MPO STAFFING POSES PROBLEMS IN SOUTHERN MAINE

By Melissa Waterman

There’s a delicate relationship at work between Maine lobstermen and the Department of Marine Resources (DMR). Ask any lobsterman and it’s likely he or she will grumble about unnecessary regulations and high trap tag fees. But ask them about their local Marine Patrol Officer (MPO), and it’s just as likely that there will be grudging praise. Likewise, many MPOs commend lobstermen in their areas, citing their hard work and generally straightforward behavior.

So what happens when one side of that relationship breaks down? That is what has occurred in southern Maine, where as of January there were four unfilled MPO positions in the district. "The problem is severe right now," said Bureau of Marine Patrol Colonel Jon Cornish. "We’ve lost five officers in the last couple of months." These officers haven’t vanished into thin air. Instead they have found other jobs in law enforcement. Those jobs offer higher salaries than that of a Marine Patrol Officer.

"It’s been a problem for the last two years at least," Cornish said. "It’s expensive to live on the coast. And you are on 24-hour call every day you are working. That’s a challenge for officers with young families." The high cost of living coupled with a long-term freeze on annual salary and cost of living increases creates a certain disincentive for new officers.

The issue in southern Maine is acute because of the discrepancy between an officer’s starting pay ($38,000 to $40,000 annually) and the cost of living in York and Cumberland Counties. An MPO must live within 30 minutes driving distance of his or her territory. For an MPO based in York, for example, that means either living directly on the coast or slightly inland, in towns such as Eliot or South Berwick.

A quick survey of the property tax rates of towns in southern Maine indicates part of the problem. South Berwick, for example, has a property tax rate of $17.80 per $1,000 of valuation. Eliot’s is $14 per $1,000. The median price of a single-family home in York County was $230,000 in 2015, up 2.27% from the previous year, according to the Maine Real Estate Information System. In Cumberland County, that price was $256,800, up 4.6% from 2014. By contrast, the median price of a single family home in Hancock County last year was $198,250; in Washington County, that price was $80,000.

"This isn’t a new problem, it’s been going on for five years now," said Laurin Brooks, a lobsterman from...
February is not much of a month. It’s short a few days, after all, and falls in the middle of the long Maine winter. Most lobstermen have pulled their traps, though an increasing number of lobstermen are fishing offshore throughout the winter. The holidays are behind us and spring seems a long, long way off.

Yet Maine coastal communities still hum along during the winter doldrums. As we note in **Landings** this month, many people look forward to the annual Maine Fishermen’s Forum, held at the beginning of March at the Samoset Resort in Rockport. The Forum, now in its 41st year, brings together fishermen from throughout New England to talk about what’s happening in the region’s various fisheries, hear from fisheries managers and scientists about the state of the Gulf of Maine, and tell stories over a few beers at the end of the day. The Forum’s Trade Show is a great place to look at a new engine, or try out some cool electronic gear.

The results of the annual scholarship auction on Friday night provides $1,000 scholarships to college-aged children from Maine’s fishing families. The Auction has raised nearly $20,000 each year over the past few years. The Maine Fishermen’s Forum is the reward for a cold February.

Enforcing the fisheries laws of Maine is the work of DMF’s Marine Patrol Bureau, whose Marine Patrol Officers cover the coast from Kittery to Calais. Unfortunately, in recent years the southern district, from York to Portland, has seen a tremendous turnover of Marine Patrol personnel. At the time of publication, four positions are vacant in District 1, leaving only the district’s Sergeant and boat captain in place. **Landings** investigates the issues facing the Marine Patrol Bureau in attracting and retaining Marine Patrol Officers in southern Maine.

We also hear from Chelsea Nunan, a young woman from Cape Porpoise pursuing her family’s traditional line of work, lobstering. Nunan started fishing with her father, Chris, when she was eight. Today she has her own boat and is proud to be a fifth generation lobsterman.

The abundance of lobster landings in recent years has led to new markets for Maine’s signature crustacean and improved profits for lobstermen. Yet how those lobsters are handled when they come up in a trap, are transferred to the wharf, and then are shipped to customers greatly affects the price paid for them. Jean Lavallée, a lobster veterinarian from Prince Edward Island, has a lot to say about lobster health. Lavallée will be speaking at the Maine Fishermen’s Association Annual Meeting on March 4.

This month **Landings** finds out more about lobster health in an interview with the energetic Lavallée. **Landings** takes us through the issues facing Maine’s lobster industry this winter. The MLA pages provide an update on recent industry meetings to discuss the lobster licensing reform bill, LD 1503, which will go to public hearing on February 10 before the Marine Resources Committee. We also check in with MLA’s Navigator, Alisha Keezer, on her efforts to help Maine lobstermen find affordable health insurance and avoid paying high penalties. This issue also explores a subject fundamental to the survival of Maine’s lobster industry — bait supplies. We review the state’s regulations to ensure that all bait sold in Maine’s lobster fishery is safe; also the MLA pages include comments submitted by the association to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission on proposed changes to improve protections for spawning herring.

Lobstering has long been a fishery marked by traditional ways of operation. Maine lobstermen own their boats. They can only fish with heavy traps on the seafloor. They conserve lobster stocks by V-notching female lobsters and returning them to the water. But within the customary world of lobstering, some people are finding ways to do things differently. This month **Landings** begins a new series called “Innovators,” profiles of the men and women who are thinking up new ways to pursue a traditional line of work.

So, stay warm and enjoy this issue of **Landings**. And, if you have any feedback, we’d love to hear from you!
LOBSTER HEALTH EXPERT TO SPEAK AT MLA ANNUAL MEETING

By Melissa Waterman

At its Annual meeting on March 4, the Maine Lobstermen’s Association will welcome Jean Lavallée as its guest speaker. Lavallée, who worked for many years at the Atlantic Veterinary College (AVC) on Prince Edward Island, is well-known in Canada as an expert on lobster health. “The MLA Board wants to keep the conversation on lobster quality at the top of everyone’s minds, especially given how warm the ocean is right now,” said Patrice McCarron, executive director of the Maine Lobstermen’s Association. “And Lavallée is the go-to guy on lobster health and quality in our region.”

“I always wanted to be a fish veterinarian,” Lavallée said in a recent interview. His father kept aquariums in the house and as a child he found himself intrigued by the creatures that lived underwater. The Montreal native graduated veterinary school in 1995 and promptly moved to Prince Edward Island to begin work as a clinical scientist at the AVC Lobster Science Centre. “I started working on lobster and never looked back!”

At that time, gaffkemia, also called red tail disease, still threatened lobsters held in pounds. Lavallée worked with lobstermen and pound owners to understand the behavior of the disease. “We would survey freshly caught lobster in the 1990s and find that anywhere from 5% to 8% of the lobsters carried the pathogen for gaffkemia,” Lavallée recalled. “A tidal pound could lose 10% to 15% of its stock.” Yet in ten years, “I have no idea why,” he admitted. “Did something change in the environment to cause the pathogen to move?”

From 2000 to 2012 Lavallée was part of a team of lobster health researchers at the AVC Lobster Science Centre. The team noticed certain changes in the molt cycle of lobsters, particularly those caught off southwest Nova Scotia. The lobster season in that region begins at the end of November and runs for six months. During that time, approximately 40% of all lobster harvested in Canada is landed. “Typically about 95% of those lobsters would be hard-shelled. But starting in the early 2000s, 20% to 30% of the lobsters were soft-shell. That was very strange,” Lavallée said. So his team began monitoring the lobster stocks to try to determine what was happening.

“We went out before, during and after the commercial fishing season to sample lobsters,” Lavallée said. The scientists took blood samples from lobsters to determine their blood protein levels. When a lobster molts, it draws in large amounts of seawater to plump up while its shell hardens. That water dilutes the blood proteins in its tissues. Blood protein levels will remain low for several weeks after molting, providing clues to scientists as to when the animal shed. They would also take a clipping of a lobster’s swimmeret (the small fins beneath the tail) to examine under a microscope. “You can see the new shell forming under the old shell,” Lavallée explained, another clue as to the time of molt.

By 2012, Lavallée and his colleagues had sampled more than 100,000 lobsters. They put these data online for all to see. “You can compare one wharf to another or compare among years. These data are very valuable to lobster buyers and processors,” Lavallée said. From the data they found that there were important differences in the time of molt between males and females and among lobsters of different sizes. In addition, the lobsters began to molt progressively earlier each year beginning in 2005, although this was not found in all areas sampled.

In 2012 funding for the Lobster Science Centre was cut sharply. Lavallée and most of his team were laid off. Lobster sampling and the database were turned over to the Fishermen and Scientists Research Society (FSRS) in Halifax (http://www.fssr.ns.ca/index.html). Lavallée reopened a consulting business he had created in 2000. And the focus of his company? Lobster health.

Aquatic Science and Health Services conducts clinical work on land and at sea, offers education on lobster health and quality handling practices, and works with different sectors of the lobster industry to create best practices for all sectors of the lobster industry. Lavallée is on the road a lot. “Since 2012 we’ve held more than 100 workshops on lobster quality and handling. We go where the...”

