By Melissa Waterman

Department of Marine Resources (DMR) Commissioner Patrick Keliher, 52, chooses his words carefully. Carefully, that is, until he gets excited about his topic. "I love this job!" he said emphatically during a recent interview. Fortunately, Keliher will continue in the job that he so enjoys following confirmation of his nomination by the Maine Legislature in late January.

Keliher was appointed by former governor Paul LePage in 2012 to the top spot at the agency. Prior to that, Keliher had been the director of the Bureau of Sea Run Fisheries for five years. Keliher took over DMR during a year of unprecedented warmth in the Gulf of Maine, which triggered an early lobster shedding season and a precipitous decline in price. Since then other crises have broken out every year: herring management, right whale protections, deep sea coral zone closures, or cod by-catch related to lobstering are just some of the more contentious topics.

"I knew this job had a tremendous amount of complexity," Keliher said. "There are always..."

By MLA staff

Maine lobstermen may be forgiven for feeling as if they were under siege from all quarters. The federal government, through the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC), and several national environmental organizations have the lobster industry in their sights because of the unprecedented deaths of 18 North Atlantic right whales in 2017 and an overall drop in the birth rate of these endangered marine mammals.

Protection efforts are under way on two fronts: the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team (TRT) is considering management measures under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) while the ASMFC is considering measures to pre-empt more severe restrictions from the federal government if the lobster industry is found to jeopardize right whales under...
You might think that life slows down in Maine during the winter months. But as always, this winter is shaping up to be as busy as ever. Governor Janet Mills’ new administration hit the ground running in January. Department of Marine Resources (DMR) Commissioner Patrick Keliher was nominated to continue in his position and confirmed by the Legislature in late January. The new Joint Committee on Marine Resources, many members of which are new to Augusta, got to work on a slate of bills related to lobstering and other fisheries. And, just around the corner, the annual Maine Fishermen’s Forum takes place in early March, three days packed with presentations, events and fun!

This month Landings features an interview with Commissioner Keliher, who speaks about what has changed at the department since he took the helm in 2012. The state’s lobster fishery currently is facing a push on several fronts to create new regulations to protect the endangered North Atlantic right whale. DMR is working with the Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA) and the Attorney General’s office to ensure that lobstermen’s concerns are made clear to all concerned.

What exactly is happening in terms of right whale regulations is explored in another article this month. Efforts to protect the whales, 18 of which died in 2017, are underway in two arenas: the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team (TRT) is considering management measures under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act, while the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission is considering measures to pre-empt more severe restrictions from the federal government if the lobster industry is found to jeopardize the right whale. DMR is working with the MLA and the Attorney General’s office to ensure that lobstermen’s concerns are made clear to all concerned.

The TRT, scheduled to meet in March to discuss those management measures; a jeopardy decision may come later in 2019.

Scientists investigating right whale deaths in 2017 in the Gulf of St. Lawrence pointed to entanglement in snow crab gear as one of the causes of the mortalities. The snow crab fishery in that region expanded greatly in 2017, when the annual quota jumped from 20,000 tons to 43,000 tons. As this month’s article explains, the fishery has had several up-and-down cycles in past decades. A reduction in the quota, in combination with new regulations instituted by the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans in 2018, appears to have protected the numerous right whales that now converge in the Gulf each summer.

Every fisherman knows that when he or she sets out to sea in the morning, a certain level of danger goes with them. Fishing is one of the three most deadly occupations in this country. Something may happen that in a split second puts one’s life in danger. In this month’s “Voices of the Maine Fishermen’s Forum,” a lobsterman’s wife recounts an event everyone dreads: a report that her husband had gone overboard. Marcia Beal Brazer of Ogunquit calls her husband’s survival “a 20th century miracle.”

We also hear this month from several young lobstermen who decided that now was the time to join the MLA. The MLA has been the voice of the Maine lobster fishery since it was founded in 1954. Alarmed by the prospect of additional whale protection measures and a looming crisis in herring bait, these young lobstermen have become MLA members because, as one man put it, “There are things facing us as a group, like a lack of working waterfront and whale rules. The MLA wants to protect us.”

The MLA and dozens of other fisheries organizations, state and federal agencies, fishermen and students will be at the Maine Fishermen’s Forum in March, Landings provides a preview of the Forum, which mixes seminars on difficult topics, such as scallop management and whale protections, with lighthearted activities, such as the ever-popular Food Guys cooking lessons. The live auction proceeds benefit the Maine Fishermen’s Forum scholarship fund, which provides money to the children of fishing families to further their education. The Trade Show gives everyone ample time to check out new engines and new gear and collect a few new tote bags for the season.

Finally, William Shakespeare posed the question years ago, “What’s in a name?” A lobsterman on North Haven quickly contributed, a selection of which we publish here. We’ve got to give Maine lobstermen credit — there are a lot witty folks out there!

We hope you enjoy this issue of Landings. We would love to print your comments and letters, or hear your feedback on new ideas and topics that you would like to see covered in future issues.
By Willis Spear

All kinds of people took part in the grassroots alliance in Portland to stop uncontrolled destruction of the waterfront. The Portland’s Working Waterfront Group’s success to date is because of its diversity and its ability to take advantage of that diversity to address all the issues.

What led to forming the group? Dissatisfaction on the part of Portland’s citizens, fishermen and Commercial Street merchants with the City’s unthinking development along Commercial Street. Fishermen were involved, of course. Young and old. Many of these fishermen had seen the world as part of the Armed Forces or on merchant ships. Some had their own businesses. All knew the value of Portland Harbor and its wharves in supporting the economy of Portland and Maine.

There were local lawyers and professors who respected grassroots opposition to bad government. They helped word the referendum and guide the Working Waterfront Group through a maze of bureaucratic BS. Computer people put all the referendum signatures into a databank. Others helped formulate arguments against the City’s actions into factual statements which were communicated to the public. Other fishing community leaders got the message out about standing up to development in other coastal communities. Media experts made a short video to educate the public of the importance of working waterfronts to the economy and character of the State of Maine.

Merchants sponsored dinners at restaurants and sold T-shirts to raise funds for the group. The wives of fishermen organized to gather signatures for the referendum. Portland’s art community organized a protest last summer that brought attention to what was happening on Commercial Street, marching down the street with their posters, signs and mermaids.

And then there are the citizens of Portland who came out to gather signatures for the referendum. They were the greatest. Like the 84-year old retired fisherman and boatbuilder who gathered 175 signatures. Or the resident who lives on a harbor wharf who doesn’t mind boats starting at 4 a.m. She stood in the rain and snow to gather 300 signatures!

All worked together, attending two weekly meetings for over 16 months.

We’ve had some successes. The developer agreed to remove a hotel from his proposal on Fishermen’s Wharf. The City may consider rezoning Commercial Street to protect water-dependent users and provide tax incentives for the wharf owners for maintenance and dredging.

Willis Spear has been a groundfisherman, merchant seaman, and lobsterman among his many careers. He has fought to protect Portland’s working waterfront for more than 30 years. MCFA photo.

All kinds of people formed the grassroots alliance to stop this uncontrolled destruction of the waterfront and the character of Portland. We are going to keep meeting weekly to assure that the city delivers. Already, there are several volunteers ready to hit the streets to do another referendum should the city fall down on its promises.

Portland’s City Council voted for a six-month moratorium on waterfront development in December in response to a citizen’s referendum organized by fishermen. Photo courtesy of the Bangor Daily News.
Marcia Beal Brazer from Ogunquit and the wife of Norman Brazer Jr., a lobsterman. This interview was recorded in March 2018 at the Maine Fishermen’s Forum. Brazer was interviewed by Matt Frassica with help from intern Corina Gribble, and this interview was edited by intern Katie Clark.

I want to tell you about a 20th century miracle at sea. On October 14, 1991, I was in my driveway planting daffodils. A person came to my driveway and told me that my husband had fallen overboard and that he had drowned. I got in my car—driving in slow motion—I saw the police drive by, and I knew that they were going to come and tell me the bad news.

I drove down to the Perkins Cove, and I saw the fishermen there and I said, “Please tell me, has this really happened?” And they said, “Well, they found your husband’s boat. The name of the boat is the Marcia Beal, which is after me. Gardner Marshall saw the boat, it was heading toward Kennebunkport. They said, “We don’t think that he had a chance to survive.” Mark Sewell was getting into his truck in York Harbor, had heard the news about my husband falling overboard. Got back in his truck and decided he was going to go explore the fresh bait in the lobster traps. He told me he was led to do that.

Even today, we live on the water and I can see him go out, and on the days he goes out, I really don’t want to go anywhere. I want to make sure that he gets in ashore okay before I can go off.

