DEDICATION AND EXPERIENCE KEEP THE MAINE LOBSTERMEN’S ASSOCIATION STRONG

By Melissa Waterman

The Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA) is not young. In fact, the MLA is the oldest fishermen’s group in Maine, celebrating its 61st anniversary this year. As in people, age brings a certain amount of institutional wisdom. "The MLA represents the best of Maine’s lobstering communities," said MLA executive director Patrice McCarron. "It is an organization set up by lobstermen, directed by lobstermen, whose daily activities are focused on helping lobstermen and their communities stay strong and prosperous." Over the years the MLA has been key in establishing many programs and legislation that have helped lobstermen, things that most now take for granted: the prohibition against landing lobsters caught by draggers, establishing V-notching as a conservation measure, limiting gauge increases, and fostering collaborations among regulators, scientists, and lobstermen. This month Landings speaks to several individuals who were involved with the MLA during the past several decades.

Bill Brennan was Department of Marine Resources (DMR) commissioner from 1987 to 1995. Prior to that he worked in Washington, D.C., for then-Congressman John McKernan. He now is the president of the Maine Maritime Academy in Castine.

"I had many interactions with Eddie Blackmore [then president of the MLA]. I got a kick out of Ed. He could be blunt but he was passionate about what he did," Brennan said. At the time, Maine lobstermen were faced with a series of increases to the legal size of lobsters mandated by the New England Fisheries Management Council (NEFMC). There were strong feelings in Maine that state lobstermen were being railroaded by the interests of the other states on the Council. Blackmore, a Council member, spent many long days in meetings trying to get lobstermen’s opinions heard.

"Eddie was always a gentleman. He didn’t have an easy job but he always treated me cordially," Brennan said.

To have the MLA exist and able to voice the thoughts of lobstermen as a group was important, according to Brennan. "If you are working in a highly regulated business you have to ensure that your views are represented. Sitting on the board of the MLA was a great learning experience."

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IN THE NEWS


CHINA’S APPETITE FOR LOBSTER EXPLODING

by Colleen Coyne

Seafood Program Coordinator, Food Export-Northeast

U.S. exports of fish and seafood reached a new record in 2014. Exports of American lobster were the key driver responsible for the nation’s record-breaking seafood sales to distant markets.

In 2014, total U.S. seafood exports were valued at $5.5 billion, up 2% in value and 3% in volume over 2013. Lobster exports increased 28% in value and 15% in volume in a single year. American lobster comprised about 13% of total seafood exports, valued at more than $697 million, up $152 million over the prior year. Not many industries can boast a similar sales growth, which is 3.5 times greater than the annual growth average for Fortune 500 companies.

While U.S. sales of live lobster still dominated the mix, processed lobster sales to distant markets also grew at a rapid rate. Export sales of live lobster totaled $577 million (up $132 million and 30% in value over 2013). Frozen and value-added lobster products exported increased by 20% to reach $120.3 million. It is probably no surprise to anyone in the lobster industry that Asian markets, and China in particular, are fueling sales growth for Maine’s live and processed lobster products.

In 2014, direct sales of lobster to China were nearly $78 million (up 50% in value overall—with live sales up 147% and overall volume up 57% over 2013). Sales to Hong Kong were $36.3 million (up 27% in value and 20% in volume). Lobster exports to Vietnam, which are largely destined for consumption in China, jumped 374% to reach $27.3 million.

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What can you say about August? Sure, it’s the “dog days” of summer, named for the appearance of the star Sirius (also known as the Dog Star) in the night sky. It’s also the time of festivals, boat races, and all the summer-time pleasures that the warm weather brings. Summer visitors continue to flock to coastal towns, looking for the savvy experience of eating Maine’s signature seafood right on the dock where it was landed. And there will be no shortage of lobstermen in Maine as lobstermen move into high gear as the soft-shell shedders appear in ever larger numbers along the coast.

This month in Landings we turn to the history of the Maine Lobstermen’s Association and what it has meant for the state’s lobstermen. The Beal family of Beals Island personifies the longstanding loyalty some lobstermen have had to the organization, started way back in 1954. Others recall their interactions with the MLA during times of conflict in the 1980s and 1990s, when many in today’s lobster industry were just youngsters.

As some issues are settled, others continue to emerge. Landings features some good news on the status of Atlantic herring stocks, and the MLA pages share the association’s comments on both the proposed Searsmont dredge and the ramp up of federal observers on Maine lobster boats. Landings also features an update on the Supreme Court ruling on the Affordable Care Act and we check in on Maine’s progress implementing new gear marking requirements.

Obtaining a Maine lobster license can be daunting. Many people are frustrated by the time spent on long waiting lists before one can obtain a license to fish in one of the state’s Lobster Conservation Zones. Monhegan lobstermen still are making a good living and are eager to see more young people join their community as year-round residents of that island.

We also focus this month on what is happening to Maine lobster once it leaves the dock. An article by Colleen Coyne of Food Export-Northeast shows how much exports of Maine lobster to Asia have jumped in just the past year. More and more middle-class consumers in Asian countries are choosing Maine lobster as an affordable luxury, which in turn helps the price paid to lobstermen here in Maine. Landings also introduces you to Cal Hancock, who explains how she has built a vibrant specialty food company that concentrates on lobster entrees and other culinary items. Hancock Gourmet Lobster began in 2000 and has won a variety of international awards and media accolades for its frozen seafood products. And it all began with lobster stew.

One of the other species for which Maine is well-known lives not below the waves but above them. Everyone likes the endearing Atlantic puffin, a small bird distinguished by its large and colorful beak. Atlantic puffins would not be found along the Maine coast if it weren’t for the efforts of Dr. Stephen Kress and the National Audubon Society, who devised a truly hands-on method to reintroduce the birds to their historic nesting grounds on offshore islands. Landings explores Audubon’s Project Puffin.

And finally, Landings presents the highlights from the opening day of the new Maine Maritime Museum exhibit, Lobstering & the Maine Coast. The exhibit offers visitors a chance to understand the past, present and future of Maine’s lobstering industry through an array of high and low-tech displays, including an interactive wall of lobster buoys donated by lobstermen throughout the state’s lobster zones. But on the island of Monhegan, there’s plenty of room for new lobstermen, as an article this month points out. Limited in their season by the Monhegan Island Lobster Conservation Zone regulations, Monhegan lobstermen still are making a good living and are eager to see more young people join their community as year-round residents of that island.

Coastal Outlook

Thoughts from MLCA President Patrice McCarron

There’s no “dog days of summer” for this faithful crew.
MLA photo.
There’s Room for More Lobstermen on Monhegan Island

By Melissa Waterman

Monhegan Island is not a large place. About 4.5 square miles in size, it lies 12 nautical miles offshore. In the summer flocks of day visitors as well as summer residents boost its population by the hundreds, but in the winter, just 67 or so people remain on the island, according to lobsterman Matt Weber. Of those, only nine hold commercial lobster licenses. That number, says Weber and others on the island, needs to change.

With so many people in Maine’s lobster zones waiting for years to gain a commercial lobster license, Weber hopes a few will think of moving to the island. The problem: housing.

Weber has been lobstering for twenty years, first as a sternman for Sherm Stanley, later as captain of his own 36-foot Wayne Beal boat. He was lucky. After years moving from rental to rental he was able to buy land and build his own house through the auspices of the Monhegan Island Sustainable Community Association (MISCA). “I’m a poster child for MISCA,” he laughed, as well as the Association’s current president.

MISCA was set up in 2002 by islanders to deal with the lack of affordable housing on the island. The fear amongst residents was that the year-round community would wither and die as more and more people found it impossible to make their lives on the island.

To keep that from happening, the Association purchases existing residential property then sells the homes to year-round residents at considerably less than the market value while retaining ownership of the land. The amount the house can appreciate is limited by a covenant in the deed. Thus, when the owners want to move, the selling price of the house will be less than the market value, which means other working families can buy it. MISCA also purchases unbuilt lots on which year-round residents like Weber can build. He completed his home in 2008.

Dustin Delano is in a position similar to Weber’s many years ago. He moved from Friendship to Monhegan in August, 2014, and set his traps in August, 2015 with the others when the season began on October 1. Monhegan Island has its own Lobster Conservation Zone, a 30-square-mile area around the island. Lobstermen who live on Monhegan have exclusive rights to fish those waters from October 1 to June 7, with a limit of 400 traps per license.

Living on an island brought with it many changes, changes that Delano appears to be handling well. “I think most people tend to believe that going into a new lobstering territory can cause you some major grief and trap-cutting,” he said. “However, that’s not the case. Monhegan is looking for year-round residents and has space for more lobster fishermen.”

Finding a place to live was a bit more difficult. “This past winter I rented an apartment on Fish Beach. It had one bedroom and bathroom along with a kitchen/living room. I paid $300 a month from October until May plus the heat,” Delano explained. During this summer he is renting a room at $10 per day from a local innkeeper. He rents a workshop and a small lot from a former lobsterman in which he can store his gear and park his truck; that runs $200 per month.

“The largest current hurdle that I can see [in encouraging more lobstermen to move to the island] is transitional housing when you first move out here. It can be difficult to find a permanent place until you can buy something,” Delano said.

On the other hand, there are certain qualities that could make the island great: the island.

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NEW LEADERS IN MAINE’S LOBSTER FISHERY: Isaac Lash, Friendship

In this series we continue our profiles of some of the young men and women who took part in the Maine Lobstermen’s Community Alliance’s inaugural Lobster Leadership Institute in May, 2014.

By Melissa Waterman

Friendship lobsterman Isaac Lash, 29, first began lobstering when he was six years old, fishing with his father from a 36-foot wooden boat. Now Lash has his own boat, a 43-foot fiberglass vessel called Big Dipper which he, his father and two other Friendship men built themselves. “I took out a five-year loan to build it. It’s paid off now,” Lash said.

