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Maine Lobstermen's Community Alliance

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Maine's lobster industry is scrambling to prepare for the pending shortage in herring bait facing Maine lobstermen this season. The final herring quota announced by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for 2019 is 15,065 metric tons, a 70% reduction from the 2018 quota of 49,900 metric tons. Approximately 77 million pounds of herring will not be available to lobstermen this year.

What will they do? What will the bait dealers do to make up that absent number of pounds?

In fact, lobstermen have been adjusting to a shrinking supply of herring for some years now. Until 2006, lobstermen had access to more than 100,000 metric tons of herring. Herring landings dropped to a previous low of just over 60,000 metric tons in 2010, but rebounded to more than 90,000 metric tons until 2014. Since then, landings of herring have dropped steadily, to 44,000 metric tons in 2018.

We asked several lobstermen from different areas of the coast about what they use for bait and their thoughts about the coming fishing season.

Chris Welch, 30, lobsters from Kennebunk aboard F/V Foolish Pride. His primary type of bait is herring and pogies when they are available. “In the late fall I will switch to hard bait — skate, redfish. This year I will try whatever I can get,” Welch said. Currently he estimates that 20% to 25% of his business costs go to purchase bait. “Ten years ago it was totally different. I maybe spent 10% of my business costs to purchase bait.” Ten years ago it was totally different. I maybe spent 10%
It seems that just a few weeks ago Maine was still in the grip of Old Man Winter. Ice on the driveway, ice on the wharves, ice on fishing boat decks — cold days and colder nights were still in control. But now we enter April and no one can deny that spring is in the air. Throughout the coast fishermen are looking over their gear, getting their trap tags ordered and preparing for the new season.

Last year certainly was a profitable one, as we report in this issue of Landings. Maine lobstermen brought in slightly more lobster in 2018 (nearly 120 million pounds, $8 million more than in 2017) and saw a bump in the average price, to $4.05 per pound. The two factors combined meant Maine lobstermen saw a $46 million increase in revenue in 2018, reaching $484 million in total value. Maine’s lobster fishery remains the largest fishery in the state and the highest in value by far.

The lobster fishery, however, is under threat due to several actions related to the endangered North Atlantic right whale. As we explore this month, a court case filed by several environmental groups against the National Marine Fisheries Service has compelled the agency to produce a Biological Opinion under the Endangered Species Act on whether the lobster fishery and other mobile gear fisheries pose a serious danger to right whales. The public-private Take Reduction Team, which has coordinated right whale protection measures since 1997, is now considering new techniques, such as ropeless fishing or weak lines, to protect the whales from entanglement. And the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission is considering an amendment to its interstate lobster management plan that would sharply reduce the number of endlines in the water in order to forestall any federal action resulting from its Biological Opinion of the lobster fishery. When it comes to whale protection measures, one thing is certain: whatever happens, Maine’s lobster fishery will feel the impact.

Landings also features a summary of the Department of Marine Resources research on the region’s lobster populations. Lobster settlement continues to be in a downturn throughout much of the Gulf of Maine, though certain places, such as the north shore of Prince Edward Island, have seen an uptick. Surveys by the department indicate that the number of legal-size lobsters along the coast remains strong while the number of sublegal or juvenile lobsters is up in eastern Maine lobster zones.

Not only must lobstermen worry about possible new rules to protect right whales, they must also contend with a sharp reduction in the amount of herring available this year. That reduction has prompted action up and down the coast, from the use of hait s avers bags to construction of bait freezers and other storage facilities. Landings begins a new series this month looking at what specific individuals and companies are doing to prepare for an extremely tight herring bait supply this year.

We also hear from the interim director of the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative about the organization’s planned activities in 2019. The Collaborative will shift its focus from marketing and promotion targeted toward celebrity chefs to educating decision makers in the food supply chain about the benefits and value of Maine soft-shell lobster. Its goal is to motivate food buyers for large entities to purchase Maine lobster from dealers listed on the Collaborative’s web site. As interim director Marianne Lacroix writes, “Think of this strategy as like a snowball rolling downhill: We start with broad outreach to the audience online. Then, we establish awareness of Maine lobster, sending out our targeted audience to our web site and finally driving measurable action.”

This month’s issue also features photos from the Maine Fishermen’s Forum, the Maine Lobstermen’s Community Alliance trip to the Boston Seafood Show, the grand opening of Hamilton Marine’s new Portland store, and so much more.

If it’s important to Maine’s lobstering world, you will find it in Landings!
Two new staff members have joined the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) to work on policy issues at the state, interstate and federal level. Nick Popoff joined the DMR in July 2018 and has been working on policy issues for seaweed, American eel, river herring, striped bass, bluefish, northern shrimp, and sea urchins. His work includes staffing the department’s sea urchin and seaweed advisory councils and leading the evaluation of electronic monitoring technology that will support the 100% harvester reporting requirement implemented by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC). A major focus of his work in recent months has been to investigate the importation of Asian carp from the Mississippi and Illinois rivers for use as lobster bait. Popoff is working with the other states and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to develop a protocol for testing, handling and transportation that will ensure biosecurity and support an exemption for lobstermen to use the currently prohibited species.

Prior to working for DMR, Nick served as a fisheries biologist for the U.S. Geological Survey, as well as the tribal liaison, policy manager, and invasive species program manager for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Megan Ware joined the Department in March as the External Affairs Director. In her role, Megan will serve as the Commissioner’s designee to the New England Fisheries Management Council and as a proxy on the ASMFC, representing Maine interests in those management bodies.

Prior to joining ASMFC, Megan worked as a Marine Policy Fellow at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, a fish advisory analyst for the Southern Environmental Law Center, and an environmental science and policy consultant for Duke Legal Clinics.

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission), in partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), is seeking proposals to develop regional pilot projects in support of sustainable aquaculture. Specifically, pilot programs should partner with industry to develop techniques and business models to grow domestic seafood production. A priority are projects that consider promising but less commercially developed technologies for species managed by the Commission or those species that contribute to healthy marine habitats, including finfish, shellfish and seaweed.

NOAA Fisheries, through the Commission, is making $25,000 available for the funding period of July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020. Individual proposals should fall within a range from $50,000 to $200,000. Any applicant seeking support for this period must submit, as a single file, an electronic proposal by email no later than 5:00 p.m. EST on Monday, April 15. Awards and start dates for successful projects will be announced by May 20. To read the full Request for Proposals (RFP), visit www.asmfc.org/files/RFPs/ASMFCAquacultureRFP_March2019.pdf.

SUSTAINABLE AQUACULTURE GRANT PROPOSALS DUE BY APRIL 15

Two new staff members have joined the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) to work on policy issues at the state, interstate and federal level. Nick Popoff joined the DMR in July 2018 and has been working on policy issues for seaweed, American eel, river herring, striped bass, bluefish, northern shrimp, and sea urchins. His work includes staffing the department’s sea urchin and seaweed advisory councils and leading the evaluation of electronic monitoring technology that will support the 100% harvester reporting requirement implemented by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC). A major focus of his work in recent months has been to investigate the importation of Asian carp from the Mississippi and Illinois rivers for use as lobster bait. Popoff is working with the other states and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to develop a protocol for testing, handling and transportation that will ensure biosecurity and support an exemption for lobstermen to use the currently prohibited species.

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Given its value to the Maine economy, lobster was a major topic of the Maine Fishermen's Forum. Kathleen Reardon, Department of Marine Resources (DMR) lobster biologist, reviewed the 2018 landings figures for a packed seminar audience. Despite a variety of difficulties — Chinese tariffs on U.S. seafood, escalating bait prices, an ever-warmer Gulf of Maine — Maine lobsters landed 119,640,379 pounds of lobster in 2018, 8 million pounds more than was landed in 2017, according to preliminary DMR data. The average price was $4.05 per pound in 2018 compared to $3.92 in 2017.

The Department has recently unveiled its new Lobster Landings Viewer on its web site, which allows users to query lobster landings by area and by town.

Rick Wahle, director of the Lobster Institute at the University of Maine, spoke about the 2018 American Lobster Settlement Index. In recent years the Settlement Index has shown a broad drop in the density of juvenile lobsters, known as young-of-the-year. That widespread decline is still evident, Wahle said, but there were a few places experiencing a distinct uptick, including Jonesport and sections of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. The north shore of Prince Edward Island saw a huge uptick in settlement, which began in 2016. Because the Gulf of Maine has warmed so much in recent years, researchers, in collaboration with lobstermen, began surveying deepwater sites for larval lobsters beginning in 2016. The warming waters have made areas of bottom previously too cold for settlement (below 54 degrees F) available to juveniles. Data derived from deepwater passive collectors set from lobster boats fishing in Downeast Maine indicate that there are a lot more young-of-the-year per square meter in shallow and midwater areas than in the past. Wahle and colleagues will use the settlement data in a "hindcast" model to predict what the population may look like in the future. The model predicts that future lobster landings will decline. "Thus far it corresponds well except in Zones E and F," Wahle said.