Meanwhile, what happened to Norman is the toggle buoy wrapped around his band falling overboard. Got back in his truck and decided he was going to go to a whole room filled with all our friends and said, “We think that he’s going to be okay. You can go in and see him.” So I said I wanted his mother to go in first, and then I came in and the first thing he said to me is, “How’s the boat?”

An hour and a half later Dr. Shaker comes out of the operating room and says that my husband was literally drowned, that he had a gallon of seawater in him, that his temperature was 84, his heart was in AFIB [atrial fibrillation], but he thought he was going to survive. Then he finally came back another hour later to a whole room filled with all our friends and said, “We think that he’s going to be okay. You can go in and see him.” So I said I wanted his mother to go in first, and then I came in and the first thing he said to me is, “How’s the boat?” So I knew he was okay.

He came home, and we had a boatload of people streaming in and out of our house. We had businessmen, we had fishermen, we had old friends. We had grown men sit in our living room and cry. And it was the synergy of everything working together. It was truly a 20th century miracle. And I’m still recovering from it.

Two weeks later he goes back on the Marcia Beal, goes fishing. We had some really funny relatives that would [say], “I think I’m gonna send you some knives instead of flowers.”

Even today, we live on the water and I can see him go out, and on the days he goes out, I really don’t want to go anywhere. I want to make sure that he gets in ashore okay before I can go off. And I even watch some of the younger fishermen that go out alone. My husband’s never had a sternman. I was going to go with him at one time. I even got a class two license, I was going be his mate, but he really prefers to go alone. He can concentrate a lot better. And he’s a water man. He needed to go back on the water. And I just admired his courage for doing that.

Just treasure every single minute and be grateful for what you have. He just wasn’t meant to go and we’re still working out that. I’d wake up in the morning and think, “Did he really die at sea? Did he really die at sea?”

I had a really hard time dealing with that. He has always been very down-to-earth. He has always been a very true-to-himself person. He walks every morning, he’s a lobsterman, he has a garden. It really changed me more than it changed him. Because he was already okay. I was the one making life complicated. I just wanted a more simple life and it brought me down to earth about what was really important. I feel so blessed that my husband was saved for me because I wouldn’t have had him all these years and we have so much fun. We’ve been married for 52 years. He’s the love of my life, and I’m just so blessed.

Marcia Beal Brazer of Ogunquit. Photo courtesy of Maine Sea Grant.
"Cheer up, it’s only going to get worse." Robert Joyce

As fishermen, we take stock during these cold winter months of the previous fishing season. Maybe your reality check is in the shop during head re-adding gear due to a personal realization of what is truly the ultimate mouse trap. Maybe your tough questions emerge during a snowmobile trip up north, in which your entire fishing career flashes before your eyes in a single moment as you subject your body to G-forces it was not designed to endure at any age.

These tough questions are similar from year to year. Biblical prophecy refers to the world’s “end times” — I think fishermen sense such a time is upon us as well in regard to our chosen profession.

Each year I am reminded of my grandfather’s quote reflecting the tenacity and strength of my fellow fishermen, paired with Downeast humor well-grounded in the realities of life. So as we once again take stock of another fishing year, I would encourage us all to prepare for the worst and pray for the best. In all aspects of life, a good sense of humor in the midst of trials and tribulations encourages others and gets us through.

"Cheer up, it’s only going to get worse.”

Yes, the future can look dire at times but don’t abandon your principles, and do your best to take the higher road when faced with tough circumstances.

Jason Joyce
Swans Island
The million-dollar questions on lobstermen’s minds seem to be: “What do I need to do to prepare for the 2019 fishing season?” or “What will be the new whale regulations to contend with, and what is the bait supply going to look like?” Unfortunately, no one can answer those questions. And we have even less information right now than we should have to the government shutdown.

The timing and severity of new whale and herring regulations are unknown. But we do have some parameters on what we can expect. The new whale regulations will likely result in a 51% quota loss to the states’ fleet, including Maine. The herring quota will be cut by 51% if the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) proposed rule goes through or by 50% if the New England Fishery Management Council proposal goes through. Under the NMFS scenario, we lose over 50 million pounds of herring, with a 45.5-million-pound reduction from Area 1A. Under the Council scenario, we lose nearly 77 million pounds of herring, with a 51.5-million-pound reduction in Area 1A.

To put it differently, if a truck carries 40,000 pounds of bait, we lose 1.400 trucks under the NMFS scenario and 1,920 under the Council scenario. That’s a lot of herring! For comparison, Maine landed approximately 12 million pounds of herring in 2018, the equivalent of 300 trucks. While both scenarios are grim, the NMFS alternative gives the lobster industry a little more breathing room to adjust to these drastic cuts. The MLA has expressed strong support for the Council alternative for the NMFS.

Regardless of which scenario plays out, lobstermen should be planning ahead. You should be talking to your bait dealer about how to fill the gap next year. Are there plans to diversify bait offerings? Is there storage available in your area to hold frozen bait or other baits that may be available before peak demand kicks in? Is your buying station or co-op talking about what your local bait supply will look like next year, and how to get the most out of what you have? If these conversations are not yet happening, then please initiate them.

What can you do personally? Based on conversations with your bait dealer, how stable does your bait supply look month-by-month next year? Do you think you will have bait when you need it? Are there alternative sources of bait to get you through the lean times? Have you considered using bait savers or other bait-saving techniques to get the most out of the bait you do get? The success of your business will depend on how closely you work with your bait dealer and on planning for your specific needs.

There have been some positive developments on the bait front. The Department of Marine Resources (DMR) is investigating the possibility of allowing carp from Illinois to be a source of bait for the lobster fishery. At the December Lobster Advisory Council meeting, DMR reported that Illinois has a very large biomass of carp not known to carry any diseases and that the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) is moving forward with a pushing for a new Biological Opinion to allow Maine lobstermen to continue to make a profit-

The wild card in all of this is the lawsuit that the environmental groups have brought against NMFS. The organizations are not satisfied with the current whale rules and are pushing for a new Biological Opinion to force more restrictions to protect whales through the U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C. While the two-pronged management approach underway through the TRT and ASMFC will do this eventually, there is always the possibility that a court will seek to force NMFS to take more immediate actions. The MLA has intervened in this lawsuit and will have input if the court decides to accelerate the timeline for new whale protection measures.

So when will we see new whale rules? If the management processes take place on schedule, do expect to see new whale rules before 2020. The lobster industry has a voice in shaping new measures through the ASMFC and TRT processes, which is why the MLA is working on both fronts. If the court and environmental groups get impatient, things could happen sooner. If the court pressures NMFS to take emergency action, it is likely that these measures will have far less impact from the fishing industry. It is in the lobster industry’s best interest to work through the TRT and ASMFC to find solutions that will help right whales, while allowing Maine lobstermen to continue to make a profit-

The MLA is committed to doing just that.

The MLA will continue to push to ensure that any new whale regulations in the U.S. are proportionate to the risk
posed by each fishery and fishing practice. We reject ropeless fishing as an option for the Maine lobster fishery but will explore other options, including expanded gear marking, gear modifications and vertical line reductions. The MLA has carefully reviewed the whale entanglement data. We know that there have been no confirmed entanglements in Maine lobster gear since 2002. We know that the Canadian snow crab fishery was responsible for 11 entanglements since 2016, eight of which resulted in serious injury or mortality. We know that most of the rope removed from whales since 2016 has been ½” diameter or larger. The MLA will continue to push for more accountability from all of Canada’s fixed gear fisheries when it comes to protecting right whales.

Maine lobstermen are certainly going to have to adapt to many changes in 2019 and beyond. Your best defense is to stay informed so you can make appropriate decisions to maximize the future success of your lobstering business. Lobstermen don’t drive their boats with their eyes closed. Lobstermen don’t ignore NOAA weather forecasts. Lobstermen notice when the engine makes a weird noise or the bilge starts to back up. So it makes sense for you to pay attention now to the changes that are coming this season and for many years to come. Don’t close your eyes and pretend that it will all be OK. You need to take steps now to ensure that you have the bait you need to continue fishing, and be able to prepare for changes resulting from the whale rules.

The MLA will continue to advocate for our lobster men and give you the information you need to be ready. As always, stay safe on the water.

MLA DIRECTORS MEETING SUMMARY

The MLA Directors met on January 7 in Belfast. Under new business Patrice McCarron reviewed the preliminary list of 13 lobster-related bills. These bills address an array of issues including the amount of time on the waiting list, grey zone fishing hours, changes to the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative funding structure, marine debris and climate change. The bills are not yet printed so there are no details available. The board will consider these bills once they are printed.

The board discussed plans for the Maine Fishermen’s Forum, including support for the Seafood Reception, MLA Annual meeting, nominations for the Golden V-notch and Marine Patrol awards, and board member elections.

