Landings, vol. 23, no. 10

Maine Lobstermen's Community Alliance

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Continued on page 21

By MLA staff

The Department of Marine Resources’ (DMR) recent round of eight meetings with the lobster industry generated some heated debate, with eastern Maine zones largely in concurrence with DMR’s proposals and zones from midcoast to the west expressing concerns. DMR Commissioner Pat Keliher and several key staff members hit the road for the third time in recent years, this time to speak directly with lobstermen about some potential changes to the lobster entry system slated for debate during the upcoming legislative session.

Continued on page 4

By Melissa Waterman

In mid-September a coalition of environmental organizations, including the Conservation Law Foundation, the National Geographic Society, the Pew Charitable Trusts, and the Natural Resources Defense Council, petitioned President Barack Obama to designate Cashes Ledge and the New England Coral Canyons and Seamounts, a chain of undersea formations about 150 miles off the coast of Massachusetts, as National Marine Monuments. These would be the first such monuments on the East Coast. The proposal produced immediate opposition from fishing groups, lobstering associations, and Maine Governor Paul LePage.

The Antiquities Act

President Obama, like past presidents, can create a national monument with a stroke of his pen, due to the language of the 1906 Antiquities Act. The Act allows a president to create a national monument to protect areas of “historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, and other objects of historic or scientific interest.” At the time the Act was passed by Congress, public lands in the western states were being stripped of archeological relics. The intent of the Act was to allow the president to act quickly, by himself, to protect these sites. National Monuments receive permanent funding. Their status cannot be revoked by subsequent presidents, and would require an act of Congress to reverse.

George W. Bush created the largest marine national monument in the nation’s history when he designated the Pacific Remote Islands National Marine Monument in 2006, a vast stretch of ocean approximately 87,000 square miles in size. Obama

CASHES LEDGE NOMINATED TO BE A NATIONAL MONUMENT

By Melissa Waterman

OCT. 15 IS DEADLINE FOR SAFETY EXAMS

By Melissa Waterman

Safety inspector Garry Moores, who covers the coast from Canada to Bar Harbor, is doing about 70% more exams than six months ago,” Smith said. As of August 31, 802 vessels have taken the exam. Of those, 580 boats have passed.

Moores has visited several boats that have survival suits on board but no one on the vessel has ever tried them on.

Safety inspector Garry Moores, who covers the coast from Canada to Bar Harbor, is doing about 70% more exams than six months ago. “The guys are pretty receptive to these exams. A lot of them, however, aren’t really ready because they have never done one before,” he said. The exact items that are required for the safety exam differ based on the length of the vessel, type of fuel used, number of crew, where the vessel operates, and other factors. Both Smith and Moores encourage boat owners to go to www.FishSafe.info to fill out an online Commercial Fishing Vessel Checklist in order to prepare for the dockside exam.
It’s a busy time of the year here on the Maine coast. In many harbors the recreational boats are gone and the marinas have turned quiet. At sea, however, Maine’s lobstermen are still in the midst of another strong lobster season, hauling in their million-dollar catch. Since September they have been able to haul their traps on Sundays so they have a bit more flexibility to keep fishing steadily as the air cools and the days get shorter. Soon the weather will turn and many lobstermen will begin to bring their traps ashore. But during October, it’s still full steam ahead!

Part of successful fishing is staying safe. As of October 15, lobster boats that operate beyond the 3-mile limit must have passed a Coast Guard safety exam in order to continue to fish. In this issue of Landings, we talk to the three Coast Guard safety inspectors about the ins and outs of earning the Coast Guard inspection decal before the deadline.

We also review the recent series of meetings held by Department of Marine Resources Commissioner Patrick Keliher in September. The purpose of the meetings was to hear from lobstermen their thoughts about potential changes to the way lobster licenses are issued. The long years that some people qualified to lobster must often wait until they are allowed to fish in a certain lobster zone has caused anger and frustration in recent years. The Joint Committee on Marine Resources and the Governor have pledged to address the issue in the Legislative session that begins in January. The Commissioner heard from lobstermen directly what they think his agency should and shouldn’t do, which we summarize in this issue.

In September a coalition of environmental groups put forth a proposal to designate Cashes Ledge as well as offshore submarine canyons and sea mounts in New England as National Monuments. Declaring an area a National Monument is a prerogative of the President and can be done with a stroke of the pen. Despite the fact that Cashes Ledge has been off-limits to bottom trawlers for more than ten years due to closure by the New England Fisheries Management Council, groups such as the Conservation Law Foundation hope to ensure that no fishing will ever occur on Cashes Ledge by making it a National Monument. Landings examines the idea and the law behind it. We also reprint an editorial against the idea written by John Sackton, editor and publisher of SeafoodNews.com.

While October brings with it colder days and nights, it also is a time of renewal when the building blocks of the Gulf of Maine’s food web once again bloom. Phytoplankton grow in great abundance in early spring each year; a bloom also occurs in the fall months, however, as blustery storms move in and the water layers of the Gulf begin to mix. Landings talks with David Townsend, professor of oceanography at the University of Maine, about this quieter, but all-important rite of fall.

Finally, what’s in a name? As an article first published by the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Company) notes, a lot. The Chinese, who are an increasingly important market for Maine lobster, think of all lobster as “Boston” lobster, according to the article. Canadian seafood firms are trying to change that notion through various marketing strategies. But for now, “Boston” is the Chinese term for what we are busily hauling in.

On a lighter note, we hear from John Tripp, one of the young lobstermen who took part in the Lobster Leadership Institute in 2014. Tripp, who fishes from Spruce Head, is looking forward to a long and successful lobster career. His experience in the Leadership Institute opened his eyes about the need to plan for the leaner times that may lie ahead and to keep informed of what is happening in the industry.

We hope you enjoy this issue, and please, let us know what you want to read about in future issues!
by John Sackton
First published on Sept. 15, 2015; reprinted with permission.

A group of conservation organizations in New England have called on President Obama to use his authority under the Antiquities Act to declare certain marine areas off New England as national monuments, in a new push to expand marine protected areas. The Obama Administration is considering a national monument designation for three deep sea canyons and four sea mounts at the southern edge of Georges Bank. The primary purpose of this designation is to protect deep sea corals that are found in the canyons.

In addition, the Conservation Law Foundation is asking that the administration include Cashes Ledge in the monument designation. Cashes Ledge is an area about 100 miles northeast of Gloucester where a ridge rises to within 40 feet of the surface. The currents there are very conducive to mixing and support high productivity.

It has always been an important fishing ground. It was declared essential fishery habitat closed to trawling by the New England Council in 2002. The CLF petition seeks to go around NOAA and the Council, and make Cashes Ledge part of a permanent marine sanctuary.

The petition is distinguishable because it fails to mention the forty year history of fisheries management and habitat protection already in place through the Magnuson-Stevens Act and other environmental laws. Saving Seafood has organized an industry petition to counter the very effective public campaign of CLF.

There are many legitimate criticisms of the New England Fisheries Management Council, which has one of the worst records in terms of stock management among U.S. regional councils. However, the new measures that have been put in place are in fact strenuously limiting fishing, with most stocks now harvested well below their sustainable limit. Over time this will lead to rebounding fishery populations.

Saving Seafood argues that current management actions are vetted via public meetings where the best available science and analytical tools are scrutinized in a transparent manner. The national monument request undermines the present democratic process established for fisheries management. In fact, it has largely been viewed by many involved in the management process as an “end-run” to the current process. It removes the ability for public and fishery stakeholders to provide input to a scientifically based, public process which is held to clear goals and objectives and replaces it with a purely political process.