Continued on page 17

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Richard Nelson, a Friendship lobsterman who serves on Maine’s Ocean Acidification Commission, was contacted by Emily Zaleski, a high school sophomore from New Hampshire, who had questions about the impact of ocean acidification in the Gulf of Maine. Nelson took time to respond to her questions and kindly agreed to share the text of their exchange here in Landings.

Emily: How can we as community members work to help our oceans?

Richard: We can all work, in our daily lives, to reduce our use of plastics and unnecessary trash that all too often finds its way into the ocean and seek out ways to limit our CO2 emissions by saving energy wherever we can and reducing the use of fossil fuels, not only in our homes but in our schools and communities. Every aspect of the way we deal with water, waste water, and runoff could—and should also be examined. Whether it’s our own septic systems and lawns, or out in our communities in the sewer systems, industrial outflow, storm drains, and agriculture, all should be examined with the hope of reducing nutrient loading, chemical pollution, or unnatural warming. We could help educate others, advocate for the oceans in political arenas, and, hey, the list is long and could be a project unto itself.

Emily: What might the effects of ocean acidification be on our seacoast and nearby waters?

Richard: The process causing ocean acidification (OA), the combining of CO2 accumulated in the environment with the waters of our oceans, not only lowers the pH by forming carbonic acid, it also removes some of the carbonate ions or shell building substance from those waters. It can then be described as a double edged sword threatening all the shell building life forms in the oceans, from clams to tiny pteropods that, along with other creatures, are so important to the ocean’s food chain, by either dissolving shells with acid or hindering the building of new shell because of the lack of carbonates. On the other hand, life forms that photosynthesize, such as some algae, may use the increased CO2 to grow faster, leading to more harmful blooms that create toxic or low oxygen conditions.

Emily: Do you believe we need more education about ocean acidification? Is education about environmental problems important?

Richard: Because the science, understanding, and recognition surrounding OA has all come about so recently, it makes education extremely important. We, here in New England, have both economic and cultural attachments to the ocean and share its vulnerability. The Gulf of Maine is at particular risk, with its somewhat contained system, inflow of cool waters from the Scotian Shelf, as well as the fresh water from its many rivers working to lower pH as well. The stakes are high, therefore the importance of informing people about it is also. Certainly recent history shows that people themselves can be drivers in what the governments or decision-makers are willing to tackle.

Emily: Is ocean acidification widely accepted through the scientific community?

Richard: The process or occurrence of OA is now accepted and is measurable by science. Not too long ago though, science just thought of the ocean as a carbon sink, or that it absorbed carbon (CO2) without regard to what happened to it in the process or that it might be detrimental to the ocean's ecosystems. That has changed now, but the extent and nature of its effects now and in the future are being debated and need more research.

Emily: Are signs of ocean acidification already appearing on the seacoast and in the local marine life?

Richard: We have seen the first signs of this in some clam flats where harvesters have noticed areas that have become nonproductive, referring to them as “dead mud,” no longer having a viable population to harvest. Shellfish aquaculture farms have also experienced problems when trying to raise oysters and scallops etc. from larval stages and grow them out. These occurrences can have immediate economic impact to businesses along the coast, and have pointed to a need for further studies and research on the effects of OA on economically important species such as lobster.

Emily: What is currently being done to reduce the effects of ocean acidification?

Richard: Certainly the reduction of atmospheric CO2 would do the most to combat the effects of OA. The U.S. has made progress in doing that, but globally CO2 has still been on the rise. Hopefully after the meetings in Paris we can all work to reduce this problem. Locally, coastal acidification can be helped by efforts to reduce nutrient loading by our attention to runoff or outflow from our homes, cities, industries and farms. Efforts to maintain and restore natural carbon sinks such as estuaries and eel grass beds, as well as seaweed aquaculture efforts can all be valuable. We need to expand efforts in monitoring and research to enable us to know the best methods and places to initiate remediation for OA.

Fishermen who might like to be on a NECAN (NERACOOS) ocean acidification Industry Working Group can contact casie@neracoos.org.

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new MPO begins work in Downeast Maine

Andrew Foss, a ten-year veteran of the Maine State Troopers, joined the ranks of the Maine Marine Patrol in January. Foss, a lifelong resident of Washington County, began serving in the Lubec area of Section 6, which stretches from the Hancock Bridge to the Canadian border. Marine Patrol Officer Foss fills a vacancy created by the promotion of Russell Wright to Sergeant of Section 3, which runs from the Kennebec River to the St. George River.

Foss began his career in law enforcement as a police officer in Lubec. He then became a Washington County Sheriff’s Deputy between 2001 and 2005. In 2005, he joined the Maine State Police and served from Machias until 2015. “Officer Foss’ extensive experience in law enforcement and knowledge of the people and places in Washington County will serve him well in his career in the Marine Patrol,” said Marine Patrol Major Rene Cloutier.

Foss also brings to the position knowledge of the working waterfront in Washington County. Between 1991 and 2005 he worked for several aquaculture operations including Maine Pride Salmon, Treats Island Fisheries and Atlantic Salmon of Maine. His duties included site work, boat operation, scuba diving, and operation of computerized feeding systems. “Officer Foss’ experience on the water, operating boats and dealing with a commercial operation gives him insight into the challenges and opportunities of the working waterfront in Downeast Maine,” said Major Cloutier.

“I like working on the ocean and I feel lucky to have been hired by the Marine Patrol,” said Officer Foss. “Working in Lubec is like going back home. I probably know 80 percent of the local fishermen and I look forward to getting to know fishermen in the area better.”

Taylor and his fellow lobstermen remain anxious about a future of constantly changing MPOs. “This season we had the usual stuff,” Taylor said. “Things got screwed up a couple of times because no one was out there, can you imagine? The whole zone council [G] is frustrated.”

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CAPE PORPOISE WOMAN CONTINUES FAMILY TRADITION

By Shelley Wigglesworth

In the tiny village of Cape Porpoise the last name Nunan goes hand-in-hand with lobstering. Twenty-year-old Chelsea Rae Nunan is the fifth generation and only woman in her immediate family to take on fishing for lobsters for a living. In fact, the 2014 Kennebunk High School graduate is the only woman currently fishing on her own boat out of Cape Porpoise harbor.

"I'm the only female out there now, but Gretchen Nunan Ebb, my dad's second cousin, used to go fishing in Cape Porpoise when she was younger. I'd say that was about 40 or 50 years ago," Nunan said.

The youngest of three children and the family's only daughter, Nunan went fishing for the first time at the age of eight under the watchful eye of her father, Chris, on his boat, the Chelsea Rae. "When I got old enough to go fishing on a regular basis, I went with my dad in the summers, and then one summer I went with a family friend named David Anderson. At the end of that summer I bought an 18-foot skiff off of him and started working on it. Each year after that I'd try to buy a few more traps to add," she said. "I think my most memorable fishing experiences ever would have to be that first year I had my own traps. I had ten of them, and my dad would take me out in my brother's skiff. It was just an 18-footer and he used to let me haul them by myself, with the help of him, of course," she recalled.

Nunan's lobstering expertise and experience as a mariner has evolved substantially since those days. She now fishes a respectable 500 traps all by herself aboard her own a boat, a 25-foot Novi with a 135 h.p. John Deere motor, named the Miss Melanie after her mother. "I've been lobstering on my own for about four years now, since I was 16 years old and a junior in high school. But sometimes my father will come with me and help," she said.

Nunan said both of her parents fully support her in her decision to be a lobsterman, though her mother did encourage her to explore other things. "I did try other stuff, but I just always leaned more towards fishing," she explained.

Even though lobstering keeps her outdoors nearly every day, Nunan enjoys spending her free time in the open whenever she has the chance. "I like to hunt, fish for fresh and saltwater fish by rod and reel, and ice fish," she said. Serious and committed, Nunan feels she is right where she's supposed to be, working as a lobsterman. "Fishing is what I grew up with, it's a huge part of my life. I've always been around it and on the water. I'm the most comfortable and at home there and I don't ever plan on doing anything different," she said. "Everything about fishing is awesome as long as the price is right. There is nothing like working on the water."
Lobstering is a traditional fishery, one of the few remaining in the United States unencumbered by giant boats and high-tech equipment. Maine lobstermen continue setting and hauling their traps using much the same techniques and gear that their fathers and grandfathers did. Sure, the traps are now made of polyvinyl-coated wire and a hydraulic hauler certainly makes the work slightly less backbreaking. Yet lobster fishing largely remains wrapped in traditional practices honed over decades of use.

Some innovators, however, are injecting something different into this traditional way of life. This month Landings begins a series spotlighting those people who are creating new products or techniques that may change, ever so slightly, the way things are done.

Lobster traps in his area of Nova Scotia often lay empty of bait, due to sand fleas, predatory crabs or other hungry creatures. Local lobstermen had to spend a lot of time and fuel rebaiting their traps during their short fishing season.

Vince Stuart, the owner of a Meteghan, Nova Scotia, company that makes winches, gantries and other fishing-boat rigging, knew there was a problem. Lobster traps in his area of Nova Scotia often lay empty of bait, due to sand fleas, predatory crabs or other hungry creatures. Local lobstermen had to spend a lot of time and fuel rebaiting their traps during their short fishing season.

So Stuart invented the Bait Savour. With assistance from Dalhousie University’s Innovation and Design Lab he created a device that allows fishermen to extend the amount of time traps can be left on the bottom yet remain baited.