MLA staff have been monitoring the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) efforts to approve carp from Illinois as a potential bait source. The issue continues to move forward but no final decision has been made. The MLA has had discussions with Nordic Aquafarms in Belfast about the potential for salmon farming in the state. MLA staff have also had discussions with Cook Aquaculture on the possibility of the Omega menhaden plant producing an alternative bait using Gulf of Maine menhaden. The board also discussed setting aside time at future meetings for strategic planning on the MLA’s legislative and research agenda.

Under old business, Patrice explained that there is no news on the amount of herring quota allocated for 2019 and beyond due to the federal shutdown. NMFS is considering two scenarios: 15,066 metric tons (mt) of quota (4,354 mt to Area 1A) or 24,468 mt of quota (7,071 mt to Area 1A). A decision is expected soon after the government reopens. The MLA submitted comments to NMFS on the pending rule, urging the agency to allocate as much quota as possible in 2019 and to maximize the herring allocation to Area 1A.

DMR will propose rules to manage the 2019 state herring and menhaden fisheries; the public hearing will be on January 29. The rules will address the herring fixed gear set-aside, reporting requirements, and landing limits. There is no news on the whale rules due to the federal government shutdown. The rules continue to move forward on two tracks. The Take Reduction Team (TRT) is scheduled to meet in March to consider changes to the whale plan, and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) will consider during its February meeting initiating management changes to its lobster fishery management plan to reduce the fishery’s impact on whales. DMR is still looking for lobstermen to help with the whale research project by filling out a survey on how vertical lines are rigged, donate used vertical lines for break strength testing and putting a load cell aboard the vessel. MLA will work with DMR to ensure that there are meetings to solicit input from the industry before any whale proposals are finalized. The MLA board will meet on February 4 at noon in Belfast. The MLA Annual meeting is Friday, March 1, at 9 a.m. during the Maine Fishermen’s Forum at the Samoset Resort.

DMR PROPOSED RULE FOR HANCOCK COUNTY LOBSTER TRAWL LIMITS

In October 2018, a new trawl limit area was established at the request of the Zone B Council. At the time DMR understood that there was the possibility of refining the area described by the new trawl limit to better meet the needs of Zone B and Zone C fishermen. DMR held meetings with Zone B and Zone C fishermen to determine what changes to the area were advisable. At their January 2019 meeting, the Zone B Council members supported the Department’s proposal to amend this area in accordance with the changes proposed through the previous meetings. The proposed rule also eliminates the sunset provision on the original area. DMR will hold a public hearing on February 4 at 5 p.m. at the Ellsworth High School. Written comments are due February 15, 2019.

DMR PROPOSED RULE FOR STATE HERRING, MENHADEN FISHERY

For vessels issued a state Commercial Pelagic and Anadromous license that do not possess a Federal Limited Access Herring Permit, DMR proposes a 6,600 pound daily trip limit, limiting at-sea transfers to no more than 46,200 pounds per week to one carrier vessel only, and clarifies that all directed herring trips must report daily, three hours prior to landing, using the “herring.dmr@maine.gov” email. Regulations for the Area 1A fishery remain status quo, with herring landings permitted only on those days designated by the ASMFC.

DMR proposes to keep the 2018 menhaden regulations in place for the 2019 season. During the state allocation fishery, menhaden may only be caught in state waters. Landings are limited to 120,000 pounds per day and 160,000 pounds per week, with only one landing per 24-hour period. Landings are only allowed Monday through Thursday. License holders are required to notify DMR of their intent to fish prior to landing any menhaden and must report daily using the menhaden.dmr@maine.gov email. If the state allocation fishery is closed and the episodic event fishery is authorized by the ASMFC, the episodic fishery will reopen under the same rules as the state allocation fishery.

If the full episodic fishery quota is caught and that fishery is closed, the incidental catch and small-scale fishery may occur. This fishery is limited to 6,000 pounds per day with one landing per 24-hour period. It is unlawful during the incidental catch fishery for a catcher vessel to sell or transfer at sea menhaden to any other vessel. Seasons are set long by 8 fathom deep. The depth of the net will be determined by taking the average size of 20 meshes and then counting the total number of meshes by depth. Additionally, DMR proposes to allow an individual to fish or take by hook and line up to 25 menhaden per day for personal use only. DMR clarifies that those harvesting menhaden during the incidental catch and small-scale fishery are required to report through a monthly logbook. Menhaden fixed-gear operations may operate under exemptions that allow for seven day harvesting practices. The public hearing for the herring and menhaden proposed rules will be held January 29, 2019 at 4:00 p.m. Written comments are due February 13, 2019.
The 129th Legislature convened on December 5, 2018. The 13 members of the Marine Resources Committee have been appointed; Senator Dave Miramant from Camden and Representative Jay McCreight from Harpswell serve as co-chairs. So far, there are 13 bill titles submitted to the committee that could affect the lobster fishery. Public hearings are expected to begin in late January. For more information, visit www.legislature.maine.gov.

BAIT UPDATE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2018 Atlantic Herring Landings</th>
<th>For Data through December 20, 2018</th>
<th>Due to the federal government shutdown, final 2018 landings are not updated and there have been no herring landings in 2019.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area</td>
<td>Cumulative Catch YTD</td>
<td>Original Quota 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1A*</td>
<td>24,991</td>
<td>31,789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1B</td>
<td>2,124</td>
<td>3,552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6,878</td>
<td>31,137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9,402</td>
<td>43,763</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43,396</td>
<td>100,843*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Quota June 1 thru Sept 30 = 43,396; Oct 1 thru Dec 31 = 6,492

NMFS accepted comments on its proposed rule for the 2019 Atlantic herring quota until December 31, 2018. Due to the federal government shutdown, there is no information regarding the final decision.

LOBSTER ZONE COUNCILS ROUNDDUP

DMR held seven zone council meetings during December and January. Each zone council elected its officers and approved its bylaws. Topics discussed during each meeting included a discussion on the zone transfer waiting list, update on whale rules and herring, and enforcement updates.

During the December Lobster Advisory Council (LAC) meeting, the DMR Commissioner asked for feedback on potential changes to the zone transfer waiting list. Since the list was started, it has resulted in one swap the first year and six swaps the second year. A few lobstermen seeking to transfer from Zone F to Zone G have expressed concern that there is no mechanism to ensure movement off this waiting list. The LAC supported DMR taking this issue to the lobster zone councils for ideas on alternative ways to structure this zone transfer waiting list, such as allowing for some predictable entry from the transfer list. For example, for every five new entrants that enter a zone, one person could enter from the zone transfer list.

Sarah Cotnoir from DMR solicited feedback from the zone councils on this idea. The majority of zone councils believed that the current system is working. There has been some movement off transfer lists when swaps can be identified. There was no support for changing the current system from any of the zone councils with the exception of Zone F, which supports looking into this further. Zone A offered feedback that the DMR consider developing criteria that a lobsterman must meet in order to qualify for a zone transfer, rather than just allowing guys to put their name on a list because they want to fish a different area. Zone G suggested that if transfers are allowed in, they should enter the zone as a new entrant with 300 traps and build up from there.

Sarah gave a brief presentation on where Maine currently stands regarding the possibility of new whale rules. The right whale population is in decline, so NMFS is moving toward developing new rules through the TIR. A preliminary decision on those changes is expected in March. The ASMFC is also considering changes to the lobster management plan, such as vertical line or trap reductions, to reduce the lobster industry’s impact on right whales. The ASMFC will discuss this at its February meeting. NMFS continues to work on the Biological Opinion (part of the Endangered Species Act) for right whales. Given the dire status of the species, the results could trigger more severe management action to protect right whales. A decision is expected later in 2019. DMR is still seeking volunteers from the lobster industry to donate used vertical lines, deploy a load cell while fishing and to complete a survey on vertical line configurations.

DMR is still waiting to hear from NMFS on its final decision for this year’s herring quota, but there has been no action while the government is shut down. DMR is moving forward with rulemaking on its state waters herring and menhaden fisheries for 2019. DMR is also researching the potential to approve carp from the Midwest for use as lobster bait. This is still under review and no decision has been made.

Zones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options Under Consideration for 2019 Herring Quota (Compared to 2018)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loss in Pounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018 Quota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 1A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 1B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Loss in Pounds</th>
<th>Pounds</th>
<th>Loss in Metric Tons</th>
<th>Metric Tons</th>
<th>% change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018 Quota</td>
<td>NMFS</td>
<td>NEFMC</td>
<td>NMFS</td>
<td>NEFMC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 1A</td>
<td>61,162,773</td>
<td>15,588,886</td>
<td>9,506,815</td>
<td>24,911,236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 1B</td>
<td>5,817,992</td>
<td>2,139,260</td>
<td>1,426,389</td>
<td>1,398,732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 2</td>
<td>18,077,884</td>
<td>14,955,825</td>
<td>9,232,949</td>
<td>13,950,592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 3</td>
<td>24,951,889</td>
<td>21,038,689</td>
<td>12,954,347</td>
<td>11,997,542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>110,020,538</td>
<td>53,942,642</td>
<td>32,212,600</td>
<td>26,076,896</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lee Fisher has been a leading provider of quality commercial fishing supply in the US since 1982.