The New England Fisheries Management Council just completed their work on a Habitat Amendment which will protect large areas of Cashes Ledge. These new regulatory measures are scheduled to be in place by 2016. They’ll be working on a regulatory action for deep sea canyons and seamounts toward the end of this month. The Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council also recently approved an action to protect deep sea canyons and seamounts.

The success of the American system of fishery management, widely seen as one of the best in the world, has relied on a transparent and decentralized system of regional fishery management councils, and the centralized authority of NOAA. The key element of the law is that all management decisions must be based on the best available science.

Currently there is a lot of discussion on the types of protections needed for both the Canyons and Cashes Ledge. The push for a national monument would be an end run around these discussions. By making this a political issue outside the council, the NGO’s are essentially giving up on the council system to make long term sustainability decisions. They would replace it with a political process where choices are made not based on science, but on the relative political strength of the combatants.

In some areas of the U.S., this type of politicization has already led to significant restrictions on commercial fishing, in favor of recreational fishing, with worse conservation outcomes. The reallocation of Gulf red snapper to less responsible and monitored recreational fishermen is one example. The stock was...
Cashes Ledge continued from page 1

expanding that monument in 2014 to 490,000 square miles in total.

The New England Fisheries Management Council

Many fishermen and fishing organizations find the idea of the national monument designation troubling, in part because Cashes Ledge is under the jurisdiction of the New England Fisheries Management Council (NEFMC). Bottom trawling and dredging have been banned there for more than a decade although it remains open to lobstering.

Furthermore, the Council's Omnibus Fisheries Habitat Amendment, after twelve years in development, was approved by the Council in June with a reconfigured Cashes Ledge closure and additional protections for Ammen Rock. Those within the commercial fishing world, and some outside that world, see the action as an effort by environmental groups to circumvent the Council process [see John Sackton's column in this issue]. A unilateral action by President Obama would permanently end all fishing in the area and remove Cashes Ledge, and the offshore seamount and canyon system, from further oversight by the Council. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) held a "Town Hall" meeting in Providence, Rhode Island, on September 14 to hear public comments on the proposals.

Where is it?

There are two areas being considered for the national monument. Cashes Ledge, well-known to Gulf of Maine fishermen, is located about 80 miles southeast of Portland. The highest peak in Cashes Ledge, Ammen Rock, holds the deepest and largest kelp forest along the Atlantic seaboard. The New England Coral Canyons and Seamounts area encompasses five underwater canyons and four seamounts approximately 150 miles off the coast of Cape Cod. The four seamounts, which are extinct underwater volcanoes, rise as high as 7,700 feet above the ocean floor. The canyons and seamounts are noted for the diversity and abundance of deep-sea corals, many of which are hundreds if not thousands of years old.

Who is against the Cashes Ledge nomination and why

In a joint letter to President Obama opposing the proposal, the Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association, the Maine Lobstermen's Association, the Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Association, and other lobstering groups stated, "The only fixed gear commercial fishery currently allowed [in the Cashes Ledge area] is the lobster fishery, which is managed under the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Act, via the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and NOAA Fisheries. These organizations have determined that the placement of lobster pots on the bottom has negligible impact on the habitat/bottom as Cashes Ledge continues to thrive even with lobster fishing taking place." Furthermore, the organizations note that imposition of national monument status on these federal waters and lands would completely circumvent the Council process which, although slow-moving and often frustrating, reflects multiple perspectives. "The management measures adopted to date have been the result of countless discussions, public hearings, rulings and collaborative efforts of scientists, commercial fishermen, state and federal fisheries managers, and other important stakeholders in the New England region. The key point is that these efforts have all been taken in an open, democratic, deliberative, public process that allows individuals to offer public comments on proposed restrictions, and offer suggestions on how to mitigate negative impacts." In a separate letter to NOAA administrators, Senator Susan Collins and Representative Bruce Poliquin also objected to any unilateral action by the President and NOAA. The two officials stated, "A National Marine Monument designation in the Cashes Ledge region could well undermine the NEFMC's longstanding, cooperative, and effective management systems and its years of hard work to develop balanced management plans in the region. We are particularly troubled to learn that NOAA did not consult with the NEFMC about its consideration of a National Marine Monument designation prior to public notice of a Town Hall meeting."

What next?

The designation process for a new National Monument is murky. "There are few, if any, steps that need to be followed when designating a monument," said Terry Stockwell, chair of the NEFMC. "I'm not sure who will review the comments [from the Providence meeting]. I suspect it will be the White House Council on Environmental Quality. According to NOAA we will all be reading the announcement, if it's forthcoming, at the same time."

rebuilt from the efforts of the commercial sector, and then the fruits of that rebuilding were taken from them.

In Florida a political campaign years ago outlawed all gillnets, putting some entire fisheries out of business. In Alaska, there is a potential for a referendum that would end set netting in Cook Inlet, in favor of suburban anchorage recreational fisherman.

All of these campaigns have in common the disregard for the give and take of the present management system, and in particular the requirement that decisions have a scientific basis. The issues with Cashes Ledge and the Canyon habitats can be described and measured scientifically. The Council's actions, and NOAA's mandate, require that there be a scientific basis for regulations and protections.

By making an exaggerated emotional claim—that unless the protections on Cashes Ledge put in place in 2002 are retained forever, the entire ecosystem will be destroyed—the environmental groups are taking this argument out of the realm of science, and instead making a political end run. In the long run, a small player like the commercial fishing industry cannot stand up to this kind of attack.

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NEW LEADERS IN MAINE’S LOBSTER FISHERY: John Tripp, Spruce Head

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

John Tripp’s new house sits on a wide expanse of cleared land in Spruce Head. On this quiet afternoon his five-week-old daughter Everly and his wife Mallary are resting upstairs. “We finished the house about a month before she was born,” Tripp, 27, said. In the year since he participated in the Lobster Leadership Institute, Tripp has experienced numerous changes, yet he radiates a sense of calm.

“Everything about Prince Edward Island was totally different,” Tripp recalled, thinking back on his visit to the island last year. He went lobstering with local fishermen Robby Jenkins and John Lock. “Even the lobsters looked different. They keep the small ones [called canners] which is the opposite of what we do. And the bottom had very little variation.” Tripp was encouraged to take part in the Institute by his father-in-law, MLA board member Tad Miller. He admits that before getting involved he had a very different idea about the MLA. “You think of the MLA, you think of trap limits,” he said. “But I’ve changed my mind since then.”

Tripp started lobstering when he was 11 in a 21-foot outboard his father bought for his three sisters and himself to use. When he was 17 he purchased a 36-foot Jonesporter, built in 1967, then moved on to a 1973 wooden boat built by Herbert Baum of Kennebunk. “That got me even further out,” Tripp said with a grin, referring to his lobstering territory. Then he bought a 42-foot fiberglass Lowell which he fished until purchasing the Sea Wife this year. “Now I’m way out,” he said. He’d like to be able to try fisheries other than lobster but those avenues are closed for right now. “I can’t get a scallop license and if I got a shrimp license, there’s no guarantee I’d ever be able to use it,” he said.

In recent years more and more lobstermen driving big boats with big engines have set their traps offshore, leading on occasion to something of a Wild West situation. Tripp acknowledges that offshore lobstering has its good and bad points. “Lobstering is about the most competitive thing there is. You have to pay your dues. There’s a lot more effort going on out there, there has been and there will be,” he said. He’d like to be able to try fisheries other than lobster but those avenues are closed for right now. “I can’t get a scallop license and if I got a shrimp license, there’s no guarantee I’d ever be able to use it,” he said.