That sense of independence was part of the reason Lash took part in the Lobster Leadership Institute held in May 2014. He and other lobstermen sat through seminars on various aspects of the lobster industry. “The marketing part was pretty interesting,” Lash recalled. “It wasn’t something I knew a lot about.” The group then traveled to Prince Edward Island to learn about the fishery there. “The trip to P.E.I. was certainly the draw. I thought it sounded interesting to go up there,” he said. “It was neat to see the way they lobster. They will haul their traps through every day except Sunday. On Mondays they get a lot!”

Since the Institute ended last year, Lash has been busy tending his own traps, keeping his boat and gear in top shape, and paying attention to what’s happening in the water as well as on land. “The season has been good so far,” he said. “The high price this spring helped after we were iced in most of the winter. The shedders have just started inside now.” Friendship Harbor was locked in sea ice this winter for more than a month.

Lash made the news earlier this year when his temporary third man, Ricky Louis Felice Jr., hauled a three-foot-long, 20-pound lobster in May. The Big Dipper had been fishing south of Monhegan Island when they hauled the heavily-laden trap. Five other fairly puny lobsters were in the trap with the 20-pounder. Felice, a college student from Cushing, posted a picture of himself with the lobster on his Facebook page in July. Suddenly the media came calling. The picture and story made their way to many local newspapers and television stations. Lash himself wasn’t all that impressed by the catch. “I’ve seen lobsters as big or bigger than that one,” he said. “It’s neat to see such a big one, but it’s not that rare.”

It was a hard winter in Friendship this year. Lash’s boat spent some time locked in the sea ice in the harbor. Photo by I. Lash.
MAINE COMPANY PUTS AWARD-WINNING LOBSTER DISHES ON AMERICA’S TABLES

By Melissa Waterman

Cal Hancock was born to be a businesswoman. The founder and president of Hancock Gourmet Lobster worked for 25 years as an executive in the health care field, primarily in the Midwest, until one day she thought to herself, “This is not fun at all!” she recalled with a laugh.

“My family is entrepreneurish. My grandmother started a lobster restaurant in Ogunquit, my sister runs a dude ranch in Wyoming, my cousin has a children’s clothing business, and my brother has a business in Los Angeles arranging cars for the movies. I just knew that I could do this,” Hancock explained, referring to the ever-growing Hancock Gourmet Lobster company she founded 15 years ago.

Her company is going strong. Hancock Gourmet Lobster continues to expand its offerings of specialty foods while winning accolades from fine food associations. The company offers more than 50 seafood items through its Web site, the catalogues of upscale companies such as Williams Sonoma and Dean and Deluca, and its distributor, Performance Food Group (PFG). Recently the company has ventured into the food service sector, specifically with large airlines. Delta Airlines now serves Hancock Gourmet Lobster items to its first-class passengers. And it all started with lobster stew. “The Midwest was an interesting place,” Hancock said. “People there were really interested that I was from Maine. They were fascinated by Maine and by lobster, but they didn’t want to have to touch it and cook it.” She thought perhaps there was a niche in the food world for value-added lobster products which people could prepare with ease. Hancock did her research, wrote a business plan for the company, and started pounding the pavement, so to speak, at food shows. “My brother had a friend in the food business who was from France. He told me about the Fancy Food Show and the specialty food category.” Hancock said.

In 2001 Hancock decided to attend the international Fancy Food Show, with more than 2,400 food booths, to get a sense of what was out there. In 2002 she put up a booth of her own. “It was great,” she recalled. “People said it tasted absolutely fantastic.” In 2003 she decided to submit the company’s lobster pot pie in one of the 30 categories of food judged at the show. The item promptly won a gold “sofi” award (specialty outstanding food item).

Since then Hancock Gourmet Lobster has won 11 awards at the Fancy Food Show, one of only three companies to win more than 10. The company has been featured on the Food Network three times, highlighted in O Magazine, and reviewed in The New York Times. Bobby Flay even turned up one day in 2010 to challenge Hancock to a cooking “Throwdown” based on her Lobster Mac & Cheese.

What makes her seafood products so successful? Hancock credits the quality of her ingredients and the procedures in place to ensure consistency. “I don’t buy from just anyone. I have to have a relationship with the people I buy from. The Midwest was an interesting place, So the facility has to have HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points) procedures in place. I visit them to see how they do things,” she emphasized. She buys lobster from Cozy Harbor Seafood, Shucks Maine Lobster, and Inland Seafood.

To ensure that all her food products meet FDA standards, Hancock does not buy from just anyone. “My brother had a friend in the food business who was from France. He told me about the Fancy Food Show and the specialty food category.” Hancock said. Hancock continues to expand its offerings of specialty foods while winning accolades from fine food associations. The company offers more than 50 seafood items through its Web site, the catalogues of upscale companies such as Williams Sonoma and Dean and Deluca, and its distributor, Performance Food Group (PFG). Recently, the company has ventured into the food service sector, specifically with large airlines. Delta Airlines now serves Hancock Gourmet Lobster items to its first-class passengers.

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Maine Lobstermen’s Association

Advocating for a sustainable lobster resource and the fishermen and communities that depend on it since 1954.

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Maine Lobstermen’s Association Update

STEAMING AHEAD

The MLA is celebrating 61 years of service to Maine’s lobstermen, which is an amazing feat if you think about it. Existing for more than six decades is an accomplishment all by itself. But when your job is to remain a cohesive and effective organization while representing a group of staunchly independent businessmen spread across 3,500 miles of coast, keeping the doors open for more than 60 years is a true achievement.

There’s no doubt that the MLA has had its ups and downs over the years. But I would challenge anyone to disagree with the fact that the Maine lobster industry is in much better shape than it would have been had the MLA never existed. During our 61 years, many issues related to lobstering have come and gone. Some have been easy to resolve, many more have been controversial and others have been downright painful. Plenty of lobstermen have disagreed with MLA positions over the years. But regardless of which side of an issue you stood on, you could always count on the MLA to be honest, transparent and accountable for its actions. And I don’t say this lightly.

When your work is highly political, often controversial and has an effect on people’s lives, you must pay attention to how you conduct yourself. The MLA has never forgotten why it was formed or who it is here to serve. We have never taken on work that does not directly benefit or affect Maine lobstermen and we have never misled our members. After all, the ends never justify the means. We are the oldest and largest fisheries organization in the state yet still a relatively small and very nimble organization. We have never forgotten who we are and why we are here.

The reason for that is simple – the MLA always has been and always will be a membership organization. If our membership is strong, the MLA is strong. If it is not, there would cease to be an MLA. For more than six decades, the MLA has been blessed with the support of loyal members who have repeatedly elected a very strong board of directors to lead the organization. It is because of its members and the people they elect to the board that the MLA has always been a leader with a clear vision: to balance the industry’s present-day needs with the goal of securing a strong lobstering future.

It’s hard to put one’s finger on why, but somehow the MLA has consistently found energetic and thoughtful men and women to serve. The MLA board has ably represented lobstermen and harbors from throughout the coast since the day it was organized. Gather lobstermen from all parts of the coast at a table, and you can be sure that when the dust settles, the consensus in the room will be to do what is good for the industry as a whole. Each person is guided by his own experiences and the needs of his community, board members show a tremendous respect for another’s point of view. After all, they share a mutual aim: to make sure that the opportunities that they have enjoyed — to make a living on the water independent of any corporate interests — do not elude the next generation.

Maine’s lobster industry has changed a lot in 61 years. When the MLA was established in 1954, Maine landed only 22 million pounds of lobster worth $8 million and the boat price was 34 cents a pound! I believe there are many things we now take for granted in the lobster fishery that exist only because the MLA was there when the battles to gain them were fought. So I ask, what might the Maine lobster fishery look like without the MLA?

- If the MLA hadn’t lobbied the Legislature to ban lobster harvesting with non-trap gear back in 1967, would Maine have allowed dragger-caught lobster to be landed? Would the practice ultimately have come into law if the MLA hadn’t been there each time it was challenged since then?
- Would oversized lobster be landed freely in Maine if the MLA hadn’t helped the state to defeat a campaign by lobster dealers to overthrow the maximum gauge in 1986?
- Would all Maine lobstermen be burdened with running payroll and paying all of the onerous taxes that go with it if the MLA hadn’t worked with Maine’s federal delegation to pass the Sternman Act in 1976?
- Would Shafmaster boats still be fishing at Maine’s 3-mile line if the MLA hadn’t lobbied to move lobster management from the New England Fisheries Management Council to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and establish the Area 1 boundary out to 40 miles in 1997?
- What if the MLA hadn’t led the charge to get V-notching recognized as an effective conservation measure? Would the minimum gauge for a legal lobster be significantly larger than 3-1/4 inches if we hadn’t been involved?
- Would Canada be selling undersized live lobster to the U.S. if the MLA hadn’t worked on the Mitchell amendment to the Magnuson Act in 1989?
- If the MLA hadn’t fought for an exemption to the sinking line rule for Maine state waters, would Maine lobstermen be forced to fish sinking line right up to the beach as they do in Massachusetts and New Hampshire?

You may find it hard to imagine, but many of Maine’s lobster conservation measures remain in place because the MLA was there to fight to keep them.

It’s not easy getting old. The back starts to ache in the morning, your fingers don’t work as well as they once did, you might even need reading glasses! Sure, the MLA is 61 years old this year, but to be honest, we are a stronger and more flexible organization than ever. I take great pride in the MLA – in its history, in its thoughtful approach and in its amazing accomplishments. Please show your pride in the MLA and join us in the celebration by renewing your membership today.

As always, stay safe on the water.

Patrice

The Dennett’s Wharf in Castine understands the power of advertising!

Photo by M. Waterman.
MLA DIRECTORS MEETING

MLA Directors met on July 1 in Belfast, Scott Smithwick provided an update on the MLA Vessel Insurance Program. To date the program is performing well, and the loss ratio is low. The program continues to experience growth; both the premium reductions and improvements made last year have been well received. The MLA Vessel Insurance program has a 23-year track record of providing excellent coverage and claims service for our members.