DMR's ventless trap survey, which provides data on sub-legal and adult lobsters, showed that from 2015 to 2018, eastern Maine saw an increase in abundance at depth than in shallower or midwater depths, an indication that lobsters are finding warmer water temperatures at depth.

DMR lobster research biologist Jesica Waller spoke about a DMR study of female lobsters in Boothbay Harbor. The project came in response to lobstermen reporting more smaller egg-bearing lobsters in the area. DMR had done two similar studies, the first in 1968 and the second in 1994, so researchers had data to compare the current study to. The size of Boothbay Harbor female lobsters at maturity in 1968 was 94 mm; in 1994 89 mm; in 2018 that size had decreased to 84 mm. DMR has been keeping track of water temperatures in Boothbay Harbor for more than a decade. It found that water temperatures lay between 43° and 50° F, (the range of optimum conditions for development and molting), for many more days today than in the past. That, in turn, influences the speed with which the females grow to maturity. Waller plans to conduct additional studies on lobster maturity along the coast and offshore.

Reardon spoke about the ASMFC lobster stock assessment process which is due to be concluded in 2020. DMR provides substantial amounts of data on lobster to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission for its modeling work, making the results of the department's spring and fall trawl surveys, ventless trap survey and sea sampling even more important. Reardon noted that the fall trawl survey results, which give data on 53-82 mm lobsters, show that numbers are up compared to 2017. The ventless trap surveys in 2018 indicate that 2018 was much like 2016 in eastern Maine and more like 2017 for the midcoast and western Maine. Sea sampling in 2018 indicates that a much larger number of sublegal-size lobsters are turning up in lobster traps in the eastern lobster zones throughout the year now. Shell disease saw a slight downturn in 2018, as is typical in a season following a cold water year.

DMR Commissioner Patrick Keliher closed the session by answering questions from the audience. Concerning future restrictions on the lobster fishery due to right whales, he stated that a 40% reduction in endlines is definitely on the table. When asked if latent lobster licenses will affect future regulations, he said, "Yes. The feds and non-governmental organizations look at potential effort. Tags are figuring into that. It's not great. The longer we are at 10% harvester reporting, the less data we have available to fight this. So it's likely that it [100% harvester reporting] will be implemented earlier than in five years."

The DMR will hold meetings with lobstermen at 6 p.m. on Monday, April 8, at South Portland High School Cafeteria; Tuesday, April 9 at Oceanside High School Auditorium in Rockland; and Wednesday, April 10, at Ellsworth High School to discuss possible actions lobstermen could live with.

Maine's lobster fishery is by far the largest and most valuable commercial fishery in Maine and the largest lobster fishery in the country. American lobster was the most valuable single species harvested in the U.S. in 2015, 2016, and 2017, with Maine landings accounting for approximately 80% of that value each year, according to data published by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Downeast Maine was well represented in Maine's top ten ports ranked by the value of the catch landed. For at least the fifth year in a row, Stonington had the highest value of fishery landings valued at more than $79 million. Vinalhaven was second at $38 million, followed by Portland at $35.5 million, Friendship $24 million, Beals $23.5 million, Spruce Head at $16.5 million, Rockland at $13.5 million, Jonesport at $13 million, Cundy's Harbor at $12 million and Owls Head at $12 million.

Overall, the value of all of Maine's commercial fisheries last year totaled $637 million, representing the state's second highest annual multi-species landings value. Lobsters represented more than three-quarters of the total value. The state's annual catch of herring, used principally for lobster bait, fell last year from 65.4 million pounds to 61.6 million pounds.

The value of Maine's 2018 elver harvest, which has an annual cap of 9,688 pounds, was $21.7 million, a $9.5 million increase compared to 2017. Maine's softshell clam harvest increased by more than 250,000 pounds hitting 7.1 million pounds with a value of $12.8 million.
THE FATE OF RIGHT WHALES, AND LOBSTERMEN, SUBJECT OF FISHERMEN’S FORUM SEMINAR

By Melissa Waterman

The plight of lobstermen was foremost in the minds of many at the Maine Fishermen’s Forum seminar on the status of North American right whales. Lobstermen are concerned about what form new regulations are likely to take and when they might be introduced.

Department of Marine Resources (DMR) endangered species specialist Erin Summers explained that right whales are protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). Protection measures designed to reduce the likelihood of injury or mortality are developed by the Large Whale Take Reduction Team (TRT). The TRT, which formed two working groups to look at the feasibility of ropeless fishing and weak rope, will meet in April to decide on protection proposals to send to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to be included in the formal TRT plan for right whales.

Meanwhile, a court case brought by environmental groups against NMFS under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) is pressuring NMFS to develop a new Biological Opinion on a variety of fisheries, including American lobster, and their interaction with right whales. The Biological Opinion, now being written by NMFS, will consider the entirety of right whale population to be sustainable, Asaro said that 20 calves or more must be born each year. There are approximately 100 females left in the population. Once

Ben Brickett of Blue Water Concepts in Eliot has a good idea. It’s a device called a “Time Tension Line-Cutter” and it does what its name says it does at a certain time after a certain amount of pressure is exerted, it cuts a line. And it could be a low-cost solution to the right whales becoming seriously injured in fishing rope.

Brickett started thinking about the problem of right whales and fishing lines in 2003. “A good friend of mine who works on an offshore lobster boat came by and was very concerned with having to put weaker lines on his gear,” Brickett said during his presentation at the Maine Fishermen’s Forum. Offshore lobstermen run many traps on a trawl; those traps are large and have heavy runners. When hauled the tension on the line can be many thousands of pounds of pressure.

Lobstermen hate to lose gear; they also hate to face a line under tension that might, at any moment, snap because of a weak link or an insert of “weak rope.” Brickett’s device allows the line to be used in a normal fashion aboard a lobster boat. A hydraulic piston inside the device, which is attached to the line, will move the blade only after a certain amount of tension, from 500 to 10,000 pounds, is exerted for a certain amount of time. So if a whale should get entangled and begin to pull against the line, adding additional tension to it, the Time Tension Line-Cutter will cut the line at a designated time, anywhere from 5 to 30 minutes.

Brickett found that his first design didn’t pass easily through the hauling block so he redesigned it to remove that obstacle. A titanium razor blade makes a clean cut through line from ⅜-inch to ⅝-inch in diameter. The line-cutter is also durable; it was used aboard an offshore lobster boat for an entire winter on Georges Banks.

“It is economical and affordable and I know that it works,” Brickett said. The Department of Marine Resources plans to buy and distribute six of the devices to lobstermen this summer to test its abilities.

To learn more, visit https://bluewaterconceptsinc.com
HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2019 MAINE FISHERMEN'S FORUM

It was an event-filled three days during the Maine Fishermen's Forum in early March. Attendees packed the seminars, enjoyed the best of Maine's many types of seafood, talked with the many vendors in the marine trade show, and held conversations throughout the days and during the evening events. Here are a selection of photos from the Forum, courtesy of Mike Young.

Dana Morse, left, and Chris Bartlett, right, dish out the oysters.

The Forum has always had events for all members of a fisherman's family.

A young oceanographer explores the DMR Aquarium touch tank.

MLA Membership director Antonina Pelletier and MLA board member Craig Stewart at the MLA booth.

DMR Deputy Commissioner Meredith Mendelson, left, and Director of Marine Policy Deirdre Gilbert, right, are all smiles at the Forum.

Stonington Rep. and Marine Resources Committee member Genevieve McDonald enjoying a libation at the Seafood Reception.
The Maine Lobstermen’s Association annual meeting took place on March 1st at the Samoset Resort in Rockport. MLA president Kristan Porter opened the meeting by recognizing the MLA board and staff members for their efforts during the previous year. He asked for a motion and a second to accept the minutes of the 2018 annual meeting; motion to accept was approved unanimously. He then presented the slate of nominees for three-year terms of board membership, noting that Laurin Brooks of Kennebunk was nominated as a new board member. A motion to accept the slate was made and seconded; motion approved unanimously.

Porter then presented the MLA Award for Outstanding Service to Department of Marine Resources (DMR) Bureau of Marine Science director Carl Wilson. Wilson grew up in the lobster fishery, not as a lobsterman but as the son of University of Maine (UME) economist Jim Wilson. He became the lead lobster biologist for the state in the 1990s at a time when federal fisheries regulators considered the lobster stock depleted. As Porter noted, Wilson partnered with professor Yong Chen at UME to prove that lobster stocks were not overfished. He has been involved in many significant lobster research projects over the years before becoming the science bureau director in 2015.

Porter also presented the MLA Golden V-Notch Award to Dwight Carver of Beals Island. Carver, who served for many years on the MLA board, was commended for his efforts to aid the lobster fishery and lobstermen over the years, attending numerous meetings and serving on the Large Whale Take Reduction Team (TRT). “He does it for his community,” Porter said. “His face lights up when he talks about his family and community.”

Porter gave a quick review of the MLA’s activities of the past year. Policy efforts focused on whales, bait, and lobster management issues. MLA programs included collaborative research in whale issues with DMR, involvement in the DMR Lobster Research Collaborative and the expanding business discount program for members. Through the MLA’s sister organization, the Maine Lobstermen’s Community Alliance (MLCA), the newspaper Landings was published and sent free to all commercial license holders each month; the MLCA also coordinated the Maine Lobster Leadership Institute.