Since taking part in the Leadership Institute, Tripp has attended many of the MLA Board of Directors’ monthly meetings in Belfast. “I want to find out what’s going on. Lobstermen are often their own worst enemies, griping about things which have been in the works for a while. Anyone can go to the meetings if they want to. They’ll listen to you,” he said.

The afternoon is drawing on. Mallary and newborn Everly come down to the living room. Tripp’s yellow Labrador nudges at the door. The new house is cool and clean, showing the pride Tripp takes in his home and his life. He holds Everly in his arms. “This is about the best thing that’s ever happened to me,” he says quietly.
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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Board of Directors’ Meeting Schedule
All meetings take place at Darby’s Restaurant, Belfast.

Oct. 7, 5 p.m.
Nov. 10, 5 p.m.
Dec. 2, 5 p.m.

MLA DIRECTORS MEETING SUMMARY
The MLA Directors met on September 2 in Belfast. Chris White attended the meeting as a guest. He is working on a book about the New England lobster industry. He is attending meetings and events to observe and understand the different voices in the industry.

Kathy Mills from the Gulf of Maine Research Institute (GMRI) presented an overview of their lobster forecast model developed to predict the timing of the shed. The model was created in response to the ocean heatwave that occurred in 2012, which resulted in a very large and early shed. GMRI scientists wondered whether that ocean heatwave could have been predicted, which lead to development of the model. It is considered a work in progress; GMRI is seeking input from the lobster industry on its utility and how it may be improved.

The model uses water temperature data from several of the NERACOOS buoys along the Maine coast collected at 50 meters. Presently, the model’s ability to make more accurate predictions for an early season as opposed to a late season. It produces a probability that the start of the shed will happen early or late relative to “a normal season,” which is said to be July 3 to July 10. MLA Directors offered feedback on the effort. The approach and predictions are too broad. Rather than using a statewide average for temperature and issuing a single prediction for the state, at least consider doing it regionally (i.e., southern, midcoast and downeast). Comparing the start of the season to a “normal” shed is confusing. Many lobstermen don’t know what “normal” is; lobstermen who have fished for several decades consider a “normal” shed to be what was seen prior to ten years ago, similar to this year.

The last ten years have been atypical and very unpredictable. In presenting the model’s prediction, there should be more emphasis on educating the industry on which factors are driving the prediction, rather than just giving a date. The model and its predictions should focus on when the shed will occur and the volume of the shed; it should not make any predictions about how this may impact the market or price. The MLA will distribute a survey to its members to solicit additional feedback on this project.

Patrice McCarron updated the Directors on several issues:

The Commissioner has held the first two outreach meetings on making changes to the lobster entry and licensing system. The key reforms under discussion include: 1) changing the currency of exit ratios to licenses for all zones, 2) extending the age for students to obtain a full commercial license for 18 years of age to under 23 years of age, and 3) create a lower cost limited lobster license with a lower trap limit. The MLA Board had a very mixed response and
is very concerned about the zone councils losing authority. MLA will attend all of the meetings to continue to assess the issue and feedback from the industry.

ASMFC closed the herring fishery because the second trimester quota has been caught. The industry was caught off guard by this because, based on landings, scientists had predicted that the quota would last through September. However, a sudden spike in the weekly reporting resulted in the shutdown. The issue is complicated by the rolling spawning closures which occur from mid-August to mid-October off, from downtown Maine to Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

The Conservation Law Foundation and several other environmental organizations are seeking to have Cashes Ledge and certain offshore submarine canyons designated as a National Monument. This can be done by presidential order with little to no public input. The fishing industry is outraged, given the time and resources invested in the recently completed New England Fisheries Management Council’s Omnibus Habitat Amendment. The MLA will join the state and other fishing groups in opposing this effort.

NMFS responded to MLA’s letter raising concerns about the federal observer program. The NMFS letter generally dismissed MLAs concerns with the exception of the issue of poor lobster handling on deck.

NMFS released its proposed rule to ban the imports of seafood that do not meet U.S. bycatch standards under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. The rules will not be implemented until at least the summer of 2016, and countries which are not in compliance have 5 years to receive a “comparability finding” or an acceptable plan before vessel restrictions are imposed. This issue will continue to be monitored. Comments are due November 9.

Max Strahan is seeking signatures in Massachusetts to get a question on the November 2016 ballot to ban gillnet gear and other fishing gear capable of harming whales and turtles. This is not the first time he has tried this; he would need to get nearly 65,000 signatures for this to move forward.

Membership renewals are underway and going well; there’s been great feedback on the new hats. Those who join before September 15 will be entered into the raffle.

April Gilmore McNutt has resigned her position as Navigator with the MLA to have more time with her son Walter and her family. She will be missed!

The next MLA meetings will be October 7, November 10 and December 2. Note: the MLA will be attending the U.S.-Canada Lobster and the Changing Ecosystem conference from November 3 to 6 on Prince Edward Island.

HERRING UPDATES

The ASMFC Herring Section closed the Area 1A herring fishery, effective August 28, though herring vessels voluntarily stopped fishing on August 26. The ASMFC earlier had cited data that showed herring were being caught at a rate that would have allowed the fishery to continue through September. However the landings rate accelerated significantly in late August resulting in the shutdown. Since then, it has been reported that the landings were not monitored accurately due to a computer glitch. The Area 1A fishery will reopen on October 1, when all vessels are allowed access to the fishery.

Atlantic Herring Landings

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Current Week Catch</th>
<th>Cumulative Catch</th>
<th>Quota June 1 thru Sept 30</th>
<th>Total Annual Quota</th>
<th>Percent Quota</th>
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<td>3</td>
<td>23,058</td>
<td>20,926</td>
<td>10,299</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1B</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2,999</td>
<td>4,922</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>11,346</td>
<td>32,100</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>28,773</td>
<td>44,910</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,834</td>
<td>63,953</td>
<td>104,566</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ASMFC implements rolling spawning closures in the herring fishery to provide adequate protection for spawning herring and prevent damage to herring egg beds. Since there were not sufficient samples to determine the spawning condition of the fish, the default spawning closures were implemented. Herring taken legally outside the Spawning Area Closures may be transported through the area only if all of its fishing gear has been stowed. Additional closures will be announced when ripe females are detected.

- Eastern Maine Spawning Area: August 15 through September 11, 2015
- Western Maine Spawning Area: September 1 through September 28, 2015.
- Western Maine and Mass/NH Spawning Area: September 21 through October 18, 2015.

SEARSPORT DREDGE PROJECT ON HOLD

On September 8, the US Army Corps of Engineers and the Maine DOT announced the withdrawal of the Water Quality Certification (WQC)/Natural Resources Protection Act application for the Searsport Harbor maintenance and improvement project. The letter stated that the application may be resubmitted at a future. In a subsequent interview, Maine Port Authority Director John Henshaw commented that the application was withdrawn due to issues of permitting, and that he expects the application to be refiled. The Army Corps project manager noted that Army Corps wanted more time to study the project, and that the application process was taking longer than expected.

MLA SAYS NO TO A NATIONAL MONUMENT IN THE GULF OF MAINE

The MLA joined several other fishing industry groups (Massachusetts Lobstermen’s Association, Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen’s Association, Downeast Lobstermen’s Association, Maine Lobstermen’s Union, Stellwagen Bank Charter Boat Association, Rhode Island Lobstermen’s Association, Gloucester Fisheries Commission and the American Bluefin Tuna Association) in signing a letter to President Obama strongly opposing the designation of Cashes Ledge and the offshore canyons as a National Monument. Such a designation could permanently ban fishing and other activities in the area and could be expanded at any time in the future. The letter notes that this potential designation would usurp the established habitat and fisheries management public process and could be economically catastrophic not only to the fishermen, but also to hundreds of small coastal communities in New England. MLA has also been in touch with state officials and Maine’s federal delegation on this issue.