MLA Directors voted unanimously to continue the MLA Vessel Insurance program with three additional changes to the policy: 1) remove the layup warranty but keep the rating credit for those fishing less than 9 months, 2) add a held-covered provision for additional crew, and 3) add a Claims surcharge waiver. Smithwick will investigate adding coverage for vessels when hosting scientific observers through the DMR sea sampling, federal observer program and University of Maine bycatch study. In the meantime, owners of vessels insured through the MLA program should call Smithwick if they are to host a researcher so that your policy will cover the extra person. They have a phone line available 24/7.

Patrice provided an update on the DMR’s recent round of zone council meetings which included a discussion of the Goals and Objectives of the Lobster FMP and advice to the Commissioner on the concept of requiring double tagging for all zones and consideration of establishing an offshore zone. The Commissioner is planning to hold ten meetings with the lobster industry beginning in September to discuss ideas to reform the lobster licensing system. The discussions will include eliminating latent effort and reducing waiting list times.

The Directors expressed much concern over any far-reaching reforms of the lobster licensing system. There was a strong sentiment that the zone councils already have the authority to make changes, and a more sound approach would be to refine those tools. Ideas included the DMR giving new Apprentices an estimated “wait time” for entry, and having them sign that; using either a lifetime high or 10-year average of retired tags for the exit; raising the age to 25 for young people to move directly in to the industry to allow kids to get through college; create a mechanism to survey the level of interest of those on the waiting list to get a better handle on who actually wants a license to go lobstering. Other ideas included not allowing latent licenses or tags for new entrants to the fishery. Many wondered whether the level of political fighting in Augusta has made it unlikely that any major changes to the lobster industry will happen while this Administration and Legislature are in office.

David Black and Wayne Canning appealed to the MLA Directors to back local lobstermen’s concerns over the Searspoint dredge. The MLA Directors voted unanimously (with one abstention) to send a letter to DEP (copied to DMR, MDOT and ACOE) stating the unusual nature of this dredge project and highlighting the concerns raised by local area lobstermen. In the letter the MLA will also clarify the record on the level of support by MLA and a few of its members for the dredge project, which has been misrepresented by the Army Corps in a correspondence to DEP.

The New England Fisheries Management Council finalized voting on the Habitat Amendment and specifically on Georges Bank closed areas. The lobster industry was very concerned about the potential to open Closed Area II on Georges Bank to groundfishing and scalloping during the summer and fall months. This area is known to have a large proportion of female and egg-bearing lobsters. While the size of the areas closed on Georges Bank has been reduced, the seasonal restriction remains in place from June 15 through October 31 to protect lobster.

MLA Directors discussed recent ASMFC actions related to shrimp, herring, Jonah crab and the lobster assessment. The ASMFC accepted public comment on the Draft Jonah Crab FMP until July 24; the herring plan has been withdrawn from public consideration in order to further develop the proposed spawning protection measures; ASMFC will develop options for the new shrimp plan based on an updated ecosystem assessment is done and has passed peer review. It will be formally accepted by the ASMFC in August.

The MLA Directors discussed the federal observer program at length. The media has reported on the program, citing safety and funding concerns from industry. A few clarifications – there are two federal observer programs: the Fisheries Observer Program and At Sea Monitoring. The Fisheries Observer Program conducts the Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology (SBRM) which is conducted across all federal fisheries and is federally funded. The lobster fishery observer trips are conducted through this program. The At Sea Monitoring Program is a separate program implemented under Amendment 16 to the groundfish management plan. The costs of this program were initially covered by the federal government, but are being moved to the industry. Therefore, the trips in the lobster industry are not taking funds away from groundfish coverage; these are separate programs.

MLA Directors expressed concern over the number of federal observer trips on lobster boats in Maine, particularly the program’s redundancy because of Maine’s long-standing sea sampling program. Those who have already carried federal observers have had varying experiences. There is concern over the federal survey design, level of observer training and lobster handling practices. MLA will continue to work with DMR and the federal program to identify strategies to address these concerns.

The MLA membership renewal will take place in July and August; anyone who joins or renews by September 15 will be entered to win $500. The MLA Directors will not meet in August; the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 2, at 5 p.m. in Belfast.

COUNCIL FINALIZES HABITAT AMENDMENT

In June, the New England Fishery Management Council finalized its recommendations on the Habitat Amendment. In addition to actions taken at its April meeting, it identified areas that would be subject to habitat protection on the northern edge of Georges Bank and Georges Shoal and singled out other areas to protect spawning groundfish, both on Georges Bank and in the Gulf of Maine.

The habitat management areas identified by the Council contain habitats of importance to multiple species, are vulnerable to impacts from fishing and, as such, should be subject to gear restrictions for conservation purposes on the basis of gear type. At the June meeting, the Council approved the Georges Shoal Habitat Management Area which would be closed to mobile bottom-tending gears including bottom trawls and dredges, with an exemption for hydraulic clam dredges. The exemption for clam dredges would sunset one year after implementation of the amendment, allowing time to consider a targeted exemption area or areas to be considered.

Two other Habitat Management Areas were approved, both located on the northern edge of Georges Bank along the U.S./Canada boundary. The area farthest to the northeast was defined as a reduced-impact Habitat Management Area, along with an adjacent area just to the south that was approved as a mobile bottom-tending gear closure. Hydraulic clam dredges would not be allowed in either area.

Exemptions in the “red area” would include limited fishing access for bottom trawls and scallop dredges. Access for the scallop fishery would be allowed under the current scallop access area regulations, with the specifics of the program to be developed in a future scallop conservation and groundfish trawling would be allowed in the relatively small area west of 67°20’ W only. Because of concerns about impacts to the lobster fishery and resource, any portions of what is currently known as Closed Area II north of 41°30’ W would be closed to scallop fishing from June 15 through October 31. While not included in the amendment, the groundfish industry has an agreement with the lobster industry to abide by similar restrictions.

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The New England Fishery Management Council reports more good news on the status of Atlantic herring. The updated stock assessment conducted this past April indicates that the Atlantic herring resource remains above its biomass target (rebuild) and below the overfishing threshold (no overfishing).

Importantly, this has been the case for this critical forage species since the current management program was adopted by the Council in 1999. The Council adopted its Scientific and Statistical Committee’s (SSC) recommendation that the Atlantic herring overfishing limit (OFL) and acceptable biological catch (ABC) for 2016-2018 fishing years be 110,000 metric tons ABC from 2016 to 2018, slightly less than its current 114,000 metric tons ABC.

HERRING STOCKS HEALTHY

The MLA has a deep interest in the Searsport dredge project because it is so unique. While the size of the proposed dredging is on par with what was done recently in Portland Harbor, it is a very large project for the Penobscot Bay area. Searsport also deserves special consideration due to the area’s distinct geography, the location of the proposed dump site, which is well inside the bay and located amid important inshore fishing territories, and the dredge project’s proximity to the area at the mouth of the Penobscot River now closed to lobster fishing due to mercury contamination.

The MLA has closely monitored the development of this project over the years, and been in communication with staff from the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR), Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) to seek information and discuss the lobster industry’s concerns. Now that the ACOE has formally submitted its request for a Water Quality Protection and Department of Marine Resources in mid-July.

This is the letter sent by the MLA to the Maine Department of Environmental Protection and Department of Marine Resources.

The MLA has been working with DEP to ensure that the lobstermen’s interests are protected in the face of these local and regional development projects.

The MLA has a deep interest in the Searsport dredge project because it is so unique. While the size of the proposed dredging is on par with what was done recently in Portland Harbor, it is a very large project for the Penobscot Bay area. Searsport also deserves special consideration due to the area’s distinct geography, the location of the proposed dump site, which is well inside the bay and located amid important inshore fishing territories, and the dredge project’s proximity to the area at the mouth of the Penobscot River now closed to lobster fishing due to mercury contamination.

The MLA would like to correct and clarify a statement made in the attached Block 16 of the application for Water Quality Certification, submitted the ACOE and MDOT, in response to DEP’s request for additional information. Specifically, under section 4, which characterizes habitat, fish and shellfish around the site, the ACOE writes,

"Lobster resource data (i.e. abundance and distribution) in and around the Penobscot Bay Disposal site is limited. Information for the Environmental Assessment and in support of this submission [emphasis added] was obtained from experts at the State of Maine's Department of Marine Resources (Mr. Dennis Nault and Mr. Carl Wilson) as well as interviews with local lobstermen (Mr. David Black and Mr. Wayne Canning) and regional lobster fishing associations (Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA) and Maine Lobstermen’s Community Alliance (MLCA))."

While the MLA facilitated a boat tour of the Penobscot Bay Disposal site between ACOE, DMR, MLA, MLCA, Mr. David Black and Mr. Wayne Canning (in addition to a few others), neither the MLA, MLA. Mr. Black nor Mr. Canning did “in support of” the proposed dredging project or the disposal of the spoils at the Pen Bay site. Rather, this trip was organized to facilitate communication between affected lobstermen and regulatory agencies so that both sides might better understand and address issues of concern. The referenced text should be corrected.

The MLA is committed to making sure that the same standards that apply to dredging in other parts of Maine and around the country are used in Searsport. During numerous meetings and conversations with lobstermen who fish in and around the proposed dredging and dumping sites, the MLA has identified unanswered questions and concerns of these fishermen about this proposal. Therefore, we present the concerns we have heard from local lobstermen.

The size and scope of this project is unprecedented in the Penobscot Bay area. Lobstermen are concerned that there are inherent risks in undertaking a project of this scale at this location. Lobstermen are concerned that the area proposed for dredging is in close proximity to the mouth of the river where high levels of mercury contamination have been identified due to pollution from the former HoltraChem plant dating back to the late 1960s and early 1970s. Lobstermen have requested that a high level of scrutiny be given to the testing methodologies and results to ensure that contamination levels and risk of dredging and disposing of this sediment is properly understood.

