Landings, vol. 25, no. 2

Maine Lobstermen's Community Alliance

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GET READY FOR THE ANNUAL MAINE FISHERMEN’S FORUM!

By Melissa Waterman

From March 2 to 4, the Samoset Resort in Rockport will be a loud and crowded place. The annual Maine Fishermen’s Forum will once again pack the conference rooms and hallways with those involved in the state’s many commercial fisheries. “This year’s Forum looks to be a great one,” said Chilloa Young, Forum organizer. “The Trade Show offers new exhibitors, and there will be some very interesting seminars this year. We are particularly excited about the Red Cross Training for CPR and First Aid Training which are being offered for the first time at the Forum. We encourage everyone to take advantage of this opportunity!”

Thursday kicks off a full day of presentations on Maine’s shellfish industry. The soft-shell clam harvest in 2015 brought more than $22 million to the state, making it an economic mainstay of Downeast Maine. Yet warming water may prompt more shellfish bed closures due to toxic phytoplankton, such as

Continued on page 11

COD ARE TOUGHER THAN YOU THINK

By Robert Boenish, UMaine

The commotion about cod bycatch has died down since the Marine Stewardship Council wrongly estimated in 2013 that 177,000 cod broke the surface in lobster traps each year. At the time, the New England Fisheries Management Council was preparing for a vote to close new areas sensitive to cod spawning. The Council voted against the measure, 14-1, prompting a sigh of relief from lob-

Continued on page 16

COLD WATER CORAL ZONES CONCERN LOBSTERMEN

By Melissa Waterman

Deep sea corals are pretty creatures. They live in colonies of individual polyps and create intricate structures in both warm and cold oceans. Cold water corals grow slowly; those living in the Gulf of Maine and the submarine canyons of the continental shelf may be thousands of years old. The problem facing fishermen in the Gulf of Maine is that these delicate and slow-growing organisms are found where they fish. A proposed management plan by the New England Fisheries Management Council (the Council) may make certain areas of the Gulf off-limits to fishermen in the future.

The Council is considering options to protect corals in four designated coral zones spanning about 161 miles of federal waters, specifically Mount Desert Rock, Outer Schoodic Ridge, Jordan Basin and Lindenkohl Knoll. Options under consideration include a prohibition of fishing. Of the four proposed zones, Mount Desert Rock and Outer Schoodic Ridge are of particular significance to Downeast lobstermen who fish in those areas throughout the year.

The Council began to pay attention to cold water corals during its Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Omnibus Amendment process in 2010-2012. Data analyzed during the EFH process showed existing coral areas in the Gulf of Maine; furthermore, the Gulf’s bathymetry suggested that it was likely there were other coral areas not yet discovered. After much deliberation, the Council decided to take coral protections out of the EFH Amendment and pursue a separate omnibus amendment to cover both deep-sea and inshore coral areas. The Council has discretionary authority to tackle this non-fishery objective through the 2007 reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Act, which

Continued on page 19
It’s hard to say much about the month of February, other than it’s short. The weather is rough, the temperatures are bitter, and there’s not much happening on the water other than scallop boats setting dredges and lobster boats working offshore.

Yet in reality there’s a lot going on. Hundreds of businesses, organizations, scientists and fishermen are getting ready for the annual Maine Fishermen’s Forum, which takes place the first weekend in March. As we note in this month’s Landings, the Forum is always packed with important seminars that reflect what’s happening in the New England fishing world today. Plus it’s the one time in the year when fishermen and their families from Maine’s many commercial fisheries can meet, argue and have a good time.

One of the topics sure to raise some voices at this year’s Forum is the New England Fisheries Management Council’s proposed regulations to protect cold water corals found in the Gulf of Maine. According to scientists, cold water corals grow very slowly; over hundreds if not thousands of years, and provide habitat for valuable species of fish. The extent of coral areas is not fully known, but potential damage from fishing gear has prompted the Council to propose specific management protections. Two areas are of concern to Maine lobstermen: Mount Desert Rock and Outer Schoodic Ridge. Landings reviews the process followed by the Council in creating the proposed regulations and actions that it will take in 2017.

There’s also a lot going on in the Maine Legislature. The new Joint Committee on Marine Resources, chaired by Senator Maker of Calais and Representative Kumiéga of Deer Isle, will be reviewing a variety of marine-related bills. The DMR has submitted four bills covering an array of issues ranging from marine debris, hide baits, and enforcement, to how Maine’s veterans may return to lobstering. Maine’s legislators have submitted 11 bills that would directly impact Maine’s veterans may return to lobstering. Maine’s legislative support Maine’s lobstering and the of Marine Resources Committee membership.

Meanwhile, the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative (MLMC) is entering its third year. Funded by a surcharge on the licenses of lobstermen, dealers and lobster processors, the Collaborative has made its mark by concentrating on chefs and food professionals on the East Coast, educating them on the versatility of Maine lobster as a menu ingredient. Matt Jacobson, MLMC executive director, reviews the Collaborative’s activities from last year and gives a hint of what’s to come in 2017.

An important topic for fishermen, in 2017 and in any year, is safety at sea. Fishing remains a dangerous occupation, which was highlighted last year with several tragic deaths. Existing survival craft requirements can be very confusing because they vary according to vessel type, distance offshore, time of year, and number of people onboard. In this month’s issue, Coast Guard District 1 Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety Coordinator Ted Harrington reviews Coast Guard regulations about life rafts.

The Maine Lobstermen’s Association has also been busy during these cold winter months. The MLA will be holding its 63rd Annual Meeting on March 3 at the Samoset Resort. All members are encouraged to attend. Later in the month, the MLA is offering a day trip to Seafood Expo North America, formerly known as the Boston Seafood Show. On Monday, March 20, lobstermen from throughout the state can climb aboard a chartered bus and head to Boston for the country’s largest seafood show, to see the thousands of offerings from seafood producers throughout the world.

In March, the MLA and the Maine Lobstermen’s Community Alliance will again host lobster veterinarian Jean Lavallée of Prince Edward Island for a second tour of the Maine coast to talk about lobster. Lavallée speaks on behalf of the lobster, explaining how its body functions and how and why it experiences stress. His presentations were so well-received last year that the two organizations decided to bring him south again.

Propriahandling practices apply not only to lobster but also to codfish. University of Maine graduate student Robert Boenish is studying cod that wander into lobster traps and are inadvertently brought to the surface. The issue is important because cod stocks are at very low levels in the Gulf of Maine. If lobster traps contribute to their mortality, regulations could be applied to lobstermen to limit the use of traps.

Maine has a long history of interactions with the sea. Searsport, for example, was once the nation’s leading sea-port in the years before the Civil War. Today the town looks to the sea again but in a very different way: as the location for the Maine Ocean School. The magnet school would be a high school that uses the sea as its organizing educational theme. A group of marine industry professionals has been working on the structure and funding mechanisms for the school since 2015. This month they go to the Legislature’s Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs with a draft curriculum. If approved, the proposal goes to the full Legislature for approval.

Winter is hard on both humans and boats, as our final story this month illustrates. Mort Morgan planned to haul a few of his traps on a cold day in January. Little did he know his boat had sunk on its mooring. Getting the boat from the bottom on a day when the temperature remained in the low teens was not easy! But it was successful, as our article shows. I hope that you enjoy this issue of Landings. We’d love to hear your feedback.
Keeping track of new laws and regulations is always a challenge but that challenge has been especially confusing and increasingly difficult for commercial fishermen these past few years. Most of that hardship can be attributed to the eb and flow of how laws and regulations are enacted and later changed.

To greatly simplify how the legislative system works, Congress makes a law that gives the Coast Guard authority to write the regulations to make the law effective. Any regulations that are written must be based upon the authority detailed in the law. The full regulatory process can take many years and sometimes Congress amends the law in the meantime which can result in suspension, delay or implementation of regulations.

In the case of survival craft, a law was in place for five years that would have forced out-of-the-water survival craft (inflatable liferafts and inflatable buoyant apparatus). Two months before the regulation came into effect, however, the law changed, resulting in suspension of that requirement. Additionally, buoyant apparatus and lifefloats lost Coast Guard approval which would have necessitated anyone needing a survival craft to switch to the more expensive inflatable type. A more recent law change has again allowed for approval of these types of survival craft.

The bottom line is that currently, despite all the legislative changes, nothing has changed for F/V survival craft carriage requirements; what was previously required is what is required now. The law still mandates a future requirement for out-of-the-water survival craft on F/Vs operating beyond three miles from shore to carry “out of the water” survival craft (inflatable liferafts and inflatable buoyant apparatus). That process was started last year in a “Proposed Rulemaking” which informs the public of the Coast Guard’s regulatory specifics and allows the public to comment. The comment period ended on December 20, 2016, and did address survival craft requirements on F/Vs. After the comments are analyzed, a Final Rule will be issued before the regulations become effective.