GMRI SEeks INDUSTRY FEEDBACK ON LOBSTER FORECAST MODEL

GMRI is seeking input from lobstermen and others in the industry to help evaluate and improve these forecasts. Through answers to the following questions, GMRI will assess lobstermen’s thoughts on this year’s forecast and identify options for how it might be improved. Any responses (full or partial) are appreciated; please e-mail responses to Kathy Mills at kmills@gmri.org. You can learn more about the modelling approach and the full series of forecasts for 2015 are available at www.gmri.org/lobster-forecast.

- Which lobster zone do you fish in?
- What is your home port?
- Where do you typically fish? (approximate lat/long or place name)
- When do you normally expect to start catching shedders?
- When did you start to pick up shedders this year?
- Did the shed come on quickly, or did they stream in?
- If you could have advanced warning of one aspect of the lobster fishery (for example, timing of the shed, volume of the catch, price, etc.), what would be most useful to you?
- Do you have other comments or feedback on the lobster forecast model?

MAINE LOBSTER MARKETING COLLABORATIVE

The Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative met in September in Rockland, Maine. Representatives from Weber Shandwick were in attendance to update the Board on implementation of the marketing plan to date. The strategy—to work with chefs to move new shell lobster into East Coast markets during peak supply and ramp up MLMC’s web and social media presence—has been extremely successful. Both chefs and consumers have been eager to learn about the taste and seasonality of Maine new shells.

Continued on page 8
COAST GUARD SAFETY STICKERS DUE OCT. 15

Lobstermen who fish outside the 3 nautical mile line must successfully complete a dockside safety exam and be issued a safety decal for your commercial fishing vessel no later than October 15, 2015. After that date, the exam must be completed at least every five years.

If your vessel was examined and safety decal issued after January 1, 2013, you are not required to have your vessel re-examined until five years from the date when the decal was issued. If you are boarded by the Coast Guard and found not in full compliance, you may be subject to enforcement action to include a civil penalty, termination of the vessel’s voyage, or other operational controls.

NOTE: Effective February 26, 2016, new safety regulations require that vessels fishing outside of 3 nautical miles must carry survival craft that ensures no part of an individual is immersed in water.

To schedule your exam, contact Seabrook, NH to Waldoboro: Kevin Plowman, 207-780-3526, kevin.l.plowman@uscg.mil

Waldoboro to Ellsworth: Brian Smith, 207-664-3931, brian.m.smith@uscg.mil

Ellsworth to Eastport: Garry Moovers, 207-838-4440, faxexaminer@myfairpoint.net

DOUBLE GEAR MARKING IN EFFECT FOR JEFFREYS LEDGE AND JORDAN BASIN

Effective September 1, 2015, two additional Gear Marking Areas go into effect, including a large area around Jeffreys Ledge and another near Jordan Basin as part of the federal whale rules. Gear fished in the Jeffreys Gear Marking Area must be marked with red and purple; gear fished in the Jordan Basin Gear Marking Area must be marked with red and purple.

The rope must be marked at least three times (top, middle, bottom) and each mark must total 12-inch in length. If the mark consists of two colors then each color mark may be 6-inch for a total mark of 12-inches.

TRAP TAGS CAN BE HOG RINGED

The DMR is reminding lobstermen that you no longer need to contact your local Marine Patrol Officer to obtain replacement tags, unless you have a major loss. If you are shifting gear, you may cut your tag out of a trap and hog ring it into the bridge of the trap. Be sure that you do not cut any of the identifying information so it is clear to Marine Patrol that it is a legal 2015 trap tag.

Fall 2015 Inshore Trawl Survey aboard F/V Robert Michael

The fall groundfish trawl survey conducted by the Maine Dept. of Marine Resources is scheduled to begin September 28th in New Hampshire working east to Lubec. The weekly schedule breaks down as: Sept. 28 through Oct. 2, we will be working from New Hampshire to Cape Elizabeth; Oct. 5 through 9, we will be working from Portland to Muscongus Bay; Oct. 12 through 16, we will be working in Penobscot Bay area (Port Clyde to Isle au Haut); Oct. 19 through 23, we will be working from Isle au Haut to Schoodic Point (Mt. Desert Is. Area); and Oct. 26 through 30, we will be working from Schoodic to Lubec (eastern Maine). Schedules are subject to the weather conditions and can change at the last minute.

The data collected by the survey is used in the assessment of lobster stocks and many other species of fish and shellfish. The better information we have about all our fishery resources, the better we can defend our fisheries and livelihoods. In order to complete the required minimum number of tows for each of our 20 strata, we are asking for the cooperation of lobstermen in clearing proposed tow areas of gear. Mailings of proposed daily tow schedules with start and stop coordinates and area overviews to all lobster license holders have already started. Thank you for your cooperation.

Tow Schedule and Updates will be available via several methods:

For detailed charts, please call Sally Sherman 633-9503, Keri Stepanek 633-9530.

Web site: www.state.me.us/dmr/rm/trawl/trawl.htm.

Marine Patrol: Division I, Boothbay @ 633-9595 or Division II, Lamoine @ 633-9530.

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Jeffreys Gear Marking Area
Jordan Basin Gear Marking Area
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Alfred has been a lifelong member of the MLA and won $500!

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Straight from the cold waters of Iceland to you!
It’s fall. Night and day are approximately the same number of hours. The air is cool, and brisk northeasterly storms swell across the Gulf of Maine. The Gulf, however, still remains warm since water retains the summer heat much longer than the land. And out there, once again, the engine of the Gulf’s food web is kicking into gear.

Most recognize the tell-tale green hue of the Gulf of Maine in the spring when microscopic plants produce an abundance of chlorophyll known as the phytoplankton bloom. The spring bloom is fueled by the warming surface of the Gulf combining with the oxygen-rich water churned up from the depths from the winter’s storms and nutrients brought in by meltwater from the region’s many rivers. But what happens in the fall? The phytoplankton once again bloom, but in patterns that are patchy and unpredictable, quite dissimilar to the spring bloom. "No one has really studied the fall bloom," explained David Townsend, professor of oceanography at the University of Maine School of Marine Sciences. "In theory it does occur."

Close-up images of Gulf of Maine phytoplankton reveal their beauty. Photos by D. Townsend.

During the summer, the Gulf of Maine is like a Jello parfait. At the surface is a deep layer of warm, nutrient-depleted water. As one moves deeper, water temperatures drop very gradually. In the middle is a layer of slightly mixed water, called the thermocline. Below the thermocline layer, water temperature will drop abruptly, leaving a layer of very cold, nutrient- and oxygen-filled water at the bottom of the Gulf. The three layers coexist together but do not mingle, like layers of different-colored Jello in a parfait.

Come fall, when the hours of sunlight decrease, that surface layer of warm water begins to diminish. Autumn storms will churn it up, allowing the cold deeper water to rise up to replace it through a process called convection. The thermocline layer expands in size as nutrients from the bottom layer mix with the warmer surface water layer. "The thermocline (slope) is gentle," Townsend said. "Phytoplankton are getting less light but more nutrients [than during the summer]."