Due to concerns over potential contamination of the spoils and the sheer volume of material slated for disposal, lobstermen have stated a strong preference that spoils be disposed of at an upland location or be considered for other beneficial uses. The areas proposed for dredging and disposal contain a rare and unique geological feature characterized by deep rock marks possibly formed by the escape of methane gas, and as such, are poorly understood and present many unknowns. Among lobstermen’s concerns surrounding dredging and dumping in and around the rock marks are the potential to: destabilize the deep rock marks, release gas, result in dumped spoils not remaining where placed, and create increased turbidity and sedimentation of the surrounding area. In addition to water quality and ecological concerns, these issues could present real challenges to any businesses growing, holding or storing lobster or other seafood that relies on intake of water from the bay.

Lobstermen have also noted that this area has strong tides, currents and wind patterns which could result in the dumped spoils not remaining in the intended area.

The proposed disposal site is located amid important inshore fishing grounds where lobstermen are tightly constrained by fishing territories. Any impact to resident or migratory lobster populations through this area will have a significant negative economic impact on affected lobstermen as they are not able to shift gear to other territories.

The lobster population in both the dredge and dump sites is poorly understood. Lobstermen believe there are both resident and migrating lobsters that inhabit these areas, particularly in the proposed dump site. While timing the dredge around typical typical lobster migration could alleviate some of the impact, the size of the resident lobster population is unknown. There is potential for these lobsters to be harmed or killed during the course of dredging and to be suffocated and killed during the dumping operations. Of particular concern are the short, hobbled females, v-notched and oversized lobsters which have been returned to the ocean as a conservation measure. These biological concerns and corresponding economic impacts must be documented so that an appropriate strategy for mitigation can be implemented.

The success of lobstermen who fish around the proposed dredging and dumping site is important to their families and communities and contributes to the success of the Penobscot Bay region's economy. These lobstermen are part of the long-standing culture and heritage of the region, one which they hope to pass onto the next generation. The issues raised by these local lobstermen deserve careful consideration, and may require additional research and explanation.

Thank you for your consideration of these important issues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Quota (as of 7/23)</th>
<th>% of quota</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area 1A</td>
<td>6,062</td>
<td>20.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 1B</td>
<td>2,883</td>
<td>58.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 2</td>
<td>11,360</td>
<td>35.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 3</td>
<td>22,536</td>
<td>50.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>42,841</td>
<td>40.97%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Data from the NMFS Weekly Atlantic Herring report. Quota deductions were made from Herring Areas 1A, 1B, 2, and 3, to account for the 3-percent Herring Research Set-Aside awarded in 2015. These amounts are: 936 mt in Area 1A; 138 mt in Area 1B; 900 mt in Area 2; and 1,260 mt in Area 3.
MAINE LOBSTERMEN’S ASSOCIATION UPDATE

MLA COMMENTS ON FEDERAL OBSERVER PROGRAM

This is the text of a letter sent to NMFS in mid-July.

The Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA) is writing to provide constructive feedback and express a few concerns relating to the expansion of the Northeast Fisheries Observer Program (NEFOP) in Maine’s lobster fishery. The MLA is a Maine-based fishing industry organization whose mission is to advocate for a sustainable lobster resource and the fishermen and communities that depend on it.

The MLA was surprised to learn about the vast expansion of NEFOP earlier this spring. We are disappointed that it occurred with little to no input from Maine’s lobstermen, managers and scientists. The lobster industry was caught off guard when we learned that Maine had been assigned over 200 federal observer days on top of our existing Maine Department of Resources (DMR) sea sampling program and that there was no opportunity for public comment. The MLA is troubled that a program that could have tremendous impact on our fishery is in place with virtually no consultation of the industry or the state in advance. Since the details of the program have been revealed, we have appreciated greatly the information and outreach provided to our organization by Glenn Chamberlain from NEFOP. However, there continues to be much confusion among Maine lobstermen about the need and the purpose of this federal observer program.

With Glenn’s help and additional research conducted ourselves, we now understand more about the Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology (SBRM) used by the Federal Observer Program. We are troubled that this program was developed with input from the fishery management councils yet without input from the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) which has had jurisdiction for the management of the lobster resource since the mid-1990’s. It seems that the lobster industry was completely circumvented in the development of this program.

Maine’s lobstermen have a long history of collaborative research between our lobstermen and scientists to help us better understand and manage lobster populations. The MLA, and the lobster industry as a whole, has worked closely with Maine DMR over the years to ensure an excellent lobster sampling program in partnership with the industry to meet the data needs of both the state and the ASMFC. Therefore, Maine lobstermen are not inherently opposed to this sort of program.

Key concerns raised when lobstermen learned about the federal observer program are the perceived redundancy or need for so many additional trips on top of our existing state lobster sea sampling program and the justification for the expenditure of funds for federal observers in the lobster industry. The latter issue is even more concerning given that groundfishermen are facing the burden of bearing the cost of their At-Sea Monitoring Program as they experience ever more difficult economic times, while the Maine lobster fishery continues to experience record high catches. While the MLA understands that these are two separate programs with separate funding streams, we urge NOAA Fisheries and NEFOP to exercise any discretion it may have to make more funds available to the groundfish At-Sea Monitoring program.

In terms of the federal observer program itself, the MLA strongly advocates that NOAA Fisheries and NEFOP work with Maine DMR to understand Maine’s lobster sampling design, methods and protocols which have been developed over many years and which are designed to cover our inshore fisheries. Maine’s state-bycatch protocol has been developed in collaboration with the ASMFC, which has input from the fishery management council. The MLA is very concerned about the NEFOP survey design which targets federal observer permit holders who hold other federal permits. This represents only a small proportion of Maine’s very diverse fleet which covers 3,500 miles of coastline. The SBRM brings significant bias and a high risk of mischaracterizing both the lobster fishery and its bycatch. Maine’s lobster sea sampling data have shown strong spatial and seasonal differences in bycatch that will be easily missed under the SBRM design. Maine DMR could provide valuable assistance in exploring this bias.

Anna T. DeFrate
Executive Director
Maine Lobstermen’s Association

The MLA has also received some limited feedback from lobstermen regarding their experience with federal observers to date. These lobstermen are very experienced in hosting state sea samplers aboard their vessels and therefore have a legitimate baseline for comparison. The general feedback on the competence of the observers has been mixed from “not knowing what they are doing” to “very good” to “seem to do something different with the catch each time.”

Lobstermen have informed the MLA that some of the federal observers are poorly trained in handling lobster; the lobstermen have been handled roughly, thrown into baskets and left on deck for long periods of time. Under the best of circumstances, lobsters can incur a lot of injury when piled into baskets and

Continued on page 15

The MLA: Independent and involved for 61 years. MLA photo.

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Weirs Motor Sales Inc.
Williams CPA Group LLC
Wormesters Lobster Bait

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<th>Location</th>
<th>Discount Details</th>
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<td>Accutech Marine Propeller, Inc.</td>
<td>Dover, NH</td>
<td>20% off propeller repair. Discounts vary by manufacturer for new propellers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applied Refrigeration Services</td>
<td>Windham, ME</td>
<td>$250 off new installations.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Back River Financial Group</td>
<td>Farmingdale, ME</td>
<td>Free initial consultation and review of previous tax returns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bessy Bait, LLC</td>
<td>Seabrook, NH</td>
<td>$5 discount per drum on multiple drum purchases (must show current MLA card).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coastal Hydraulics</td>
<td>Seabrook, NH</td>
<td>10% discount on all in stock items for MLA members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Fisheries News</td>
<td>Deer Isle, ME</td>
<td>Discounted annual subscription rate for $18.75 with MLA membership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craig's All Natural</td>
<td>Durham, NH</td>
<td>10% discount on all Victinox Cutlery.</td>
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<td>Friendship Trap Company</td>
<td>Friendship, ME</td>
<td>5% off list price on traps purchased at the Friendship store.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hamilton Marine</td>
<td>Searsmont, ME</td>
<td>Southwest Harbor, Jonesport, ME -- Discounts available to commercial fishermen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hews Company, LLC</td>
<td>South Portland, ME</td>
<td>10% off all hydraulic components and Cable Craft cables in 2015.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law Office of J. Scott Logan, LLC</td>
<td>Portland, ME</td>
<td>20% discount on foreclosure defense and bankruptcy legal fees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine Camp Outfitters</td>
<td>Sunset, ME</td>
<td>10% off all apparel and promotional product orders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine Lobstermen's Association</td>
<td>Kennebunk, ME</td>
<td>10% off MLA merchandise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine Maritime Museum</td>
<td>Bath, ME</td>
<td>Free admission to MLA members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McMillan Offshore Survival Training</td>
<td>Belfast, ME</td>
<td>10% discount on USCG Drill Conductor training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midcoast Marine Electronics</td>
<td>Rockland, ME</td>
<td>10% off list price on all marine electronic products.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Desert Oceanarium</td>
<td>Bar Harbor, ME</td>
<td>Free admission to commercial fishermen and their families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Fisherman</td>
<td>North Hollywood, CA</td>
<td>Special annual subscription rate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Atlantic Power Products</td>
<td>Exeter, NH</td>
<td>10% off marine gears, controls, accessories, and parts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Penobscot Marine Museum</td>
<td>Searsmont, ME</td>
<td>Free admission for MLA members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Stanley Custom Boats</td>
<td>Bass Harbor, ME</td>
<td>$1,000 off final price of hull with MLA membership.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sea Rose Trap Co.</td>
<td>Scarborough, ME</td>
<td>5% off trap list price when you show your MLA card.</td>
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<td>Smithwick &amp; Mariners Insurance</td>
<td>Falmouth, ME</td>
<td>Discounted vessel insurance plus 5% discount with proof of CG approved Drill Conductor course within the last 5 years.</td>
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<tr>
<td>SW Boatworks</td>
<td>Lamonie, ME</td>
<td>$1000 discount for hull or top.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weathervane Seafood Inc.</td>
<td>Kittery, ME</td>
<td>10% off mail order purchases. Just mention you are an MLA member.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter Harbor Fishermen’s Coop</td>
<td>Winter Harbor, ME</td>
<td>10% off picked lobster.</td>
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WHAT TO DO NOW THAT YOU HAVE HEALTH INSURANCE

By April Gilmore McNutt

If you enrolled in an insurance plan through healthcare.gov you may have been wondering what all the talk about the Supreme Court case known as King v. Burwell was about and what exactly it means for you.