During 2018 MLA staff were involved in the Gubernatorial Forum held at the Strand Theatre in Rockland in October; organized support from within the fishing industry for the re-appointment of Patrick Kelher as DMR Commissioner; came out against energy development in the Gulf of Maine; petitioned EPA for relief from the Tier 4 engine standards; supported reauthorization of the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative; negotiated to delay implementation of the ASMFC’s 100% reporting requirement in Maine for five years; and participated in the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health’s life jacket testing project in Maine.

A huge amount of time in 2018 was spent on representing lobstermen’s perspectives on possible right whale protection measures. The MLA successfully petitioned to become an intervenor in the court case brought by environmental organizations against the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to force immediate action on right whale protection. It also spoke forcefully against the notion of relentless fishing in the Maine lobster fishery as one of Maine’s representatives on the TRT. The MLA also was involved in DMR’s three-year research project on the strength of lines used in the fishery. “Before they can make us change,” explained Porter, “we need to know where we are now. We are testing rope and breaking rope and finding a huge difference between new rope right off the shelf and rope two to three years old.”

The MLA also organized eight meetings with lobstermen throughout the state to get their thoughts on how best to address the push for new whale conservation measures. Staff is also monitoring the Atlantic States Marine Fishery Commission’s right whale working group to keep lobstermen aware of what might take place there.

Porter then spoke about the MLA’s 2019 planned activities. The MLA will work with the Maine Lobster Dealers Association and Bates College on developing a lobster quality program prior to the start of the season. It also will hold safety trainings for lobstermen in concert with Fishing Partnership Services of Massachusetts. To add data to the ongoing discussion of right whale entanglement protections the MLA will support research on a time tension line cutter developed by Blue Water Concepts.

The MLA’s attorney Mary Anne Mason spoke to the membership about legal actions related to whales. In May 2018, environmental organizations brought suit against NMFS under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA), arguing that the government had not done its job under those laws to protect right whales and that the court should force NMFS to take steps to do so, which could include closing the lobster fishery. The MLA strategy was to become an intervenor in the case. As a party to the case, but not a litigant, the MLA will have the right to review information and decisions that affect lobstermen and can add information to the process. Mason said that the discovery or information gathering process was still going on but should end by mid-April. Then the judge would set a schedule for a hearing likely to take place in the fall. The hope is that the TRT will come up with protective measures before then.

MLA executive director, Patrice McCarron, reviewed the situation with herring. The official quota released by NMFS for 2019 is 70% less than in 2018, which translates into a loss of 77 million pounds of herring. Area 1A quota has been cut drastically. Additional, deeper cuts will occur in 2020 and 2021. The cuts occurred because the 2018 herring stock assessment found that herring biomass was down sharply due to poor recruitment from 2013 onward.

In addition, in 2018 the New Brunswick weir fishery had a really good year, landing 11,000 metric tons of herring; their harvests are considered part of the Gulf of Maine stock and so are counted when tallying up the year’s total landings.

The MLA conducted a survey of members in 2018 to understand their concerns about bait supply in 2019. Of the total, 87% reported that they were concerned or extremely concerned; 82% said they were concerned that the bait problem would lead to an economic crisis for lobstermen; and some said that the strong would survive the herring reduction and the weak would drop out. McCarron emphasized that Maine’s regulations for bait biosecurity are strict and that no bait that threatens the marine environment can be used as lobster bait. However, DMR is looking at allowing a type of carp found in Illinois to be used as well as Gulf of Mexico menhaden. McCarron noted that even if all the state quota and episodic quota for menhaden is harvested this year, it would be used as lobster bait. However, DMR is looking at allowing a type of carp found in Illinois to be used as well as Gulf of Mexico menhaden. McCarron noted that even if all the state quota and episodic quota for menhaden is harvested this year, it would represent just a very small fraction of the amount of herring no longer available.

To close the meeting a raffle for five gift packages was held. The winners were Jordan Drouin, Mark Jones, Gerry Cashman, Craig Stewart, and Bobby Ingalls. Porter than thanked the companies which had provided items for the gift packages: Brooks Trap Mill, Sea Rose Trap, Hamilton Marine, Friendship Trap, McMillan Offshore Safety and Training, Plante Buoy Sticks, and Maine Camp Gifts.

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MAINE LOBSTERMEN’S ASSOCIATION UPDATE

STEAMING AHEAD

Maine Lobstermen’s Association

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

President: Kristen Porter
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2nd VP: Dustin Delano
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Robert Ingalls, Bucks Harbor, 255-3418
Gerry Cushman, Port Clyde, 372-6429
Jameen Hallowell, S. Bristol, 677-0148
Jim Dow, Bass Harbor, 288-9846
Herman Coombs, Orr’s Island, 807-8596
Laurin Brooks, Kennebunk, 468-2165

The discussions about what the new whale rules will be has been heating up this winter. In March, the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) began talking with lobstermen in preparation for three public meetings on the whale rules to be held on April 8, 9 and 10. The issue is an extremely complex one involving the Marine Mammal Protection Act and the Endangered Species Act as the legal framework, and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team and all of the East coast states as managers. Plus, there is a court case pending in Washington D.C.

Given all this the bureaucratic confusion, lobstermen naturally want to cut to the chase. “If there are no recent confirmed right whale entanglements in Maine lobster gear, why do we need to do anything?” they wonder. “Who is standing up for us and telling the government that enough is enough?”

The Maine Lobstermen’s Association is. The MLA is present at all of the whale meetings and you can see, we are not sitting there silently. At whale management meetings, we have already said “No” to ropeless fishing and to a mandate for 1,700 pound weak rope for everyone. At industry meetings, we are listening to lobstermen’s feedback on what will work for Maine. And the MLA is an intervener in the court case so that the Maine lobster fishery will have a voice if any decisions are made through the court.

But even as we fight for Maine lobstermen to continue to fish, that does not mean that Maine will not have to do something. The Maine lobster fishery is not the smoking gun when it comes to whale entanglement. In fact, there is no smoking gun (other than Canadian snow crab gear). Unfortunately, there is no clear solution on how to ensure the continued survival of right whales.

From 2010 to 2018, there were 46 right whale serious injuries or deaths due to fishing gear entanglement. In 78% of the cases, the origin of the gear was unknown. The 22% that are known include eight in Canadian snow crab gear, one in unknown U.S. gear, and one in U.S. trap gear. The problem is that any fishery with rope in the water is potentially part of the unknown gear that is harming right whales. Our industry fishes a lot of rope. So the Maine lobster fishery, along with every other fixed gear fishery on the Atlantic coast, must work together to reduce that 78% figure.

Solving this problem will take place on two fronts. First, the ASMFC is considering measures to reduce the likelihood that a whale will get entangled in lobster gear. The Commission is considering actions to reduce the amount of buoy lines in the water by up to 40%. This could be achieved by trawling up, endline caps, trap reductions or closures. The ASMFC Lobster Board is scheduled to meet on April 29 in Arlington, VA, to vote on which approaches will be considered in the lobster management plan. Those options then will go out for public comment during the spring or summer. The implementation date for the amended lobster management plan is 2020.

Second, the Take Reduction Team is considering measures on how to reduce the likelihood that a whale will become seriously injured or killed if it becomes entangled in fishing gear. The TRT is considering measures such as gear modifications to allow whales to break out of rope more easily, closures and ropeless fishing. For its part, Maine is considering options to cap rope diameter in state waters, fish smaller diameter rope on the top portion of the buoy line in federal waters and is testing the use of time tension line cutters as a potential option where stronger rope is needed. A real challenge in identifying whale rules that will have a positive impact on whale recovery is finding a plan that lobstermen can live with.

Also under consideration is adopting a unique mark for Maine lobster gear in order to distinguish Maine from other lobster gear and marking exempt gear to ensure that all Maine lobster gear is marked. There is also a push to add more marks to gear to increase the likelihood of finding a mark if that gear ends up on a whale. The Take Reduction Team is considering April 23 to 26 in Providence, RI, Based on the outcome of the TRT meeting, NMFS will begin rule making to implement changes to the TRT whale plan. Due to the slow pace of federal rulemaking, implementation would take place in 2020 or 2021.

There are two wild cards in all of this: the outcome of the Biological Opinion currently being drafted by NMFS and the potential for action through the court. Under the Biological Opinion, NMFS will assess whether the American lobster fishery, as well as all other fixed gear fisheries on the East coast, has the potential to entangle a right whale. If the answer is yes, NMFS will make a determination of “jeopardy” and will prepare a list of reasonable and prudent alternatives” that the fishery must consider so that it may continue to operate without hindering the recovery of right whales.

The hope is that the combination of measures put forward through the TRT for gear modifications and by the ASMFC for vertical line reductions will be enough to avoid NMFS requiring additional management measures when it re-issues the Biological Opinion. However, if NMFS does not believe that the fishery has done enough to reduce the risk to right whales, the Biological Opinion will prescribe additional measures to reduce the risk the fishery poses to right whale recovery or the fishery will risk being shut down. So take note. If you think we can fight through this next round of the whale rules without changing the way we fish, you risk allowing NMFS to make that decision for you and for all Maine lobstermen.