BAIT BAG
Material: P.E. (Polyethylene) No.18 (300d/24)
Mesh: 1” Or 1-1/2” Stretched Mesh. Packaging: 1 Dozen

Bullet Buoy
Size | Price (Dz.) |
--- | --- |
1-1/2” Mesh Yellow | $7.65 |
1” Mesh Orange, Blue, Yellow | $8.80 |
7” | $ 6.80 |
8” | $ 6.80 |
9” | $ 7.20 |
10” | $ 7.95 |
12” | $ 8.80 |
14” | $ 9.60 |
16” | $ 12.00 |

Prices Good Through March 31, 2019

Also visit us at
WWW.LEEFLFISHING.COM
For other commercial fishing, crabbing, and lobster supplies.

MLA Seeks Nominations for Board of Directors

MLA Members -- Don’t miss your opportunity to influence the future of your organization and your industry!

Annual Meeting will be held Friday, March 1, 2019 at 9am

Did you know?
• MLA Directors are elected for a 3-year term
• MLA Directors meet monthly (except August) in Belfast.
• Board members expected to attend at least 4 meetings/yr

Overview of MLA Board
• Maximum # of Board members: 21
• Current Board: 20 members
• Number of Directors with Terms expiring: 6
• Average age of MLA Board: 49
• Youngest MLA Board member: 25
• Oldest MLA Board member: 70

MLA Board representation
• Zone A 4 (1 expiring)
• Zone B 3 (1 expiring)
• Zone C 3 (1 expiring)
• Zone D 4
• Zone E 2
• Zone F 3 (2 expiring)
• Zone G 1 (1 expiring)
• Islands represented 4

2019 Board Priorities
• Dedicated lobstermen who care about the future of the industry
• Lobstermen who can talk about the industry’s needs and priorities
• Young lobstermen

Nomination Requirements
• To make a nomination, you must be an MLA member in good standing.
• All nominees must hold a Maine lobster license & be an MLA member in good standing.
• Deadline for nominations: January 31, 2019
• Feel free to nominate yourself, or someone else.

Nominee Information (must be MLA member)
Name: ____________________________________________________________
Fishing Port: ______________________________________________________
Zone: ___, Town of residence: _____________________________
Please let us know how this nominee could contribute to the MLA Board:
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

Person submitting nomination (must be MLA member)
Name: ____________________________________________________________
Lobster Lic. #: ____________________________

Thank you for helping to keep the MLA strong!

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.
Here to serve you!
Jerry Wadsworth (207) 542-0842  jerryy@friendshiptrap.com
Jimmy Emerson (207) 463-6656  jemerson@friendshiptrap.com
Friendship Falls Office: (800) 451-1200; (207) 245-2549
Columbia Falls Office: (800) 339-6656
Visit our website: www.friendshiptrap.com

February 2019 | LANDINGS | Page 11

PORTLAND    ROCKLAND    SEARSPORT    SOUTHWEST HARBOR    JONESPORT    MAINE          800-639-2715  •  hamiltonmarine.com

Typographical errors are unintentional and subject to correction.

Maine Lobstermen’s Association
Est. 1954

The MLA advocates for a sustainable lobster resource and the fishermen & communities that depend on it.

Become a member.
For your future & the future of the industry.

2 Storer St. Suite 203 | Kennebunk, Maine | www.mainelobstermen.org
207.967.4555

Here’s spring membership time.
New members $200.

It’s spring membership time.
New members $200.

It’s spring membership time.
New members $200.
YOU BE THE JUDGE:

Which Wire Would You Buy?

They say pictures speak louder than words and we couldn’t agree more, especially when comparing photos of lobster traps constructed with Aquamesh® to traps made with inferior imported wire.

Aquamesh® is manufactured in the USA using an exclusive hot-dipped zinc galvanized after welding (GAW) and specialized PVC coating method. The wire is first welded and then galvanized, submerged in a tank of molten zinc, which provides a heavy zinc coating that completely covers and seals the welds, protecting it from all harsh environmental elements. The wire is then covered with our proprietary marine-grade PVC coating. The Aquamesh® manufacturing process results in a longer lifetime of use, typically 5x-10x times more when compared to GBW marine products.

Other trap wire is manufactured overseas using a substandard galvanized before welding (GBW) and plastic coating process. The wire is first coated with a very thin layer of zinc and then welded together and coated in vinyl plastic. During the welding process the zinc is burnt off leaving the wire unprotected at the weld. The weld is completely exposed to all environmental elements causing premature rusting and breakage, leading to a limited lifetime of use and costing more due to the frequency of replacing.

By selecting Aquamesh® you are getting the highest quality, longest lasting and best-selling marine trap wire in the world. But don’t take our word for it, just look at the above photos and judge for yourself.

NOTHING COMPARES TO AQUAMESH®

THE GAW DIFFERENCE

1.800.762.6374 | 1.508.234.8400
info@riverdale.com | www.riverdale.com
WHEN YOUR ENGINE MEANS BUSINESS, MILTON CAT MEANS MORE.

Milton CAT is the Northeast and upstate New York Caterpillar dealer. Our complete range of marine power systems solutions is backed by a team with exceptional knowledge and experience.

• More engine choices.
• More fully-equipped and staffed locations.
• More support for your commercial fishing vessel, ferry, tug, or pleasure craft.
• More ordering and delivery options for unparalleled part availability.

Contact: Kevin Hampson, 508-634-5503, Kevin_Hampson@miltoncat.com

WHY BUY SECONDHAND WHEN YOU CAN BUY FRESH FROM O’HARA?

BLACK COD
FROZEN IN BOXES
HERRING
FRESH BY TANK AND BARREL
POGIES
FRESH BY TANK AND BARREL
REDFISH
FRESH BY TANK AND BARREL
FROZEN IN BOXES
ROCKFISH
FROZEN IN BOXES
SALT
50 LB BAGS
TUNA
FROZEN IN 50 LB BAGS

WHEN YOUR ENGINE MEANS BUSINESS,
MILTON CAT MEANS MORE.

Black Cod
Frozen in boxes
Herring
Fresh by tank and barrel
Pogies
Fresh by tank and barrel
Redfish
Fresh by tank and barrel
Frozen in boxes
Rockfish
Frozen in boxes
Salt
50 lb bags
Tuna
Frozen in 50 lb bags

WHEN YOUR ENGINE MEANS BUSINESS,
MILTON CAT MEANS MORE.

SINCE 1907

FRESH BY TANK AND BARREL
FROZEN IN BOXES
FROZEN IN VATS/BOXES
FRESH BY TANK AND BARREL
FROZEN IN BOXES
FROZEN IN BOXES
FROZEN IN BOXES
FROZEN IN BOXES
50 LB BAGS
FROZEN IN 50 LB BAGS

WHEN YOUR ENGINE MEANS BUSINESS,
MILTON CAT MEANS MORE.

Bottom Line
Super 46 Wesmac
C18 CAT

BROOKS TRAP MILL
& MARINE SUPPLIES

Working to make 2019 your best season ever!

The one stop shop for your lobster & commercial fishing needs! ~

Visit us online at: www.brookstrapmill.com

Jonesboro, ME  (207) 434-5791
Portland, ME  (800) 244-8727
Thomaston, ME  (800) 426-4526
West Bath, ME  (855) 840-6027
Keep Maquoit Bay open for all commercial fishermen and recreational users.

Generations have fished these waters and now their livelihood is being threatened.

“The scale is just too big.” — Albert Rose

“Does it bother you that a group of lobstermen will lose income so two people could make income?” — John Powers

“I have been fishing there for 60 years (Maquoit Bay) and it’s a good spot right there.” — Donald Ulrickson

“My son and I have caught stripers in Maquoit Bay and the impact of the proposed factory is too big on too many people.” — Andrew Washburn

“If this lease goes through you will ruin this spot for fisherman and it will impact our revenue. We can’t allow this to create winners and losers — the ocean belongs to everyone not just two people who want to start an oyster farm.” — Tom Santaguida

TO JOIN THIS GROWING COALITION

Email us at maquoitpg@gmail.com and find out how you can add your voice.
LEARN MORE AT FACEBOOK.COM/SAVEMAQUOITBAY

Paid and Authorized by Maquoit Bay, LLC.
The MLMC recently conducted a strategic review of their marketing strategy, resulting in updated plans targeting additional pieces of the supply chain outside of the end buyers, chefs and media. The MLMC will continue to reach those audiences while expanding to seafood purveyors as well.