As a reminder, the requirement to carry an out-of-water survival craft in accordance with statute or regulation (see 46 CFR Part 28) still remains in effect. Here is a link to those current requirements: www.uscg.mil/d11/cfr/CheckLists/Regs/28.120.pdf.

The existing survival craft requirements can be very confusing because they vary according to vessel type, distance offshore, time of year, people onboard, etc. The bottom line is that the owner must provide a “Coast Guard Approved” survival craft for his vessel that is listed in 46 CFR Part 28.120 and accommodates all the crew onboard.

Every type of “Coast Guard Approved” survival craft will have a marking that identifies it as C.G. approved. For inflatable liferafts those numbers will read either 160.051 or 160.151. The difference is that 160.151 liferafts are SOLAS approved. SOLAS is an international standard that stands for Safety of Life at Sea. SOLAS will not be marked on rafts with less than 6-person capacity. Rafts designated as SOLAS A or SOLAS B simply identify what type of survival pack is included with the vessel. SOLAS A packs are for vessels that operate more than 50 miles from shore and have more survival equipment in the pack i.e., water, food, medical supplies, etc. SOLAS B pack liferafts are for F/Vs that operate between 20-50 miles from shore. Liferafts with less than 6-person capacity are equipped with either A or B packs because they can’t be SOLAS approved. If you are confused by the many choices or what ifs, the best thing to do is to talk with your local Coast Guard examiner or contact our District Office.

Questions concerning survival craft requirements on commercial fishing vessels may be directed to the First Coast Guard District Prevention Division, Ted Harrington, at 617-223-8440, Paul Bassick, at 617-223-8315, or Kevin Plowman at Coast Guard Sector Northern New England, 207-780-3256, or by email at Ted.Harrington@uscg.mil. Paul.M.Bassick@uscg.mil or Kevin.P.Plowman@uscg.mil. Questions concerning survival craft type approvals should be directed to the Office of Design and Engineering Standards, at TypeApproval@uscg.mil.
The Super Bowl! Pats vs. Falcons. The big game is this month and I’m sure we will all be watching. But there is a bigger game going on outside the stadium, an expensive and important attempt to get attention from viewers for brands that different companies will display to the 110 million viewers in the U.S. They will pay about $5 million for 30 seconds of air time, and millions more to produce the commercial they hope will foster awareness and drive demand for their product or service.

Here at the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative, we don’t have $5 million to run an ad during the Super Bowl, but we still want to reach a large audience. We want to increase awareness of Maine lobster in all its forms, and we want to spark demand for our product. Our strategy and goals are similar to the large companies advertising during the game, but our tactics are very different. In 2016, we worked with editors and producers at a variety of outlets like Food & Wine, Cooking Light, and the Morning Joe show to bring the story of Maine lobster to their audiences. And we reached one billion people. One billion people had an opportunity to see our story. The MLMC reached 10 times as many people as a Super Bowl ad, and we spent less than half the money.

But our activities in 2016 did not end with our media engagements. We understand that our supply chain is complex; the MLMC’s funding is limited. But our activities in 2016 did not end with our media engagements. We understand that our supply chain is complex; the MLMC’s funding is limited.

Beyond our media outreach and events, we also focused on digital channels to reach an even larger audience. In fact, more than 675,000 people went to the MLMC website. Of those, more than 21,000 clicked on a dealer’s link, presum-ably to buy lobster from that Maine dealer. We learned a lot from our website traffic: people most often clicked on “how to prepare” articles and recipes. We will use those data to produce more content that shows people how to prepare different dishes using Maine lobster.

Our social media outreach also worked well for us in 2016. More than 2.3 million people viewed our videos. Many media outlets used our video as background for stories on Maine lobster. In addition to the videos, we reached more than 8 million people on channels such as Facebook. More than 133,000 people clicked on content and dove deeper into the messaging. We engaged with 311 influential chefs and media on different social media channels, nearly one per day. Each of these people has tens of thousands of followers who are likely to explore what these influencers suggest.

Through these face-to-face and virtual engagements we listened and learned a lot about what people interested in food are looking for. Through our partnership with Technomic, which monitors menu trends, we found that restaurant owners can charge a substantial amount more for a lobster item on the menu when they name Maine as the origin. This speaks to the value of our story and consumers’ willingness to pay more for a quality product that they know was sustainably harvested.

We also learned that flavor pairings have become increasingly diversified when it comes to lobster. Asian flavors have risen to the top, whereas traditional items like butter have decreased. Brandy, curry, coconut, lime and mustard are the leading menu pairings with Maine lobster on menus around the country! This speaks to the importance of continuing to educate chefs, media, and consumers on the culinary versatility of Maine lobster, and featuring it as an ingredient vs. a sustainable resource and way of life — will be the key to our success.
LOBSTER HEALTH EXPERT RETURNS TO MAINE IN MARCH

By Melissa Waterman

Who would have thought that a funny, fast-talking Canadian lobster veterinarian would be such a hit among Maine lobstermen? But Jean Lavallée, an expert on lobster health, took the Maine coast by storm last spring when he spoke to lobstermen and other industry members in each of the seven zones about how they can keep their lobsters healthy and their profits up.

Now Lavallée is returning. In March, the Maine Lobstermen’s Association in conjunction with the Maine Lobstermen’s Community Alliance will host Lavallée for a series of workshops on how to keep stress on lobsters down and a lobsterman’s profits up. This year’s tour will kick off on Saturday afternoon during the Maine Fishermen’s Forum and then travel the coast from southern to Downeast Maine the following week to talk about the unusual physiology of the lobster and commonsense practices lobstermen can employ to ensure the highest quality catch regardless of the number of pounds hauled each day. The workshops are supported by Maine Sea Grant and some of Maine’s lobster coops.

“The goal is to make sure that you harvest, transport and ship lobsters in the best way possible. What that way is may change by region or the time of year,” Lavallée said. “But fundamentally there are certain practical things that must be done.”

A lobster may appear to be as armored as a tank, yet its internal structures make it prone to injury. For example, a lobster’s nerve cord runs down its belly, without the protection of vertebrae. A cut from another lobster or a rough toss by a lobsterman can sever that cord, resulting in paralysis of the lobster’s tail and eventual death.

A lobster’s heart is on its back, where the carapace meets the tail. Whack a lobster on the back and the heart will likely rupture. Furthermore, a lobster has a semi-open blood circulation system. That means the heart pumps blood through ever smaller arteries until finally the blood vessels simply spill blood into the animal’s tissues. The blood doesn’t recirculate; it flows over the tissues all the time. As soon as a lobster’s shell is broken, then the blood comes out, weakening the lobster.

“Quality is like a one-way gas tank. You can take the quality out of the lobster but it’s very hard to put it back in,” Lavallée said. All sorts of things weaken a lobster. Rapid hauling from the bottom is one stressor. Minor injuries to lobsters also add up to lost money, he said. Practices such as tossing lobsters, handling traps roughly and overstuffing, dropping or banging crates can increase limb loss and bleeding. Lobsters that bleed lose fluid which means they lose weight which means a lobsterman loses money. Plus that lobster is likely to be weak when it starts on its trip to the processor or dealer. “Quality is as important to the processing sector as it is to the live sector,” Lavallée emphasized. “Processors live and die by meat yield. They want a high quality non-injured lobster to start with.”

Response from lobstermen after last year’s tour was very positive. Lavallée’s engaging style made the three-hour workshop pass quickly. “I have seen him three times and each time I learn something new” said veteran lobsterman John Williams. This year’s workshops are expected to draw bigger crowds. Lavallée will speak at this year’s Fisherman’s Forum and then begin his tour in southern Maine on Monday, March 6. He will visit all seven zones as well as several island communities, wrapping up in Zone A on Saturday, March 11.

For more information, please call the MLA office at 967-4555 or visit www.mainelobstermen.org.
Winter is the time to work on boat and gear but for the MLA, it’s time to tend to legislation and other bureaucratic business, MLA photo.
The MLA Board met on January 4. Sarah Paquette informed the board that she will finish her employment with MLA this month. The Board thanked Sarah for her six years of service and wished her well in her future endeavors. MLA’s half-year membership drive will take place in March, with the regular renewal scheduled again for summer time.