On June 25, the Supreme Court made a decision to allow federally-run Health Insurance Marketplaces to continue to make tax credits available in all states. Maine’s health insurance marketplace at healthcare.gov is federally-run, so this decision was good news for the families who qualify for tax credits so they may continue to afford health insurance each month.

In the King v. Burwell case, a majority of the Supreme Court Justices decided that the language of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) in question did actually mean that Premium Tax Credits should be available to consumers in all states, not just those using state-based marketplaces. A state-based marketplace is just that: it’s managed by the state itself. Maine’s marketplace is federal, managed by the federal government. The plaintiffs in the case argued that tax credits were meant to be available only for the residents in states with state-based marketplaces. The majority of the health insurance marketplaces in the country are federally-run, so undoing the tax credits in these states would likely have forced many to lose their health insurance because it would become too expensive without the tax credits. Over 61,000 Mainers have enrolled in insurance plans through healthcare.gov and qualified for tax credits to help lower their premiums each month.

Emily Brostek, executive director of Consumers for Affordable Health Care, a Maine advocacy organization, wrote online after the Court’s decision, “We are thrilled that Mainers will continue to have access to subsidies to make health insurance more affordable and accessible. Tens of thousands of hard-working Mainers will be helped by this decision. Without the subsidies, monthly insurance premiums are just too expensive for many people.”

Remember, although subsidies are still available, you do need to update your 2015 household income estimate if it has changed already during the year or you expect it to before the end of the year. Your update can be made through the online application at healthcare.gov or through the healthcare.gov call center, open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If you have any questions or trouble trying to do the update on your own, give us a call at the MLA and we can help you. Please be sure to update your information so you’re not required to pay back subsidy monies at tax time.

Open enrollment will start again November 1 and will end January 31, 2016. If you think you may qualify for a Special Enrollment Period before November, due to a major life event such as divorce or birth of a child, give us a call at the MLA and we can help you figure out your options.

MLA continued from page 9

experience stress when kept out of the water. These trips have occurred very early in the season on cool days when catches are extremely low. If poor handling, subsampling of catch, and allowing lobsters to sit on deck are already happening, MLA is very worried about the impact of the federal observers and this sampling methodology when the volume of lobsters picks up later this year.

By contrast, Maine DMR has done an excellent job training samplers to record a high volume of the lobster catch while minimizing stress and injury to lobsters due to improper handling. Maine lobstermen are proud of their stewardship and fishing practices so it is important that scientists working aboard their vessels have the appropriate level of skill and understand these values.

In moving forward, MLA would like to facilitate a collaboration between NEFOP and Maine DMR (and is open to other states participating) to explore how the state and federal observer/sampling efforts can be streamlined, and the federal observers can learn how to most effectively work with lobster on Maine vessels. Likewise, the DMR could gain valuable expertise from NEFOP on collecting bycatch data. In the near term, we ask that the handling issues reported by Maine lobstermen be addressed immediately. If poor lobster handling is commonplace, MLA anticipates that Maine lobstermen will understandably not be open to hosting federal observers when the catch picks up. It would be unfortunate if this was allowed to happen.

I hope we are able to find a way to work together to reduce redundancies, streamline expenditures and improve data collection in the lobster fishery to achieve these mutual goals. MLA strongly believes that a combined DMR/NEFOP program could better characterize both the lobster fishery and bycatch if we work together to develop common goals and sampling design. Thank you for your consideration of our feedback.

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LOBSTERMEN EXPERIMENT WITH MARKING TECHNIQUES AS RESULT OF NEW REGULATIONS

By Melissa Waterman

"I spray-painted my lines with red paint. Most stayed pretty good but now the rope's wearing. It's just one more thing I have to do."

"I weave red string in to make the marks. I tried paint but you can't paint wet rope."

"I used zip ties. Don't do it."

As of June 1, Maine lobstermen fishing outside Maine's exemption line began marking their buoy lines with three twelve-inch red marks: one near the top of the line, one near the middle and one near the bottom of the line. The previous rule had only required buoy lines to have one four-inch red mark midway down the buoy line. The new rules require that the color mark be permanent on or along the rope and be clearly visible when hauled.

In addition, single traps fished in the quarter-mile Isles of Shoals buffer area must be marked with two colors: red and orange. Two other special Gear Marking Areas exist around Jeffreys Ledge and Jordan Basin. Gear fished in the Jeffreys Gear Marking Area must be marked with red and green; gear fished in the Jordan Basin Gear Marking Area must be marked with red and purple. These additional gear marking requirements for Jeffreys Ledge and Jordan Basin go into effect September 1.

"All of this is very complicated for lobstermen as well as for Marine Patrol," admitted Major Rene Cloutier, deputy chief of the Marine Patrol Bureau.

John Higgins is an equipment specialist in the Special Resources Division at NMFS. He too acknowledges that the new requirements are posing some trials for lobstermen this season. "Lobstermen are using tape, twine, paint, ties. The only other talk I have heard was dye but I don't know of anyone doing it," he said in an email. "The most challenging effort is for guys who need the double colors when fishing Jeffreys. I have heard some may use wire ties so the second color can be removed easily in the event they shift gear out of the Jeffreys area."

The predominant method of marking, based on an anecdotal survey of lobstermen, is to unlay the line and weave a red strand into it. The problem there is that over time, the rope itself wears or fouls and the mark becomes hard to see.

According to Cloutier, a lobsterman can put whatever marks he or she wants on vertical lines provided those marks comply with the marking requirements of the area in which the person fishes. There is no prohibition against moving those traps into an area where no marks are required, such as within Maine's exempt waters. "No one here at the Bureau wants to create more work for lobstermen. We will do everything we can to work with industry," he said. "There will be a big education period, as there was when breakaways went into effect."

In order to help his Marine Patrol officers deal with the complexity of the marking requirements, Cloutier plans to have the different marking areas set into the plotters on Marine Patrol vessels.

Cloutier emphasized that Marine Patrol officers are not going to fine every lobsterman with a fouled rope that they come across. An additional complication will come as lobstermen move their traps when the fall comes around. Lobstermen are always moving their traps. Their goal is to keep pace with the lobsters as they change location based on water temperature and other environmental factors.

So what happens when a lobsterman moves a trap marked according to NMFS standards into an area that does not require those marks? After all, the purpose of the marks is to link the location of the gear to an entangled whale, should entanglement occur.

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The problem with wire ties, as several lobstermen who preferred not to be named can be removed easily in the event they shift gear out of the Jeffreys area. "The most challenging effort is for guys who need the double colors when fishing Jeffreys. I have heard some may use wire ties so the second color can be removed easily in the event they shift gear out of the Jeffreys area."

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This fall mandatory dockside examinations for all commercial fishing vessels operating beyond 3 nautical miles of the baseline of the United States territorial seas takes effect. As of October 15, your vessel must successfully complete a Coast Guard commercial fishing vessel safety exam to legally commercially fish beyond 3 nautical miles. Those vessels with a current and valid commercial fishing vessel safety decal will meet the requirements of having satisfactorily completed the mandatory dockside examination.

Over 600 commercial fishing vessels within Coast Guard Sector Northern New England’s area of responsibility have satisfactorily completed a dockside examination and have been issued a commercial fishing vessel safety decal valid through November 1, 2015. That leaves a lot of commercial fishing vessels yet to satisfactorily complete a dockside examination. Vessel owners are encouraged to schedule their dockside examinations as soon as possible to avoid the rush.

To schedule an examination all you need to do is call or email any of our full-time commercial fishing vessel safety examiners: Kevin Plowman, 207-780-3256, Seabrook, NH to Waldoboro, ME, Kevin.f.plowman@uscg.mil; Brian Smith 207-664-3931 Waldoboro, ME to Ellsworth, ME, Brian.m.smith@uscg.mil; Garry Moores 207-838-4440 Ellsworth, ME to Eastport, ME, fvexaminer@myfairpoint.net.

You can go to the following Web site to create a checklist of what is required for your vessel to be in compliance with the safety regulations: www.uscg.mil/d13/cfvs/DocksideExams/VFinal.swf.

The only changes to the commercial fishing vessel safety regulations as of now are:

- Construction standards for commercial fishing vessels less than 50 feet in length operating beyond 3 miles.
- Classing of new commercial fishing vessels 50 or more feet in length operating beyond 3 miles.
- Loadlines for new commercial fishing vessels 79 or more feet in length operating beyond the boundary line.
- Mandatory dockside examinations for commercial fishing vessels operating beyond 3 miles from land.
- On February 16, 2016, commercial fishing vessels will be required to carry survival craft capable of keeping the user out of the water. Buoyant apparatus and life floats do not meet this requirement. Those vessels required to carry survival craft will be required to carry an inflatable buoyant apparatus, a life raft or a life boat depending upon your vessel’s area of operation. At this time we do not know who will be required to carry what for survival craft. When we know we will advise you.

On March 1, 2016, commercial fishing vessels 65 or more feet in length will be required to carry an Automated Identification System (AIS). Commercial fishing vessels may install a Class B AIS device versus a Class A device if the vessel operates at a speed of less than 14 knots.