The Bait Savour consists of a base attached to the bottom of a lobster trap which has a traditional bait bag, a metal spike on which to impale the secondary bait, and a buoyant, injection-molded dome that closes over the spike and seals at the base.

Vince Stuart and the Bait Savour. Photo courtesy of CBC.

When the fuse dissolves, the dome pops open, revealing the new bait. The length of time required to dissolve the fuse can vary based on its composition and length.

The Bait Savour was tested among lobstermen in the Meteghan area who found it worked well.

Unfortunately, according to Stuart, his invention has hit some legal hurdles. A claim of intellectual property infringement has brought production of the item to a halt for now. But Stuart remains confident that someday the Bait Savour will become common gear among Canadian and American lobstermen.

Anthony (Tony) Raffaele, an ocean-inspired artist working in Westminster, Massachusetts who is also an inventor, has developed a new safety product that is quickly gaining popularity in the fishing industry. Made from 100% organic, non-toxic materials, his anti-slip agent helps fishermen stay on their feet on deck.

Raffaele said he came up with the idea while working in Maine with a lobsterman friend. “When I was on the boat, the skipper said ‘Be careful, the deck is covered with fish oil and if you slip and get caught in the rope, it could drag you overboard and you won’t come loose until you hit bottom.’ The water temperature was 36 degrees and I knew I would most likely die, either on the ride down to the bottom or from hypothermia. So I decided I wanted to invent an anti-slip agent for the lobster industry.”

After developing and testing his product, Raffaele began giving away free samples to fishermen. “The lobstermen have told me they like it and it works and they come back for more. Safe House can also be used on sundecks, balconies, boat docks, steps, concrete areas, or basement floors,” he said. Safe House comes in a natural brownish color with clear calcium chloride crystals; it sells for $6 per pound. “Usually a pound a trip or a day will work. You just sprinkle the grit on the boat deck and you will not slip,” Raffaele said.

INNOVATORS: Vince Stuart and Tony Raffaele

Toward long-lasting bait
By Melissa Waterman

Keeping fishermen and the environment safe
By Shelley Wigglesworth

If you know of an innovator in your area, someone who tinkers with the way things are typically done, let us know! Contact Melissa Waterman at 691-2330 or at melissa@mainelobstermen.org.
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.
February 3, 9 a.m. at the Belfast Library
March 4, Annual Meeting
April 6, noon

A Look Back at 2015

Since 1954, the Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA) has pursued its mission to advocate for a sustainable lobster resource and the fishermen and communities that depend on it. 2015 was another busy and successful year for the MLA and for Maine’s lobster industry. This month I’d like to take stock of how the MLA has served its members on the vast array of issues lobstermen face.

Staying in touch with lobstermen

The MLA spends a lot of time keeping its ear to the ground to keep in touch with lobstermen. We gain from the insight of MLA Board members and from attending the many zone council and Lobster Advisory Council meetings around the state. This has been particularly important in 2015 as these councils discussed potential changes to the state’s lobster licensing program and the development of a state Lobster Fishery Management Plan. The MLA has attended all of the DMR Commissioner’s meetings over the past three years to hear the industry’s suggestions and concerns on this sensitive issue.

The MLA regularly meets with DMR staff and the Commissioner to keep lobster issues front and center with the agency. We stay in close contact with the members of the Legislature, Governor and our federal delegation as relevant issues arise.

The MLA works with many organizations and businesses in Maine’s health insurance community to assist with enrollment and health insurance outreach events. The MLA also collaborates with researchers who are working to understand the health and safety challenges facing Maine fishermen. We have helped distribute surveys to fishermen that address health issues, safety at sea and the ergonomics of fishing, research that could improve fishing practices for lobstermen. In 2015, the MLA partnered with Fishing Partnership Support Services of Massachusetts to offer a low-cost CPR and ergonomics workshop as well as free safety and drill conductor training in Portland.

The new Coast Guard fishing vessel safety regulations have been a challenge for the fishing industry. The MLA made sure that lobstermen were informed of the new requirements during the October 2015 deadline for mandatory fishing vessel safety exams for those operating in federal waters and the life raft requirements which will become effective later this year and in 2017.

Fishing vessel safety exams for those operating in federal waters is on hold. The MLA submitted comments to the state Department of Marine Resources regarding the new requirements and other actions that may affect the lobster industry. Over the past year, the MLA spent a considerable amount of time attending meetings and talking with fishermen, government officials and other stakeholders on the proposed Sargasso Sea dredge project which is now on hold. The MLA submitted comments to the state highlighting the many concerns that have been voiced from local fishermen on the project.

Keeping Maine’s lobster industry profitable

Profitability has been a major concern in the lobster industry since the international financial crisis in 2008. The economic situation has had its ups and downs since then. During the past seven years, the MLA has worked to put tools in place to stabilize profitability. In addition to working with lobstermen and dealers to improve lobster handling and lobster quality, the MLA added its voice to many others in lobbying the Legislature to establish and adequately fund a marketing program for Maine lobster.

As a result of our collective efforts, the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative was established in 2013.

Since then, the MLA regularly attends Collaborative meeting to monitor its activities and provide accountability back to lobstermen. MLA staff and board members also regularly attend the annual Seafood Expo North America (formerly the Boston Seafood Show) to stay up-to-date on international seafood marketing efforts.

Keeping Lobstermen Healthy and Safe

2015 marked the completion of MLA’s second year helping fishermen and their families get health insurance through the Affordable Care Act. Since we began this work, the MLA has assisted hundreds of fishing families along the coast in understanding the health insurance options available to them and completing enrollments.

In the fall, MLA staff took part in our first health insurance Navigator, April Kezer, who made the MLA a go-to resource for fishermen with health insurance questions.

The MLA then welcomed Alisha Kezer who has ably filled April’s shoes and taken MLA’s health insurance assistance to a new level.

The MLA provides a go-to resource for many students, universities and other organizations seeking information on the lobster industry.
The MLA Directors met on January 6 in Belfast. Matt Jacobson, Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative director, updated the Board on the Collaborative’s accomplishments and its goals for 2016.

“Ninety percent of Maine lobster sold nationally goes to restaurants. But we are only on the menu four percent of the time. Lobster of any kind is on the menu just 17% of the time,” Jacobson told the MLA. “How can we change that?”

The Collaborative’s response has been to focus on upscale casual restaurants where chefs develop flavors and styles that can become mainstream. In 2015, the Collaborative brought chefs, restaurateurs and food journalists together with Maine lobstersmen and lobster at hosted events in New York City and Chicago. At those gatherings many chefs ordered lobster on the spot. MLA will build on this success in 2016 by further connecting Maine lobstersmen to the culinary worlds in New York, Atlanta and Washington, D.C.

Jacobson views lobstersmen as shareholders in his organization’s efforts to promote Maine lobster. The Collaborative will hold media trainings for lobstersmen during the Maine Fishermen’s Forum and schedule other trainings with groups like the MLA. Lobstersmen will be invited to take part in the Collaborative’s 2016 presentations. The Collaborative will produce a quarterly report card to measure the results of its work and provide accountability to the industry, in addition to its annual meeting which is held during the Maine Fisherman’s Forum.

The MLA briefly discussed the effects of El Nino this year, specifically the warm ocean temperatures. The lobster industry must remain vigilant in tracking these changing ocean conditions and prepare for potential impacts on the lobster market. The MLA board highlighted the need to focus on the best quality and handling practices since we can’t control the weather. Ocean observation data in 2015 show temperatures returning to 10-year averages or cooler, but then jumping to the 10-year highs in December and January. If the strong El Nino continues, this could translate into very warm spring ocean water temperatures reminiscent of 2012.

Kristan Porter told the board that there will be a session on the Forum on Thursday afternoon with fishermen from Alaska, Australia and other parts of the world discussing their observations of changes in their areas.

Continued on page 10

MAINE LOBSTERMEN’S ASSOCIATION UPDATE

News You Can Use

Highflyers Required on Offshore Lobster Gear

Major Cloutier informed the Lobster Advisory Council in January that Marine Patrol will soon be actively enforcing federal offshore gear marking requirements in place outside of 12 miles.

Federal law requires that lobster trap trawls fished outside 12 miles (North of 42°20’ ) must have a radar reflector and a single flag or pennant on the westernmost end (marking the half compass circle from magnetic south through west, to and including north), while the easternmost end (meaning the half compass circle from magnetic north through east, to and including south) must be configured with a radar reflector only. Standard tetrahedral corner radar reflectors of at least 8 inches (20.32 cm) (both in height and width and made from metal) must be employed. Furthermore, no American lobster trap trawl shall exceed 1.5 nautical miles (2.78 km) in length, as measured from radar reflector to radar reflector.

We Need Your Input!

NOAA is planning to conduct a hydrographic survey of inshore Penobscot Bay in 2016 using the 123-foot twin-hulled ship R/V Ferdinand Hassler. Previous surveys resulted in gear conflicts with lobstersmen in southern Maine. NOAA is seeking feedback on the scope and location of the area proposed for survey and the survey window that will minimize gear conflict with the lobster industry.

Licensing Bill Summary

LD 1503, An Act To Create a Class II Limited Lobster and Crab Fishing License and Improve the Limited Entry System, is scheduled for public hearing before the Marine Resources Committee on February 10, 2016 at 10 am. This bill contains provisions to improve the lobster fishery’s entry system and address latent effort.