Come join us at the 2019 Fishermen’s Forum where MLMC Executive Director Matt Jacobson and a representative from Maine Lobster’s global communications firm, Weber Shandwick, will share plans for continuing to buoy demand and awareness in 2019.

The MLMC will outline their new tactics, including digitally targeting food and seafood buyers, to round out these robust programs with continuous media outreach, chef engagement and ongoing social content, ensuring that Maine Lobster is top of mind year-round.

Make a donation today.  Online. By phone. By mail.  

If you are a Maine lobsterman, please support the Legal Defense Fund.

Mail: 2 Storer St, Ste 203, Kennebunk ME
Online at www.mainelobstermen.org

Call: 207-967-4555

The MLA Legal Defense Fund is supporting MLA’s fight against extreme whale rules such as ropeless fishing and closures. Funds are being used to pay for legal fees in response to a lawsuit filed by several national environmental groups.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Discount/Deal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smithwick &amp; Mariners Insurance</td>
<td>Falmouth, ME</td>
<td>Vessel Insurance</td>
<td>Discounted vessel insurance plus 5% discount with proof of CG approved Drill Conductor course w/in the last 5 years. Wooden boat, Builders coverage, no lay up period, discounted electronics deductible, and automatic coverage of researchers and more!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW Boatworks</td>
<td>Lamonie, ME</td>
<td>Boat Builders/Repairs</td>
<td>$1000 discount for hull or top. on a 38’ CB or 44’ CB.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLA MEMBER DISCOUNT DIRECTORY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midcoast Marine Electronics</td>
<td>Rockland, ME</td>
<td>Electronic Equipment</td>
<td>10% off list price on all marine electronic products excluding MRP products.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navtronics, LLC</td>
<td>York, ME</td>
<td>Electronic Equipment</td>
<td>5% off of purchases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back River Financial Group</td>
<td>Farmingdale, ME</td>
<td>Financial &amp; Investment</td>
<td>Free initial consultation and review of previous tax returns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic Edge Lobster</td>
<td>Boothbay Harbor, ME</td>
<td>Fuel</td>
<td>Fuel discount for MLA members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine Camp Outfitters</td>
<td>Sunset, ME</td>
<td>Gifts</td>
<td>10% off all apparel and promotional product orders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show your MLA card to receive great discounts at these fine businesses!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampton Inn, Ellsworth</td>
<td>(Ellsworth, ME)</td>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>Special rates for MLA members and Business Supporters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampton Inn, Downtown-Waterfront</td>
<td>(Portland, ME)</td>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampton Inn, Rockland/Thomaston</td>
<td>(Rockland, ME)</td>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence Inn by Marriott</td>
<td>(Scarborough, ME)</td>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coastal Hydraulics</td>
<td>Seabrook, NH</td>
<td>Hydraulics</td>
<td>10% discount on all stock items for MLA members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hews Company, LLC</td>
<td>South Portland, ME</td>
<td>Hydraulics</td>
<td>10% off hydraulic components &amp; Cable Craft cables.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chase Leavitt Co.</td>
<td>Portland, ME</td>
<td>Safety Training &amp; Equipment</td>
<td>5% off service fee for liferaft repack OR $50 off new liferaft purchase w/ MLA card or current Maine CF card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McMillan Offshore Survival Training</td>
<td>Belfast, ME</td>
<td>Safety Training &amp; Equipment</td>
<td>25% discount on USCG Drill Conductor training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter Harbor Fishermen's Coop</td>
<td>Winter Harbor, ME</td>
<td>Trap Builders, Stock &amp; Supplies</td>
<td>10% off picked lobster meat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B &amp; S Bait</td>
<td>Cherryfield, ME</td>
<td>Bait</td>
<td>$100 off per pallet of pig hide (must show current MLA card).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bessy Bait, LLC</td>
<td>Seabrook, NH</td>
<td>Bait</td>
<td>$5 discount per drum on multiple drum purchases (must show current MLA card).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCUTECH Marine Propeller, Inc</td>
<td>Dover, NH</td>
<td>Propellers</td>
<td>10% off propeller repair &amp; new shafts. New propeller discounts vary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England Propeller Inc</td>
<td>Plymouth, MA</td>
<td>Propellers</td>
<td>Discounts on marine propeller, shafting, and related items, sales &amp; repairs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nautilus Marine Fabrication, Inc.</td>
<td>Trenton, ME</td>
<td>Propellers</td>
<td>5% Discount on propeller reconditioning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accutech Marine Propeller, Inc</td>
<td>Dover, NH</td>
<td>Propellers</td>
<td>10% off propeller repair &amp; new shafts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England Propeller Inc</td>
<td>Plymouth, MA</td>
<td>Propellers</td>
<td>Discounts on marine propeller, shafting, and related items, sales &amp; repairs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nautilus Marine Fabrication, Inc.</td>
<td>Trenton, ME</td>
<td>Propellers</td>
<td>5% Discount on propeller reconditioning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter Harbor Fishermen’s Coop</td>
<td>Winter Harbor, ME</td>
<td>Trap Builders, Stock &amp; Supplies</td>
<td>10% off picked lobster meat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B &amp; S Bait</td>
<td>Cherryfield, ME</td>
<td>Bait</td>
<td>$100 off per pallet of pig hide (must show current MLA card).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bessy Bait, LLC</td>
<td>Seabrook, NH</td>
<td>Bait</td>
<td>$5 discount per drum on multiple drum purchases (must show current MLA card).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCUTECH Marine Propeller, Inc</td>
<td>Dover, NH</td>
<td>Propellers</td>
<td>10% off propeller repair &amp; new shafts. New propeller discounts vary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England Propeller Inc</td>
<td>Plymouth, MA</td>
<td>Propellers</td>
<td>Discounts on marine propeller, shafting, and related items, sales &amp; repairs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nautilus Marine Fabrication, Inc.</td>
<td>Trenton, ME</td>
<td>Propellers</td>
<td>5% Discount on propeller reconditioning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter Harbor Fishermen’s Coop</td>
<td>Winter Harbor, ME</td>
<td>Trap Builders, Stock &amp; Supplies</td>
<td>10% off picked lobster meat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B &amp; S Bait</td>
<td>Cherryfield, ME</td>
<td>Bait</td>
<td>$100 off per pallet of pig hide (must show current MLA card).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bessy Bait, LLC</td>
<td>Seabrook, NH</td>
<td>Bait</td>
<td>$5 discount per drum on multiple drum purchases (must show current MLA card).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCUTECH Marine Propeller, Inc</td>
<td>Dover, NH</td>
<td>Propellers</td>
<td>10% off propeller repair &amp; new shafts. New propeller discounts vary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England Propeller Inc</td>
<td>Plymouth, MA</td>
<td>Propellers</td>
<td>Discounts on marine propeller, shafting, and related items, sales &amp; repairs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nautilus Marine Fabrication, Inc.</td>
<td>Trenton, ME</td>
<td>Propellers</td>
<td>5% Discount on propeller reconditioning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter Harbor Fishermen’s Coop</td>
<td>Winter Harbor, ME</td>
<td>Trap Builders, Stock &amp; Supplies</td>
<td>10% off picked lobster meat.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SNOW CRAB QUOTA IN GULF OF ST. LAWRENCE CORRESPONDS TO RIGHT WHALE ENTANGLEMENTS

By Melissa Waterman

No one would call a snow crab pretty. The flat, 10-legged crustacean, whose carapace can grow to about 6 inches in size, looks like a creature concocted by a Hollywood horror movie director. But the homely deepwater crab, once landed, has translated into a lot of money for fishermen around the Gulf of St. Lawrence in Canada.

The snow crab fishery, however, has been tagged as a likely culprit in the 2017 deaths of endangered North Atlantic right whales in Canadian waters.

The snow crab fishery started slowly in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. According to an article by Karen Pinchin published by the CBC in 2018, snow crab was first landed as bycatch by ocean dragger in the 1960s. By 1968, just a few dozen fishermen deliberately set for snow crab in the area around the Gaspé peninsula and west of Cape Breton.

The Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) began regulating the fishery during the 1970s, instituting trap limits and a minimum mesh size for nets and restricting landings to only male crabs. In 1982, fishermen landed 35,000 tons of snow crab from the Gulf of St. Lawrence region. But, as has happened with so many commercial marine species, overfishing took its toll on the stock. By 1989 landings had dropped to 8,000 tons.