Townsend, who has tracked phytoplankton in the Gulf for decades, finds the fall phytoplankton bloom somewhat mysterious. "The satellite images [which show concentrations of chlorophyll produced by the phytoplankton] aggregate the data. You could have a high concentration in one pixel [of the image] and zero in the next," he noted. "It’s the variation among areas of the Gulf that he believes tells the story of the fall bloom. "In all years there must be the same productivity but it is expressed in a different way. Instead of a bloom it’s more of a gradual increase," he said.

One of the factors that influences the fall phytoplankton bloom is the temperature of the water at depth. In some years bottom waters in the Gulf are particularly cold; in other years much warmer and saltier. Townsend explained that the difference in temperature is related to the amount of melting occurring in the Arctic Ocean.

Continued on page 17
By Paul Withers, CBC News
First published on Sept. 2, 2015; reprinted with permission.

With Canadian lobster sales in China at record levels, a major Nova Scotia exporter is trying to rebrand the tasty crustacean to overcome its generic name in China: "Boston lobster."

"We all know Canadian lobster is better quality than lobster from the U.S. side," says Jack Liu, of Zoneco, a large Chinese seafood company that has bought into the Nova Scotia lobster industry. "It's stronger, the meat is fuller. The yield is high, there is more meat inside."

Sales of live Canadian lobster to China — mostly from Nova Scotia — have more than tripled in the last few years. By the end of June, sales in 2015 totalled $55 million, and are on pace to top a record from 2014 when sales totalled $67 million. But Chinese consumers may not know where they come from.

Replacing a widely-accepted generic name is going to be very difficult.

Since its arrival in Nova Scotia last year, Zoneco has been air shipping about 35,000 pounds a week to China from of its plant in Eastern Passage outside Halifax. The company has applied for permits for a five-fold expansion of the operation and says it will open another facility on the province's south shore.

The company's promotional campaign includes a feel-good video featuring crews who catch and process the lobster caught off Nova Scotia. A portion of the video with Nova Scotia Fisheries Minister Keith Colwell features Chinese subtitles. "It's the right thing to do to tell the true story and let consumers know," says Liu. He also agrees successful rebranding could yield a higher price and a better bottom line. "We believe that would be the result."

Replacing a widely-accepted generic name is going to be very difficult, according to Mount Saint Vincent University marketing expert Dr. Peter Mombourquette. "Most companies that try to brand a commodity generally stop after a certain point. There's very few companies that have been been successful doing so," he said.

Mombourquette also questions whether consumers in China who may eat lobster two or three times a year will really be able to distinguish a difference between lobster from Atlantic Canada and the United States.

Liu points to Norwegian-farmed salmon and branding by the Alaskan Seafood Institute as successes. He admits the effort will take time but the company is in for the long haul, saying for instance that its expansion plans are going ahead despite a weakening Chinese economy. "A short-term phenomenon will not change our strategic decision."

The first company in the Chinese market was American. "Boston lobster" has, as a result, become the generic name for all two-clawed lobsters from North America. "We feel we need to do some work to educate the market and consumer to better understand the origin of the lobster to tell them the story, the environment and the community," says Liu.

CANADA AIMS TO LOSE THE “BOSTON” LOBSTER NAME
HEALTH INSURANCE ENROLLMENT BEGINS NOV. 1

By April Gilmore McNutt

It’s hard to believe the summer has passed and health insurance open enrollment is right around the corner again! This will be the third open enrollment period under the Affordable Care Act. Open enrollment for 2016 health insurance coverage starts November 1 and will end January 31, 2016. If you enroll in a plan before December 15, your coverage will start January 1.

The open enrollment period for 2016 is even shorter than in previous years so be sure to plan ahead to make your enrollment as simple as possible. And since the first two months overlap with the holiday season, if you wait you could get stuck scrambling during the closing weeks of open enrollment. The last few weeks are always extremely busy, so to avoid long waiting times on the phone or any technical issues with the healthcare.gov website, it’s best to start the process early. Navigators are here to help you in person as well, but schedules have been known to fill up fast!

If you miss the open enrollment period you can only enroll in a plan for 2016 if you meet “special enrollment” criteria, meaning you have some sort of life event that would qualify you: for example, if you have a baby or get married or move outside your plan’s service area. Maine residents will have even more choices this year as Aetna becomes the fourth company offering plans in the Maine marketplace along with Anthem, Harvard Pilgrim. Plans offered by all four companies will range from bronze to gold level, with catastrophic plans available to those people 30 years old and under. All plans will cover the essential health benefits required under the Affordable Care Act, such as prescriptions, emergency services, preventative care, and pregnancy, maternity and newborn care. You’ll want to take your time to look through plan options and choose a plan that suits your needs. The MLA will be here to help you look through plan options, help answer questions and assist with enrollment if needed.

If you already have insurance through the Marketplace, re-enrollment will be similar to the previous years: if you enrolled in a plan using www.healthcare.gov you will be automatically re-enrolled in the same plan or, if your current plan is no longer available, in a similar plan. Insurance companies are required to let you know about any changes to existing plans or new plans offered during open enrollment. If you have experienced any changes to your contact information, household size or estimated household income over this past year it is best to update your healthcare.gov account as soon as possible to reflect your current situation. Federal health insurance subsidies are based on household size and estimated household income; lack of accurate information could affect your future eligibility.

Healthcare.gov will also reach out to you through mail or email to let you know about your re-enrollment.

Ways to enroll will be the same as before: online, in person with an assister or over the phone at the healthcare.gov call center (1-800-318-2596 open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week). Enrolling through healthcare.gov will allow you to apply for federal subsidies, which could help lower your health insurance costs each month.

If you have any questions regarding how to make updates, what plan options are available or how to enroll, please contact the MLA. We are here to help you understand your options and enroll in the best plan for you and your family.

Phytoplankton continued from page 15

The Arctic meltwater flows into the Labrador Sea. That cold fairly fresh water fuels the Labrador Current, an arm of which winds its way into the Gulf of Maine at the surface. Scientists refer to that water as Scotian Shelf Water. Warmer, nutrient-rich water slips in over Georges Bank and the continental shelf; that deep water is called Slope Water. “If lots of freshwater is coming in, then the deep slope water can’t come in,” Townsend said. As a result, phytoplankton may find themselves without the nutrients they need to explode into a bloom, both in the spring and in the winter months.

The Gulf of Maine is a complex system, whose rich productivity is a result of the interplay among the sun, the currents, and the wind. As the Earth’s climate warms, that complex interplay has begun to change as well.

Phytoplankton continued from page 15

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INTERNATIONAL MARITIME LIBRARY: A LABOR OF LOVE

By Jon Johansen
Publisher, Maine Coastal News

Wouldn’t it be helpful to be able to go to your computer and find specific information on a maritime subject? Yes, there is a lot of maritime information on the Internet, but there is a lot more still buried in the most obscure places. Another issue is that it is fragmented. You will find some here and some there, and at times it is nearly impossible to tie them together unless you know all the details. The International Maritime Library (IML) was formed in 2006 to answer this problem. It will be a digital library, based on computerized information, which can be called up at the touch of a button.

I have always been interested in maritime history and have consistently made it a part of the editorial content of Maine Coastal News. When putting together an article on vessels built on the Penobscot River I noticed there was not a complete detailed database on the vessels built in each town which could be accessed easily. I began to create a list for each of the towns on the river using the “List of Merchant Vessels for the United States” (MVUS).