LD 1503 proposes to address the waiting list in three ways:

- Change the exit ratio from tags or licenses to licenses for all lobster zones.
- Extend the age a student can obtain a commercial license from before you turn 18 and obtain a high school diploma or GED in order to be eligible for only 300 tags and license and marketing fees that are half those for the full Class II license. A lobsterman who purchases this license, cannot go purchase a regular commercial license in future years. This license is not counted toward the exit ratio until it is retired. The existing over 70 half price licenses are eliminated.

Continued on page 10

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lies with the waiting list? Should students be required to have a diploma or GED? There are many successful lobstermen who don't have those. Should the provision be to a student be waived altogether? Some believe we should create incentives for fishermen to be well educated. Many raised concerns over letting an additional 53 students into the zones if the provision were implemented retroactively. The MLA Board worried that these two provisions could actually result in increased effort in the fishery, which is not acceptable. There were strong concerns that using licenses as currency will increase effort on the water as latent licenses may be replaced with active licenses. Students are already getting in, and also a lot of latency that has been activated by the commercial lobster license holders. Others worry that so many lobstermen have survived lean times in the past. If lobster stocks take a downturn, or if the offshore fishery dries up and that effort moves back inshore, younger people will not make it if we continue to bring more lobstermen into the fishery. Others fear that this scenario would set Maine up for future trap reductions. It seems like a risky proposition, given that scientists have predicted there could be a downturn in the fishery based on lobster settlement. Maine's lobster fishery is one of the most sustainable fisheries in the world. We've gotten many things right and have a lot to lose if we make the wrong changes. There is inevitably pressure to access the fishery during times of success and profitability. Comparable fisheries around the world are either closed or there is a high cost of entry into the fishery. Maine's lobster fishery is successful because of our conservation practices, stewardship and co-management through the zones. The public hearing for LD 1503 is Feb 10 at 10 a.m. MLA Directors met on February 3 for a workshop to further discuss the bill.

The Lobster Advisory Council had a full audience when it met in January to discuss Rep. Walter Kunkiega’s bill to revamp the licensing system for commercial lobstermen. Photo by P. McCarron.

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**LOBSTER ADVISORY COUNCIL**

The LAC met on January 19 to discuss LD 1503 and vote on its proposals. The LAC voted unanimously to oppose changing the currency for exit ratios to licenses. The LAC supports the status quo which allows the zones the option to base exit ratios on licenses or tags.

The LAC voted unanimously to support expanding the student license program, so that students would have to complete the Apprentice Program before they turn 23 (rather than 18 which is currently in place) in order to obtain a commercial license without going on the waiting list. The LAC voted only on this provision and did not vote on the other proposals to the student license (such as starting before age 18, the requirement to have a HS diploma or GED, or whether or not this provision should be implemented retroactively).

The LAC unanimously supported changes to the Island Limited Entry program so that Apprentices who wish to participate in an island's program do not need to test shipments of live lobster arriving in China. The Chinese are not requiring testing of lobsters arriving in China. NOAA has responded by implementing an annual monitoring program for lobsters arriving in China. Therefore, NOAA is proposing that this testing program be implemented in the U.S. and Canada so that both fisheries operate under the same export standards.

**MAINE TO IMPLEMENT JONAH CRAB PLAN**

In accordance with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) Jonah Crab Plan adopted in August 2015, Maine DMR has proposed rules to implement size and possession limits for Jonah crabs. These new requirements include setting a minimum size of 4.75 inches; making it unlawful to possess egg-bearing, female Jonah crab; making it unlawful to possess mutilated Jonah crabs on board a vessel and making it unlawful for recreational possession of more than 50 Jonah crabs per person per 24-hour day. In addition, the proposed rulemaking consolidates three pre-existing regional and seasonal limits on crab.

**LOBSTER EXPORTS TO CHINA**

NOAA Fisheries Office of International Affairs and Seafood Inspection has updated key lobster industry members, including the MLA, on an emerging trade issue with China. China has been reviewing the inspection standards for much of the food it imports. The Chinese visited the U.S. during last summer to review NOAA Seafood Inspection program and, specifically, lobster. NOAA reports that the Chinese did not voice any concern over the controls in place regarding the export of lobster at that time. However, in early December, 2015, NOAA received a report from the Chinese that they have concerns and plan to test all shipments of live lobster arriving in China. Since testing could take five to seven days, this could result in high losses of live shipments.

NOAA has responded by implementing an annual monitoring program for lobster. Testing would take place on a quarterly basis so that the Chinese would not need to test shipments of live lobster arriving in China. The Chinese are expected to visit Canada in April to look at similar issues with lobster exports. Therefore, NOAA is proposing that this testing program be implemented in the U.S. and Canada so that both fisheries operate under the same export standards.

**DO YOU NEED A LIFE RAFT?**

The Coast Guard has pushed back the deadline on the life raft requirement for vessels fishing outside of three miles to November 1, 2016. For those vessels that operate exclusively in warm water (inside 20 nautical miles from the coastline from July 1 through September 30), the requirement is pushed back until February 1, 2017. The Coast Guard had originally targeted February 2016 for implementation. See the January issue of Landings for more details.

**DMR ONLINE LICENSING**

Still no news on the launch of the DMR’s new online licensing system. You can renew your license the old-fashioned way by contacting the Licensing Division at 624-6550 and having an application mailed to you, or you can download one from the DMR website. Fishermen should check the DMR website often for updates on when the online renewal system will be available.

**LOBSTER CRABS VS. JONAH CRABS**

Jonah crabs are often confused with rock crab (C. irroratus) although the species are biologically and taxonomically distinct. This confusion is largely due to overlapping habitat and numerous regional common names attributed to both species. The two species can be distinguished in a few ways. First, rock crabs have smooth-edged teeth on the edge of the carapace, whereas Jonah crabs have rough-edged teeth on their carapace edge. Second, rock crabs have purplish-brown spots on the carapace while Jonah crabs have yellow spots. Lastly, Jonah crabs can be slightly larger than rock crabs.
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plish-brown spots on the carapace while Jonah crabs have yellow spots. Lastly, 
Jonah crabs can be slightly larger than rock crabs.

Deadline for comments: February 19, to Hannah Dean, Maine DMR, 21 State 
House Station, Augusta, Maine 04333. (207) 624-6573.

Public Hearing: February 9, at 6 p.m., DMR Conference Room, Marquardt 
Building, 32 Blossom Lane, Augusta.

IS YOUR GHOST GEAR STILL FISHING?

How long do your lobster traps continue to fish after you lose gear? According to 
researchers at the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences (VIMS) and the 
Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, longer than you might think!
Research has shown the ferrous hog rings that are not exposed to air corrode 
very slowly, while those that are hauled regularly (and exposed to the air) de-
grade very quickly. A great number of ghost panels have found ghost panels still 
intact in lobster gear that had been lost for at least five years. The Massachusetts 
study found that ghost panels did not fail after two full years on the bottom.

Discussions are underway to explore more effective methods to incorporate 
ghost panels into lobster traps.

MLA COMMENTS ON ASMFC HERRING PLAN

In November, the ASMFC Atlantic Herring Section approved the Public Hearing 
Document for Draft Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan 
(FMP) for Atlantic Herring. The draft amendment recognized that the herring 
stock has rebuilt since the 1990’s. There is now a broad range of age classes with 
older and larger fish when compared to the stock during overfished conditions.

The amendment was initiated to strengthen spawning protections in Area 1A 
(inshore Gulf of Maine) and address concerns raised by the commercial fishing 
industry. The Public Hearing Document proposes 1) alternatives to the spawn-
ning monitoring program (protocol, default start dates, area boundaries, and 
length of the closure period); 2) removing the fixed gear set-aside rollover pro-
vision; and 3) requiring a vessel’s fish hold to be emptied before leaving on a 
fishing trip.

MLA comments:
The Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA) is providing comments on the pro-
posals under consideration in the Draft Amendment 3 to the Atlantic Herring 
FMP document. MLA is Maine’s oldest and largest fishing industry organiza-
tion whose mission is to advocate for a sustainable lobster resource and the 
fishermen and communities that depend on it.

Maine’s lobster industry is worth well over a billion dollars and our coastal 
ecoconomy depends on its success. In 2014, Maine’s 5,000 lobstermen landed 
neary 125 million pounds for the third year in a row, valued at more than $450 
million. Maine lobster accounted for nearly 80% of the value of all seafood 
landed in Maine and is by far our state’s most valuable fishery. While official 
statistics are not yet available for 2015, industry feedback has indicated that 
the 2015 has been another strong and profitable year for Maine lobstermen.

Maine lobstermen are the primary consumers of Atlantic herring. Fresh her-
ring continues to be the preferred baits choice of most Maine lobstermen and 
many depend solely on herring to bait their lobster traps. Lobstermen need 
bait to fish, therefore the MLA has a strong vested interest in sustaining the 
herring stock and herring fishery over the long term.