But the Gulf of St. Lawrence population slowly recovered, in part due to additional management measures by DFO such as individual boat quotas and dockside monitoring. The quota for the Gulf, which is divided into several smaller management areas, was increased. In 2016, the official quota was 20,000 tons. Approximately $129 million worth of snow crab was landed in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and New Brunswick that year, primarily from Area 12 in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Snow crab exports in 2016 hit $280 million, with 83% going to the United States and 12% to Japan.

snow crab entanglements from 2016 to 2018 were particularly hard on the right whale population, resulting in 11 serious injuries and mortalities.

In addition to the reduction in quota in 2018, DFO also instituted new right whale protection measures in the Gulf of St. Lawrence snow crab fishery during the 2018. These included a closure in a known feeding ground, dynamic closures when whales where sighted around the foraging area, gear modifications to limit the amount of rope in the surface system and ban floating line on the surface, and gear marking requirements. The snow crab fishery is also subject to several strict reporting requirements.

DFO began an assessment of the snow crab population status in the Gulf of St. Lawrence area and off Newfoundland and Labrador in 2017. The report, issued in October 2018, surprised many. The biomass of snow crab off Newfoundland was the lowest in 25 years. Furthermore, the steady harvesting of larger male crabs has had an impact on succeeding generations. Scientists found that 80% of the current crab stock were below commercial size. Apparently when there are fewer large males in the population, the smaller male crabs terminally molt earlier, which means that they stop growing at a smaller size.

The annual quota for snow crab in the Gulf of St. Lawrence was reduced in 2018. That and the new federal regulations may have had the effect of protecting the migrating right whales as no new deaths were reported that year. DFO is currently finalizing measures to protect right whales in 2019; the snow crab quota for 2019 in the Gulf of St. Lawrence has not yet been released.
surprises popping up. The price crash in 2012 and the whale rules that are coming are examples. My preference, when time allows, is to communicate the issues to the fishing industry and get input from them prior to the decision-making process. It all depends on what we have for time.

DMR today is different than it was when Keliher first took the helm. Under the former administration, which emphasized downsizing government, Keliher had to reduce the number of positions in the agency. He was able to reduce his staff, from 202 to 172 people. He also reorganized DMR to ensure that bureaus within the agency were integrated with each other, not isolated.

“So we broke down the silos, allowing science staff to work on multiple species and to provide input more effectively into policy decisions. People are working on a breadth of issues now, not one single thing. It’s more challenging but also more interesting,” he said.

The effect of climate change in the Gulf of Maine is one of the challenges that the agency and Maine’s fishermen are facing together. Governor Mills made it clear in her inaugural address in January that her administration will focus on the issue within all state agencies. “There’s both good and bad with climate change in terms of marine species,” Keliher noted. “For lobster, it’s been good. The question of the resiliency of the lobster stock, however, is a high priority. That’s part of the work started at the Commission [Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission], look at how standardizing management measures across Lobster Conservation Management Areas can help protect spawning stock biomass.”

Another challenge from climate change is the effect of the rising sea level on coastal communities. When former governor LePage dissolved the State Planning Office in 2012, the state Coastal Program moved to the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. In 2017, the federally-funded program became part of DMR. The move gives DMR yet another mandate. “One of the biggest issues we need to focus on is coastal resiliency in the face of sea level rise. Look at Port Clyde, for example. The dock [at the Port Clyde Fishermen’s Cooperative] that was rebuilt with a Working Waterfront grant is underwater on a moon tide. We have to assist and find grant opportunities and funding around infrastructure as it ages and needs to be rebuilt,” Keliher said.

But the issue that is on the minds of most lobstermen is possible new protections for endangered North Atlantic right whales. The population took a serious hit in 2017 when 18 whales died, primarily in Canadian waters. In response, several environmental organizations petitioned the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) under two federal laws, the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), to take steps to protect the population while in U.S. waters. “The Take Reduction Team, a consortium of public and private agencies and organizations, will meet in March to discuss ways to reduce serious injury and mortality under the MMPA. Through the ESA, NMFS will release a new Biological Opinion on the lobster fishery,” Keliher said. A Biological Opinion was issued in 2014, which found that the lobster fishery did not jeopardize right whales. According to Keliher, it’s likely that the new Opinion will be the opposite when NMFS concludes its analysis.

Simultaneously, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC), on which Keliher presides as chairman this year, set up a technical committee that is looking at a reduction in endlines as a preemptive measure. “They are discussing a percent reduction in endlines to mitigate risk [to the whales] and influence the Biological Opinion. If ASMFC doesn’t act, the feds will. Once we know what direction the Commission may take, we will start having conversations with industry,” Keliher explained.

Many lobstermen protest that right whales are not traversing the Gulf of Maine any longer and thus the threat from lobster gear is practically nonexistent. The whales, however, do pass through offshore waters. They were found off Nantucket in January, heading for their feeding grounds in Massachusetts Bay where they spend the winter and early spring months. “They are in the Area 1 lobster fishery. There’s a risk of entanglement. The federal government is not going to let this go,” Keliher cautioned. “There’s going to be change. We [DMR] must take corrective action. The lawsuit is a wild card,” Keliher admitted. “The DMR is working the the Attorney General’s office to submit an amicus brief. That will allow information to be documented within the court case.”

In addition, a court case brought last year by the Center for Biological Diversity and other environmental organizations to force NMFS to institute new restrictions on the lobster fishery to protect right whales is proceeding in U.S. district court in Washington, D.C. The environmental organizations contend that NMFS has violated the ESA by allowing whales to become entangled and die due to fishing gear and are asking the judge to set a time by which the agency must take corrective action. “The lawsuit is a wild card,” Keliher admitted. “The DMR is working the the Attorney General’s office to submit an amicus brief. That will allow information to be documented within the court case.”

With dilemmas like these as well as the crises that seem to occur every year, such as a reduction in the herring quota or battles over aquaculture leases, one would think that Keliher’s enthusiasm for his job might be wearing a bit thin. On the contrary, “I love this job because of the people. We have a staff with a diversity of skills and experience. Did you know we have one of the youngest staffs in state agencies now?” Keliher said. “And I love talking with fishermen. The support I got [from eight state fishing organizations] to stay in this job was incredibly humbling. I had no idea. Even a couple of fishermen whose licenses I suspended wrote letters of support.”

Keliher paused, “The hardest thing is to suspend someone’s license. You have to give everyone a fair shake, give everyone the time to talk.”
limits. New England Fisheries Science Center oceanographer Jim Manning will review 2018 findings of the environmental monitoring program known as eMOLT. The program attaches temperature sensors to lobster traps and travels to record water temperatures at depth, data of growing importance as the Gulf of Maine continues to warm. And throughout the weekend, Maine Sea Grant will host a mobile recording studio parked in the Samoset parking lot to continue capturing “Voices of the Fishermen’s Forum” interviews with fishermen and others pursuing their livelihoods on the water.

On Friday the Maine Lobstermen’s Association holds its 65th annual members meeting. This will mark the first meeting presided over by MLA’s President, Kristan Porter, of Cutler. The MLA will update its membership on the past year’s work advocating for lobstermen on bait allocations, whale rules, ocean energy development, developing better life jackets, and more. The MLA will also explore what the pending quota cuts will mean for Maine lobstermen and discuss strategies to keep lobstermen fishing and profitable.

Also Friday morning, high school students from the eight Downeast high schools participating in the Eastern Maine Skippers Program, a program of the Maine Center for Coastal Fisheries in Stonington, will speak about their ongoing investigation into the question of how technology can be used to support sustainable and successful local fisheries in the state. The MLA and DMR will lead a session on the status of right whales and management efforts to protect them. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is evaluating the relationship between lobster gear and right whale mortalities and is likely to promulgate additional regulations to protect the whales. The session will include an update on the status of the right whale population, an overview of the management processes underway, an update on the pending court case, and review the preliminary results of Maine’s vertical line project.

On Friday afternoon, Department of Marine Resources staff will give the annual lobster science and management update. Preliminary data suggest a good 2018 season, with landings slightly less than 119 million pounds. The session will also explore other management issues affecting the lobster industry including bait. NOAA officials will follow that session with an open forum on fisheries management; the public is encouraged to take part in that session.

On Saturday the Maine Elver Fishermen’s Association and Maine Alewife Harvesters will hold their respective annual meetings. Staff and board members from the new Maine Ocean School in Searsport will speak about the magnet high school and its mission to provide a high school education focused on Maine’s maritime connection. Fishermen and others involved in protecting the working waterfront in Portland and other Maine communities will talk about the recent events in Portland and the development pressures being felt in Boothbay Harbor and other ports.

The Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative will present highlights from its 2018 marketing efforts and review its new focus for 2019. The Collaborative, which was reauthorized by the Maine Legislature in January 2018, plans to concentrate on educating food and seafood buyers about the Maine lobster fishery and the culinary qualities of Maine soft-shell lobster. A new seminar, on financial planning for retirement for fishermen, also will take place in the afternoon.