Not thinking about the time it was going to take, I expanded this to not only encompass all the towns of the state of Maine, but for the United States. The “MVUS” was published yearly from 1867 until the early 1990s and contains basic information (Name; Official Number; Signal Letters; Rig; Gross and Net Tonnage; Length; Breadth; Depth; Crew; Indicated Horsepower; When Built; Where Built; and Homeport) on each vessel registered in the United States. After 6,000 hours I had entered the data for approximately 31,000 merchant sailing vessels from 1867 to 1885 and then decided to start compiling a list of steam vessels from the “MVUS” for the years 1867 to 1903.

While entering this data I found that there were lists of vessels compiled by Robert Applebee of Stockton Springs at the Penobscot Marine Museum in Searsport. He had done a good job compiling lists for vessels built mainly from Penobscot Bay to Eastport. Applebee documented just sailing vessels, thus he missed all the steamers and many of the small boats.

Another source is Custom House records, which provide additional information on vessels arriving at certain ports around the United States. There were several volumes published by the Works Project Administration (WPA) in the 1930s and early 1940s, however, some were left partially completed. Only two Maine towns’ records were published.

It is helpful having the basic information on all these vessels, but there is a lot of other information regarding the rest of a ship’s life which was basically nonexistent, such as where did she sail, her master(s), owner(s), and what was her fate. A major source for this information is in old newspapers and magazines. Reading and transcribing all the maritime related articles takes hundreds of hours for each newspaper or magazine published, but in the end it is well worth the time spent.

The more one researches this material the more one will realize just what else needs to be done. The state of Maine is well known for those who went to sea, especially the deep sea voyagers. Information on these people, especially those who became masters, is lacking. Obituaries did not contain a lot of information until the late 1800s. Reading through old newspapers helps, but a lot of information unfortunately is not documented. A trip through a coastal cemetery can give you a lot of basic information on captains and those lost at sea, but adding to that can be very challenging.

Maine is also well-known for boatbuilding, but there is not a lot of early documentation. Fortunately some newspapers found boatbuilding interesting enough to write articles about it. What can you find about the early lobster boat builders and the boats they built? Are there any photographs?

There is some documentation of fishing vessels in the newspapers. Last winter I spent a vast amount of time documenting the Grand Banks fishing vessels sailing out of Gloucester, Massachusetts. These files include not only the vessels, but also the masters, owners, outfitters and lost vessels as well as crew members.

IML, which is a non-profit organization, is dedicated to the collection, computerization and preservation of all maritime information, such as books, periodicals, documents, personal papers and photographs. Making all this maritime information easily available is the backbone of IML’s mission. I’m constantly adding basic information to create more useful databases. In years past, extremely in-depth research generally resulted in academic books, but that is not a logical product today. Now one writes the text, illustrates it and publishes it on the Internet. The upside is that there is little to no cost and if you need to make corrections, or have learned additional information, you can easily correct it.

I was told by Tim Hodgdon of Hodgdon Yachts, who recognized the amount of work needed to get this information computerized, that I will not live long enough to complete this project. I hope to prove him wrong, but if not, I at least will have made a big dent in it!

To become a member of the International Maritime Library, visit the Web site at www.internationalmaritimelibrary.org; e-mail igmatats@aol.com; or call 207-223-8846.

Maine's history of merchant vessels is rich but unavailable to a casual researcher. Photo courtesy of the Penobscot Marine Museum.

Vessels in Monhegan Harbor. Photo courtesy of the Penobscot Marine Museum.

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A 25% fail rate is normal," Smith said. "Vessels that have never had an exam before tend to be more deficient. There's been very little pushback. Most say that they should have done it before."

Typically the safety inspectors find simple things, such as fire extinguishers and first aid supplies, are out of date. However, some vessels lack more serious items, such as survival suits or crew training in flooding, collision or fire procedures. Moores has visited several boats that have survival suits aboard but no one on the vessel has ever tried them on. "These are $300 suits. I said, "You go to Walmart to get a new pair of $40 shoes, you generally try them on first. And these are things that can save your life. You should make sure they fit and you know how to use them."

If major life safety items are not in compliance, the inspectors can't give a safety decal and the boat owner must reschedule for a second exam. Smith doesn't anticipate being overwhelmed as the October 15 date draws closer. "If someone has passed the exam in the last three years [since January 1, 2013] then their decal will be valued for five years rather than the regular two years," he explained. "That makes a difference." Moores, on the other hand, recognizes that not all the boats in his area will have passed the exam by the deadline. "We're not going to get to all of them in time," he said.

Kevin Plowman, Coast Guard safety examiner for the coast from New Hampshire to Boothbay, said that those boats not in compliance could face a fine as of October 16. "But it's likely that someone would get a warning the first time. You'd have 30 days to take the exam and pass. If a safety exam takes place at sea, however, and there are real issues, you might have the trip terminated then." For those who continue to flout the requirement, a fine of up to $5,000 per violation can be levied.

Plowman also strongly encourages all fishermen to go through the Commercial Fishing Vessel Checklist at www.FishSafe.info before the inspector shows up at the dock. "I had a guy in Boothbay Harbor, he'd gone through the checklist and found a few problems. He fixed them before the exam. Basically it was painless and we were done in 40 minutes," he said.

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MLA SAYS GOOD-BYE TO APRIL MCNUTT

By Melissa Waterman

This month the Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA) says good-bye to April Gilmore McNutt. April, 34, started working for the MLA in February, 2011, as an educational assistant involved with the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program. The MLA administered the TAA program, which provided business training for lobstermen and sternmen impacted by foreign imports, for nearly three years. More than 1,850 lobstermen completed the program. April then went on to become trained as a health insurance Navigator, assisting lobstermen and their families to apply for health insurance plans through the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

So it’s safe to say that April has had a very thorough experience of federal programs and bureaucracies. Despite that, she has remained a cheerful and very capable presence within the MLA office. “April has been a tremendous asset to the MLA. She’s just one of those people who gets it – she understands lobstermen and their families – you really can’t teach that,” commented Patrice McCarron, MLA Executive Director. “April is smart, personable and has a great sense of humor. And on top of that, she’s a hard worker and willing to put in the time and jump through all the hoops necessary to successfully administer federal programs to an industry that really doesn’t fit any of the molds.”

“I was really so excited to get the position [in 2011],” April recalled. “I always wanted to work with the lobstering community. It was close to my heart because I grew up around it.” April was raised in Bath where her family has operated Gilmore Seafood for many years. Friends from the area as well as relatives were fishermen and lobstermen. “I have always had a lot of respect for the hard work they do,” she said.

“April has been a tremendous asset to the MLA. She’s just one of those people who gets it — she understands lobstermen and their families — you really can’t teach that.”

Jumping into a world as complex as the TAA program proved to be a bit daunting but April soon got her feet under her. “Working with Annie [Tselikis, program coordinator] was a lot of fun. She was the teacher and I was the assistant,” April said. Through her work, April met many lobstermen and their families, connections that would prove valuable in her next assignment. “April has an incredible way of working with people. She is patient and kind and an excellent listener,” Tselikis commented. “The TAA process was new to us in Maine and not without challenges in the program administration. April was a pro at all of this and she was so fun to work with, whether we were in the office in Kennebunk or on the road running trainings.”

The ACA kicked off in October, 2013, with a malfunctioning Web site and a whole lot of confusion among potential participants as well as the Navigators whose job was to help them. “Oh my gosh, we were really overwhelmed,” April said. “I worked to get myself up to speed and had great help from a network of people in the state.” She credits staff at Maine Community Health Options, Maine Health Access Foundation and Maine Primary Care Association with helping her become competent in the complex and constantly changing health insurance program. “Maine has a great network of people involved with the ACA. We exceeded expectations for enrollment that first year and are still one of the top states for enrollment. It shows the hard work these people put in,” she said. April was funded through a grant to Fishing Partnership Support Services of Massachusetts and worked closely with that organization’s staff.