Our job is to make sure that the types of changes we make actually help whales and reflect the level of risk that our fishery poses. The Canadian snow crab fishery will continue to operate with a combination of static and dynamic closures when the whales arrive in the Gulf of St. Lawrence each summer. Massachusetts will continue to operate with its winter closure in Cape Cod Bay and may face new closures because hundreds of right whales now gather there to feed each year. Some of these fishermen favor ropeless fishing because it could give them the ability to fish during the closure period. But these are not solutions that make sense for Maine because we do not have feeding aggregations of whales. Maine’s job is to focus on how to reduce the amount of rope we have in the water column and ensure any whale that might encounter Maine lobster gear has a strong chance of breaking free without serious harm.

Do Maine lobstermen want to take control and recommend whale protection measures that continue to allow us to make a living? Or do you want to simply say “No” and leave it to NMFS to decide what those regulations should be? I favor going on the offensive, not playing defense. I urge you to attend DMR’s April meetings to discuss changes lobstermen can live with. We need your feedback because our fishery is very diverse and one solution or approach will not work for everyone. We can help the state fight for a plan that lobstermen can live with and pre-empt a more draconian management approach from NMFS as part of the Biological Opinion. The MLA remains a leader in the lobster industry and will continue to advocate that lobstermen work together to control their own destiny. It’s hard work, but this is an fishery worth fighting for.

As always, stay safe on the water.
Maine Menhaden Rules

DMR adopted rules for the state’s 2019 menhaden fishery, effective March 13. The 2019 state menhaden regulations clarify reporting requirements for all Atlantic menhaden fishery operations. Components of the fishery that are quota managed (state and episodic) require daily reporting, while the incidental/small scale fishery requires monthly reporting.

This rulemaking continues management in place for the state allocated and episodic fisheries: menhaden fishing and landings are allowed Monday through Thursday, with a 120,000 pound per vessel per day limit, and a 160,000 pound per vessel per week limit. Only one landing is allowed per day. Fixed gear harvesting may occur seven days a week in both the state allocated fishery and the episodic event fishery; however, the fixed gear fishery will maintain the same daily and weekly landing limits as previously set for the mobile fishery. Finally, the rule re-instates a personal use regulation for hook and line harvest. Recreational harvest by hook and line for 25 fish per day is permitted seven days a week.

Due to the incidental catch and small scale fishery, menhaden fishing is limited to state waters with a limit of 6,000 pounds per vessel per day. Only one landing is allowed per day. Catcher vessels may not sell, give or transfer, at sea menhaden they have taken to any other vessel. All menhaden must immediately be stored in barrels or fish totes, or a combination thereof, upon harvest. All menhaden must be contained in barrels or fish totes on both the catcher vessel and the dory towed by the catcher vessel, if utilized. A standard fish tote (tray), measuring 28 inches long x 16 inches wide x 11 inches deep, when level full equals 1/3 barrel.

State Herring Rules

The DMR adopted rules for the state’s 2019 herring fishery, effective March 13. This rule clarifies that all directed herring trips must report daily using the herring.dmr@maine.gov landings email. This rule implements a weekly limit on state-only permitted vessels of 25,000 pounds. Fishing in state waters may occur from Sunday to Thursday. Fixed gear harvesting in state waters is exempt from the weekly harvest schedule but is subject to a weekly landing limit of 25,000 pounds.

Table: 2019 Atlantic Herring Landings For Data through March 15, 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>2019 Quota</th>
<th>Cumulative Catch</th>
<th>% of Quota to Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1A*</td>
<td>4,354</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1B</td>
<td>647</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4,062</td>
<td>4630</td>
<td>114%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>5,700</td>
<td>1,123</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15,065</td>
<td>5,753</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team will meet from April 23 to 26 in Providence, RI, to consider options to reduce serious injury and mortality to right whales posed by fixed fishing gear.

ASMF VERTICAL LINE REDUCTIONS

The ASMFC Lobster Board will meet on April 29 in Arlington, VA, to consider recommendations for management options developed by the Lobster Plan Development Team (PDT). The PDT has been meeting regularly to review and analyze data in order to prepare management options for consideration for inclusion in the management document by the Lobster Board. Management options include reducing vertical lines by from zero to 40%, to be achieved by trap limits, gear configuration changes, seasonal closures, and/or the acceleration of currently planned trap reductions.

HANCOCK COUNTY TRAWL LIMITS

DMR adopted new rules to the Hancock County trawl limits, effective March 13, as recommended by the Zone B Council at its January 2019 meeting. This replaces the trawl limit put in place in October 2018. DMR was aware that refining the October 2018 trawl limit area was possible to better meet the needs of Zone B and Zone C fishermen fishing there. DMR held meetings with Zone B and C fishermen to determine what changes to the area were advisable. At their January 2019 meeting, the Zone B Council supported the Department’s proposal to amend this area.

WAITING LIST VERIFICATION REQUIRED BY APRIL 9

The DMR must verify that individuals currently on the lobster zone waiting lists wish to remain on the lists. DMR has mailed forms to everyone on the waiting lists. Those who wish to remain on the lists must return the completed form to DMR by April 9.

The MLA Legal Defense Fund Needs your Support!

There are two ways you can help:
Send a donation to:
MLA LOF, 2 Storer St, Ste 203, Kennebunk, ME 04043

Attend the Legal Defense Fundraiser April 6th
Bowen’s Tavern, Belfast
5 to 9 pm with free food, raffles, live band and open mic!
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Saturday April 6th, 5 - 9 pm
Bowen’s Tavern, Belfast
cash bar • free food • donations accepted
FMI: mainelobstermen.org or 967-4555

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Water based, extra tough, high covering, flexible coating, UV & weather resistant, low odor, fast drying, easy soap & water cleanup. Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Black or White. Search HM-LBP
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Plastic with handles and holes for draining.
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USCG Approved with reflective tape.
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3” x 3’ mat with 2 Sided Interlocking Design 1/2” thick.
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**Kent Premium Adult Universal Immersion Suit**
USCG APPROVED
Hi visibility yellow waist and ankle stops. Removable head pillow. Articulated arms for easier donning.
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Flush, watertight, 4-dog system, opens from the outside only.
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Features wide legs for quick donning. Dual zipper pull tabs.
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**Tread Plate Access Hatch**
Covers are heavy duty anodized aluminum tread plate, Frames are heavy 12-gauge 316 stainless steel. Wrench cold separately. Search BOM-54

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Plastic with handles and holes for draining. 1 bushel capacity.
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Covers are heavy duty anodized aluminum tread plate, Frames are heavy 12-gauge 316 stainless steel. Wrench cold separately. Search BOM-54

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**Typographical errors are unintentional and subject to correction.**
Keep Maquoit Bay open for all commercial fisherman 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

Protect the rights of commercial fishermen to access public waters and stop aquaculture leases that benefit the applicant at the expense of others. Let your voice be heard. Contact the Department of Marine Resources Commissioner Patrick Keliher and let him know the ocean belongs to all of us.

Email: Patrick.Keliher@maine.gov
Call: Department of Marine Resources 207-624-6553
www.maquoitbay.org and on facebook

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We’ve been manufacturing Aquamesh® in the USA since 1980 using our GAW technique. High quality carbon steel is welded and then submerged in a tank of molten zinc to protect the welds. After this, our proprietary marine grade PVC coating is applied, ensuring maximum defense against the elements.

Other trap wire manufactured overseas uses a substandard galvanized before welding (GBW) and plastic coating process. The wire is coated with a thin layer of zinc, welded together, and then coated in vinyl plastic. During the welding process, the zinc is burnt off, leaving the wire unprotected at the weld and subject to environmental elements, causing premature rusting and breakage.

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**WHAT TO REPORT:**
- date, location (loran is okay), tag # (between 0001-18000), whether the lobster had eggs or v-notch, and whether it was kept or released.
- Report length or send a photo with gauge to qualify for higher value raffles.

**HOW TO REPORT:**
- Call, text, email or Facebook messenger us: #774-251-9454, heidi@offshorelobster.org.
- It’s okay to report old recaps.

Congratulations to our 2017 and 2018 raffle winners.

**NEXT RAFFLES:**
- JULY 1, 2019 AND JANUARY 1, 2020 - $4,500 IN REWARDS.

**PROJECT UPDATE:**
The Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen’s Association, New Hampshire Fish and Game and Maine Department of Marine Resources are tagging lobsters in the Gulf of Maine and on Georges Bank in order to track migration and investigate growth.

Close to 17,000 lobsters tagged so far, with plans to tag 18,000 total.

Approximately 1,000 recapture reports provided by fishermen to date.

The charts below show lobsters tagged (squares) in the Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank with recaptures (circles) of at least 50 miles away.