A topic on everyone’s minds is the impact of warming sea temperatures in the Gulf of Maine on the area’s fisheries. As the water warms, species previously found in southern New England, such as black sea bass, are making their way into Maine waters. Will the state be ready to take advantage of these changes and what are the regulatory implications?

The Forum is known not only for its interesting seminars and mix of attendees but for its social aspects. On Thursday night there will be the popular seafood reception offering free blood pressure checks, glucose screening, and cholesterol screening. Dr. Jensen from Maine Dermatology will conduct skin cancer checkups while a Coast Guard-approved First Aid and CPR Training will take place from 1 to 4:30 p.m. on Thursday (registration required). And of course, the popular Trade Show will offer attendees everything from oilskins to engines during the Forum. We will see you there!
RESEARCHERS LAUNCH LIFEJACKET VANS THAT AIM TO MAKE LIFEJACKET USE EASY AND AFFORDBLE FOR LOBSTERMEN

According to the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), lobster fishing deaths accounted for the highest number of occupational fatalities in East Coast fisheries from 2010-2014. Most of these deaths were related to falls overboard (50%) or vessel disasters (30%) and based on fatality report narratives, none of the recovered victims was wearing a lifejacket.

Researchers at the Northeast Center for Occupational Health and Safety: Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (NEC) have been working with lobstermen in Maine and Massachusetts over the past few years to understand why lifejacket use is relatively uncommon among fishermen in this fishery sector. Feedback from the community has pointed to a number of barriers to lifejacket use that the NEC and their partners (Fishing Partnership Support Services, Maine Lobstermen’s Association, Massachusetts Lobstermen’s Association, McMillian Offshore Survival Training and the Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen’s Association) plan to address with a “Lifejackets for Lobstermen” campaign.

According to the project’s coordinator, Rebecca Weil, the campaign will launch in April of 2019 and will address the prior barriers that lobstermen have experienced when considering lifejackets. “We’ve been working with lobstermen over the past few years to identify user-friendly, commercially available lifejackets and fortunately, we have identified many that lobstermen find appealing. We have also discovered that choosing a lifejacket is really a matter of personal preference, so fishermen need to have a number of options to consider, as well as information on the various features that will likely meet their specific work needs.”

To access easy and affordable options, Weil states that the campaign will feature two lifejacket vans that will drive to ports in Maine and Massachusetts. The vans will provide lifejacket options at a one-time discount and will allow fishermen to try them on, get information about the various options available and learn about additional technology that can improve fishermen’s chances of recovery and survival in the event of a fall overboard.

In addition to improving access to affordable lifejackets, the campaign seeks to make the process of getting and using lifejackets, a positive, fun experience. "The Lifejackets for Lobstermen campaign is really more than just a mobile van that carries lifejackets, it’s about bringing the community together to celebrate and support a very important segment of coastal economies. We have been working with local partners to promote the vans and organize fun and engaging activities wherever possible in the various ports that the vans will visit," says Julie Sorensen, the project’s director. The vans will be visiting ports in Maine and Massachusetts throughout the spring, summer and early fall of 2019.

Over the next few months, the research group and its partners hope to make lifejacket use the norm in the lobster fishing community. As Captain Mark Ring, in Gloucester, Massachusetts, said, "They are bringing safety to the fleet, one boat at a time." If the vans prove successful, NEC researchers plan to work with local partners, community members, retailers, and fishing groups to develop a transition plan that will ensure the sustainability of the program through local ownership. Most importantly, they hope to improve fishermen’s chances of survival and markedly reduce fatalities in the lobster fishing industry in the coming years.

The NEC is funded through the Centers for Disease Control to address prominent occupational safety and health hazards in agricultural, forestry and fishing communities throughout the Northeast. In addition to conducting research and developing safety programs, the Center offers safety training, health screening and counseling services to agricultural, forestry and fisheries workers.

To find out more about the Lifejackets for Lobstermen campaign, individuals can visit the project Facebook page for updates at www.facebook.com/LifejacketsforLobstermen or contact project staff via email at LifejacketProject@bassett.org.
NEW MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE TO ADDRESS LOBSTER ISSUES

By Melissa Waterman and Patrice McCarron

The first regular session of the 129th Legislature convened on December 5, 2018 and must complete its work by June 19, 2019. The Maine Legislature consists of two chambers: the Senate and the House of Representatives. The House consists of 151 members (88 Democrats, 56 Republicans, 5 Independents, and 1 Independent and 1 vacancy). The House elected Sara Gideon to serve as Speaker of the House and Kathleen Dillingham as House Minority Leader. The Senate consists of 35 members (21 Democrats and 14 Republicans). The Senate elected Troy Jackson to serve as Senate President and Dana Dow as Minority Leaders.

With the advent of the 129th Maine State Legislature comes a new slate of faces on the Joint Committee on Marine Resources. The Committee’s responsibilities include review of all bills pertaining to Maine’s many marine species, every-thing from seaweed harvesting to seafood dealer licensing.

The two co-chairman this session are Senator David Miramant of Camden and Representative Jay McCreight of Harpswell. The Committee is comprised of 13 members, eight of whom have served on this committee during a previous Legislature and four who have lobster fishing experience. Four members of the committee — Allison Hepler, Genevieve McDonald, Bill Bob Faulkingham and Kathy Javner — are serving their very first terms in the Legislature.

We contacted Senator Miramant to hear his perspective on his new position.

“I am excited to get to work dealing with the 40 or so bills that will be sent to our committee. We have a diverse group of members who all share a passion for protecting our marine resources now and for the future. Because of this diversity and experience, the members have shown a grasp of the issues we are facing. We will not waste the time of those who travel to make their views known in August. We will be grouping the bills to minimize travel for any particular subject matter, as we understand what it takes to give up time from fishing to come and testify.”

To date, there have been 34 marine resource related bills put forward. Nine of these are lobster-related bills. There are others that deal with marine debris, ocean acidification and the marine economy that will indirectly impact the lobster industry.

Lobster-related Bills

Bills titles that have not yet been printed are assigned an “LR” number. Once the bill is drafted with the text of the proposed legislative changes, it is assigned an “LD” number. The following bills and bill titles were available as of press date.

LR 2191 Resolve, To Require Maine to Become an Affiliate of the International Area in the Bay of Fundy (Sponsored by Rep Devin of Newcastle).

LR 852 An Act to Provide Equity in the Lobster License Promotion Surcharge (sponsored by Rep Faulkingham of Winter Harbor).

LD 148 Resolve, Establishing a Commission to Study the Existing Potential and Future Impacts of Aquatic and Marine Debris on Maine's Aquatic and Coastal Habitats and Species (Sponsored by Rep Devin of Newcastle).

LR 2075 An Act to Incorporate Advancements in Watershed Nutrient Management (Sponsored by Rep Devin of Newcastle).

LR 314 An Act to Simplify Apprenticeship Requirements for Student and Apprentice Fishermen and Crab Fishermen (Sponsored by Rep Devin of Newcastle).

LR 2075 An Act to Incorporate Advancements in Watershed Nutrient Management (Sponsored by Rep Devin of Newcastle).

LR 747 An Act to Remove Night-time Restrictions on Lobster Fishing in a Certain Area in the Bay of Fundy (sponsored by Rep Tuell of East Machias).


LR 312 An Act to Improve the Student Lobster Licensing Program (Sponsored by Rep Devin of Newcastle).

LR 1921 Resolve, To Require Maine to Become an Affiliate of the International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification (Sponsored by Rep Devin of Newcastle).

LR 2191 Resolve, To Require Maine to Become an Affiliate of the International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification (Sponsored by Rep Devin of Newcastle).

LR 148 Resolve, Establishing a Commission to Study the Existing Potential and Future Impacts of Aquatic and Marine Debris on Maine's Aquatic and Coastal Habitats and Species (Sponsored by Rep Devin of Newcastle).

LR 2075 An Act to Incorporate Advancements in Watershed Nutrient Management (Sponsored by Rep Devin of Newcastle).

LR 2089 An Act to Protect Maine’s Marine Waters (Sponsored by Rep Devin of Newcastle).

LR 1161 An Act to Strengthen the Marine Economy (Sponsored by Rep Devin of Newcastle).