During this time April also experienced some major changes in her personal life. In 2013 she and her partner Dan McNutt bought their first house together in South Portland. The next year the couple married; in 2015 they welcomed their first child, a son named Walter, into the world. “Yup, we’re wasting no time here,” April laughed. She is looking forward to spending more time at home for the next few years yet recognizes the pleasure she has drawn from her experiences at the MLA. “I like working with people in the ways I’ve done here. I’d really like to stay working with the fishing community. I’m grateful I’ve had this experience because I did so many different things,” she said.

April Gilmore McNutt and young Walter say good-bye. Photo by D. McNutt.

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Commissioner Keliher explained to lobstermen, "We need to create a functional entry system, but the resource is already fully exploited so we don't want to increase effort into the fishery." He continued, "But people on the waiting list are looking for a predictable time frame to receive a license so that they can plan the table. Instead, we're looking at making simple changes to the existing system," The Commissioner explained that resolving latency remains a priority for the department, but previous proposals have been met with a lot of resistance from lobstermen. Instead, through a series of small changes, the department reasons that latency will slowly resolve itself.

Keliher made his case for simple reforms to create a more functional entry system through three potential actions: 1) change how we approach ratios, 2) increase opportunities for students, and 3) address retirement. A potential fourth reform would address future latency.

The first change that Keliher proposed was to use licenses as the currency for the exit ratios and cap ratios at 3 to 1. This issue was given the most attention and was most controversial. The DMR presented data for each zone on the net increase or decrease in licenses and tags from 2008 to 2014, as well as a breakdown of the change in licenses and tags based on ratios. The net change reflects the number of licenses sold in 2008 compared to the number of licenses sold in 2014, so it encompasses all of the licenses retired and all of the new entrants to the fishery.

DMR's analysis shows that Zone C, the state's only open zone, had a minimal increase of 11 licenses and 29,000 tags during the six-year period. All other zones showed a net decrease in both licenses and tags as a result of the limited-entry program.

In Zone D, licenses have decreased by 15% (168 licenses) under the 5:1 ratio based on tags. However, had the exit ratio been based on licenses rather than tags, licenses still would have decreased by 13% (142 licenses). The Commissioner reasoned that if the zones used licenses for the exit ratios rather than tags, they would have still achieved their goal of reducing effort.

Additionally, using licenses rather than tags would allow more opportunity for entry for those on the waiting list. DMR's analysis indicates that 45 people would have entered the fishery as a result of reduced ratios if only 10% more had gained entry over the past six years. If licenses had been used for the ratio, the size of the Zone D waiting list would have been reduced from approximately 60 to 33. The DMR concluded that this simple change—basing the exit ratios on licenses rather than tags—would create a more fluid entry system which would help to reduce effort.

The Commissioner told a group of more than 50 lobstermen at the Machias meeting that Zone A has already implemented these changes and is the poster child for creating a more functional entry system. Zone A voted to change its ratio to 3:1 based on licenses. "I'm not trying to drive a wedge [between the zones]," Keliher said, "I'm just trying to point out that we can make a big difference with small changes. Zone A has had 22 people come off the waiting list in the last two years." By contrast, Zone B, which also changed its ratio from tags to licenses, but remained at 5:1, has seen only four new entrants in the last six years. Zones D, E, F, and G, all of which have a 5:1 ratio based on tags, have seen a range of between two and six new entrants in the last two years.

Feedback varied widely across the zones. Lobstermen from Zones A, B, and C generally supported the change, while the other zones worried about creating more effort on the water. Lobstermen at the Deer Isle and Vinalhaven meetings, both located in Zone C, were confused about what the DMR was trying to solve. A Deer Isle lobsterman asked, "If Zone C has only gained 11 licenses since 2008, what’s the problem? Why do zones have ratios?" "That's a good question," responded the Commissioner. Ironically, Zone C lobstermen recently completed a non-binding questionnaire to gauge opinion on closing the zone; the non-official results had a 50% response rate with a 3-to-1 ratio strongly in favor of closing the zone.

Zones A and B offered similar feedback. Rock Alley, a Beals Island lobsterman, asked, "What's the harm in opening them [the zones] all up?" Jack Merrill, an Islesford lobsterman, asked the room, "How many of you guys had to wait seven years to get your license? No one should have to wait that long. It's not fair." Zone A lobstermen wondered why the Commissioner continues to hold meetings to discuss things that don't need fixing. John Drouin, a Cutler lobsterman who serves on the Zone A Council, asked the Commissioner, "Why are you talking about these things in a way that is meant to create fear? There are no 20, 30 or 40 year waiting lists. The GMR report said the average time on a waiting list is only six years." Richard Alley, an Addison lobsterman, asked, "Why do you keep coming out trying to fix things that aren't broken? Those [latent] licenses aren't a problem. They pay for them, which benefits the state and doesn't take anything from the resource."

Feedback from Zone D and Zone F was more heated. These lobstermen were concerned about why the DMR would recommend changing the currency from tags to licenses when the zones already have the authority to use either method.

They voiced strong concern that this would result in the Legislature underestimating the zones' authority.

Jerry Cushman, a Port Clyde lobsterman, stated, "I'm out on the water every day and your numbers don't make sense. You [Commissioner Keliher] say we've lost 168 licenses, but I have not seen any reduction in the number of traps in the water. There are traps set on top of traps. We are still on the edge with bait. There is already too much effort. How can you say that you are going to increase entry and not increase effort? You are taking latent effort out and putting active effort in. None of this makes sense!"

Based on its analysis, DMR staff argued that the increase in effort for lobstermen is seeing on the water is not coming from latent effort or from new licenses. Rather, the increase in effort is coming from within the fishery — from lobstermen changing how and where they fish.

Bob Baines from South Thomaston asked, "So what do you think will happen if the offshore fishery falls off and all of those boats come back inshore?" Carl Wilson, director of DMR's Bureau of Marine Science, answered, "It would be a mess.

It comes down to how one defines effort. For lobstermen, effort equals traps in the water. For DMR, effort equals licenses and traps tag set. Based on the level of emotion expressed during the meetings, these are clearly not the same thing.

Bar Harbor lobsterman Jon Carter said that the ratios were put in place at a time when managers were demanding that Maine control its effort because the lobster population was thought to be in decline. "Weren't we supposed to go to 1:1 once we reached our goal? Maybe we need to rethink why we are keeping these ratios out of the equation because this is the situation that we have.

"This is not the same fishery and not the same resource that we had when this system was put in place over 15 years ago," noted the Commissioner. Since 2000, statewide lobster landings have more than doubled, from 57 million pounds to 124 million pounds. While landings have increased, two zones have had people on the waiting list for 10 years; five zones have had people on the waiting list for at least eight years.

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At the Portland meeting, Chebeague Island lobsterman Jeff Putnam warned, "You shouldn’t undermine the zones. There will be more effort in the water if you change to licenses."

Long Island lobsterman Steve Train asked the Commissioner, "If the Legislature decides to do this anyway, will you at least consider not counting those latent licenses [with no tags] when they are retired?" Another Zone F lobsterman asked if the Commissioner had considered how many more people will sign up for the Apprentice Program if time on the waiting list is shortened.

"You know, if we just leave the existing system alone, effort will be cut in half in just 10 years as lobstermen retire. Have you considered that?" asked Donny Young, a Cushsing lobsterman. He suggested that if the DMR insists on changing all the exit ratios to licenses, they should consider putting a cap on the number of licenses for each zone.