The MLA Directors discussed plans for the MLA Annual meeting on Friday, March 3 during the Maine Fishermen’s Forum. The MLA’s focus on improving the MLA, the board will invite Commissioner Keliher to serve as the keynote speaker and include Colonel Cornish and other Marine Patrol staff to answer questions. The MLA discussed nominees for the association’s Marine Patrol Officer of the year award and the Golden V-notch award. The Board also reviewed nominations to date to fill the seven board seats up for election in 2017. The slate of nominees will be finalized at the February meeting.

The MLA Board met on January 4. Sarah Paquette informed the board that she will leave the Maine lobstering world for a new and exciting opportunity with Connections for Kids. We wish her the very best.

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Sarah was looking over the paper, “said Melissa Waterman, the editorial. “She was thorough and paid attention to all those details.”

In January, the Maine Lobstermen’s Association bid farewell to Sarah Paquette, the organization’s executive assistant, who has taken a position with Connections for Kids, a licensed mental health agency serving children and families throughout the state.

Sarah came to the MLA in March, 2011, just a year after graduating from the Maine Maritime Academy. A Vermonter by birth, her interest in marine biology had lured her from that landlocked state to Maine. Since starting with the MLA, Sarah has proven herself a highly organized and imperturbable asset. She worked closely with Patrice McCarron, MLA executive director, throughout her six years. “Whether it was managing our membership database, ordering T-shirts and hats for the Forum, making sure the rent was paid or being that friendly voice on the phone, Sarah did it,” said McCarron. “We’re really going to miss her.”

Drawing on her science background, Sarah also contributed numerous science articles to the Maine Lobstermen’s Community Alliance’s newspaper, Landings. She managed advertising accounts and billing for the newspaper and diligently proofed the paper each month. “It was always a relief to me to know that Sarah was looking over the paper,” said Melissa Waterman, Landings editor. “She was thorough and paid attention to all those details.”

Sarah leaves the Maine lobstering world for a new and exciting opportunity with Connections for Kids. We wish her the very best.
Running large crews results in large landings which flood the market, which can negatively impact price. The LAC tabled this discussion for a future meeting.

Colonel Jon Cornish provided updates on Marine Patrol. Marine Patrol has been consulting with NOAA Fisheries on the federal requirement to fish high-seas only lobstermen may purchase up to 2,000 pound threshold to participate; how price is calibrated; and how lobsters are liberated. Th is issue will be discussed at a future meeting.

Marine patrol officers are being trained to recognize drug impairment. A discussion about mandatory drug testing for commercial fishermen will be on a future LAC agenda. The next LAC meeting will be scheduled in February to discuss lobster bills, among other items.

Did you know?
- MLA Directors are elected at the Annual Meeting
- MLA Directors meet monthly in Belfast
- Board members are expected to attend at least 4 meetings/yr.
- Maximum # of Board members: 21
- Current Board: 21 members
- # Directs with Terms expiring: 7
- Average age of MLA Board: 52
- Youngest MLA Board member: 26
- Oldest MLA Board member: 68
- Number of Board members representing islands: 4

**Notice of MLA Annual Meeting**

**Friday, March 3, 2017**

9am at the Samoset Resort

**MAINE LOBSTERMEN’S ASSOCIATION UPDATE**

Marine patrol officers are being trained to recognize drug impairment. A discussion about mandatory drug testing for commercial fishermen will be on a future LAC agenda. The next LAC meeting will be scheduled in February to discuss lobster bills, among other items.

**ASMFC HERRING WORKING GROUP**

The ASMFC Atlantic Herring Section convened a working group to discuss an Addendum and to flesh out ideas that could provide the ASMFC with more tools to manage herring landings from Area 1A during the second trimester, from June 1 through September 30. Th e intent of the Addendum is to better design effort controls that can slow the rate of Area 1A catch so the seasonal quota can be spread throughout the entirety of each trimester, specifically Trimester 2. Th e addendum includes six alternatives to modify the Days Out program. Th e Herring Section will consider the Addendum during the February meeting.

**NEFMC HERRING COMMITTEE**

Th e NEFMC herring committee met to discuss several items. Th e committee reviewed the outcomes of the recent Management Strategy Evaluation workshop held in December 2016 and discussed an initial range of alternatives for ABS control rules. Th e Committee supported the PDT and advisory committee’s recommendation to eliminate a few options including the constant catch options and three-year control rules. Th e Committee reviewed the draft analysis for Georges Bank haddock accountability measures, and reviewed public comments on herring-related measures under development.

**RESEARCH, EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD**

Th e RED Board met in January to discuss management of funds to support lobster research. As directed by the RED Board, the DMR will be coordinating lobster research activities among several research institutions. Th e RED board will continue discussion on supporting this research at a future meeting.

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**Nomination Requirements**
- To make a nomination, you must be an MLA member in good standing.
- All nominees must hold a valid commercial lobster license and be an MLA member in good standing.
- Feel free to nominate yourself, or someone else.

**Nominee Information**
Name: 
Fishing Port: 
Zone: Town of residence: 

Please let us know how this nominee could contribute to the MLA Board:

**Nominator Information**
Name: 
Lobster Lic. #: 

Mail your nomination to the MLA office: MLA, 2 Storer St, Ste 203, Kennebunk, ME 04043
Or feel free to call in your nomination to 967-4555
or email: patrice@mainelobstermen.org.
MLA COMMENTS ON ASMFC MENHADEN PUBLIC INFORMATION DOCUMENT

The MLA submitted comments in January to the ASMFC on the Public Information Document for Amendment 3 to the Atlantic Menhaden Plan.

Menhaden remains a very important bait fish for Maine’s lobster fishery. Sustainably managing local bait stocks such as herring and menhaden is fundamental to the continued success of the Maine lobster fishery.

Access to a steady supply of local baits — fresh or frozen — was a challenge in 2016. Due to a lack of landings from the offshore herring fishery, lobster bait was scarce and prices skyrocketed. While the availability of menhaden helped to meet demand, it was not strong enough to stabilize prices. Despite a strong year of lobster landings, many lobstermen have been frustrated that profits are down significantly due to the spike in bait prices.

Fortunately, the menhaden fishery is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. However, under the current allocation system any increases in the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) will not benefit Maine or the bait fishery. In fact, of the 15 states allocated TAC, only Virginia and to a lesser extent, New Jersey, would realize any meaningful benefit from a quota increase under the current allocation structure.

From MLAs perspective, the status quo approach for allocating menhaden quota does not work. The significance of the menhaden fishery to the state of Maine and the lobster fishery should considered when exploring a more equitable allocation among the states.

The ASMFC should consider a broad range of approaches for allocation including coastwide, seasonal and regional quotas. Future allocation approaches should better reflect historic participation in the fishery through a longer-term reference period in order to more equitably distribute the TAC. The MLA would also like to see changes to the episodic events set-aside program. The current set aside is simply too small to adequately accommodate these events, and is also difficult for states to monitor and administer. Alternatives to significantly increase this set aside should be explored.

Under the current management approach, the lobster industry does not benefit as fishing opportunities for menhaden increase. The MLA strongly advocates that Amendment 3 fully explore options to change the allocation of the quota so that historic participation in the fishery is considered and the bait fishery is more equitably served. Thank you for consideration of these comments.

MLA COMMENTS ON ASMFC JONAH CRAB ADDENDUM

The MLA submitted comments to the ASMFC on the draft Addendum II to the Jonah Crab Plan.

Maine lobstermen have long harvested Jonah crab as a side fishery for both commercial and recreational purposes. While crabs can be very cyclical in Maine, many lobstermen consider this crab harvest to be a part of their traditional fishery.

The passage of the ASMFC Jonah Crab Plan hurt many Maine lobstermen by making it illegal to harvest Jonah crab claws. While some lobstermen will harvest whole crabs, many have traditionally snapped off the claws and returned the crabs to the sea. The passage of the Jonah Crab Plan has made this practice illegal.

The MLA strongly supports Section 5.1, Option C, to allow claws to be detached and harvested at sea, without a minimum size, if the volume of claws is less than five gallons. This would allow a longstanding tradition for Maine lobstermen to continue legally. Thank you for consideration of these comments.

MLA COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT WHALE STOCK ASSESSMENTS

The MLA submitted comments to National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on the 2016 draft Atlantic Marine Mammal Stock Assessments (SAR). MLA comments were specific to the Humpback Whale/Gulf of Maine and the North Atlantic Right Whale/Western Atlantic stock.