Keep in mind that the effective date of the new safety regulations required by the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2010 is unknown at this time. The new regulations will treat Federally Documented and State Registered vessels the same. All commercial fishing vessels will need to meet these additional safety requirements if they operate beyond 3 nautical miles of the baseline of the United States territorial seas.

If you have questions or would like to schedule a free dockside safety examination for your vessel please contact me at 207-780-3256 office, 207-899-6278 cell, or email Kevin.f.plowman@uscg.mil.
BRINGING PUFFINS BACK TO MAINE A FOUR-DECADE PROJECT

By Sarah Paquette

Maine has historic puffin breeding islands off its coast. Yet for decades no puffins came to settle on those islands. Thanks to Project Puffin and the National Audubon Society, however, those breeding grounds are active again.

Eastern Egg Rock, a small island in Muscongus Bay (about six miles east of Pemaquid Point) was an active breeding ground for Atlantic puffins until the early 1880s. Their Latin name is Fratercula arctica, “little brother of the north,” referring to their black and white plumage which reminded early explorers of a friar’s robes. Puffins were hunted for food and feathers, as were many other Atlantic sea birds in the mid-to late 1800s.

In 1973, the National Audubon Society created Project Puffin in an effort to restore puffins along Maine’s coast. That same year scientists from Project Puffin and Canadian wildlife agencies gathered 1,000 puffin chicks from Newfoundland and brought them to Eastern Egg Rock where they raised the birds. “It was a pioneer project,” said Project Puffin director Dr. Stephen Kress. Puffins typically return to the island where they were hatched to raise their young. The hope was that the puffins transplanted from Canada would return to Eastern Egg Rock when they were ready to nest. In 1984, Kress and others from Project Puffin moved another 1,000 chicks from Canada, this time to Seal Island.

Though the project was questioned at the time, the successful methods used by Kress and Project Puffin are now used to restore populations of other sea birds. As of 2014, there were about 1,000 nesting pairs of puffins on five islands in Maine, and 148 of those pairs were counted on Eastern Egg Rock.

“Puffins nest on remote islands that are often covered by dense fog. Little is known about how they find their way back each year, but theories suggest they use the Earth’s magnetic field [as a compass],” Kress said.

Once the female lays her single egg, it is incubated by both the male and female. It takes about 32 days for the egg to hatch. Again, both parents carry fish to the nest and feed the baby puffin. Kress said not much is known about how far the adult puffins will go to find food, but he would guess they travel up to 20 miles to find fishing hotspots.

Puffins only come to land to nest between early April and late May in Maine, depending on the availability of food. “They nest later when the water has been cooler. I haven’t seen data for 2015 yet, but I’d guess the water was a little cooler this year,” Kress continued, noting that salinity and plankton bloom timing also affect the timing of nesting. “It’s fascinating how everything is tied together,” he said. When puffins aren’t in nesting season, they spend their time riding ocean waves.

Puffins eat small fish such as hake or herring. They catch juvenile hake that are just one and a half to two inches in size. “An adult puffin can hold anywhere from two to two dozen fish in its beak,” explained Kress. Puffins have a raspy tongue that holds the fish in place by pushing them against spines on the palate inside the puffin’s beak. This allows the puffin to open its beak and catch more fish.

Hake hatch offshore then move inshore to feed on plankton blooms. “If there is a lot of plankton, the hake will be abundant and the puffins will have a good food source,” Kress said.

Warm water poses a threat to puffins. Since they depend on white hake and herring for their food, which in turn feed on phytoplankton, warm water may dismantle this food web as those fish stocks seek cooler water further north. In 2013, after unusually warm water in the Gulf of Maine the previous year, only 10 percent of puffin pairs on Seal Island tracked by researchers successfully fledged chicks, compared to their normal rate of 77 percent. Fortunately, in 2014 when colder water temperatures returned, 75 percent of puffins successfully raised their young.

Photo courtesy of S. Kress.

A one-week-old puffin chick. Photo courtesy of S. Kress.

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BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR OFFSHORE TAGGED LOBSTERS

By Heidi Henniger
Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Association

New Hampshire Department of Fish and Game, working with the Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Association, was recently awarded a grant by the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACSCP) to collect data to better characterize the Georges Bank lobster population generally, and seasonal aggregation of egg-bearing lobsters specifically.

The project includes three components: 1) sea sampling by NMFS-certified observers on LCMA 3 lobster vessels; 2) independent industry data collection, and 3) tagging of up to 5,000 egg-bearing, v-notch, and oversized lobsters.

The project will help fill a critical data gap for the lobster stock assessment, since offshore waters are generally poorly sampled; this is particularly true for the discard portion of the catch, which can't be sampled dockside. The tagging component will document seasonal migrations of broodstock lobsters and could lead to improved understanding of any connections between inshore and offshore lobster populations. Understanding where egg-bearing lobsters go when they leave Georges Bank is a critical step in understanding the locations of egg release and larval settlement.

This project is relevant and timely not only for lobster stock assessment purposes, but also to inform NMFS rulemaking in response to the New England Fishery Management Council’s Omnibus Habitat Amendment II, which proposes changes to habitat management areas throughout the region.

The tagging portion of this project will only be successful if captures of tagged lobsters are reported. If you encounter a tagged lobster with a yellow t-bar tag marked “AOLA,” please note date, location, tag number, lobster sex, whether the lobster had eggs or v-notch, then release the animal. If you have a way to measure carapace length in millimeters, we would appreciate that information as well. Tag hauls should be reported to Heidi Henniger of AOLA at 603-828-9342 or heidi@offshorelobster.org.

There will be a raffle to distribute rewards, as follows: 1st place - $500, 2nd place - $300, 3rd place - $200. Each tag report will qualify as one entry into the raffle. Raffle winners will be drawn July 1, 2016.

China continued from page 1

China’s rapidly growing appetite for lobster stems from liberalization policies that have generated better living standards and changed food consumption patterns. The forces driving production and trade, combined with lobster promotions and opportunities for Maine’s lobster industry to cultivate Chinese buyers, generated a “perfect storm” of opportunity for Maine’s lobster industry to grow sales.

Market Liberalization

During the 1980s and 1990s, as China emerged from isolation and allowed economic forces to allocate resources, international attention became focused on China’s demand for imports. China’s negotiations to join the World Trade Organization (WTO), which were finally completed in 2001, intensified global interest in China as a market. Early on during this period, China’s economic policies to encourage manufacturing discouraged fishery imports not intended for processing and re-export. Exports of U.S. seafood to China were mainly limited to high value seafood products (such as Pacific salmon and California squid) destined for processing and re-export.

Emerging Middle Class

As manufacturing and service industries grew and expanded, large numbers of rural laborers were drawn to urban centers. China’s gross domestic product (GDP) and household income grew rapidly in tandem. Although China’s own agricultural and fishery production was expanding, it could not keep pace with rising consumer demand for more, and then for more variety, as the structure of food consumption changed. A large segment of the population now regularly pursues gourmet-type foods rather than seeking food simply for sustenance.

China’s agricultural and seafood imports have risen dramatically in recent years, and the United States has become a leading supplier. China has been increasingly importing oilseeds, oils, cotton, grains, meat and dairy, seafood and processed foods. While bulk commodities and generic products used as raw materials for processing are still predominant, higher-value foods and beverages comprise a rapidly growing share of China’s imports. Imports of higher-value items are increasing rapidly as living standards rise and as the number of restaurants, modern retail outlets, and e-commerce platforms expand.

In 2005, China’s middle class accounted for 90 million people; this is projected to reach 650 million by the end of 2015. In the period from 990 to 2004, seafood consumption in China rose rapidly, from 11.5 kg per person to 25.4 kg, and is predicted to increase to 35.8 kg/year by 2020. China’s growing population of young, sophisticated and affluent consumers (located primarily in the larger cities) seeks to purchase imported seafood products, in part for their status, but also because imported seafood is believed to be of higher quality and from a cleaner environment. These changes are supporting the introduction of American lobster into China.

Lobster Demand Emerges

It was the introduction of Australian rock lobster to China that paved the way for introducing American lobster. China started buying southern rock lobster in the late 1980s. Almost immediately, the dockside value of Australia’s rock lobster tripled; the bulk of its annual harvest was bought by China. Demand for the dragon-red-colored, large lobster was explosive, if not dizzying.

High prices were no deterrent to demand. This lobster species (Jasus edwardsii) is now viewed as the world’s most expensive lobster, thanks to the insatiable appetite and increasing spending power of Chinese consumers. Tight supplies of southern rock lobster along with a complete, though temporary, halt of export licenses during an anti-smuggling campaign in 2010 provided an opportunity to focus China’s attention on American lobster. A marketing niche quickly grew as Chinese consumers learned that American lobster could be a less expensive and delectable alternative.

Seizing Opportunities

Since 2010, Food Export-Northeast has conducted an extensive lobster promotion campaign consisting of education initiatives (importer seminars and chef training) and promotional activities (restaurant, retail and e-commerce promotions) in first, second and third-tier cities. American lobster is considered an affordable luxury. With a swelling middle class population and consumer demand still building, China’s appetite for lobster shows no signs of slowing. Maine’s lobster industry should continue to make strong gains in sales as market penetration expands.

To maintain market share and growth, it is imperative that lobster companies make regular visits to China. It is important to see market conditions, to meet with current customers and to continue to develop new buyers. This autumn, Maine lobster companies will again participate in a variety of Asian market activities coordinated by Food Export-Northeast. Maine’s lobster exporters will use Food Export-Northeast-administered cost-share assistance funding to defray travel and activity expenses. Our in-market representatives will provide market briefings and tours, one-on-one meetings with major buyers, trained interpreters and networking opportunities at the Seafood Expo Asia (Hong Kong in September); the Busan International Seafood Show (Korea in October); a trade mission (Shanghai, China, in November); and China Fisheries & Seafood Expo (Qingdao, China, in November).