The MLA supports the premise of Draft Amendment 3—we want to see effec-
tive measures in place to protect the spawning stock to help ensure the long-
term sustainability of the herring resource and fishery. As noted in the public 
hearing document, the herring stock has rebuilt since the 1990’s and there is 
now a broad range of age classes with older and larger fish when compared to 
the stock during overfished conditions. Therefore, it appears that the existing 
management plan has been effective and there is no pressing need to make 
changes unless they further improve the health of the herring stock in a man-
ner that does not negatively impact the harvest of the resource and a steady 
bait supply.

The ASMFC’s work to manage the herring fishery significantly and directly 
impacts Maine’s lobster fishery. For example, during the 2015 fishing season, 
the bait supply experienced many interruptions, which cost the lobster fishery 
time and money. The second trimester Area 1A fishery had been predicted to 
last through September but was closed abruptly on August 28; the third trimes-
ter 1A fishery barely lasted one month closing in early November: the Area 3 
fishery was closed on October 22; and the inshore spawning closures were in 
place coast-wide from August 15 to November 4. The impacts of these com-
bined factors on Maine’s lobster fishery included a short-term lack of bait for 
some lobstermen resulting in time out of the fishery. Most of these lobstermen 
had to scramble to find alternate bait sources in order to resume fishing. And 
most lobstermen along the Maine coast experienced spikes in the price of bait 
due to the unexpected lack of supply.

Spawning herring need to be protected to ensure the continued sustainabil-
ity of the fishery. The MLA has long supported spawning protections, particu-
larly the earlier program that included a 20% tolerance. This approach worked 
well for Maine and allowed for strong protections of spawning herring with 
the least interruption to the fishery. It is important to consider how all of the 
management requirements combine to affect the herring fleet’s ability to catch 
fish during the period when demand for bait is highest. It has been challenging 
under the current management structure to keep a steady supply of herring 
landings during the late summer and fall months.

With regard to the specific proposals in draft Amendment 3, the MLA does 
not feel that we have enough information to confidently support one proposed 
option over another. The MLA would support the option that has the least in-
terruption to the commercial fishery (4 week closures versus 6 week closures) 
if it provides adequate protection for the fish. To ensure the least interruption 
of the bait supply, the MLA would support a four week closure with sampling 
during the last week of the closure to determine if it should be extended for an 
additional two weeks. Under this scenario, the samples should be obtained in a 
timely manner so that the closure remains in place without interruption.

The MLA does support the additional flexibility proposed in several of the op-
tions to obtain fish samples from outside the commercial fishery to provide 
flexibility and help ensure that adequate samples are obtained if the herring 
fleet is not operating in a particular area. The MLA did not see any justification 
in the document to change the spawning area boundaries.

Finally, the MLA is concerned about the reported dumping of unsold herring 
at sea if there is a bottle neck in the supply chain when the fish are landed. 
The demand for fresh herring is very strong in the Maine lobster industry and 
there is a strong market for every single herring that is landed. The MLA sup-
ports implementing provisions to prevent the dumping of fish, and requiring 
an empty fish hold prior to trip departure could address this issue. However, 
it is important to engage the herring fleet directly in this discussion as they are 
the ones involved in the harvest and sale of those fish and may be able to pro-
vide alternate solutions to address this issue.

Overall, the herring stock has rebuilt and is stable. We applaud the Commission 
for seeking out options to further improve the overall health of the herring 
fishery. Given the lobster industry’s strong dependence on the Atlantic herring 
fishery for our bait supply, please carefully consider the implications of further 
interrupting the herring fishery since this will greatly impact the Maine lobster 
fishery during the late summer and fall months. Thank you for your considera-
tion of these comments.

Sincerely, Patrice McCarron

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MARKETING MAINE LOBSTER IN 2016

Come join us at the 2016 Fisherman’s Forum on March 4th where MLMC executive director Matt Jacobson and representatives from Maine Lobster’s global marketing firm, Weber Shandwick, will share key learnings from 2015—as well as the 2016 plan for buoying interest in Maine Lobster. The 2016 plan will focus on growing demand for Maine New Shell Lobster among chefs and culinary professionals as the primary audience, with a secondary focus on media, influencers and consumers.

Annual Report to the Industry

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Applied Refrigeration Services
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Back River Financial Group
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Bessy Bait, LLC
Seabrook, NH -- $5 discount per drum on multiple drum purchases (must show current MLA card).

Coastal Hydraulics
Seabrook, NH -- 10% discount on all in stock items for MLA members.

Commercial Fisheries News
Deer Isle, ME -- Discounted annual subscription rate for $18.75 with MLA membership noted on check.

Craig’s All Natural
Durham, NH -- 10% discount on all Victinox Cutlery.

Friendship Trap Company
Friendship, ME -- 5% off list price on traps purchased at the Friendship store. Cannot be combined with other discounts.

Hamilton Marine
Searsport, Rockland, Portland, Southwest Harbor, Jonesport, ME -- Discounts available to commercial fishermen.

Hews Company, LLC
South Portland, ME -- 10% off all hydraulic components and Cable Craft cables in 2015.

Law Office of J. Scott Logan, LLC
Portland, ME -- 20% discount on foreclosure defense and bankruptcy legal fees.

Liferaft Services, LLC
York, ME -- 5% off liferaft repack with proof of MLA membership. CAN be combined with other promotions.

Maine Camp Outfitters
Sunset, ME -- 10% off all apparel and promotional product orders.

Maine Design Company
Appleton, ME -- 10% discount to surveys on lobster boats. Must be an MLA member & mention this listing to get discount.

Maine Lobstermen’s Association
Kennebunk, ME -- 10% off MLA merchandise.

Maine Maritime Museum
Bath, ME -- Free admission to MLA members.

McMillan Offshore Survival Training
Belfast, ME -- 10% discount on USCG Drill Conductor training.

Midcoast Marine Electronics
Rockland, ME -- 10% off list price on all marine electronic products.

National Fisherman
North Hollywood, CA -- Special annual subscription rate.

New England Propeller Inc
Plymouth, MA -- Discounts on marine propeller, shafting, and related items, sales & repairs.

Nicholas H Walsh PA
Portland, ME -- 20% off legal services.

North Atlantic Power Products
Exeter, NH -- 10% discount on parts and service.

Penobscot Marine Museum
Searsport, ME -- Free admission for MLA members.

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Scarborough, ME -- 5% off trap list price when you show your MLA card.

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SW Boatworks
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Weathervane Seafood Inc.
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Winter Harbor Fishermen’s Coop
Winter Harbor, ME -- 10% off picked lobster meat.
OBSTROY TRAP TAG WASHES UP IN SOUTHERN ENGLAND

Jay Butler and a group of volunteers from his town of Ovingdean, East Sussex, on the south shore of England, were cleaning trash from their local beach in January when he came across a Maine lobster trap tag. He contacted the Maine Lobstermen's Association to share the information with us, and to make Maine lobstermen aware of the amount of commercial fishing trash found in this area.

"We are well aware that a large quantity of the garbage which accumulates on our beaches originates from the eastern seaboard of the USA. A group of volunteers including myself regularly litter pick our local beaches and the vast majority of what we find is generated by commercial fishing. My point for sending this message is to ask that you might convey a message to all of your members that any items, however small, which are discarded overboard will have environmental consequences which are further reaching than they might imagine. At least one million seabirds and one hundred thousand marine mammals die each year due to plastic pollution."

As the accompanying picture shows, these English beach cleaners operate at the Maine Fishermen’s Forum or call us. Classes being scheduled in Stonington, Belfast, Rockland, Harpswell, Portland.

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By Paul Withers, CBC News, reprinted with permission.

Federal fisheries scientists say their most recent sampling of juvenile lobster in southwest Nova Scotia indicates a decade-long trend of abundant populations is holding steady. "It’s closer to the long-term average. Not the extreme high or low. Somewhere along the middle of what we’ve seen," said Adam Cook, a federal research scientist.

Canada’s Fisheries and Oceans department has three sites in southwest Nova Scotia where it captures juvenile lobsters after they settle to the ocean floor. Two methodologies are used; Diver-based suction sampling and passive collectors in boxes placed on the ocean floor. Both quantitatively newly-hatched and older juvenile lobsters at the end of the larval settlement season between August and October. Fisheries and Oceans hopes settlement sampling can be a predictor of future populations when they mature to market size in seven or eight years. "We are cautiously optimistic," Cook said of the fall 2015 survey.

Cause for caution
Cook says they’re years away from establishing a baseline. Settlement sampling can be a predictor of future populations when they mature to market size in seven or eight years. "We are cautiously optimistic," Cook said of the fall 2015 survey.

"We are seeing some of the highest abundances we’ve seen on record... These are some of the highest landings we’ve ever seen." 

Many factors have been put forward to explain the increase, including a corresponding decline in the population of codfish which prey on juvenile lobster. According to federal statistics, in the past year Nova Scotia exported 34,331 tonnes of lobster (76,127,824 lbs.) valued at C$576 million.

The department has no experience to compare with lower lobster populations in the 1980s and 1990s and says time would also smooth out any variables between sites. "The more places where you get those extremes, the broader the variability the less certain you are of the central tendency or where the middle is, or what is the average," Cook said in an interview at the Bedford Institute of Oceanography. In the Gulf of Maine, where identical sampling has been underway since the 1980s, recent years have shown a decline in young lobsters.

Europe and China, as their currency will be more attractive as these currencies weaken relative to the dollar as well.