As one of the fisheries highly regulated under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), the status of endangered large whales greatly impacts Maine lobsters. The MLA has been engaged in the Take Reduction Team process since Amendment 3 fully explores the minimum population to be 440 whales, which is a census of those known to be alive. Using a census is not an adequate methodology to assess this population given that much of the population is unknown during the winter, and recent shifts in habitat use patterns have resulted in fewer right whales being detected in known habitats. As noted in the report, "This apparent change in habitat use has the effect that, despite relatively constant effort to find whales, the chance of seeing an individual that is alive has decreased." Right whale patterns and behaviors will continue to change, thus this mark-and-recapture approach to determine the minimum population is not adequate. This approach also ignores recent science which concluded, based on genetic testing matched to known calves, that the population of right whale males and females includes the Gulf of Maine, eastern Canada, and western Greenland. Accordingly, the MLA supports the use of the default recovery factor used in this draft assessment of 0.5, rather than the former 0.10, because this stock is no longer considered endangered.

The MLA urges that all aspects of this stock assessment reflect this larger assessment unit (West Indies DPS) including population, productivity rates and assessing human-caused injury and mortality. With regard to human-caused interactions, the MLA has long been concerned with the former status quo approach which attributed all of these interactions to the Gulf of Maine stock and that these whales could not be confirmed to another stock.

The global status review provides the best available science on humpbacks. By using the West Indies DPS as the assessment unit, it will no longer be necessary to make assumptions about which smaller-scale feeding or breeding areas were used by the whales when analyzing human-caused impacts.

With regard to the North Atlantic Right Whale draft stock assessment, the draft SAR determines the minimum population to be 440 whales, which is a census of those known to be alive. Using a census is not an adequate methodology to assess this population given that much of the population is unknown during the winter, and recent shifts in habitat use patterns have resulted in fewer right whales being detected in known habitats. As noted in the report, “This apparent change in habitat use has the effect that, despite relatively constant effort to find whales, the chance of seeing an individual that is alive has decreased.” Right whale patterns and behaviors will continue to change, thus this mark-and-recapture approach to determine the minimum population is not adequate. This approach also ignores recent science which concluded, based on genetic testing matched to known calves, that the population of right whale males and females included the Gulf of Maine, eastern Canada, and western Greenland. Accordingly, the MLA supports the use of the default recovery factor used in this draft assessment of 0.5, rather than the former 0.10, because this stock is no longer considered endangered.

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With regard to the North Atlantic Right Whale draft stock assessment, the draft SAR determines the minimum population to be 440 whales, which is a census of those known to be alive. Using a census is not an adequate methodology to assess this population given that much of the population is unknown during the winter, and recent shifts in habitat use patterns have resulted in fewer right whales being detected in known habitats. As noted in the report, “This apparent change in habitat use has the effect that, despite relatively constant effort to find whales, the chance of seeing an individual that is alive has decreased.” Right whale patterns and behaviors will continue to change, thus this mark-and-recapture approach to determine the minimum population is not adequate. This approach also ignores recent science which concluded, based on genetic testing matched to known calves, that the population of right whale males and females included the Gulf of Maine, eastern Canada, and western Greenland. Accordingly, the MLA supports the use of the default recovery factor used in this draft assessment of 0.5, rather than the former 0.10, because this stock is no longer considered endangered.

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has been underestimated. Unfortunately, the SAR offers little to explain why patterns of habitat use are shifting or adequately determine the population size.

This problem is further exacerbated by the new methodologies used to count serious injury and mortality: whales with unknown outcomes are now counted on a pro-rated basis. The combination of fewer right whales being observed in the annual survey while pro-rating serious injury and mortality of whales with unknown consequence could lead to very real management implications for Maine lobstermen regardless of the actual status of the stock.

Given the critical status of the species, it is imperative that NMFS develop a new method of assessing the right whale population that does not rely solely on sightings and photo-identification of these whales. The MLA strongly recommends that NMFS convene a workshop of independent scientists to review the best available science and potential modelling approaches to assess this stock. This task should not be delegated to science center staff but rather should involve scientists from a variety of marine mammal, modelling, climate change and other fields to objectively recommend the best approach to assessing North American right whales.

The draft assessment also raises concern about a potential decline in the population beginning in 2012, the most recent year of the assessment, but also notes that productivity in North Atlantic right whales lacks a definitive trend. The SAR focuses the majority of its discussion on Current Population Trend to re-search from the early 1990’s through the early 2000’s, documenting a decline during that time. In discussing the recent population growth spanning more than 20 years (2000 through 2011), the SAR offers only one sentence: “However, the population continued to grow since that apparent interval of decline [ending in 2000] until the most recent year included in this analysis.” The SAR provides no discussion of conditions during this recent 10-year period of growth and does little to inform what may have driven either the former decline or recent growth.

Finally, the data on the confirmed human-caused mortality continues to be difficult to interpret. Of the 24 interactions attributed to entanglement from 2010-2014, only 0.4 was confirmed to be U.S. fishing gear from a pot/trap fishery. Twenty-two of the entanglement cases have no definitive information on the fishery involved or where the gear was set. Data implications of the fishing industry at large having fruitful discussion and makes it very difficult for the individual fisheries to find effective solutions to the entanglement problem.

The Maine lobster industry remains committed to working through the Take Reduction Team process to manage fishery interactions with North Atlantic right whales. It is important that the SAR adequately reflect all of the positive changes in the right whale population in addition to its present challenges. The MLA appreciates the opportunity for provide feedback.

First Regular Session after the cloture deadline if approved by the Legislative Council. Bills can be tracked online through the Legislature's website at www.legislature.maine.gov. An update on the activities of the Marine Resources Committee is distributed weekly. Contact the Marine Resources Committee clerk, Julia Brown at 207-287-1692 or email Julia.Brown@Legislature.Maine.gov to get on the distribution list.

Bills that begin with "LD" or legislative document are printed so legislators. Bills that begin with "LR" or legislative record were not printed as of 1/23/2017. Descriptions of "LR" bills were provided by Maine Department of Marine Resources for department bills and by the bill sponsor for those submitted by legislators. Bills that begin with "LD" or legislative document are printed so that the full text of the bill is available. The effective date for non-emergency legislation is 90 days after adjournment. Emergency legislation is effective when signed by the Governor.
the unusual closures that occurred throughout New England due to domoic acid last fall. Participants will be able to question Department of Marine Resources (DMR) biologists about testing programs and other activities related to shellfish management.

That afternoon, the Maine Lobstermen’s Association is hosting officials from NIOSH (National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health) to lead a seminar on improving fishermen’s safety at sea. “Giving Safety a Competitive Advantage” will focus on preventing death due to a fall overboard by use of a personal flotation device (PFD). A multi-year NIOSH research project kicked off this winter, which involves working with lobstermen from Maine and Massachusetts to test wear a variety of PFDs and make suggestions on their redesign so that they are more comfortable and easier for lobstermen to work in. The Forum seminar will give participants an opportunity to try on various models of newer PFDs, discuss barriers to working in PFD aboard a vessel and explore additional issues related to falls overboard.

On Friday, the Forum moves into full swing. The Maine Lobster Association will hold its 63rd Annual Meeting with members at 9 a.m. The New England Fisheries Management Council (NEFMC) will host a public scoping hearing on its proposed Groundfish Monitoring Amendment. The amendment has generated much controversy among fishermen because it shifts the cost for on-board monitors from the National Marine Fisheries Service to the fishermen.

There will be a morning presentation on halibut management and science. Halibut is a seasonal fish in Maine, taking place typically in May and early June. Managers are concerned that halibut may be overfished and will be reviewing its management this year. The Council has asked the DMR to review how it manages halibut. Representatives from DMR, the NEFMC, and the National Marine Fisheries Service will discuss possible management changes. In the afternoon, officials from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration will hold an open forum, taking questions from the audience about federal fisheries management.

Of particular interest to lobstermen will be the seminar on herring and lobster bait scheduled for Friday afternoon. This seminar will focus on the availability of herring and lobster bait, and will also feature speakers who will discuss the cost for on-board monitors from the National Marine Fisheries Service to the fishermen. The seminar will provide an opportunity for lobstermen to ask questions and share their concerns about the cost of monitoring.

The DMR stepped in to ensure that herring, although limited in supply, remained available throughout the late summer and early fall. Now the question is how to avoid a similar crisis next year if the herring once again prove scarce in Area 3. Representatives from DMR, the NEFMC, and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission will discuss the upcoming season.

On Saturday the Maine Elver Fishermen’s Association will hold its annual meeting. Elvers remain a profitable fishery in the state, worth more than $11 million in value in 2015. The DMR instituted a swipe-card system for elver fishermen and dealers in 2016 which has allowed managers to track landings more efficiently. Current fishermen are limited to 9,688 pounds in total; that quota is divided up among individual elver harvesters.