On Georges Bank, there is regular movement between shoal and deep water, but also movement to other areas of the Gulf. In the Gulf of Maine, lobsters tagged offshore Jan. to July 2018 have been recaptured 50-150 miles away from downeast ME to southern MA.

Since the tags remain intact after a molt, recaptures with carapace measurements or a good quality photography with gauge for reference (see right) are used to understand molting and growth.

Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to report recaptures! Please keep the reports coming in 2019 and good luck with the raffles.

---

**Black Cod**

**Herring**

**Pogies**

**Redfish**

**Rockfish**

**Tuna**

---

**FIND A TAGGED LOBSTER?**

**PHOTO:**

[Photo indicating how to report length]
The 129th Maine Legislature has been busy considering many legislative proposals. The MLA has been monitoring bills before the Marine Resources Committee, of which it has 13, and has made several energy proposals. This session will end by June 19, 2019.

The Marine Resources Committee has held public hearings on most the bills that would affect the lobster industry and has taken final votes on a few. Several bills are still under consideration.

Under Review by the Legislature

LD 28 An Act Regarding Access to Lobster Licenses, sponsored by Rep McCreight of Harpswell, proposes to give lobster licenses to those who have completed the Apprentice program and been on the waiting list for 10 or more years. The Marine Resources Committee received a lot of testimony during the public hearing on February 5 which was roughly split between those who supported and opposed the bill. During the February 19 work session, the Marine Resources Committee voted to table this bill due to the many changes that the lobster industry is currently facing as result of herring cuts and potential whale rules. The bill will be reconsidered during the second session in 2020.

LD 340 An Act to Establish a Temporary Terminal Condition Medical Allowance for Lobster and Crab Fishing License Holders, sponsored by Rep McCreight of Harpswell, proposes to establish a temporary terminal condition medical allowance to allow a person who meets several criteria. On February 26, the Marine Resources Committee voted to pass an amended version of this bill which would not create a new terminal condition medical allowance, but instead, expand the temporary medical allowance. The amendment would allow the lobsterman to haul his own gear during times when he is well enough while the temporary medical allowance is in place. The amendment is pending final review and approval by the Committee.

LD 430 An Act To Establish and Promote a System of Safe Disposal of Expired Marine Flares, sponsored by Rep McCreight of Harpswell, proposes to establish programs for the collection and disposal of expired marine flares. On March 4, the Criminal Justice voted to support an amended version of this bill. The amendment is pending final review and approval by the Committee.

LD 618 An Act To Remove Nighttime Restrictions on Lobster Fishing in a Certain Area in the Bay of Fundy, sponsored by Rep Tuell of East Machias, proposes to allow a zonist who fish in the U.S. portion of the Gray Zone to haul lobster gear during any time of day between Labor Day and Memorial Day. On March 5, the majority of the Marine Resources Committee voted Ought to Pass an amended version to make this change for the 2019 season but require DMRR to report back to the Marine Resources Committee during the second session before the provision is made permanent. The amendment is pending final review and approval by the Committee.

LD 676 An Act to Simplify Maine's Lobster Licensing System, sponsored by Rep Faulkingham of Winter Harbor, proposes to eliminate the Class I, II, and III licenses and replace them with a “single” license for an individual and a “crew” license for an unlimited crew. The cost of the license and associated fees for the single license would be the same as the current Class I license and fee for the crew license would be the same as the current Class III license. On March 5, the Marine Resources Committee voted to table this bill in order to get more input from the lobster industry.

LD 955 An Act to Prohibit Offshore Oil and Natural Gas Drilling and Exploration, sponsored by Rep Devin of Newcastle, proposes to prohibit activities relating to offshore oil and natural gas exploration, development and production within the boundaries and jurisdiction of the State. The public hearing is scheduled for March 29 before the Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

LD 914 An Act to Enhance the Recruitment and Retainment of Marine Patrol Sergeants, sponsored by Sen Deschambault of York, proposes a 5% salary increase for Marine Patrol Sergeants. Marine Patrol sergeants are seeking to remedy a problem with availability pay so that they are compensated in the same way as IFW sergeants. A public hearing was held on March 5.

LD 797 An Act to Limit Greenhouse Gas Pollution and Effectively Use Maine's Natural Resources, sponsored by Rep Tucker of Brunswick, proposes to require that by 2050 the state to reduce net annual greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% below 1990 levels. The public hearing was held on March 13 before the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. This is the Governor’s proposal for Maine to address climate change. The ENR Committee is considering several other proposals to address climate change.

LD 937 An Act Regarding the Sale and Release or Abandonment of Balloons, sponsored by Rep Devin of Newcastle, proposes to subject a person who releases or abandons a balloon outdoors to penalty. It also requires a seller of balloons to register with the Department of Environmental Protection and to display in a conspicuous place at each purchase counter information concerning the risks and safety hazards of balloons. The public hearing is scheduled for March 27 before the Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

DMR Budget. Governor Mills has proposed a budget for DMR for FY 2020-2021 of $27 million. This budget reflects approximately $13 million in General Fund resources, of which $3 million would support one time capital expenditures to support an upgrade to the Boothbay Lab to allow research to continue and the purchase of five new marine patrol vessels.

Ought Not to Pass

LD 174 An Act to Promote Youth Participation in the Maine Lobster Fishery, sponsored by Rep McDonald of Stonington, proposed to allow a child 12 years old or younger, who does not hold a student license, to assist a Class I, II or III lobster license holder while lobstering. The Marine Resources Committee moved the bill out of committee on March 19 with a unanimous ought not to pass vote.

LD 314 An Act to Simplify Apprenticeship Requirements for Student and Apprentice Lobster and Crab Fishing License Holders, sponsored by Rep Faulkingham of Winter Harbor, proposed to allow a person with an Apprentice or Student lobster license an alternate method to demonstrate Apprenticeship Program completion through verified landings of at least 4,000 pounds of lobster over a period of not less than 2 years. The Marine Resources Committee majority (7) voted ought not to pass, with a minority (5) supporting an amended version of the bill. This bill was voted down by the House on March 19 and killed by the Senate on March 21.

LD 675 An Act to Provide Equity in the Lobster Promotion License Surcharges, sponsored by Rep Faulkingham of Winter Harbor, proposed to replace the 3-tiered promotion charge with a single promotion surcharge of $310 for all 3 classes of licenses. On March 15, the Marine Resources Committee moved this bill out of committee with a majority ought not to pass vote. MLA is up for reauthorization in 2021 which time changes to the funding structure could be considered.

No Public Hearings Yet Scheduled

LD 941 An Act to Further Define the Monhegan Lobster Conservation Area, sponsored by Rep Devin of Newcastle, is a concept draft which proposes to redefine the status of the Monhegan Lobster Conservation Area.

LD 956 An Act To Allow Student License Holders To Fish for or Take Lobsters during a Closed Season, sponsored by Rep Devin of Newcastle, proposes to allow a lobsterman with a student license to fish during a closed season if that closed season occurs during an interim between school years.

LD 936 Resolve, Establishing a Commission To Study the Existing and Potential Effects of Freshwater and Marine Debris on Maine's Freshwater and Coastal Ecosystems, habitats and species.

There are several bonds seeking funds related to marine issues:

LD 16 An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Invest in Infrastructure to Address Sea Level Rise, seeks a $50 million bond to improve waterfront and coastal infrastructure in municipalities to address sea level rise.

LD 400 An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue for Food Processing Infrastructure in Targeted Areas of the State, seeks $20 million for food processing infrastructure in targeted areas of the State.


LD 537 An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Support the Gulf of Maine Research Institute's Establishment of a Near-shore Coastal Sensor Network, seeks $2 million to the Gulf of Maine Research Institute to establish a near-shore coastal sensor network to gather oceanographic data and track changes in state waters.

LD 861 An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Complete the Renovation of a Wharf and Bulkhead in Portland for Marine Research, seeks $3 million to complete the renovation of a wharf and bulkhead at the Gulf of Maine Research Institute in Portland.

There is also a $50 million marine jobs bond being worked on to facilitate the growth of commercial fishing and aquaculture related marine businesses.

For more information, visit www.legislature.maine.gov or contact the MRC clerk at 287-1338.
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☐ Harvester Family* $325  Phone:__________________ Cell:____________________ D.O.B:__________________
☐ Junior Harvester (under 18) $125  Email:__________________________________________________________
☐ Senior Harvester (over 65) $125  (Please include to receive weekly e-news updates and lobster, bait, & fuel prices)
☐ Retired Harvester (no longer a captain) $50  Boat Name:___________________________________________

Individual Membership Levels:
☐ Sternman $50  Lobster License #:_________________ Zone & District:____________________
☐ Lobster Friend $100  *Family Members:_______________________________________________________
☐ Lobster Lover $250

Payment info:  Pay with: Visa MasterCard Check: # ________________
Credit Card #:_____________ - _______________ - _______________ - _______________
Exp. date:_____________ CV code:_____________
Billing town/state/zip:______________________________________________________________
on bait,” he said. Welch purchases bait from New England Fish Company or Coastal Bait Company in Portland. When it comes to storing bait, Welch takes part in a local cooler association where he can stockpile a few weeks’ worth of bait. “It is something built years ago, I own a portion of the building,” he explained. This year he plans to use less bait than in the past. “I will haul on shorter soaks and fish fewer traps until the bulk of the lobsters show up,” Welch said.