Members of the Marine Resources Committee

Sen. Dave Miramant (Co-chair), Camden
D. - District 12, Knox County
207-236-4815
david.miramant@legislature.maine.gov

Sen. Dana Dow, Waldoboro
R. - District 13, Lincoln County
207-446-3262
dana.dow@legislature.maine.gov

Sen. Eloise Vitelli, Arrowsic
D. - District 23, Sagadahoc County
207-443-4660
Eloise.Vitelli@legislature.maine.gov

Rep. Jay McCreight (Co-Chair), Harpswell
D. - District 51
207-449-3293
Jay.McCreight@legislature.maine.gov

Rep. Robert Alley, Beals
D. - District 138
207-263-4442
Robert.Alley@legislature.maine.gov

Rep. Lynda Blume, York
D. - District 3
207-363-9235
Lynda.Blume@legislature.maine.gov

Rep. Mick Devin, Newcastle
D. - District 90
207-975-3132
Michael.Devin@legislature.maine.gov

R. - District 136
207-460-6967
William.Faulkingham@legislature.maine.gov

Rep. Allison Hepler, Woolwich
D. - District 55
207-319-4936
Allison.Hepler@legislature.maine.gov

Rep. Sherm Hutchins, Pembroke
R. - District 131
207-479-8545
Sherman.Hutchins@legislature.maine.gov

Rep. Kathy Javner, Chester
R. - District 141
207-290-1321
Kathy.Javner@legislature.maine.gov

Rep. Genevieve McDonald, Stonington
D. - District 134
207-266-5113
Genevieve.McDonald@legislature.maine.gov

Rep. Will Tuell, East Machias
R. - District 139
207-287-1670
Will.Tuell@legislature.maine.gov

Deidre Schneider, Analyst
207-287-1670
Deidre.Schneider@legislature.maine.gov

Linda Lacroix, Clerk
207-287-1338
Linda.Lacroix@legislature.maine.gov

Rep. Robert Devin, Newcastle
D. - District 9
207-460-6967
Michael.Devin@legislature.maine.gov

Deidre Schneider, Analyst
207-287-1670
Deidre.Schneider@legislature.maine.gov

Linda Lacroix, Clerk
207-287-1338
Linda.Lacroix@legislature.maine.gov

Sen. Lydia Blume, York
D. - District 3
207-363-9235
Lynda.Blume@legislature.maine.gov

Sen. Eloise Vitelli, Arrowsic
D. - District 23, Sagadahoc County
207-443-4660
Eloise.Vitelli@legislature.maine.gov

Rep. Jay McCreight (Co-Chair), Harpswell
D. - District 51
207-449-3293
Jay.McCreight@legislature.maine.gov
MAINE LANDINGS TOP 100 MILLION POUNDS IN 2018

Preliminary figures indicate Maine’s lobster harvest was up slightly in 2018, but didn’t match the total of the record-setting 2016 season. Anecdotal data shared at the 2019 Global Seafood Market Conference revealed that the 2018 catch total finished at around 119 million pounds. Maine lobstermen landed a little over 110 million pounds of lobster in 2017, after landing an all-time high of nearly 131 million pounds in 2016.

“It was a very, very healthy harvest rate from Maine this year,” Keith Moores, president of seafood supplier F.W. Bryce, said during his presentation. Moores reported unofficial figures which show the Canadian harvest was stable in 2018 at around 198,416,000 pounds (90,000 metric tons). In 2017, Canada caught 92,682 metric tons of lobster, or approximately 200 million pounds and in 2016, the catch was nearly identical, at 92,601 metric tons. After a delayed start due to bad weather, Canada’s current season has been steady, according to Owen Kenney, the sales and business development manager of Downeast Specialty Products, which has lobster operations in both Canada and Maine.

P.E.I. Lobstermen Vote to Change Fishing Times

Prince Edward Island’s fall lobster fishermen have voted in favor of the Maritime Fishermen’s Union proposal to have the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans enforce a curfew in the Lobster Fishing Area the two organizations share.

The majority voted in favor of fishing trips not beginning before 4 a.m. and boats being off the water by 9 p.m. Lobster landings for P.E.I. boats in LFA 25 were reported as 8.26 million pounds for 2018, an increase of nearly 11% from the previous year. But fishermen in the north end of the district, especially from Miminegash to North Cape, report that the increase in lobsters is not occurring in the waters where they traditionally fish and they are being forced to sail further south to set their gear.

Good news for right whales! As of January 28, four right whale calves travelling with their mothers have been spotted in the calving grounds off of Florida. The news was encouraging because no confirmed births occurred during the 2018 calving season. The right whales’ calving season usually starts in December and peaks in January and February. An annual average of 17 young whales were born during the years between 1990 and 2014.

EAST COAST SEAFOODS REFOCUSING ON PROSPECT HARBOR FACILITY

Garbo Seafood closed its Groton, Connecticut, live lobster packing plant in mid-January. The company, part of East Coast Seafoods, plans to make new investments in its Prospect Harbor facility. Maine Fair Trade Lobster, to increase production capacity, optimize the production process, and enhance labor needs. Most of the work being carried out at the Groton operation will be absorbed into the Prospect Harbor facility, with the remainder moving to East Coast’s new lobster processing line in New Bedford, one of the most advanced processing lines in the industry, according to a company release. East Coast said the impending consolidation is the result of years of planning.

NEW CALVES JOIN RIGHT WHALE POPULATION

Prince Edward Island’s fall lobster fishermen have voted in favor of the Maritime Fishermen’s Union proposal to have the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans enforce a curfew in the Lobster Fishing Area the two organizations share.

The majority voted in favor of fishing trips not beginning before 4 a.m. and boats being off the water by 9 p.m. Lobster landings for P.E.I. boats in LFA 25 were reported as 8.26 million pounds for 2018, an increase of nearly 11% from the previous year. But fishermen in the north end of the district, especially from Miminegash to North Cape, report that the increase in lobsters is not occurring in the waters where they traditionally fish and they are being forced to sail further south to set their gear.

Good news for right whales! As of January 28, four right whale calves travelling with their mothers have been spotted in the calving grounds off of Florida. The news was encouraging because no confirmed births occurred during the 2018 calving season. The right whales’ calving season usually starts in December and peaks in January and February. An annual average of 17 young whales were born during the years between 1990 and 2014.

EAST COAST SEAFOODS REFOCUSING ON PROSPECT HARBOR FACILITY

Garbo Seafood closed its Groton, Connecticut, live lobster packing plant in mid-January. The company, part of East Coast Seafoods, plans to make new investments in its Prospect Harbor facility. Maine Fair Trade Lobster, to increase production capacity, optimize the production process, and enhance labor needs. Most of the work being carried out at the Groton operation will be absorbed into the Prospect Harbor facility, with the remainder moving to East Coast’s new lobster processing line in New Bedford, one of the most advanced processing lines in the industry, according to a company release. East Coast said the impending consolidation is the result of years of planning.
the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The current “whale rules,” such as sinking groundline and limits on vertical lines, are mandated under the MMPA. The goal of the TRT, which comprises more than 30 state and federal officials and organizations, is “to reduce injuries and deaths of large whales due to incidental entanglement in fishing gear.” The group is examining possible changes to the existing whale management plan — such as closures, expanded gear marking and gear modifications — to reduce the impact of Atlantic coast fisheries on right whales. The goal under the MMPA is to have less than one whale per year die or become seriously injured as a result of human activities. Under the MMPA, the TRT must compare the number of whale deaths and serious injuries with the potential biological removal (PBR) figure, which is currently less than one right whale per year.

Concurrently, NMFS’s Protected Species Division is at work on a “Biological Opinion” on the status of the right whales as required under the ESA. If the Biological Opinion finds that the lobster fishery jeopardizes the recovery of the right whale species, it could mean much more drastic regulation changes. The Biological Opinion considers not only actions to reduce the severity of injury to right whales, but also the sublethal impacts of human activity on whales. New research has shown that entanglement in fishing gear may result in a decline in the health of entangled whales, particularly females.

This had led to the possibility of a second set of new regulations. Due to the likelihood that the lobster fishery could be found to jeopardize the recovery of right whales, the ASMFC is reviewing its lobster management plan with an eye toward reducing the fishery’s impact on right whales. The Lobster Technical Committee is examining whether reducing endlines or the number of traps might benefit whales. “If ASMFC moves forward with a management action, it would be to minimize the lobster industry’s interaction with right whales and therefore avoid a jeopardy finding against the fishery,” McCarron said.

“Maine lobstermen have rope in the water, so we are actively engaged in the plan. But the data do not show that it is Maine lobster gear causing serious injury and mortality [in right whales],” McCarron added. “Since 2016, most [deaths from entanglement] were confirmed in Canadian snow crab gear or the gear was unknown.”
Kevin Hornby from North Haven, Maine was considering re-naming his boat. So, as so many people do these days, he posted the question to fellow lobstermen via Facebook, hoping for a few good ideas. Looks like he struck a chord: Hornby received over 400 suggested names, many within an hour of the original post. Despite the flood of contributions, he decided he’s going to stick with his boat’s current name, High Hopes.