Also on Saturday the DMR and Council staff will present an overview of the Coral Amendment under development, including a review of potential closures proposed to protect deep-water corals in the Gulf of Maine. The NEFMC has crafted a management plan that identifies four areas in the near-shore Gulf of Maine for protection: Mount Desert Rock, Outer Schoodic Ridge, Jordan Basin and Lindenkohl Knoll. Maine lobstermen fish the first two areas; Massachusetts lobstermen frequent the second two. Written into the draft management plan are two regulatory options for these sites. The first would prohibit bottom-tending gears; the second would prohibit mobile bottom-tending gears. Maine lobstermen, particularly those from Downeast counties, want to ensure that lobster gear is exempted from any closures. Moderated by DMR external affairs director Terry Stockwell, this session is sure to be informative and lively.

The Alewife Harvesters of Maine will hold its annual meeting on Saturday. Each spring alewives return to their lakes of origin to spawn. The seasonal run is a boom for lobstermen, who use the oily little fish as bait at a time when herring supply tends to be low. Very few states still have sustainable wild alewife runs, making management of this species of particular importance to biologists as well as lobstermen.

DMR science staff will speak about the state of Maine’s lobster stocks and present the preliminary 2016 landings figures in their annual lobster science update.
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"I was at the Fisherman’s Forum and learned more about what the MLA does in DC and Augusta. I thought, I need to do this. “
The Maine Fishermen's Forum Board of Directors offers a scholarship fund to benefit immediate family members (son/daughter, or a grandson/granddaughter) or legal dependent of someone actively involved in Maine's seafood industry, regardless of financial need or academic achievement. Undergraduates attending a two or four year college who are in at least the second year of their program or students who are in at least the second semester of their Certificate Program will be eligible. Applications will be accepted through March 1, 2017. Scholarships will be awarded by a random drawing to be held during the 42nd annual Maine Fishermen's Forum. Please note that previous winners are not eligible.

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2. Do you have an immediate family member actively participating in Maine's seafood industry?

What do you need to apply? (Check all that apply)
3. Complete this application & send to the address at the top.
4. Provide an official transcript or Registrar's letter of current standing along with application.

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Street/Mailing Address____________________________________
City_________________________ State____ Zip_________ Home Phone__________________________
Email________________________

SCHOOL INFORMATION
College/University name_________________________________
Location of college_______________________________________
Expected year of graduation______ your major________________
**School standing as of Sept 2016 (circle one)
Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior

MAINE SEAFOOD INDUSTRY FAMILY MEMBER INFORMATION
Name____________________________________________________
Relationship______________________
Street/Mailing Address__________________________ Home Phone__________________________
City_________________________ State____ Zip_________ Email__________________________
Vessel Name or Commercial License Number__________________________
Describe Participation in the Maine seafood industry__________________________
stermen and a sigh of discontent from groundfishermen. The problem with the estimate, as Department of Marine Resources Commissioner Patrick Keliher stated at the time, was that it didn’t take into account different parts of the coast, different depths, and different seasons of fishing; instead it more or less just scaled up a small amount of offshore data.

I came to the University of Maine in 2014, to begin a project looking into the fate of cod bycatch in the Maine lobster fishery. The late Captain Cappy Sargent of Milbridge took me aboard his boat to get a feel for what lobster fishing was like. Before I was a fish scientist, I was a commercial fisherman, having spent nine summers fishing for sockeye salmon in Alaska’s Bristol Bay and one year fishing for Dungeness crab near my hometown on Whidbey Island, Washington.

Soon, other lobstermen took my lab mate Jocelyn Runnebaum and myself aboard their boats and were kind enough to let us run a cod and cusk discard survival experiment. Some of the highlights for me were working with lobstermen from across the state, including Justin Papkee, Dustin Delano, and Bobby Ingalls and learning “wicked” lobstering strategies. The goal of our ongoing study is to quantify the extent of barotrauma (pressure trauma) cod and cusk undergo when hauled up from the bottom in a trap and to figure out the best handling procedures to return the fish with minimal harm.

... our results are encouraging and suggest that if cod are handled properly, a large proportion of them may be able to survive.

Some fish undergo the reverse of what divers call “the bends” when coming from depth rapidly. It works out that for every five fathoms in depth, pressure is one atmosphere greater (for reference, pressure is roughly one atmosphere unless you are underwater or on top of Mt. Katahdin). We were testing the idea that if we could recompress the cod as a trap sinks back down, we might be able to reverse the barotrauma. We attached a GoPro camera and an LED light inside a trap. When a cod came up in a lobsterman’s trap, we would tag it, take measurements, evaluate its health, then put it in our rigged trap, throw it back, and wait.

We hypothesized that the reason cod swim into the trap either had to do with perceived shelter (lobster traps are nice looking houses to a fish), or food supply. In reality, the truth is likely a bit of both. Many types of bait are fished in different seasons and parts of the coast, but among the most common is herring, which happens to be one of the most energy-rich foods for cod. We saw a wide range of cod sizes in our study, but most were around 18 inches, which is the assumption of 100% mortality, so any reduction in estimated mortality rate would be advantageous. The Maine lobster fishery is one of the cleanest fisheries (in terms of bycatch) around and it is no accident that it has a reputation for marine stewardship.

Overall what we found is that most cod don’t show severe signs of external barotrauma (i.e. stomach sticking out the mouth, bugged out eyes, or skin bubbles). Only about 10% of cod hauled initially were dead, and these were mostly due to hungry lobsters in the trap. Of those remaining, most of the cod looked vibrant and swam around the video trap when recompressed. The GoPro footage suggested cod could be recompressed and swim around inside the trap, but could not find their way out of the trap over the few hours when the GoPro operated.

I released some of the cod at the surface, and most could swim down. However, with this method we don’t know a lot about what happens to cod internally after they are surface-released. That being said, our results are encouraging and suggest that if cod are handled properly, a large proportion of them may be able to survive. This will be important if management decisions down the line include cod as a bycatch in the lobster fishery. Often managers make an assumption of 100% mortality, so any reduction in estimated mortality rate would be advantageous. The Maine lobster fishery is one of the cleanest fisheries (in terms of bycatch) around and it is no accident that it has a reputation for marine stewardship.

ARTIFACTS ILLUSTRATE LONG LOBSTERING HISTORY

Fishermen have been catching lobsters commercially in Maine for more than a century. The tools of the fishery have changed over the decades — from sail-powered wooden vessels to today’s high-tech fiberglass boats, from traps made with wooden lathes to vinyl-coated wire traps made in a factory. The Maine lobster fishery is full of tradition, despite the changes that have occurred over the decades. This month Landings begins a new feature on those items from long ago. We start with an image sent to us from the Maine Maritime Museum in Bath, whose exhibit, Lobstering & the Maine Coast, opened in 2015.
By Shelley Wigglesworth

LOBSTER GEAR NOW MAKING ITS WAY INTO FINE JEWELRY

Bar Harbor native Tegan Curry literally stumbled upon the idea of incorporating rubber bands used by lobstermen to keep lobster claws closed as an accessory for her handmade jewelry when she came across a few of the colorful bands while beachcombing a few years back. “People loosely refer to these bands as ‘Downeast wedding bands’ and I thought why not go a step further and actually make a ring where the bands could be worn?” Curry said.

Curry, who has a BFA degree from Maine College of Art where she specialized in metalsmithing, did just that and the result was a sturdy sterling silver band with edge ridges that can hold a lobster band for display. “The lobster bands are made in different widths, so all may not fit on your ring — but they can easily be trimmed to size with sharp scissors if needed,” Curry said.

All rings are all stamped with the word “Maine” on the outside and may be worn with or without a lobster band. Each ring purchased comes in a clean bail bag with four new, different-color lobster bands to interchange as you wish. Curry gets her bands from local lobster co-ops, but ring owners may also collect their own, or purchase other band colors or bands that are custom-stamped with messages, or use recycled bands from live lobsters. Some people like to collect different bands from various fishermen friends.

“The LobsterBand rings are sturdy, versatile and fun and a unique conversation piece and reminder of Maine,” Curry said.

Since she began marketing these particular rings three years ago, the 36-year-old designer, who currently has six other jewelry lines, said the rings have become popular among both men and women and fishermen and non- fishermen as well. It appears the rings have a universal appeal, as Curry has sold her rings to people from all over the world. And though she is not sure if any of her rings have been used as actual wedding bands, the possibility is certainly there.

The sterling silver LobsterBand rings may be purchased directly through Curry’s website www.lobsterbandrings.com and are also available at selected stores across the state.