Bob Baines, who lobsters in South Thomaston, still fishes primarily with herring. “I’ve used herring for thirty some years. I used pogies when they were available last year and I use alewives in the spring,” he said. He estimates that approximately 15% of his gross goes to buy bait. “That’s more than double what is was ten years ago,” Baines said. Furthermore, as the lobster population has become stronger in Downeast waters, Baines continues to fish as he did ten years ago but is landing fewer lobsters, making his bait costs even more significant. He is a member of the Spruce Head Fishermen’s Co-operative which gets its bait from the O’Hara Corporation in Rockland.

Baines has adjusted his fishing to conserve bait as much as he can. He’s used bait saver bags at different times of the year and cut back on the amount of bait in each bag. But, in terms of this season, ”I just hope for the best,” he said.

Mike Sargent, 26, of Stueben, fishes with herring or pogies at different times of the year, supplemented with hides. “In the summer I use herring for the first month or two depending when the pogies come in. I’ll supplement with the pogies generally in mid-August until the fall,” he said. The herring that Sargent, like many Downeast lobstermen, use is imported. “It is something built years ago, I own a portion of the building,” he explained. This year he plans to use less bait than in the past. “I will haul on shorter soaks and fish fewer traps until the bulk of the lobsters show up,” Sargent explained.

Sargent estimates that between 20% to 25% of his gross revenue goes to buy bait right now. Compared to five or ten years ago, “bait costs are up significantly. It’s a huge difference,” he said. He purchases herring from J & K Lobster Bait and D.C. Air in Gouldsboro. To store the bait he gets, Sargent takes an old-fashioned approach. “I do it like they used to do, I have insulated vats and I salt the pogies, flip them over and salt them again. There’s 20 bushels to a vat,” he said.

To make do in recent years, Sargent has paid closer attention to how much bait he uses. “Now we don’t dump the bait, we repack it. I’ve moved to small mesh bags from larger mesh. And I supplement with hide throughout the year,” he said. This season he pre-bought herring and salted it to use until the pogies come in. “I’m pretty good on bait right now. The unknown is what we are going to have to pay in the future. Guys who depend on herring are going to have a hard time and hard bait is going to be scarce as well.”

**DMR Bait Dealer Survey**

The Department of Marine Resources (DMR) has undertaken a survey of licensed bait dealers in Maine to help advance a bait security initiative by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) Bait Workgroup. The Bait Workgroup was established to examine practices in the bait industry and to recommend measures that will ensure biosecurity of bait used in states that take part in the ASMFC lobster management plan.

In light of the recent reduction in the herring quota, this information is critical since there will likely be more interest in alternative sources of lobster bait, some of which could pose a biosecurity risk to the marine environment.

“We have 210 bait dealers registered through our system,” said Nicholas Popoff, DMR resource coordinator. “This is part of the ASMFC effort to take a closer look at risk along the East Coast.”

Maine lobster fishermen have historically used Atlantic herring and menhaden as bait, but quotas for these species have been reduced significantly during the past decade. In response, lobstermen pursued new types of bait. However, bait sourced from other regions of the world can harbor pathogens, which may pose ecological risks to the Gulf of Maine. Therefore, a new classification system and review process was created to prevent the introduction of harmful pathogens or invasive species into Maine’s coastal waters.

The 125th Legislature passed a law giving the DMR authority to review and prohibit the use of any freshwater or marine organism as lobster or crab bait that poses an unacceptable risk to the marine environment and consumers. DMR implemented this law by establishing a Lobster and Crab Bait Review Process in regulation.

“We are ahead of the game in terms of biosecurity in Maine,” Popoff noted. “We’re the only ones with regulations to prevent the risk of something negative coming into the Gulf of Maine. This will give the ASMFC more information about what is being sold throughout the region.”

**Many thanks to these fine businesses, the MLA’s Keeper members!**

- Acadia Seaplants LLC
- Bar Harbor Bank & Trust
- Beals-Jonesport Coop Inc.
- Beals Lobster Pier
- Bell Power Systems Inc.
- Bowdoin College
- Dining Services
- Buysticks.com
- Chapman & Chapman
- Coastal Documentation
- Conary Cove Lobster Co.
- Cousins Maine Lobster
- Crazy Lobster & Shellfish
- Cushing Diesel, LLC
- Damariscotta Bank & Trust Co.
- Downeast Boat Co.
- F.A. Peabody Insurance
- Farrin’s Boatshop
- Finestkind Scenic Cruises
- First National Bank
- F. W. Thurston Co. Inc.
- Georgetown Fishermen’s Co-op
- Gulf of Maine Lobster Foundation
- Guy Cotten, Inc.
- Inland Seafood
- Interstate Lobster Co.
- Island Fishing Gear & Auto Parts
- Island Fishermen’s Wives
- Island Seafood LLC
- John’s Bay Boat Co.
- Journey’s End Marina
- Kip’s Seafood
- Lobster Trap Co.
- Lomnie’s Hydraulic Inc.

**Table: Estimate of Total Bait Supply**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Herring</th>
<th>Menhaden</th>
<th>CR travel</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td>3,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>22,000</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Maine Lobstermen’s Cooperative
- Maine Port Authority
- Maine Financial Group
- Maine fisherman’s Cooperative
- Superior Bait & Salt
- Superior Marine Products Inc.
- Tenants Harbor Fishermen’s Cooperative
- Vinalhaven Fishermen’s Cooperative
- Williams Coffin and Sons, Inc.
- Williams CPA Group LLC
- Worcestes Lobster Bait
## DMR List of Approved, Prohibited Lobster and Crab Baits

### Marine Approved, March 14, 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Restrictions</th>
<th>Region of Origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any Species in the NEFMC Groundfish Complex</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gulf of Maine or Georges Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic Cod</td>
<td></td>
<td>US East Coast &amp; Canada East Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic Herring</td>
<td></td>
<td>US East Coast &amp; Canada East Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croaker</td>
<td></td>
<td>US East Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halibut</td>
<td></td>
<td>Atlantic &amp; Pacific Ocean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaican Weakfish (Glymoxon jamaicensis)</td>
<td>Wild caught, frozen, racks only</td>
<td>Suriname</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King Weakfish (Macrodonton angulodon)</td>
<td>Wild caught, frozen, racks only</td>
<td>Suriname</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinky (aka rockfish, long/short spinyhead, idiot fish) (Genus Sebastes)</td>
<td>Must be frozen</td>
<td>US West Coast &amp; Canada West Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lingcod</td>
<td></td>
<td>Atlantic &amp; Pacific Ocean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mackerel (Scomber japonicus)</td>
<td>Must be frozen if from China</td>
<td>US East Coast, Japan, Portugal and China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mullet (Genus Mugilidae)</td>
<td></td>
<td>US &amp; Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange Roughy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Australia &amp; New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Menhaden (aka Pogie, Bunker)</td>
<td></td>
<td>US East Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patagonian toothfish</td>
<td>Must be frozen</td>
<td>Australia and Argentina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pollock</td>
<td></td>
<td>Atlantic Ocean only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redfish</td>
<td></td>
<td>N. Atlantic Ocean &amp; Pacific Ocean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Alphonsino</td>
<td></td>
<td>NE Atlantic Ocean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roundnose Grenadier</td>
<td></td>
<td>NE Atlantic Ocean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River herring (alewife, blueback herring)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Maine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockfish (Genus Sebastes)</td>
<td>Must be frozen</td>
<td>US West Coast &amp; Canada West Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sablefish</td>
<td></td>
<td>Alaska &amp; Western Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skate</td>
<td></td>
<td>US Northeast Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shad</td>
<td></td>
<td>Maine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sole</td>
<td></td>
<td>US West Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Kingfish (Montichthys americanus)</td>
<td>Wild caught, frozen, racks only</td>
<td>Suriname</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuna</td>
<td></td>
<td>North Pacific Ocean</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Any species that was legally caught in Maine coastal waters, except as otherwise prohibited in regulation

For more information, visit [www.maine.gov/dmr/science-research/species/lobster/bait.html](http://www.maine.gov/dmr/science-research/species/lobster/bait.html) or contact Sarah Cotnoir at sarah.cotnoir@maine.gov.