Food Export-Northeast administers USDA Market Access Program (MAP) funding to conduct generic promotion activities to create, or boost, demand for seafood products from the northeastern U.S. Since 2004, Food Export-Northeast has provided more than $12 million in promotion support to the region’s seafood industry. Visit the web site at www.foodexport.org to learn more about Food Export-Northeast activities, programs and services.

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Pat [White] and Dave [Cousens] worked incredibly hard. The hours they put in were not the best way to protect [lobstermen’s] interests," he said. At the time there were no other organizations to represent Maine lobstermen. Today there are the smaller Downeast Lobstermen’s Association and the Southern Maine Lobstermen’s Association in addition to the MLA. "By and large I think that the MLA’s views did represent the opinions of the majority of the harvesting sector. It’s very difficult for an individual to have their views expressed on public policy being made," Brennan commented. "It’s much better to have those views put forward in a group."

Pat White became executive director of the MLA during Brennan’s tenure as DMR commissioner. David Cousens soon followed as president. "All three were very different men who approached their jobs in different ways based on their personalities," Brennan said. "And all were very successful. It’s hard for lobstermen to come together. To have kept the MLA together and advancing for this long is a real testament."

Robin Alden took over as DMR commissioner in 1995. Alden, who had founded and published Commercial Fisheries News in Stonington for many years, brought a new perspective to the agency. Management of lobster had shifted from the NEFMC to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC). The ASMFC was putting pressure on Maine to control the number of licenses issued and the number of traps fished in the state. Alden chaperoned the transition of limited management authority from the state level to the seven lobster zone councils set up by the Legislature.

"The MLA had been sending representatives to the ASMFC meetings for years. So they knew that something had to happen at the state level or it would be imposed on us from the Commission," Alden recalled. Alden was keen on finding a solution to the impasse that worked for Maine and also met the ASMFC’s concern about fishing pressure on lobster stocks.

The different sections of the coast had different views on the need for license and trap limits. As Alden recalled, those in the southern coastal regions didn’t want any trap limits. Those in eastern Maine were fishing around 400 traps and also wanted no limits. But those in the mid-coast area were eager to see some limit imposed on them. Alden chaperoned the transition of limited management authority from the state level to the seven lobster zone councils set up by the Legislature.

"There’s no more persuasive person in front of the Legislature than Alden said. "Although at times I found the MLA’s position too intractable,  thus causing me to push back, more commonly I found their stances good for all lobstermen."

The MLA met with DMR officials, faculty from the University of Maine and many other individuals involved in the lobster fishery to reach a solution. Lobster zone councils were given the regulatory authority to set limits on the number of new lobstermen in each zone, the number of traps each lobsterman could set, and other management measures. "The MLA turned out the troops to support the bill when it came through [the Marine Resources Committee]," Alden said. "There’s no more persuasive person in front of the Legislature than a fisherman."

Dennis Damon of Trenton served in the Maine Senate for eight years and in the House for four. He was the chairman of the Joint Committee on Marine Resources for three terms, in which role he had numerous interactions with lobstermen and the MLA.

Damon had the dubious honor of overseeing one of the largest public hearings I ever held by that Committee. The issue was landing lobsters in Maine caught by offshore trawlers. "Undoubtedly the most contentious issue during my tenure was the so-called "Lobster Dragging" bill. The public hearing was held at the Augusta Civic Center. It lasted all day and by my count there were 575 people in attendance," he recalled.

Lobstermen were vehemently opposed to catching lobsters in any fashion other than by a trap. Groundfishermen, on the other hand, wanted to be able to land those lobsters that came up in their nets as bycatch in order to gain a small amount of profit in the face of declining groundfish catches. The rancor between the two groups was high. "I realized that educating [Committee members] on the reasons why removal of even some of those prohibitions [against taking lobsters other than by a trap] could affect the single-most productive fishery resource was vital to defeating the bill. That education could not take place without first permitting the issues to be heard and without feeling the emotion of both sides," Damon said. The MLA got its members out in force to attend the public hearing and make their voices heard. The bill was soundly voted down by the Committee.

Another piece of legislation brought Damon and the MLA together. This was a bill that specified that a lobster license could only be issued to the owner of the lobster boat, who also had to operate that boat. "There was a loophole that allowed a lobsterman or business to own more than one boat. Each boat could fish 800 traps with someone else running the boat," Damon said. Left unchecked, the Maine lobster fishery could eventually become a corporate fishery, with companies owning multiple boats and lobstermen no more than hired hands. MLA leadership spoke before the Marine Resources Committee to persuade members that such a bill requiring owner/operator status for a license was necessary.

Creating good laws for a fishery marked by a diversity of geography, harbors, and practices and populated by men and women who pride themselves on their individuality isn’t an easy undertaking. Damon and others found that working with the MLA was not always pleasant but generally successful. "The MLA was always ready to provide me with their opinion. I think the relationships I established were honest and trusting enough so we could quickly sift through the bull and avoid trying to blow smoke into places where it can’t be seen," Damon said.

"Although at times I found the MLA’s position too intractable, thus causing me to push back, more commonly I found their stances good for all lobstermen, whether they were members of the MLA or not."

Over the years, the MLA has made a difference for all Maine lobstermen by doing its best to represent their interests at the state, regional and federal levels. It has accomplished this because, year after year, lobstermen sign up to join the MLA to serve on the board, and to make the long trip up to Augusta to let their legislators know what they think. "When the MLA speaks, you know the sentiments are being presented on behalf of many hundreds of lobstermen and women along our entire coast. The MLA spoke to us through one voice representing hundreds. It made a difference then and it continues to make a difference today," Damon said.

Puffin Slide continued from page 1

The Improbable Quest to Bring a Puffin to Watching

Jackson have also just released a book about puffins. Project Puffin: The Improbable Quest to Bring a Beloved Seabird Back to Egg Rock. For more information, visit the Project Puffin Web site at www.projectpuffin. Audubon.org.
THE MLA: IT’S ALL IN THE FAMILY

By Melissa Waterman

It’s not everyone who wants to be a member of the Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA). You have to be determined, straightforward, and persistent. It also helps to have a sense of humor.

Those qualities are all found in the Beal family of Beals Island, where MLA membership is a custom handed down from father to son.

Ossie Beal was president of the MLA from 1967 to 1974. He was a hard-working man, a life-long lobsterman, fisherman, and boat builder and known to be outspoken. That tendency to speak his mind came to the fore in 1970 during the debate about locating an oil refinery in Machiasport and a desulphurization plant in Penobscot Bay. Economic development and the creation of jobs for the residents of Washington and Hancock Counties was then, as it is now, a pressing issue. Senator Edmund Muskie was considering endorsing construction of the projects as a way to bring economic prosperity to the region.

The MLA saw those proposals very differently. Beal was asked to testify on the MLA’s behalf at a Senate Committee on Air and Water Pollution hearing held in Machiasport and chaired by Senator Muskie. Beal and other lobstermen weren’t opposed to the projects on environmental grounds. Rather, the MLA opposed the proposals based on the stark reality that lobsters were the cornerstone of the Downeast economy. Any oil spill, no matter how slight, would have long-term repercussions for local lobstermen.

Monhegan continued from page 3

enticing to those people facing years on the zone waiting lists. At a time when much of the Maine coast is full of lobstermen setting their traps on each other, of massive tangles and frayed tempers, Monhegan is a pretty mellow place. “I never worry about my gear,” said Weber. “I trust every one of them to not screw around with it. We’re a close-knit group and we deal with problems like adults, not like children.” In addition to the pleasure of rarely getting wound up in someone else’s trap, Weber has confidence that other lobstermen are looking out for him. “Sometimes when someone sees something wrong with my boat, he’s likely to go fix it before he even calls me to let me know,” Weber said.

Still, Monhegan is an island. When things go wrong, it’s a long way to the local hardware or marine supply store. “My mechanic is constantly amazed by the number of spare parts I have,” Weber laughed. When a breakdown does occur, it takes time and money to get back on the water.

Monhegan lobstermen also have very few places to hide when the weather turns poor. Even on the best of days, the island’s harbor isn’t well protected. “When the wind blows in the winter you can get 10-foot seas on the mooring. Fishing out here teaches you to be an expert seaman first, then a fisherman. There’s very little protection,” Weber said.

Because their season runs during the fall and winter months, Monhegan lobstermen must find other things to do during the summer months. Lobsterman John Murdock, for example, runs a small bed and breakfast and rents cottages during the summer months. Weber used to harpoon for tuna for a number of years, first with Lexi Crouse, then for himself. In 2013, however, he, his wife and his father-in-law started a new venture together, Monhegan Brewing Company.

“We are pleased by the success of it. We’ve doubled our capacity to brew,” said Weber. “We’re not worried about competition from the mainland. All the supplies for the company came to this island on the mail boat from Port Clyde, then were trucked from the ferry landing. The 1,000 pounds of spent grains the brewery creates each time a batch of beer is made go to the Monhegan Island Farm Project, which uses them for compost. The farm grows hops, which the brewery uses to make its Island Farm Double IPA. They’ve also started offering ginger beer and root beer for people who don’t drink alcohol.

Last year approximately 20,000 people came to the brewery, double the number of the first year. “The brewery is a nice touch at the end of the day. Our customers are island people, people from away, day visitors. Everyone is out there on the deck talking and having a good time,” Weber said.

Meanwhile, Delano has also put his shingle out. In July he started Monhegan Kayak Rentals, offering kayaks and tours to summer visitors. “Matty Thomson who is also a lobsterman on the island is letting me run my kayak rental out of his fish house and Lisa Brackett who owns Fish Beach is allowing me to use her property for water access,” Delano said.

“We’re not worried about competition from the mainland. Our intent is to draw more people out here. “All the supplies for the company came to this island on the mail boat from Port Clyde, then were trucked from the ferry landing. The 1,000 pounds of spent grains the brewery creates each time a batch of beer is made go to the Monhegan Island Farm Project, which uses them for compost. The farm grows hops, which the brewery uses to make its Island Farm Double IPA. They’ve also started offering ginger beer and root beer for people who don’t drink alcohol.