Evans Griffith, 29, grew up in South Portland. The youngest of three brothers, he spent his first years out of school as a golf professional, but decided to give up the clubs four years ago. He began to make lobster gauge cuff bracelets and hasn’t looked back since.

“My biggest focus and area of expertise in golf was building golf clubs. That’s where I first picked up some of the skills I use making jewelry,” Griffith said. Griffith’s interest in the unisex lobster gauge cuff was piqued when a friend introduced him to the concept and suggested he could easily do it because of his experience and the skills he had honed building golf clubs.

“I thought it was really neat and wanted to try to make one. I had never made jewelry or anything really like it before, but I saw the potential for what it could be beyond just the original polished brass design that others had made,” Griffith said.

“The first two cuffs I made were a polished brass and a torched stainless [steel] lobster gauge cuff. I knew from working on golf clubs that heating stainless steel brought out a wide range of colors, deep blues and purples as well as gold and green depending on the temperature used. From there I came up with the weathered brass look which I think mimics the patina that brass tools get when used in a marine environment.”

Every step in the bracelet-making process is done by Griffith himself — from the shaping, bending and stamping to the final patina effect and polishing. The complete process takes him about 36 hours to complete. The cuffs sell through his online studio store.

He has created another variation of the cuff bracelet which he calls the mariner line. “Customers can have coordinates engraved on the inside of their lobster gauge cuffs. I love that the coordinates themselves are a great conversation starter, as well as having the ability to have each cuff be unique to each customer,” Griffith said.

His cuffs appeal to both men and women and young and old alike. “I’ve sold to just about everyone, of all ages, from those who are local and in some way involved in the fishing industry to people as far away as California who love the concept and story behind the intended use of the original form,” Griffith said.

Since he officially started the business in the spring of 2015, sales have been brisk. “I’ve sold somewhere around 750 bracelets, which is amazing to me. I never really thought I’d love it as much as I do or would have the ability to make it my full-time job when I started.”

“I’m working on prototypes now for the spring/summer season,” Griffith explained. “I have some designs I’ve been thinking about for a while now and it’s just a matter of seeing what is feasible. I’m also working on products for the home. I’ve been designing lamps and home interior designs for about a year now and I’m about ready to add those to the list of things I make for Lighthouse Studio Design (www.lighthousestudiodesign.com). My goal is to keep thinking of and making new ideas and see how far I can take the business.”

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Welcome to February! If you missed the open enrollment period for ACA health insurance, which closed on January 31, you will have to wait until November of this year to enroll in a plan for 2018. There are a few exceptions, typically the result of a significant life event.

After the open enrollment period ends, consumers still have the opportunity to enroll in qualified health plans if they experience certain life changes, such as marriage or a permanent move to an area with new coverage options. These opportunities outside of open enrollment are called special enrollment periods, or SEPs.

A qualifying event can occur at any point during the year. The ability to enroll in a health insurance plan through a SEP lasts 60 days from the date of the qualifying event.

A SEP can be something that occurs in one of the following six categories:

1. Loss of qualifying health coverage: if you (or anyone in your household for whom they seek coverage) lose qualifying health coverage. Some examples of qualifying health coverage include:
   - Coverage through a job, or through another person’s job
   - Medicaid or Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) coverage (including pregnancy-related coverage and medically needy coverage)
   - Medicare
   - Individual or group health plan coverage that ends during the year
   - Dependent coverage that a consumer has through a parent’s plan. If you turn 26 or the maximum dependent age allowed in your state and lose coverage, you can qualify for an SEP.

2. Change in household size: a consumer may qualify for an SEP if you (or anyone in your household):
   - Got married
   - Had a baby, adopted a child, or placed a child for foster care
   - Got divorced, legally separated, or had a death in the family and lost health coverage
   - Gained or became a dependent due to a child support or other court order

3. Change in primary place of living: if you (or anyone in your household) has a change in your primary place of living, such as:
   - Moving to a new home in a new zip code or county where new qualified health plans are available
   - Moving to the U.S. from a foreign country or United States territory
   - A student moving to or from the place he or she attends school
   - A seasonal worker moving to or from the place he or she lives and works

4. Change in eligibility for Marketplace coverage or help paying for coverage. If you (or anyone in your household) is enrolled in Marketplace coverage and reports a change that makes the consumer:
   - Newly eligible for help paying for coverage
   - Ineligible for help paying for coverage
   - Eligible for a different amount of help paying out-of-pocket costs

Many changes in circumstance or life events can trigger SEPs, but you should understand that not all changes will allow you to enroll in or change plans. Some changes that do not trigger an SEP include:

- Loss of minimum essential coverage due to failure of payments
- Voluntary COBRA cancelation
- Pregnancy (a birth, however, will lead to an SEP)
- Income changes, unless a consumer is currently enrolled in a qualified health plan or their income rose above the 100% Federal Poverty Line
- Loss of coverage for more than 60 days.

If you think you qualify for a SEP and want help with your health insurance options, please call me at 207-967-4555 or send an email to alisha@mainelobstermen.org.
stated that the fishery management council could identify and implement measures that reduce, to the extent practicable, impacts of fishing gear on deep-sea corals in New England.

In the meantime, environmental organizations began lobbying Congress and the Obama administration to establish a National Marine Monument in offshore waters, specifically those submarine canyons and seamounts located south of Georges Bank. Despite opposition from most fishing organizations in New England, President Obama created the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts National Marine Monument in September 2016, the first U.S. monument located in the Atlantic Ocean. The 4,913-square-mile area, which includes three deep-sea canyons and four underwater mountains, is now off limits to commercial fishing (red crab and lobster fishing must end within six years) and other commercial uses.

The Council entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council in 2013. The regulatory authority of the two councils overlapped along the continental slope where coral concentrations had been found. The Mid-Atlantic Council chose to pursue coral protection by amending its existing Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Fisheries Management Plan. Amendment 16 to that plan was approved in June 2015. The plan prohibits fishing activity in areas deeper than 450 meters. It also exempts lobster gear from commercial fishing prohibitions, in part because lobstermen from at least 15 ports which lobster in the 49 square miles of the Mount Desert Rock and Outer Schoodic Ridge coral zones. Lobstermen from Swans Island, the Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR), working with the Maine Lobstermen’s Association, has identified at least 100 lobster boats and pot boats in the 49 square-mile area, which includes three deep-sea canyons and seamounts south of Georges Bank as well as discrete, defined areas in the Gulf of Maine, both inshore and offshore. Not only could it protect areas below 50 meters in which corals have been found, but it could also prohibit fishing in areas in which corals are likely to be present.

The plan features two options for fishing activities in coral protection areas. The first would prohibit bottom-tending gears, such as bottom-tending otter trawls, bottom-tending beam trawls, hydraulic dredges, non-hydraulic dredges, bottom-tending seines, and pots and traps. It would, however, permit use of gears that do not contact the seabed. The draft plan offers two possible exemptions to these restrictions: to exempt solely the red crab fishery from coral zone restrictions or to exempt other trap fisheries, including lobster.

Lobstermen, particularly those in Downeast Maine, are not happy with the prospect of losing access to the areas identified by the Council as coral protection zones. The Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR), working with the Maine Lobstermen’s Association, has identified at least 100 lobster boats from at least 15 ports which lobster in the 49 square miles of the Mount Desert Rock and Outer Schoodic Ridge coral zones. Lobstermen from Swans Island, Frenchboro and Cranberry Island in particular rely on Mount Desert Rock for winter fishing. Those lobstermen bring in a lot of lobster, about $4 million in value, according to DMR figures.

This winter the DMR will hold a series of public meetings to hear what the fishermen think of the measures proposed in the draft Coral Amendment. “We know that there is strong opposition to the alternative proposing that lobster/crab gear be prohibited in those two areas,” noted DMR external affairs director Terry Stockwell in an email.

The financial hardships posed by the coral protection amendment also might influence the Council’s final decision. The Magnuson-Stevens Act specifically requires the Council to consider the economic impact of its regulations. “We are seeking input on how closures of specific coral management areas would affect businesses, ports, and communities, and we’d like to know if there are ways to modify the boundaries of the areas to limit any negative effects,” Michelle Bachman, the Council’s lead habitat analyst, said.

The draft amendment and its range of alternatives will go out to public hearings in the spring before the Council takes a final vote, which could happen as early as June.

“We welcome industry involvement,” said Bachman. “We’re trying to balance coral conservation with fishery access, and to do this, we need to understand how fishing activity is distributed with respect to coral habitats.” For example, she explained, information about depth and bottom type where gear is typically set would help the Council evaluate the likelihood of fishing gear interactions with coral.