It is likely that the Canadian currency will weaken harder and faster. Although a benefit to exporters, the weak currency could have other costs for the Canadian economy. It will make things like orange juice, coffee and warm water shrimp more expensive, and will make it harder for Canadians to take vacations in the U.S. Eventually Canadian banks may have to raise interest rates, and that could push the country into a recession.

For 2016 however, the weak Canadian dollar should help hold down prices on principal commodities like lobster, salmon and crab.

Lavallée continued from page 3

fishermen are in order to get more people to attend," Lavallée said. "My feeling is that if the scientific community wants support for its work then it must make that work relevant and accessible."

According to Lavallée the focus in the Maritime Provinces right now should be on instituting best practices throughout the lobster industry. "The goal is to make sure that we harvest, transport and ship lobsters in the best way possible."

"These are common sense things, like don’t leave the lobsters out in the rain, don’t put them in a tank without running water or leave them on deck when it’s hot."

Lavallée admits that he’s often found Canadian lobstermen a tough audience. "Usually when I first talk they think I’m some city boy from Montreal telling them what to do with their lobsters. But often there will be some guy who’s been fishing for 60 years who will come up to me afterward and say that he’s learned something from me about lobsters that he didn’t know before."

All those meetings and travels have had some clear results. Lavallée recounted the change in behavior among New Brunswick lobstermen after he held a series of lobster health workshops there two years ago. The lobstermen often would haul through their 325 traps each day, leaving the lobsters in a tub of sea water on the deck. On hot August days, that water soon warmed up and was depleted of oxygen, weakening the lobsters. "Now, when it’s really hot weather they will fish only half their traps and then come back in because they know those lobsters won’t last. The buyers were calling me to say what a difference it made in the product," Lavallée said.

It is likely that the Canadian currency will weaken harder and faster. Although a benefit to exporters, the weak currency could have other costs for the Canadian economy. It will make things like orange juice, coffee and warm water shrimp more expensive, and will make it harder for Canadians to take vacations in the U.S. Eventually Canadian banks may have to raise interest rates, and that could push the country into a recession.

For 2016 however, the weak Canadian dollar should help hold down prices on principal commodities like lobster, salmon and crab.


The Canadian dollar is headed back to some of its weakest levels ever against the U.S. dollar, as 100 was 65 cents back in 2001. A new report from the Société Générale bank says that the value of the Canadian dollar is the most tied to oil prices of any currency, even more so than the Russian ruble. With oil prices threatening to go below $30 per barrel (which occurred in late January), the Canadian dollar could easily fall below 70 or 71 cents, where it is currently trading.

The weak Loonie is a boon to seafood exporters, and will also serve to keep prices down in the U.S for Canadian products like salmon, lobster and crab. The weak currency will also boost Canadian exports to the UK, Europe and China, as their currency will be more attractive as these currencies weaken relative to the dollar as well.

Europe and China, as their currency will be more attractive as these currencies weaken relative to the dollar as well.
GOT BAIT? DMR BAIT LIST FINALIZED

By Melissa Waterman

In 2012, the state Legislature gave the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) authority to review and prohibit the use of any freshwater or marine organism as lobster and crab bait that poses an unacceptable risk to the marine environment and consumers. The new authority was in response to the growing use by lobstermen of frozen bait made up of species caught on the West Coast, in fresh water or abroad. Those species potentially could introduce diseases and pests into Maine’s coastal waters.

A survey of bait dealers in 2013 revealed that 42 different species of fish were being sold as lobster bait. DMR hired Kennebec River Biosciences to assess the risk from those species to Maine coastal waters and creatures. The firm reviewed the risks based on possible pathogens carried, the toxicity threat to lobsters, and larger ecological consequences. Viruses such as viral hemorrhagic septicemia and white spot syndrome were known to have entered the U.S. via frozen seafood imports.

The new bait rules went into effect in June, 2015. “We’ve seen no effect from the list,” said Wyatt Anderson, head of bait operations at O’Hara Corporation in Rockland. “Carp was banned but we didn’t carry it anyway,” Seth Anderson, who oversees O’Hara’s frozen bait department, also said the prohibited bait list hadn’t caused him trouble. “Some guys want orange roughy but that’s no big deal. In fact the list helped me out. Before I didn’t have room for what I sell the most [rockfish, herring and pogies] because I had to stock all those other things in the freezers.” Jennie Bichrest, owner of Purse Line Bait in Harpswell, thinks that DMR did the right thing to create the prohibited list but has taken too long to implement the rules. “DMR was trying to do the right thing by giving us time to get rid of what we had. Some guys gave DMR a bunch of bull about how much stuff like carp they had in stock. So they have until May to sell it. One or two guys are gaming the system and it fries my butt,” she said.

She is also concerned about the requirement to get approval from DMR to sell a species found on the East Coast, like fluke. “I thought that originally the aim was to get rid of the oddball stuff, bait from freshwater or the Pacific Ocean. I was told that if I wanted to sell fluke from New Jersey it would have to be sent in Rockland. “Carp was banned but we didn’t carry it anyway.” Seth Anderson, head of bait operations at O’Hara Corporation, said Wyatt Anderson, said that nothing is used that has diseases endemic to that species.

DMR director of marine policy and management Deirdre Gilbert explained the agency’s point of view. “If the species is not on the list now then a bait dealer does not have to contact us. When they do, the species is referred to the bait review team, which does a literature search and risk assessment scoring to determine if there’s a possible problem. We only go to the testing phase if something is flagged by the team,’ she said. Even if the literature indicates that a pathogen or disease is associated with the species, there may be ways to mitigate that risk. “It could be that there is no risk if the bait species comes in frozen, for example, or in some other form,” Gilbert said. “The department is primarily concerned that nothing is used that has diseases endemic to that species.

### MARINE APPROVED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Restrictions</th>
<th>Region of Origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any Species in the NEFMC Groundfish Complex</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gulf of Maine or Georges Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic Cod</td>
<td></td>
<td>US East Coast &amp; Canada East Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic Herring</td>
<td></td>
<td>US East Coast &amp; Canada East Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croaker</td>
<td></td>
<td>US East Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halibut</td>
<td></td>
<td>Atlantic &amp; Pacific Ocean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinky (aka rockfish, long/short spinyhead, skidfl0, (Genus Sebastolobus)</td>
<td>Must be frozen</td>
<td>US West Coast &amp; Canada West Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lingcod</td>
<td></td>
<td>Atlantic &amp; Pacific Ocean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mackerel</td>
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<td>US East Coast, Japan, &amp; Portugal</td>
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<td>Mullet (Genus Mugilidae)</td>
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<td>US &amp; Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange Roughy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Australia &amp; New Zealand</td>
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<td>Pollock</td>
<td></td>
<td>Atlantic Ocean only</td>
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<td>Redfish</td>
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<td>N. Atlantic Ocean &amp; Pacific Ocean</td>
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<tr>
<td>Red Alphonso</td>
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<td>NE Atlantic Ocean</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roundnose Grenadier</td>
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<td>River herring (alewife, blueback herring)</td>
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<td>Maine</td>
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<td>Sablefish</td>
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<td>Alaska &amp; Western Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shad</td>
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<td>Sole</td>
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<td>Tuna</td>
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<td>North Pacific Ocean</td>
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### MARINE PROHIBITED

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Region of Origin</th>
<th>Unacceptable Risk</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>New Zealand</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonito</td>
<td>Panama West Coast</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cobia</td>
<td>South Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean Sea</td>
<td>Unknown pathogen status</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cod</td>
<td>US West Coast &amp; Canada West Coast</td>
<td>Possibility of exotic agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flatfish</td>
<td>Pacific Ocean</td>
<td>Possibility of exotic agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hake</td>
<td>US West Coast</td>
<td>Exotic pathogens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horseshoe Crab</td>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>Possibility of invarious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pollock</td>
<td>Pacific Ocean</td>
<td>Exotic pathogens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Sardine (South American Pilchard)</td>
<td>US West Coast &amp; Canada West Coast</td>
<td>Exotic pathogens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snapper</td>
<td>Panama West Coast</td>
<td>Exotic pathogens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tilapia</td>
<td>Panama West Coast</td>
<td>Exotic pathogens</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Maine residents once again enrolled in Affordable Care Act health insurance plans in record numbers during the most recent enrollment period, which ended on January 31. More than 79,000 Mainers had enrolled in health insurance plans by January 16, according to federal officials. Last year, 66,118 enrolled in Maine.

We spoke with Alisha Keezer, the health insurance Navigator for the Maine Lobstermen’s Association, about the enrollment process and what she has experienced during the three-month enrollment period.

Who comes to you for assistance?

It’s a mix of all ages. I certainly wish more of the younger population would call. I’ve found that those who are under 40 years old generally can find affordable premiums even without receiving tax credits for coverage. The younger you are the more likely you are to get a good plan at an affordability price [54% of all enrollees in Maine are female; 33% are under age 35; 31% are between 55 and 64].

Do you see any patterns among those who you enroll?

Most of the people who call the MLA for assistance are coming in for the first time. They are people who generally have never had any health insurance.

Does it matter where a person lives in terms of health insurance costs?