The DMR's second proposal, to improve student entry by increasing the age to obtain a commercial license from under 18 to under 23, was well received across the state. "It’s not right that kids need to choose their career by the time they are 15 to get into this fishery, and it’s really not right that kids would have to drop out of school to complete their time," said David Cousins of South Thomaston. "Lobstering is just a job for the Commission. We would like to see a positive change to the entry system. Dwight Carver, a Beals Island lobsterman, agreed. "It’s the right thing to do and it’s about time. We need to give a person time to grow up before they decide what they want to do." DMR noted that this change will help alleviate pressure on the waiting list. "We hope that by getting more students through by increasing the age, we would move a lot of people off the waiting list," added DMR's marine policy director Deirsch Gilbert.

The Commissioner raised the question of whether this sort of reform should be retroactive. "What do you think about going through the list and letting anyone who had completed their Apprentice Program before they turned 23 in? That would really move some people off the list." DMR staff stated that, depending...
GOOD SEASON ON P.E.I.

Fall lobster landings on Prince Edward Island are on par with those of last year. The price, however, is much better. Most lobstermen are receiving $5.25 a pound for canners and $5.75 a pound for market size; both prices have risen a quarter since the season began in August. At $5.25 and $5.75 cents a pound, fall lobstermen are averaging $1.75 more per pound than last year. Fall prices on the island have generally lagged behind spring lobster prices. This year, however, the fall lobstermen are receiving 75 cents more a pound for canners and 50 cents more per pound for markets than the spring lobstermen did at the end of their season.

SEARSPORT DREDGING PERMIT PROCESS Halted

The Army Corps of Engineers withdrew its permit application to the Maine Department of Environmental Protection to dredge parts of Searsport harbor in September. The Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT), which is co-sponsoring the project, said the withdrawal was likely temporary and that a revised application would probably be resubmitted. The federal agency and MDOT have just ironed out an agreement on matching funds, with each side contributing an additional $150,000 to the application process. The state would like to improve cargo ship access to Mack Point where the shallowest part of the channel is believed to be about 31 feet deep. The channel has not been dredged since it was first dug in 1964. Since then ships have gotten bigger, in part because of safety requirements such as double hulls, and the channel depth means ships can only come in at high tide. If the channel is deepened to 40 feet, it will allow ships to dock more frequently and not have to wait for a high tide.

DMR Recognizes Staff Members

Department of Marine Resources staff received awards from Commissioner Patrick Keliher during the Department’s annual meeting on Friday, September 11 at the Department’s Boothbay Harbor facility. Marine Resource Scientist Heidi Bray received the Employee of the Year Award for work implementing a new online licensing system; Secretary Specialist Jessica McKay received a Special Commendation for organizing the Department’s move to its new location; and Marine Resource Scientist David Libby received the Manager of the Year Award for serving as Interim Bureau of Marine Science Director after the retirement of previous Director Linda Mercer.

A Very L-O-N-G Lobster Roll

As part of the P.E.I. International Shellfish Festival in September, the Prince Edward Island Fishermen’s Association prepared one continuous lobster roll just under 23 meters (75.5 feet) in length. It took almost ten hours to bake and assemble the mighty roll, which required 32 local lobstermen plus a police escort to be carried to the festival’s main tent. About 34 kilograms of lobster meat (75 pounds) was mixed with 11 kilograms of mayonnaise (24 pounds) and 11 kilograms of vegetables. The roll, which beat the previous 22-meter (72.1 feet) record for length held by Shediac, New Brunswick, served 400 people.

After the story made headlines, Michel Boudreau, the president of the Shediac lobster festival, quickly reached out to CBC News to dispute the lobster roll record. “As the Shediac Lobster Festival president … I am proud to report that this year’s lobster roll record was 85 feet, 6 inches which is 26 metres in length,” Boudreau wrote in an e-mail. “I am happy to see that this event has stirred up some friendly competition.” The giant Shediac lobster roll was made — and enjoyed by many — during the town’s July festival.
UPCOMING
November 3-6

November 4-5
North Atlantic Right Whale Consortium Annual Meeting, New Bedford, MA.

November 10
Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative meeting, Island Institute, Rockland. FMI: 541-9310.

NERA Annual Meeting. Prizes include a $500 Grand Prize, $250 2nd place, and $100 3rd place.

October 7
MLA Directors Meeting, 5 p.m., Darby's in Belfast. FMI: 967-4555.

October 8
Sea Urchin Zone Council meeting, 5 p.m., Ellsworth City Hall.

"Hopeful Signs from Canada: The Return of the Newfoundland Cod," 7 p.m., Gulf of Maine Research Institute, Portland. FMI: 228-1699.

Week of October 12
MLA V-notch Survey Week. FMI: 967-4555.

October 22

on the zone, this would move from four (Zone E) to 15 (Zone D) additional people off the waiting list. Some liked this idea, some did not. Others questioned how this helped the older Apprentices. In Zone B, lobstermen asked what more could be done for Apprentices on the list: "Can they get a token amount of tags to fish like students, to keep them interested?" Can DMR use tax records and give credit for time as a sternman?" and "Can't you do something to get full-time lobstermen from other zones off the list?"

There was no consensus from the industry on how to deal with lobstermen who are winding down their careers. The DMR proposed creating a new limited commercial license which would be offered with fewer tags and at a lower cost. The license would be available to purchase voluntarily for those who want to keep a lobster license but are fishing less. Presently, 11% of all commercial lobstermen hold an over-70 license (530 licenses), DMR staff noted that creating a limited commercial license might not do much for those on the waiting list, but it would address some of the latency. Some lobstermen felt that this couldn't hurt; others could not understand the point since over-70 licenses are already discounted and those lobstermen don't have to purchase 800 tags. Zone A lobstermen offered a different approach, noting that if you allow lobstermen to purchase only the tags they want to fish each year, and remove the provision that you can only increase by 100 tags each year, you wouldn't need a limited license and you would get rid of a lot of latent tags.

The final idea offered for discussion was a "use it or lose it" concept for new entrants. "Should we forgo the additional tags and remove the provision that you can only increase by 100 tags each year, you wouldn't need a limited license and you would get rid of a lot of latent tags."

Net change is all of the licenses retired plus all of the new entrants (students, wait list, medical, military, transfers).

Source: Maine DMR (data presented at outreach meetings)
In the old days, when lobster traps were made of wood and that wood was often cut and milled by the fisherman himself, human hands made bait bags. Knitting a net was a skill taught early on to the young by older men and women. It is a specialized form of knitting requiring a mesh board (a board with short rods that govern the size of the mesh), a needle, and a fair bit of patience. Now bait bags often come in a roll of pre-knitted nylon which a lobsterman can cut and shape to the size he wants.

On Vinalhaven, Stephanie Crossman is still knitting bait bags the old-fashioned way but for a modern purpose. She creates bags, purses, shawls and three-dimensional sculptures using the net stand, hand-carved needles, and mesh board given to her years ago by her husband's great-grandmother. Three decades ago, at age 92, Gram J, as she was known, taught Crossman the traditional method of making net when she moved to the island to marry Matthew Crossman. Now she uses those skills to make airy sculptures of the natural world. Moving into three-dimensional figures required a different approach to knitting. Crossman learned to stiffen the twine and knit over a form that could be retracted when the sculpture was completed. The resulting creations have a lacy, almost levitating, look about them. Crossman's sculptures and other works are available at fine craft shows around the country and online at www.mainenetbags.com.