There will be a session on Saturday, March 4, at 9 a.m. during the Maine Fishermen’s Forum to provide interested fishermen with more information about this process and the proposals under consideration. There are several ways fishermen can provide feedback or information to the Council:

- Send a letter, which will be reviewed at the next available Habitat Committee or Council meeting.
- Attend a Habitat Committee or Council meeting in person and provide comments.
- Attend a public hearing. These will be scheduled in the spring of 2017 after the Council has had the opportunity to review the entire draft amendment and analyses and to identify preferred approaches. Public hearings are especially important because they’re solely focused on getting industry feedback on the proposals.
- Sign up to receive habitat-related alerts via email using this link: https://www.nefmc.org/subscribe.
- Visit the Council website regularly at www.nefmc.org to keep tabs on all meeting dates, locations, and related documents. And finally,
- Call or email Michelle Bachman at 978-465-0492, extension 120, mbachman@nefmc.org. She’s available to answer questions about the alternatives, impacts analysis, or the amendment development process.

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Maine offers many possibilities for those who want to pursue a career linked to the sea. We look at a new high school that makes the ocean the center of the classroom in this article, our next in a series on marine educational opportunities in Maine.

By Melissa Waterman

If all goes well, within the next two years a new high school will open in Searsport. But not any old high school. The Maine Ocean School (MOS) would be the state's second magnet school, after Limestone School of Science and Mathematics, which opened in 1995. It would be a school whose entire focus is on the ocean.

In 2015, Rep. James Gillway, also Searsport's town manager, introduced a bill in the Legislature to create the Maine Ocean School. The bill, which allocated no money for the new school, became law as one of a group of bills that Governor Paul LePage had intended to veto but did not do so in time.

In Maine, a magnet school is a public school offering special instruction and programs not available elsewhere, designed to attract a more diverse student body from throughout the state. The majority of magnet school students live at the school.

After the bill chartering the school passed, a group of individuals from marine-related fields began to meet and formed itself into a board to build the foundations for the new high school. They had a deadline: by February, 2017, the group would have to deliver an organizational report to the Maine State Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. "The board must provide a plan for the school, the most significant part of which is the draft curriculum," explained Gayle Zydlewski, program committee chair. "If the result is positive, we can set a budget for the school based on the plan."

According to the MOS website, the Maine Ocean School's mission is "to provide a theme-based high school education focused on Maine's maritime connection, with an emphasis on leadership, work ethic, and the transferable skills associated with careers involving the ocean."

As a public school, the MOS curriculum must meet state standards in eight specific content areas: Career and Education Development, English Language Arts, Health and Physical Education, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Social Studies, Visual and Performing Arts, and World Languages. Each content area will be taught with an eye toward its connection to the marine world. So, for instance, English classes will include literature of the sea. Social studies would involve marine policy or law.

"But what makes the ocean science school unique will be the four different tracks that students can choose from at school," Zydlewski said. "These four tracks — marine science, marine transportation, marine engineering, and marine management — are designed to introduce students to the many careers available in these areas. When a freshman enters the MOS, he or she will get to sample classes and opportunities in all four areas. By the junior year, the student is expected to concentrate in one area to prepare for future studies. "For example, someone who chooses a track in the marine transportation track might decide to go on to higher education or perhaps work as a pilot," Zydlewski said. "We hope that they will either have their Marine Mariner credentials or be ready to get them. Marine engineering could lead to work in structural engineering or someone could pursue a career as a ship's engineer."

Many individuals have been eager to volunteer their time and expertise to the fledgling school, Zydlewski continued. The MOS board has set up a separate 501 (c) 3 charitable organization to receive grants and donations. If the Joint Committee approves the MOS report, the proposal will go to the Legislature for budget appropriation as a public school. "People have been coming out of the woodwork to make this curriculum happen. If we meet with the committee's approval, then the next step is to hire an executive director and to start summer programming for students," she said.

The presentation will include the results of the department’s monitoring programs, specifically the sea sampling, ventless trap survey, inshore trawl survey, and settlement survey. University of Maine researchers will talk about the Rapid Resource Program, a new resource for industry. One issue sure to be covered is the decline during the past three years in juvenile lobster settlement along the coast.

Dr. Jean Lavallée, a lobster veterinarian and the region's leading lobster health expert, will present a workshop entitled "Avoid a Crustacean Crisis" Saturday afternoon chronicling a lobster's journey from the comfort of the ocean floor to a processing plant or holding facility. A lobster's physiology makes it surprisingly prone to stress and injury. In addition, environmental factors such as diet, water temperatures and molt cycle can affect its health. Handling practices and the holding environment can put stress on the animal. Lavallée will explain how minimizing stress and injury to lobsters will produce a healthier lobster and more profits.

On Saturday afternoon the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative's (MLMC) executive director Matt Jacobson will host a review of the Collaborative's efforts in 2016. The MLMC was established in 2013 by the Maine Legislature and is funded by a surcharge on lobstermen and seafood processors' licenses. Since its inception, the MLMC has worked with the marketing firm Weber Shandwick to boost demand for Maine lobster among East Coast chefs and food professionals. Its "Maine after Midnight" events in major cities last summer brought Maine lobstermen face-to-face with leading chefs, helping to educate those professionals on the versatility of Maine lobster.

And, as always, the Fishermen's Forum will be packed with exhibitors featuring products and services of interest to fishermen. The Forum's social calendar will include the popular seafood reception and silent auction to benefit the annual Scholarship Fund on Thursday night. Friday night will feature a seafood dinner and live auction, also to benefit the Scholarship Fund, which always makes for a fun and energetic evening. The scholarship awards will be given on Saturday night at the traditional evening banquet and dance. That night also features the annual Golden V-notch award, the DMR Officer of the Year award, and other recognitions. For more information on the Maine Fishermen's Forum, visit www.mainefishermenforum.org.
Enforcement of Maine’s lobster conservation laws and ensure the long-term sustainability of the lobster resource. These measures may include establishing minimum penalties such as license suspension to deter violations such as scrubbing egged lobster, fishing over the trap limit, fishing sunken trawls or untagged gear and molesting lobster traps establish minimum penalties of monetary fines to deter violations such as keeping short, over-sized, v-notched or egg-bearing females and higher minimum penalties for repeat offenders. The bill also proposes to give the Commissioner of Marine Resources the authority to manage herring fishermen depending on how recently they have had landings in Maine. This bill would enable Maine to comply with potential changes to the herring management plan through the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

LR 1184 An Act to Give the Department of Marine Resources Flexibility with Licensing in the Herring Fishery, sponsored by Rep. Parry of Arundel. This bill proposes to give the Commissioner of Marine Resources the authority to manage herring fishermen depending on how recently they have had landings in Maine. This bill would enable Maine to comply with potential changes to the herring management plan through the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

LR 1743 An Act to Incentivize Private Investment of Lobster Processing in Maine, sponsored by Sen. Carson of Cumberland

128th Legislature Marine Resources Committee Members

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Joyce.Make@legislature.maine.gov or 207-454-2327

Rep. Kevin Battle (R), South Portland
Kevin.Battle@legislature.maine.gov or 207-831-6962

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Rep. Michael Devin (D), Newcastle
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**In the NEWS**

**TRADE AGREEMENTS CAUSE UNCERTAINTY AMONG SEAFOOD PRODUCERS**

President Donald Trump signed an executive order that officially withdrew the United States from the Trans Pacific Partnership Trade Agreement in January. "This is a lost opportunity for exporters and importers to make the global seafood trade market a more predictable place," said Gavin Gibbons, vice president of communications for the National Fisheries Institute (NFI). The move signaled that the President would also be likely to renegotiate the terms of the North American Free Trade Agreement, signed by President Clinton in 1992. That action would in turn affect seafood trade between the U.S. and Canada and Mexico.

**THEY'RE BACK!**

Two North Atlantic right whales were spotted in Cape Cod Bay in late January, five miles south of the Provincetown harbor. Two days later whale observers spotted five right whales in approximately the same location. Right whales enter Cape Cod Bay every winter, drawn to the area by high concentrations of microscopic zooplankton upon which they feed. The whales gather in large groups throughout the winter months before dispersing into the Gulf of Maine in the summer.

**MARINE INSTITUTE TO EXPAND THIS SUMMER**

The University of Maine announced in January that it would begin a $5 million expansion this summer of the Downeast Institute, an applied marine research and education facility located in Beals. The project will include 8,500 square feet of added laboratory space, along with mechanical, electrical and plumbing upgrades, short-term housing for visiting scientists and students, a small visitors center and office space. The expansion will allow more researchers to pursue projects in the eastern Gulf of Maine. It also will increase opportunities for University of Maine at Machias students and others in the state university system to get practical research experience as they pursue their degrees.