Maine is broken down into four ratings areas. The closer you are to an area with doctors and medical infrastructure, the less your premiums will cost. For example, in Washington County the premiums are really high. If you look at a map of Maine counties you will see that the more rural the area, the higher the premiums. That makes it harder for people in those areas to afford insurance.

What do you think of the three health insurance companies offering plans in Maine (Harvard Pilgrim, Anthem, and Community Health Options, which closed new enrollment in December, 2015)?

As a Navigator, my job is to help consumers understand how each company’s options might fit their needs. In Maine, each company offer comparable plans. There are just little differences among them, like which doctors are “in network” options might fit their needs. In Maine, each company offer comparable plans.

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What do you do research on details like prescription coverage or in-network services so they choose a plan which meets their needs.

What do you enjoy about this work?

I’m helping people get something that is vital to their physical as well as financial well-being. As an example, there’s a lobsterman who fishes from Ogunquit. He has a wife and two children, one 8-months old and one 4-years old. He’s never had health insurance, just pays everything out of pocket. He contacted me early in this enrollment period but then just kept putting it off and putting it off. I knew he comes in to Kennebunkport to get his bait so I told him to just drop by the office sometime. And then I kept nagging him! He came in and found a very affordable plan. The nicest thing was that he wrote me an email to say thank you.

It’s important for people to realize that I am here for them not just when they sign up but also afterward, if they have any questions or problems. I’m not going to disappear!

Keezer helped more 200 Maine lobstermen and their families obtain affordable health insurance through the Affordable Care Act by January 31. Now she is available to assist those who may qualify for the special enrollment period and to help lobstermen and their families with Medicare enrollment as well.
MLA advised the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation on how regulations and lobster fishing practices can lead to lost fishing gear, attended NOAA’s marine debris conference which focused on derelict fishing gear, and served on the Steering Committee for the American Lobster in a Changing Ecosystem conference in Prince Edward Island during which the MLA presented on the economics of the Maine lobster fishery.

The MLA at the Legislature

The MLA is an active participant in Maine’s legislative process, interacting regularly with the Marine Resources Committee and state legislators. In 2015, MLA attended public hearings and provided comments on more than ten pieces of legislation addressing an array of issues such as the lobster entry system, latent effort and enforcement of marine laws. The MLA was one of many voices successfully urging the Legislature to keep the St. Croix River open to allow the passage of alewives.

MLA in Policy and Management

Lobster is a public resource, and with that status comes a vast array of management and regulatory issues. The MLA keeps track of all of them, and works to ensure that when the dust settles, Maine lobstermen are still fishing and able to make a living.

Whale Rules

When it came to the whale rules, 2015 was a busy year. The MLA worked with DMR and lobstermen to identify ways to reduce the risk from vertical lines in the water that the Maine lobster industry could live with. This included zone-by-zone trawling up measures which increase as a vessel moves offshore. Importantly, these rules included the creation of the 6-mile line which lessened the length of trawls needed at the 3-mile line. The original proposal required trawling up immediately at 3 miles out to twelve miles.

Following the initial implementation of the whale rules, the MLA helped lead the effort to exempt a ¼-mile buffer around Maine’s islands from the trawling up requirements. The MLA attended the Take Reduction Team meetings, submitted written comments and distributed information to the industry.

The MLA commented on NOAA’s proposal to expand right whale critical habitat in the Gulf of Maine, urging them to scale it back even though NOAA determined written comments and distributed information to the industry.

The MLA at the Legislature

The MLA attended the Marine Mammal Commission’s Annual Meeting about the Maine lobster industry’s involvement in the Take Reduction Team process and on efforts to protect whales. The MLA prepared comments against NOAA’s proposed rule to implement a ban on seafood imports that do not meet U.S. marine mammal protection standards. The MLA also participated in the review of NOAA’s Protected Resources program.

The MLA is a member of the Consortium for Wildlife Bycatch Reduction based at the New England Aquarium, and continues to work with scientists to find operationally-feasible methods to reduce whale entanglements in lobster gear.

Habitat and Cod Bycatch

The MLA tracked the development of the New England Fishery Management Council’s (NEFMC) Habitat Amendment. The MLA attended public hearings and provided comments to ensure that lobster gear is not excluded from any of the revised habitat areas. The MLA also weighed in on the highly politicized debate over the rate and impact of cod bycatch in lobster traps. The MLA emphasized that cod bycatch in lobster traps is rare; most cod caught in a trap are returned to the sea alive. The MLA has met with researchers at University of Maine who are studying this issue. So far, Maine lobstermen have not been affected by these regulations.

Herring

The MLA continually tracks herring management at the NEFMC and the ASMFC. The herring stock has rebuilt since the 1990’s and there is now a broad range of age classes with older and larger fish. The MLA is following development of NEFMC’s Amendment 8 which addresses the biological needs of Atlantic herring and its importance as a forage species. The amendment will consider a range of alternatives concerning the amount of herring that should be allocated to the commercial fishery. The final plan could be in force for the 2017 fishing year. The MLA monitors ASMFC’s days-out meetings to manage the inshore quota and tracks weekly landings. The MLA also tracked development of ASMFC’s Herring Amendment 3 which will implement stronger protections for spawning herring.

Shrimp

The MLA commented on ASMFC’s public information document to develop a new shrimp management plan. The MLA urged the Commission not to implement a limited entry system, but rather to implement a management plan.

Continued on page 21
A new wind-wave research facility to strengthen marine-related economic development in Maine, including boating, opened at the University of Maine with the help of an award from the Harold Alfond Foundation.

The foundation awarded a $3.9 million grant to UMaine to match $9.98 million already raised to establish the Ocean Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing Laboratories at the Advanced Structures and Composites Center on campus. The Harold Alfond Foundation’s award will help equip the facility, hire world-class engineers for the startup in 2015–16, and fund graduate and undergraduate students over three years. The new facility is called the W2 Alfond Ocean Engineering Laboratory in honor of philanthropist Harold Alfond, a longtime UMaine benefactor.

The ocean engineering facility will assist businesses in developing products for the ocean economy, including improved boat and ship hulls; ocean energy devices such as wind, wave and tidal energy converters; offshore facilities; and systems to protect coastal cities from the effects of erosion, sea-level rise and extreme storms.

Through it all, undergraduate and graduate students will receive hands-on training in the research and technology, joining more than 1,800 students who have gained real-world experience at the Advanced Structures and Composites Center since its inception in 1996.

"We are investing in people and infrastructure that will support ocean engineering and advanced manufacturing education and research, and grow Maine jobs," says Gregory Powell, chairman of the Harold Alfond Foundation.

The unique facility is equipped with a high-performance rotating wind machine over a wave basin, which can simulate some of the largest wind and wave storms seen on Earth. The basin will be an important resource for companies in Maine and throughout the world to develop next-generation ocean devices and structures.

"In an ocean state such as Maine, an important part of the economy revolves around our ability to harness the Gulf of Maine’s full potential, while protecting its delicate ecosystem," said Habib Dagher, executive director of the UMaine Composites Center and the BWI Professor of Structural Engineering.

The multipaddle wave basin has a rotatable wind machine, producing velocities up to 7 meters per second, for simultaneous application of scaled wind and wave environments for sophisticated floating body model testing. The concrete floor moves up and down to model ocean depths.

"These will be the only labs of their kind in Maine with world-class capabilities to educate students, and conduct cutting-edge research and development," says Dagher. "The R&D will support the growth of the ocean economies and shipbuilding sectors in Maine and the nation, as well as the growth of digital and additive manufacturing of thermoplastic composite materials."

The Advanced Manufacturing Laboratory for thermoplastic composites will utilize digital, additive and robotics manufacturing to reduce cycle time and cost. Structural thermoplastics are recyclable materials that can transform composite materials used in cars, ships, boats and aerospace applications.

In June, the Composites Center received $497,965 from the National Institute of Standards and Technology to develop a national road map for advanced manufacturing of structural thermoplastics composites materials.

The total construction, equipping, and startup of the new laboratories over the first three years will cost more than $13.8 million. Of that, the center had raised more than $9.98 million through four grant competitions, which included funding through the U.S. Economic Development Administration, National Science Foundation, National Institute of Standards and Technology, Maine Technology Institute and a voter-approved bond.

Commercial testing in the facility is expected to begin in April.

WAVES OF THE FUTURE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MAINE

by Margaret Nagle

Each week, MLA members receive an email with a selection of state, regional and international news items relevant to the lobster industry, as well as an overview of lobster, bait and fuel prices along the coast. MLA also maintains a FaceBook page and Web site to convey information to the public and to members. And, as many of you know, MLA staff are always available to answer calls and emails from members during business hours.

In addition to ongoing communications, the MLA serves as a source of information for its members on complicated issues. MLA regularly publishes summaries of complex rulemaking and tracks monthly herring landings and closures. During the spring of 2015, MLA published a comprehensive summary of the new whales to provide a user-friendly resource for lobstermen.

MLA’s Board of Directors meets monthly, except for August. Members are always welcome to attend these meetings or to reach out to any of the Directors to find out what is going on. MLA’s Directors regularly discuss issues facing the lobster industry as a whole and review how the MLA can best represent the interest of its members.

It’s a sign of the value that the MLA holds in Maine’s lobstering communities that the organization is still in business after 63 years. It’s a further sign of the dedication of its board of directors and staff that so much can be accomplished in a single year with so few paid employees. I hope that you all take pride in your Association’s efforts on your behalf during this past year. See you at the Annual Meeting in March!