### Marine Prohibited, March 14, 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Region of Origin</th>
<th>Unacceptable Risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any salmonid fish species (prohibited pursuant to DMR Chapter 24.23)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Exotic pathogens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alphonsino</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>Exotic pathogens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atka Mackerel (Pleuragrammus Menopterygius)</td>
<td>North Pacific Ocean, Alaska</td>
<td>Exotic pathogens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonito</td>
<td>Panama West Coast</td>
<td>Exotic pathogens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cobia</td>
<td>South Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean Sea</td>
<td>Unknown pathogen status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cod</td>
<td>US West Coast, Caribbean Sea</td>
<td>Possibility of exotic agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eulachon (Thaleichthys pacificus)</td>
<td>Alaska</td>
<td>Exotic pathogens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flatfish</td>
<td>Pacific Ocean</td>
<td>Possibility of exotic agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluke</td>
<td>US West Coast</td>
<td>Exotic pathogens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horseshoe Crab</td>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>Possibility of invasive species</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monkfish (Lophius piscatorius)</td>
<td>FAO Major Fishing Area 27</td>
<td>Exotic pathogens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pollock</td>
<td>Pacific Ocean</td>
<td>Exotic pathogens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Sardine (South American Pilchard)</td>
<td>US West Coast &amp; Canada West Coast</td>
<td>Exotic pathogens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Gurnard (Chelidonichthys cuculus)</td>
<td>Netherlands, France, Germany</td>
<td>Exotic Pathogens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snapper</td>
<td>Panama West Coast</td>
<td>Exotic pathogens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tilapia</td>
<td>Panama West Coast</td>
<td>Exotic pathogens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow Goosefish (Lophius Litalon)</td>
<td>FFO Major Fishing Area 64</td>
<td>Exotic pathogens</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Freshwater Approved, July 23, 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Region of Origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carp</td>
<td>Maine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pickerel</td>
<td>Central Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suckerfish</td>
<td>Maine, Canadian provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Any freshwater species that was legally harvested in Maine

### Freshwater Prohibited, July 23, 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Region of Origin</th>
<th>Unacceptable Risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Carp, including Asian Carp (grass carp, common carp, Amur carp, silver carp, largescale silver carp, bighhead carp, black carp, goldfish, crucian carp, mud carp)</td>
<td>Asia, US (caught outside of Maine) &amp; Canada. Carp caught in Maine ARE approved.</td>
<td>Exotic pathogens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catfish</td>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>Exotic pathogens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mudshad</td>
<td>Central US &amp; Virginia</td>
<td>Unknown pathogen status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Pike</td>
<td>Central Canada</td>
<td>Exotic pathogens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheephead (Freshwater Drum)</td>
<td>US &amp; Canada</td>
<td>Exotic pathogens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmed or Wild Tilapia</td>
<td>Africa, Asia, Florida, Latin America and Vietnam</td>
<td>Exotic pathogens</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LOBSTER COMPANY PARTNERS WITH NON-PROFIT FOUNDATION TO KEEP WATERFRONT WORKING

By Mainebiz staff. Reprinted with permission

Luke's Lobster, a seafood company and restaurant group founded by Luke Holden in 2009, will partner with the Boothbay Region Maritime Foundation to operate a seafood-buying station at the Sea Pier in Boothbay Harbor. The partnership is intended to protect working waterfront and access for local fishermen, according to a company news release.

Last August, the newly formed foundation entered into an agreement to acquire the Sea Pier, previously owned by longtime fisherman Douglas Carter, who wanted to ensure he sold his property to an entity that would keep it as a commercial fishing wharf. The lease was signed last week between the parties, and Luke's has taken over operations and lobster buying at Sea Pier.

All of the catch coming into the station will go to Luke Holden's seafood company to be steamed, hand-picked and packed for serving directly to Luke's Lobster customers.

The foundation was created with a mission to protect Boothbay's working waterfront, its marine-related activities and access for fishermen, as well as an educational mandate. "We spent a long time looking for the right operator for Sea Pier," Deanne Tibbets, board president of the Boothbay Region Foundation, said in the release. "We believe Luke's has the ability to work collaboratively with the Sea Pier's fishermen and is the best partner to help us realize our vision — a vibrant working waterfront, access for fishermen and public education about Boothbay's fishing heritage."

As part of the lease agreement, an advisory committee made up of representatives from the foundation, fishermen who fish at Sea Pier and representatives from Luke's will be created to ensure the operational transition is smooth, the foundation's mission is implemented and communication among all parties is open and clear.

"We are really looking forward to this partnership and to working with the fishermen here at Sea Pier to create as much value as possible for their product at the shore," Holden said in the release. "Protecting Maine's working waterfront and access for fishermen is important for our business, and our mission of sourcing the highest quality seafood but also critically important for Maine's future."

"The Sea Pier will be renamed Carter's Wharf. It is one of several commercial fishing wharfs on the east side of Boothbay Harbor. An anonymous donation made the transfer of the property possible. A deed restriction requires the property remain a commercial fishing wharf.

"The working waterfront is key to Maine on many levels — not only maintaining access for fishermen but also for tourism and economic development," said Holden. "People coming from out of state want to see the authentic Maine, and that's our working waterfront."

The possible formation of a fishermen's co-op is an option the parties will explore, according to the release.

The Sea Pier will be renamed Carter's Wharf. It is one of several commercial fishing wharfs on the east side of Boothbay Harbor. An anonymous donation made the transfer of the property possible. A deed restriction requires the property remain a commercial fishing wharf.

"The working waterfront is key to Maine on many levels — not only maintaining access for fishermen but also for tourism and economic development," Ben Martens, executive director for the Maine Coast Fishermen's Association, said in the release. "People coming from out of state want to see the authentic Maine, and that's our working waterfront."

NEW ORGANIZATION MAKES COLLABORATION A PRIORITY OFFSHORE

By Melissa Waterman

Formed in 2018, the Responsible Offshore Development Alliance (RODA) is a membership-based coalition of fishing industry associations and fishing companies with an interest in improving the compatibility of new offshore development with their businesses. RODA endeavors to coordinate science and policy approaches to managing development of the Outer Continental Shelf in a way that minimizes conflicts with existing and historic fishing.

To do this, RODA seeks to formally engage with NMFS and other entities on collaborative research and monitoring. The organization wants to design and implement with NMFS’s new model for a long-term, holistic, and collaborative research program that effectively gathers and incorporates fishery-dependent and independent data and expertise. RODA also seeks to create regional “science panels” in cooperation with NMFS to identify priority research and monitoring needs, prioritize research funding, and provide technical recommendations.

In January, RODA entered into a partnership agreement with Ørsted U.S. Offshore Wind to improve communications between the commercial fishing industry and offshore wind energy developers. This first-of-its-kind partnership creates an opportunity for those who fish commercially to provide direct input to the wind energy industry on matters of significant interest to their businesses. "Partnering with Ørsted is a significant step forward as we look to strengthen our ongoing dialogue between commercial fishermen and offshore wind developers," RODA Executive Director Annie Hawkins said in a press release. "RODA believes that we need to develop solutions for offshore wind energy and commercial fishing to coexist.”

On March 26, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries signed a memorandum of understanding with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) and RODA to bring fishing interests together with federal regulators.

Through the 10-year memorandum of understanding, RODA, NOAA Fisheries and BOEM will collaborate on the science and the "process of offshore wind energy development” on the Outer Continental Shelf. "The fishing industry has expressed its concern about the potential impacts of rapid large-scale wind energy development to coastal communities and sustainable fishing practices. This agreement paves a way forward for fishing communities to give meaningful input to federal regulators in determining the future of our ocean resources," Hawkins said in a release.

The Commission's Lobster Board recommended that vertical lines be reduced by between zero and 40% in all lobster management areas except LCMA 6. It also recommended that the 10% replacement tag provision be removed and that a method of reporting on vertical lines be developed and implemented prior to having 100% harvester reporting in place. The Commission's Plan Development Team is now drafting Amendment 28 to reflect these recommendations. Kerns anticipated a public comment period from May to July if the ASMFC accepts the recommendations at its May meeting. Final action would occur before August.

DMR's three-year vertical line project seeks to provide data on the functional breaking strength of lines used by lobstermen, on the strength such lines must have to haul traps safely, and on the different ways lobstermen rig their vertical lines in various parts of the coast. Using a rope breaking machine loaded by NMFS, DMR project staff, led by Erin Summers, have conducted tested 48 vertical lines thus far, breaking 23 clean lengths of rope, 16 with knots and 8 with splices. The ropes have all been fished by lobstermen between three and six seasons. The rope diameters vary from 5/16-inch to ½-inch. Summers explained that the tests show that knotted line breaks first, then spliced, then clean line. Most 3/8-inch line with a knot breaks at 1800 pounds, with a splice at 2000 pounds of pressure; while clean 3/8-inch line breaks at 2500 pounds.

Load cell testers have been installed on six vessels to figure out how many pounds of pressure hauling exerts on vertical lines. The boats hauled five- to 35-trap trawls in federal waters at varying depths. The load cells showed that most of the pressure comes when the first trap comes up. The data also indicates that more pressure is exerted because of depth than because of the number of traps on a trawl.

Summers also reviewed the results of a telephone and online survey made of lobstermen in Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Rhode Island concerning gear configurations. The largest number of responses to the survey came from Maine lobstermen (667). Lobstermen in Maine waters typically fish singles, pairs and triples (24%, 28%, and 15% respectively). The majority of Maine lobstermen use 3/8-inch rope, although some go up to ½-inch line. Project researchers want to get additional information about how surface systems are fished, the weight of various taws and other information. In addition, the project is still looking for used rope to test as well as lobstermen willing to have load cells installed on their vessels this summer.
By Marianne Lacroix, interim director, MLMC

Since the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative (MLMC) was formed in 2013, our marketing effort has primarily focused on creating preference and demand for Maine lobster among chefs and consumers. We know that the Maine story resonates with these audiences and that they represent the primary end consumers of Maine lobster. Over time we’ve generated a great deal of interest within the chef community, and that interest led us to a discovery — the need for greater education within the supply chain to ensure that those seeking out Maine lobster meet as few barriers to obtaining it as possible.