**SWEDEN PLANS ANOTHER TRY AT LIMITING LOBSTER IMPORTS**

Officials in Sweden are preparing a new proposal to deal with American lobsters that have turned up in Swedish waters. Sweden had wanted the European Union to consider a ban on imports of American lobsters as an invasive species after 12 American lobsters were found along its coast. EU officials turned down the request in October after U.S. and Canadian scientists and politicians raised concerns about a lack of evidence for such a uniform ban. The new proposal intends to address the presence of American lobsters with countrywide and regional measures as opposed to an international ban.

**NOVA SCOTIA BENEFITING FROM FREE TRADE**

On January 1, tariffs were reduced on Canadian seafood by China's ministry of commerce benefiting about a quarter of Canada's seafood exports to China. Nova Scotia exports more seafood than any other Canadian province. Through October 2016, it had exported $218 million worth to the Asian country. In addition, Nova Scotia will benefit from the proposed EU-Canada free trade deal, which will permanently eliminate almost all tariffs on seafood going into Europe. Europe still remains at the moment a larger market for Nova Scotia than China. Upon ratification, the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) would immediately eliminate the tariff on live lobster, which now is 8%. Under CETA, all additional seafood tariffs would be phased out in seven years.

**PENOBSCOT EAST RESOURCE CENTER DIRECTOR WILL STEP DOWN**

Robin Alden, executive director of a progressive Downeast fisheries research and advocacy center, will step down at the end of the year, as part of a planned transition. The Stonington resident co-founded the Penobscot East Resource Center 13 years ago with her husband Ted Ames, and Ted Hoskins and Kristen and Paul Lewis.

Alden is the long-time editor and publisher of Commercial Fisheries News, and has served as commissioner of the Maine Department of Marine Resources. The Ellsworth American reported that Alden's decision to retire from PERC is part of what the organization called, "a carefully planned five-year process." Penobscot East operates educational, scientific and environmental research and advocacy programs for fishermen and fisheries and also coordinates the Eastern Maine Skippers Program for high school students interested in commercial fishing. Alden's work was recently recognized by both the Peter Benchley Ocean Awards and by the White House.

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*Affordable Care Act health insurance remains in place for now*

President Trump issued an executive order in January that instructs federal agencies to use their existing powers to weaken the Affordable Care Act “to the maximum extent permitted by law.”

While the order is sending tremors throughout the health insurance market, alarming health care providers and consumers alike, it’s important to note what it does not do:

- On its own the order cannot dismantle the Affordable Care Act.
- The order does not change people’s ability to enroll in coverage and get subsidies for 2017 health plans. Current efforts to encourage people to enroll in Marketplace coverage should continue and people should continue to sign up.

What the executive order does do is signal the Trump administration’s intent to begin dismantling the ACA. With this order, Trump assumes responsibility for what comes next as his massive changes to America’s health care system jeopardize the coverage and protections for millions. While the full impact of this executive order has yet to be seen, it is important for consumers to still enroll in coverage.
FISHERMEN INVITED TO SEAFOOD EXPO NORTH AMERICA

By MLA Staff

Where can you find cuttlefish from Spain, mahi-mahi from Taiwan, lobster from Maine, tuna from China and more than 20,000 seafood buyers, sellers and processors in one place? At the Seafood Expo North America (formerly the Boston Seafood Show) in Boston, that’s where. The Expo is the largest seafood trade event in North America, with more than 1,000 exhibitors attending from around the world. This year’s show takes place from March 19 to 21.

On Monday, March 20, the Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA) will offer a one-day trip to the Expo on a chartered bus. The bus departs from Bangor and stops in Augusta, Portland, and Kennebunk to pick up participants before heading to Boston. The cost is $50 for MLA members and $60 for non-members and includes entrance to the show.

“We offered this trip last year because it is important that our members see just how massive the global seafood market is,” said Patrice McCarron, MLA executive director. “Lobstermen can see for themselves the high regard given to their lobster and learn more about how seafood products move around the world.”

The MLA is offering the trip again this year to help keep this tradition alive. Please contact Jonathan Feeney, 7 p.m., Bull Feeney’s, Portland. Tickets and info at www.maine.gov/dmr/laws-regulations/proposed-rulemaking.html.

February 13
Public Comment deadline for DMR proposed rules for exit ratios for zones B, C and E; Hancock County trawl limits and zone transfer list. Send comments to Sarah Cotnoir, DMR, 21 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333 or sarah.cotnoir@maine.gov; FMI: 207-624-6596

UPCOMING
March 2-4
42nd Annual Maine Fishermen’s Forum, Samoset Resort, Rockport.
March 3
Maine Lobstermen’s Association 63rd Annual Meeting, 9 a.m., Samoset Resort, Rockport.
March 9
March 19-21
Seafood Expo North America, Boston, MA.
March 20
MLA day trip to Seafood Expo North America, Boston. FMI: 967-4555.

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The Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative (MLMC) is hosting the Maine Lobster Pavilion to promote Maine lobster and will feature exhibits by Cape Seafood, Maine Coast, Sea Salt Lobster, Seaview Lobster and The Lobster Co. In addition, the MLMC will host a highly-popular lobster reception on Monday night. The reception brings seafood buyers, Maine lobster dealers, lobstermen and industry officials together to talk lobster!

The Maine Maritime Museum is looking for musician or poet fishermen performers for our 6th Annual Voices of the Sea event. If you know someone who sings or writes about their work on the water and would like to help keep this tradition alive, please contact Jonathan at wells@maritimememe.org or (207)443-1316 x325

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Kennebunk: 9:15 a.m. from the Park and Ride (off Rt 35 across from Spurling Training Center)
Arrive in Boston about 10:45/11 a.m.
Return to bus 4:45 p.m. Depart Boston 5 p.m. – stop in Kennebunk, Portland, Augusta and final stop in Bangor estimated 10 p.m.
Reservations must be made prior to February 27th and can be made online at www.mainelobstermen.org/projects or by calling or emailing Andi at 207-967-4555 or andi@mainelobstermen.org
By Melissa Waterman

Maurice (Mort) Morgan of Cundy’s Harbor set out on a Saturday morning in January to take some of his lobster traps out of the water. Before he reached the harbor, however, he received the call that lobstermen dread: the Silvia Maria, his 38-foot Duffy, had sunk in 30 feet of water. “I never thought it would happen to me,” he said.

Morgan took all the right steps. He called the Coast Guard to let them know that his federally-documented vessel was sunk. He informed local officials that no oil had leaked from the boat. He called his insurance company to tell them of his situation. And then he tried to raise his boat. “Four other boats came together and we tried to get her off the bottom,” Morgan said. “It was a freezing day.” A diver was sent down to get straps under the hull; the other vessels took lines through their haulers and began to slowly bring the boat out of the mud. Then the lines broke. “She went down again. There was an air pocket in the cabin, burst the windows out,” Morgan said.

Morgan called Sea Tow Inc. to raise the Silvia Maria. Sea Tow is a private company that provides on-the-water assistance to mariners. Bruce White is in charge of the Sea Tow district from Goose Rocks Beach to Pemaquid Point.

RAISING A SUNKEN BOAT IS TOUGH WORK IN THE WINTER

The day after the sinking was too windy to attempt the salvage so the boat sat on the bottom for a total three days. “First thing we do is send a diver down to get the boat off the bottom,” White explained. The company uses air bags that when inflated can exert between 2,000 to 4,000 pounds of pressure. Once the boat is free from the seabed, additional air bags are secured around the hull to keep the boat upright as she’s raised. “A boat is very uncontrollable when it’s awash. It’s easy to roll over. When it leaps just a bit to one side you can lose control.” The trick is to raise the boat very, very slowly. The delicate task was compounded by the cold day; temperatures never rose above 16° F. “The air valves and manifolds kept freezing up. We had to use [one of the local lobster boat’s] hot tank to free things.”

“It took all day. They did an excellent job,” Morgan said. Once the boat was pumped dry, Morgan had her towed to Bethel Point to Finest Kind boatyard. Everything ruined by salt water was removed. “The electronics are about $15,000. The engine and transmission, that’s $45 to $48,000. I have some insurance but I don’t know if it’s enough,” Morgan said.

Getting the boat free of the bottom is the first step. B. White photos.

Air bags begin to slowly ease the vessel to the surface.

The low air temperature made the process of raising the Silvia Maria even more difficult.

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