The MLA Board hosted scientists from the Gulf of Maine Research Institute to track changes in ocean temperatures. The MLA has many meetings, regulations and issues that affect the lobster industry. MLA keeps every lobsterman, not just its members, on top of the news through Landings, published and distributed monthly by our sister organization, the Maine Lobstermen’s Community Alliance. Landings includes the MLA pages, which include a round-up of MLA’s work on behalf of the industry.

The MLA Board did a thorough review of the MLA Vessel Insurance Program in 2015. The MLA offers comprehensive hull and P&I coverage at competitive rates through Smithwick & Mariners. The program offers additional discounts if you have a completed a Drill Conductor course within the last five years. Vessels insured through the program generally are not required to have the vessel surveyed for renewals and also does not require layup period. Any research- ers working aboard a vessel insured through the MLA program are automatically covered if the vessel carries P&I.

The MLA regularly collaborates with the region’s scientists and connects scientists and students with lobstermen who can assist in their research. In 2015, the MLA Board hosted scientists from the Gulf of Maine Research Institute to provide feedback on how to improve the model which predicts the timing of the lobster shuck. The MLA has developed a tool more relevant to fishermen. The MLA also supports NEFMC, which maintains part of the real-time oceanographic buoys in the Gulf of Maine and provides online tools to track changes in ocean temperatures. The MLA serves the RED Board (Research, Education and Development Board or lobster license plate fund) and on the board of the Island Institute.

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Information you can Trust

The MLA believes that information is power and the association is committed to keeping our members – and the industry as a whole – informed about the many meetings, regulations and issues that affect the lobster industry. MLA keeps every lobsterman, not just its members, on top of the news through Landings, published and distributed monthly by our sister organization, the Maine Lobstermen’s Community Alliance. Landings includes the MLA pages, which include a round-up of MLA’s work on behalf of the industry.

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National Monument and Federal Observers

The MLA joined several other regional fishing associations in opposing designation of any National Monument in the Gulf of Maine under the Antiquities Act. Such a designation could permanently ban fishing and other activities in the area and could be expanded at any time in the future. MLA’s letter urged President Obama to implement any new ocean protections measures through existing the management process, namely the NEFMC which includes broad stakeholder input. The MLA also sent a letter to NMFS expressing concern over the expansion of the federal at-sea observer program to Maine lobstermen, and existing the management process, namely the NEFMC which includes broad stakeholder input. The MLA also sent a letter to NMFS expressing concern over the expansion of the federal at-sea observer program to Maine lobstermen, and existing the management process, namely the NEFMC which includes broad stakeholder input. The MLA also sent a letter to NMFS expressing concern over the expansion of the federal at-sea observer program to Maine lobstermen, and existing the management process, namely the NEFMC which includes broad stakeholder input. The MLA also sent a letter to NMFS expressing concern over the expansion of the federal at-sea observer program to Maine lobstermen, and existing the management process, namely the NEFMC which includes broad stakeholder input.
BANDAGES FROM LOBSTER SHELLS

A startup company in Maine is developing a children's bandage coated with a substance extracted from crushed lobster shells that promotes blood-clotting and is resistant to bacterial infection. The company, Lobster Tough LLC, shipped Maine lobster shells to a processor in Iceland for testing, and so far, the results are promising, said Thor Sigfusson, an Icelandic investor in the company. Chitosan, the blood-clotting compound found in lobster shells, is currently produced industrially by crushing shrimp shells and washing the solids with acids to remove inorganic materials and proteins. The U.S. Army has used field bandages treated with chitosan processed from shrimp shells.

The lobster shells must be dehydrated to remove weight and lower shipping costs. Lobster Tough this winter is shipping a portable dehydration machine from Iceland to Maine. The company eventually plans to build a $2 million dehydration plant somewhere on the Maine coast. The bandages would be the first commercial product developed through the New England Ocean Cluster, a new business incubator in Portland.

LOBSTER PROCESSING PLANT TO REOPEN ON P.E.I.

The former Mariner Seafoods processing plant in Brudenell, Prince Edward Island, which closed nearly three years ago, has a new owner. The facility was purchased by North Lake Fisheries, the same Los Angeles-based company that bought another P.E.I. fish plant in 2013. The plant will process lobster starting with the spring fishery in May. The company's goal is to maximize the plant's capacity, although a company spokesman would not say exactly how many jobs the plant will offer.

ROCKWEED HARVESTING PROMPTS LAWSUIT

Multiple alleged incidents of illegal rockweed harvesting have provided the catalyst for Pembroke property owners to file a civil lawsuit against Acadian Seaplants. The lawsuit seeks to determine who has ownership of intertidal rockweed.

The plaintiffs are Ken and Carl Ross and Roque Island Gardner Homestead Corporation. Marine regulators and industry members are currently working on a management plan to ensure rockweed is harvested sustainably. Harveters must have a license, but there is no limit on how much may be cut, raked or otherwise removed. Landings have quadrupled since 2003.

In Maine, rockweed has comprised over 95% of Maine's seaweed landings by weight over the past five years. An estimated 16.7 million pounds of rockweed was harvested in 2013, compared with 468,900 pounds of other seaweeds. Most rockweed in Maine is processed into two general product categories — nutritional supplements for animals and people and concentrated fertilizers. With a total estimated value of $20 million per year, rockweed is one of Maine's most valuable marine resources.

AND THE WINNERS ARE...

In early January, three Maine lobstermen found that they held the winning tickets to the Rockland Lobster Trap Tree. Travis Carter of Waldoboro, Fred Allen III of South Thomaston, and Quinten Toothaker of Harpswell each won 50 traps from Brooks Trap Mill. More than 340 tickets were sold at Brooks Trap Mill, Hamilton Marine, Camden National Bank, and The First for the Trap Tree, which was organized by Rockland Main Street. The proceeds support Rockland Main Street's community events.

PLASTICS IN THE OCEAN GOING UP

There is a lot of plastic trash floating in the world’s oceans. But that quantity pales in comparison to the amount that the World Economic Forum, a public-private nonprofit organization based in Switzerland, expects will be floating in the oceans by the middle of the century.

If the world continues to produce and improperly dispose of plastics at predicted rates, plastics in the ocean will outweigh fish pound for pound in 2050, according to the report released in January. Worldwide use of plastic has increased twenty-fold in the past 50 years, and it is expected to double again in the next 20 years. By 2050, the world will be making more than three times as much plastic stuff as it did in 2014. About a third of all plastics produced escape collection systems and often wind up in waterways and ultimately, the oceans. Currently, that amount is approximately 8 million metric tons of plastic a year.
NOAA announced in late January that critical habitat for endangered North Atlantic right whales has been expanded along the East Coast. The expanded critical habitat area includes the right whales’ northeast feeding area which encompasses the entire Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank and the southeast calving grounds from North Carolina to Florida. As defined under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), critical habitat within the range of the species consists of areas that contain physical or biological features essential to conservation of the species.

NOAA has stated that these new regulations will not affect commercial fishermen. "As part of its impact analysis, we concluded that commercial fishing activities, as currently conducted, are not expected to affect the essential features of right whale foraging habitat with the exception of a potential future directed copepod fishery. Gear restrictions currently in place to protect large whales, including right whales, were established by the regulations implementing the Marine Mammal Protection Act’s Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan. Changes to gear restrictions are beyond the scope of this rulemaking to designate critical habitat under the ESA. The Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team process is the proper venue to consider the adequacy of gear restrictions. Consequently, we are not making any changes to the current gear restrictions as part of this critical habitat rule," NOAA officials said in a statement.

Captain Colburn will participate in the session "Questioning our Changing Oceans" Thursday, March 3rd, 1 to 3pm Samoset Resort, Rockport, ME

DON'T MISS OUT!
He plans to be in attendance for the entire 3 day event.

Right Whale Critical Habitat Area Expanded

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Captain Keith Colburn from the series "Deadliest Catch" to speak at Maine Fishermen’s Forum!
LET’S GO TO THE BOSTON SEAFOOD SHOW!

MLA members are invited to attend the Boston Seafood Show!
(now the Seafood Expo North America)

You are paying to market Maine lobster. Come see for yourself how seafood is marketed and sold. This show is a must see!

When? Monday, March 7th, 2016
Where? Catch our coach in Bangor, Augusta, Portland, or Kennebunk.
Cost? $45 includes bus fare and entry to the show.
To register: call Andi at 967-4555 or email andi@mainelobstermen.org.
Pre-registration is required.
Please register by February 15th to reserve your seat.
Not a member? Become one now! 207-967-4555 or www.mainelobstermen.org/membership

A good partnership is hard to find.

That's why we value the relationship we have with Smithwick & Mariners Insurance. With discounts offered to MLA members and coverage solutions for every type of vessel, we're a team that can't be beat.

Our Vessel Insurance Program offers competitive rates, no layup period, and coverage for researchers working on your vessel if you carry P&I coverage.

Become part of the solution. Join the MLA and connect.

www.mainelobstermen.org/membership
207-967-4555 or andi@mainelobstermen.org

Garbo Lobster

We put our name on it

Garbo depends on the hard work and stewardship of Maine lobstermen.

Thank you!

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