In 2019, the MLMC will continue our marketing efforts directed at chefs and consumers, while also adding a new focus, the wholesale distributor audience. Before beginning our efforts to reach this group, we conducted rigorous research to determine key challenges for this audience, including the varying ways our products are perceived, opportunities for education and the best means for reaching and engaging wholesale distributors.

Our goal is to reach the supply chain audience where they are, when they’re most receptive and with messages and content that have impact.

The research phase of the program has included both qualitative information derived from in-depth interviews and quantitative data pulled from surveys. The goal of the research has been to find out how distributors nationwide do business and how we can most efficiently and effectively reach this important part of the supply chain. The research has shown that suppliers look for information on different types of lobsters (whether that be live vs. value-added, or Maine vs. Caribbean products, for example), cooking and handling recommendations, as well as seasonality and variations in yield. These insights will inform the types of materials the MLMC develops to help market Maine lobster in 2019. Takeaways from our research will be provided to Maine dealers and distributors to use in educating their own customers.

Our goal is to reach the supply chain audience where they are, when they’re most receptive and with messages and content that have impact. The outreach plan is three-pronged. First, we create awareness of Maine lobster with attention-capturing content and media headlines. Then, we’ll provide distributors with deeper insight into Maine lobster and Maine new-shell lobster by educating them on the product’s benefits and unique values. The final step is to drive the targeted audience to action.

Our approach to the supply chain will be different from how we seek to educate chefs. With chefs, we target influential chefs in important U.S. markets using events, social media and media outreach. These chefs in turn help to disseminate information and enthusiasm for Maine lobster to their friends and social media followers. With the supply chain audience, we will primarily use advertising tactics like paid social media and search engine marketing. Through these tactics we’ll be able to steer our supply chain audience to our web site. Specific actions on the web site will indicate intent to purchase or sell lobster, including downloading content, visiting our online Buyers Guide, searching for specific products, and clicking on a link to a dealer website.

Think of this strategy like a snowball rolling downhill: We start with broad outreach to the audience online. Then, we establish awareness of Maine lobster, sending our targeted audience to our website and finally driving measurable action.

We’re excited to charge ahead this year with a marketing program designed to increase demand for Maine lobster among all levels of the supply chain, all the way down to the consumer. Stay up to date on all of the Maine lobster marketing activities through our monthly emails, ads and articles in Landings, as well as our social media channels.
ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS SUE FEDS OVER SEISMIC TESTING

A group of conservation organizations, including the Natural Resources Defense Council, Sierra Club, Surfrider Foundation, Center for Biological Diversity, Defenders of Wildlife, and Oceana, have asked a federal judge to block the start of seismic exploration in the Atlantic Ocean until the case can be fully heard in court. According to the Natural Resources Defense Council, the motion for a preliminary injunction filed in federal court in Charleston, S.C., contends that the Trump administration’s seismic survey go-ahead violates three federal laws: the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act. The filing asserts that the federal government “failed to consider the combined effects of overlapping and simultaneous surveys, which are greater than the effects of individual seismic-blasting boats,” and, in addition, “erroneously determined that only a ‘small number’ of whales and dolphins would be harmed.”

PETITION CALLS FOR NEW AQUACULTURE REGULATIONS

Critics of a Brunswick aquaculture proposal have organized a citizen petition asking the state to limit where new aquaculture operations are sited in Maine’s coastal waters. Petitioners claim the surge in new licenses affects where lobsters can drop traps. A 30-acre oyster farm proposed in Maquoit Bay in Brunswick by Mere Point Oyster Co. is a flashpoint in the debate.

The Department of Marine Resources current aquaculture evaluation process includes making sure a new lease will not unreasonably interfere with navigation, waterfront access, fishing or other uses of the area, result in unreasonable noise or interfere with wildlife and marine habitat. Petitioners want an immediate, statewide moratorium on pending lease applications bigger than 10 acres. They also want the state to add rules that would allow it to consider whether a nearby location or different lease boundaries would better balance competing water uses.

2018 SCALLOP SEASON TOOK A DOWNTURN

Maine’s 2018 scallop harvest fell by 37 percent in value and by 30 percent in volume from the prior year, according to state officials. Despite the dropoff, the fishery continues to be relatively productive and lucrative compared to its poor condition in the 2000s. Maine scallop fishermen netted 563,000 pounds of scallop meat with a cumulative dockside value of $5.9 million in 2018, continuing a streak of six straight years in which the fishery has produced nearly half a million pounds or more of scallop meat and at least $5 million in statewide landings value. The 2018 drop can be attributed to exceptional numbers the fishery had in 2017, when it hit a 20-year high in volume and its highest value in nearly 25 years. Over the past decade, with the state’s new management system in place, there has been a surge in demand for scallops, which has boosted the price to historic highs. In 2012 the average price paid to scallop fishermen rose above $10 per pound for the first time, and it has stayed there every year since, hitting a record high of $12.81 per pound in 2016 and settling last year at $10.54 per pound.

KEEPING AN EYE ON ELVERS

For the 2019 elver season, the Department of Marine Resources added a requirement that baby eels, or elvers, exported notify the Maine Marine Patrol 48 hours before preparing to pack and ship the eels. The officer will then witness the packing. The new rule’s designed to deter illegal sales of the valuable fish. Elvers are almost always worth more than $1,000 per pound at docks. They’re then sold to Asian aquaculture companies so they can raised to maturity for use as food.

SALMON FARMING DOES NOT HARM LOBSTERS, SAYS NEW STUDY

An eight-year study of lobsters living below a salmon farm off New Brunswick’s Grand Manan Island found the aquaculture operation had no impact on the crustaceans’ abundance, size or growth. The peer-reviewed, industry-funded study was published in the Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences. The study involved divers visiting a sample area under the Benson Aquaculture salmon farm at Cheney Head off Grand Manan in 2008, and returning every August and September. To establish a baseline, surveying started before the fish farm opened. The study covered two production cycles at the farm, which has been opposed by lobster fishermen because the company uses pesticides to control sea lice. It also included a fallow period and a farm expansion to 336,000 fish from 10,000 during the second production cycle. An identical survey was conducted about a kilometre outside the farm. By the time the project ended in 2015, divers had counted 1,255 lobsters inside the farm and 1,171 outside.

BILL TO FOSTER NEW FISHERMEN INTRODUCED

Maine Rep. Jared Golden and Alaskan Rep. Don Young introduced new bipartisan legislation to address the longtime decline in younger Americans entering the commercial fishing industry. Golden and Young introduced H.R. 1240, the Young Fishermen’s Development Act with original cosponsors Representatives Seth Moulton (MA) and Aumua Amata (American Samoa). The bill creates the first ever national grant program through the Department of Commerce to support training, education, and workplace development for the nation’s next generation of commercial fishermen.

The Young Fisherman’s Development Act would authorize up to $200,000 in competitive grants through NOAA’s Sea Grant Program to support new and established local and regional training, education, outreach, and technical assistance initiatives for young fishermen. The grant program outlined in the bill is modeled on the Department of Agriculture’s successful Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Development Program.
Gov. Mills spoke at the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative’s popular Lobster Reception.

Lobster Reception, hosted by the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative, where they sampled Maine wine and lobster dishes with other Expo attendees.

Governor Janet Mills spoke briefly, complimenting Maine lobstermen on their work ethic and resourcefulness. "Yes, there are challenges," she said, referring to the difficulties with right whales and a looming herring bait shortage. "But as Mainers, we solve problems. It’s in our DNA."

"What a great networking event, in addition to the Expo!" remarked Christal Applin of Swans Island. John Drouin of Cutler summed it up. “Our favorite experience at the show? Honestly, the entire day was fantastic!”

You can find more information, links, and photos at www.mainelobstermen.org. And let us know if you would like us to list your upcoming events!
AWARDS ABOUND AT THIS YEAR’S MAINE FISHERMEN’S FORUM

From left, MLA Board President Kristan Porter, Governor Janet Mills, Col. Jon Cornish, Marine Patrol Officer Brian Brodie, recipient of the MLA Officer of the Year award, DMR Commissioner Pat Keliher, and MLA Executive Director Patrice McCarron.

From left, MLA President Porter, Golden V-Notch winner Dwight Carver, MLA executive director Patrice McCarron. MLA photo.

DMR Commissioner Pat Keliher presented Terry Alexander of Harpswell with the Andy Mays Award of Excellence. M. Young photo.

From left, Patrice McCarron, Outstanding Service Award DMR Bureau of Marine Science director Carl Wilson, and MLA president Kristan Porter. MLA photo.

Maine Fishermen’s Co-operatives
Since 1947
Organized for Maine’s fishermen, by Maine’s fishermen.

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