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“Sonny Beal Jr. “He told me that to make change you have to stand up and get other people to stand up with you.” Sonny is a long-time member of the MLA himself. He lobsters in the same area that his father did and is teaching his sons, Damon, 10, and Kaden, 8, to lobster as well.

“The MLA is a fantastic group to belong to. Hands down it is the most powerful fishermen’s group in the state. It’s made every effort to help lobstermen any way they can,” he continued.

Beal, like his father, feels the need to bring the views of lobstermen to a larger audience. That is one reason why he now serves on the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative board, one of three commercial lobstermen to do so.

He is also vice-president of the Beals-Jonesport Fishermen’s Coop, which his father helped establish.

The belief that there is merit in belonging to something larger than yourself has been passed on to his Damon. Damon became a full-fledged member of the MLA in 2014.

“There’s no other group in the state with that strong a voice,” Beal said. “They are there for us.”

“It’s unbelievable that public servants selected for ability, wisdom, and vision can be so shortsighted, so unwise, as to pronounce the death of the coast of Maine. This is certainly a case of selling your birthright, and that of others, for a mess of pottage,” he declared at the hearing. Muskie eventually withdrew his support for the projects.

“My father knew that the MLA could make a difference and he wanted to be part of it,” said Ossie “Sonny” Beal Jr. “He told me that to make change you have to stand up and get other people to stand up with you.” Sonny is a long-time member of the MLA himself. He lobsters in the same area that his father did and is teaching his sons, Damon, 10, and Kaden, 8, to lobster as well.

“We are looking to support young people out here,” Weber said. “There’s room for more but it takes a different breed.”

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In August, Maine Sail Freight will sail eleven tons of Maine-grown cargo from Maine down to Boston aboard the 131-foot wooden schooner Harvey Gamage. The majority of cargo will come aboard on August 27 in Portland Harbor.

The approximately $70,000 worth of Maine cargo, packaged in traditional wooden boxes, will sail down the coast to Boston Harbor, where it will be unloaded from the hold on August 30, then transported by a fleet of trailer bicycles to Boston Public Market and other regional outlets. The cargo will be both pre-sold online and available to passers-by for purchase dockside.

In addition to the maiden cargo voyage to Boston, Maine Sail Freight has planned a full series of dockside events. Nearly a dozen picnics, day-events, trade-lectures, dinners, and musical performances, and historical programs will be held along the coast throughout the month of August. For more information, visit www.fiddlersgreensails.com/freight.html or www.thegreenhorns.net/mainesaufreight/#toc-10.

Russell Wright, a 16-year veteran of the Maine Marine Patrol, was promoted to Sergeant of Section 3, which stretches from the Kennebec River to the St. George River. Sergeant Wright replaces Dan White who was promoted to Lieutenant of Division 1 in May. A Lubec native, Wright has served in Washington County since joining the Marine Patrol in 1999. In 2005, he was promoted to Specialist, and given responsibility for operating and maintaining Marine Patrol vessels in Downeast waters.

Wright has received numerous awards and commendations, including Officer of the Year awards from the Maine Lobstermen’s Association, the Downeast Lobstermen’s Association, and the Northeast Conservation Law Enforcement Chiefs Association. Sergeant Wright has also been recognized for saving lives. Last year he and Officer Brian Brodie were on the Lubec waterfront when an urchin diver’s boat capsized in the Lubec Narrows. The two were able to quickly rescue him from the turbulent waters. Other incidents include rescuing a man whose canoe overturned in the Whiting River in the winter, and saving a father and daughter who got stranded in the winter on a ledge below the high water line on the Whiting River. Last December, Wright and Brodie rescued two urchin divers who were stranded on a ledge in Cutler after their boat capsized.

The P.E.I. government has approved lobster marketing board regulations that will allow for a lobster levy to be collected next spring. The new legislation allows for the establishment of a board to administer the levy for the marketing of lobster, and to represent the interests of lobster fishermen provincially and nationally. The regulations require lobster fishermen to pay a levy of one cent per pound of lobster sold to buyers and authorizes the board to ensure that the levy is collected. The new regulations also authorize the holding of a levy meeting to consider changes to the amount of the levy if two-thirds of the board members vote in favor.

Scientists are preparing to deploy an arsenal of high-tech gadetry in the Atlantic Ocean to try to track down North Atlantic right whales. A team of Canadian and American researchers plan to use autonomous gliders, air support and acoustic devices to listen and watch for endangered North Atlantic right whales to determine their migratory routes along the East Coast. The team launched underwater gliders off Nova Scotia on July 27 to begin a roughly two month-long process of collecting data on the whales. Similar work last summer in the Roseway Basin, a known right whale habitat off Nova Scotia’s south coast, left scientists shaking their heads when they recorded 93 sightings in August and then found that the whales had all left just two weeks later. This year the team will use up to seven gliders, which are equipped with acoustic devices and high-frequency echo sounders that can instantly identify what type of mammal they encounter. Scientists want to know if the whales are changing their patterns due to changes in phytoplankton stocks occurring in response to warmer water temperatures.

The P.E.I. Lobstermen’s Association will host the second “The American Lobster in a Changing Ecosystem” conference on November 3-6, at the Rodd Hotel in Charlottetown, P.E.I.
July 29 – August 2  

August 3  
Penobscot East Resource Center Annual Lobster Buoy Auction, 5:30 p.m., Stonington. FMI: 367-2708.

August 4  
Fundraiser for Island Community Medical Services, 5 p.m., the Flatbread Company, Route 1, Rockport. FMI: 706-4146.

August 4-6  
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission summer meeting, Alexandria, VA.

August 8  

August 13  
“Science, Lobstering and Lobstermen,” lecture by Robin Alden, 6:30 p.m., at Maine Maritime Museum, Bath.

August 14-16  
Maine Boats, Homes and Harbors Show, Rockland Harbor Park. FMI: 594-8622.

August 15  

August 16  
Pemaquid Lobster Boat Races. FMI: Don Drisko, 207-677-2432.


UPCOMING

September 8  
Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative meeting, time to be announced, Island Institute, Rockland. FMI: 541-9310.

September 10  
Shellfish Advisory Council meeting, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., Ellsworth City Hall.

Film about the Mid-Coast Fishermen’s Co-op, 7 p.m., Penobscot Marine Museum, Searsport. FMI: 548-2529.

September 29-Oct. 1  
New England Fisheries Management Council meeting, Plymouth, MA.

Hancock continued from page 5

crew (15 full-time workers year round, an additional 20 to 30 more in the fall, prior to the holiday season). “My head chef, Kevin Messier, has been with us for 11 years. I have two other chefs, one who was in the Navy for 20 years and the other trained in the technical culinary program here in Brunswick. Quality assurance is key. Someone has to taste each batch,” she said.

In this era, when the news periodically is full of stories about E. coli or Listeria contamination of everything from cantaloupes to ice cream, ensuring that all Hancock Gourmet Lobster products are safe is always on Hancock’s mind. “We must be able to track all the ingredients in every product, including any packaging that touches the food,” she said. A system is in place that allows Hancock to know exactly what went into each product and where that ingredient came from. The system knows what is on each pallet that goes out the door and the destination for items in case there should ever be a recall.

The hallmark of the company and of Cal Hancock herself is continuing creativity when it comes to value-added seafood items. Hancock experiments with many new ideas in her test kitchen in Cundy’s Harbor. “I like to make things that are a little different which you won’t find in the grocery store. I want to create a desire in the consumer to buy this!” The company’s biggest seller has been its Lobster Mac & Cheese. The gluten-free version came in first at the Fancy Food Show in 2014. New products include lobster sliders on a mini-brioche bun and a lobster hand-pie. “These are delicious and really fun,” Hancock said.

Louise Kramer, communications director for the Specialty Food Association, said that Hancock’s reputation shines in upper echelon circles. “Her products are just wonderful and they really appeal to the different panel of judges every year,” said Kramer. “They are consistently excellent. She manages to be innovative and has products that are hard to produce.”

Hancock Gourmet Lobster does not sell its products internationally. “There’s still so much growth in the United States,” Hancock said. “The food service sector is growing the most for us.”

When asked if she was surprised to find herself the head of a thriving specialty food company fifteen years after returning to her home state, Hancock shook her head. “No, when I wrote my business plan, I had it in my head that we were going to be big and successful!”

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DMR Lobster Community Meetings

Mon., Aug. 31, Deer Isle Stonington High School – Cafeteria.

Tues., Sept. 1, Vinalhaven School – Auditorium.

Tues., Sept. 8, Oceanside High School, Rockland – Performing Arts Center.

Wed., Sept. 9, University of Southern Maine, Talbot Lecture Hall, in Luther Bonney Hall.


Tue., Sept. 29, Kennebunk High School – Cafeteria.


All meetings are at 6 p.m., with the exception of the Vinalhaven meeting, which is scheduled for 3 p.m.

Please check the DMR Web site, www.maine.gov/dmr, as meeting dates/locations are subject to change.
GRAND OPENING OF LOBSTERING & THE MAINE COAST

Hundreds turned out for the opening of the new Maine Maritime Museum exhibit, "Lobstering & the Maine Coast," on July 26. The 6,200-square-foot permanent exhibit highlights the century-old practices of lobstermen as well as the modern complexities of the lobstering industry today. Maine Maritime Museum photos.

Above, from left to right: Annie Tselikis, Maine Lobster Dealers Association executive director, Patrice McCarron, MLA executive director, Tim Harkins, Maine Lobster Dealers Association president, and David Cousens, MLA president, listen to Maine Maritime Museum director Amy Lent at the official ribbon cutting ceremony opening the exhibit.

PURE AND SIMPLE,

our focus is on providing our customers consistent service and reliability for one product and one product only: the best, highest quality, wild-caught Stonington Maine lobsters.

—Hugh Reynolds, Owner