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MAINE OFFICIALS GO ON OFFENSE REGARDING WHALE RULES

By Melissa Waterman

During July Governor Janet Mills and the Maine Congressional delegation expressed strong opposition to the mandate from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) requiring additional right whale protections. In April, states with commercial lobster fisheries were directed by NMFS to reduce the risk posed by the fishery to right whales by between 60% and 80%. As a result, Maine lobstermen must remove 50% of all vertical lines from the water to achieve the 60% reduction in risk.

But, as Governor Mills stated in a letter to commercial lobstermen released on July 11, “...it is clear to me — as it is to you — that the federal government’s pending regulations are unfair, unreasonable, and unwarranted. I will not stand idly by as Washington attempts to threaten your livelihoods and our way of life,” Mills cited the lack of data linking the gear used by Maine lobstermen to any recent right whale entanglements and deaths. Shortly after Mills sent her letter to lobstermen, the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans confirmed that eight right whales have died in the Gulf of St. Lawrence this summer. Three more were seen to be entangled in fishing gear in that region in July.

Mills explained that she had ‘directed Commissioner Kilcher to evaluate a risk reduction target for Maine that is commensurate to any actual risk posed by the Maine lobster industry — not the 60 percent risk reduction target assigned by the National Marine Fisheries Service. The Commissioner will come back to the industry in August, as promised, to share the Department’s findings and put forward a plan to reduce risk in Maine.’

In response, the Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA) commended Mills’ action. “The Maine lobster industry understands that right whales are at risk and we want to be part of the solution. But as the Governor rightly points out, the data show that Maine is just a small part of a large and complex problem,” wrote MLA executive director Patrice McCarron. “Maine’s solution must be right-sized to reflect the risk our fishery poses to right whales. We will not implement changes to our fishery to achieve an arbitrary goal if those measures won’t actually benefit the right whale.”

On July 21, lobstermen turned out in force at a rally in Stonington to protest NMFS’ actions. Governor Mills, Senator Susan Collins, Representative Chellie Pingree and Representative Jared Golden were in attendance. Rep. Golden said to lobstermen, “The new NOAA regulations could put many Maine lobstermen out of business without a guarantee that any right whales would be saved. It is important to Maine communities and the lobster industry that we continue to fight against unfair rules and inaccurate information. We’re calling for solutions based on sound science and good data that protect lobstermen and whales.”

Governor Janet Mills speaks in support of lobstermen at a July 21 rally in Stonington.

Photo courtesy of Knox Village Soup.

Continued on page 18
COASTAL OUTLOOK

Thoughts from MLCA President Patrice McCarron

If you are a Maine lobsterman, all you have heard about this summer is North Atlantic right whales. The endangered species has been in the minds of lobstermen, state legislators, Maine’s Congressional delegation and Governor Mills. Eight right whales have died in Canadian waters by the end of July, from a population now estimated to be below 450 in number. The Department of Marine Resources (DMR) spent long hours in June meeting with lobstermen in each of the seven lobster zones to understand which strategies would work best to remove 50% of Maine’s vertical lines and the operational, safety and economic concerns associated with those changes. As our lead article this month indicates, lobstermen are up in arms about that plan and held a rally in Stonington last month to express their concerns.

In response to NMFS’ plan and lobstermen’s protests, Governor Mills decided to take action in mid-July. As you will read, the Governor called upon DMR to undertake its own analysis of interactions between lobstermen and right whales in order to assess the true risk Maine lobstermen might pose. “My Administration will not allow any bureaucrat to undermine our lobster industry or our economy with foolish, unsupported, and ill-advised regulations,” she wrote to Maine lobstermen. DMR will hold a second series of meetings with lobstermen in August to share the results of its analysis.

DMR has also continued with its three-year study of the ropes used in the state’s lobster fishery, whose preliminary results we highlight in this issue. The study is designed to provide better data on how lobster gear is configured by lobstermen in different areas of the Gulf of Maine, the functional breaking strength of vertical lines in use in the fishery, and the strain vertical lines experience when hauling under various conditions. Some environmental organizations are promoting the notion of 1,700-pound breaking strength to inform gear configurations to protect right whales in the future. The study is designed to meet its own analysis of interactions with lobstermen and right whales in order to assess the true risk Maine lobstermen might pose. “My Administration will not allow any bureaucrat to undermine our lobster industry or our economy with foolish, unsupported, and ill-advised regulations,” she wrote to Maine lobstermen. DMR will hold a second series of meetings with lobstermen in August to share the results of its analysis.

While the plight of right whales and of Maine lobstermen have dominated the news this summer, other issues continued to draw attention. New or expanded aquaculture leases have caused concern in several communities along the coast in recent months. Landings continues its series on aquaculture in the state with a look at the impetus for the sector’s growth. As the article indicates, no one specific factor triggered the growth but rather it has resulted from a mix of private and public actions.

Landings also continues our series on health issues and lobstermen looking at the problem of high blood pressure. The “quiet” killer — high blood pressure — afflicts nearly half of all adults in America, many of whom have no idea they have the condition. Untreated, high blood pressure can cause a multitude of other illnesses, including heart attack and stroke.

Jeff Grenier is a Maine artist whose love of the coast permeates his pen and ink drawings. He learned how to handle a boat as a child in Friendship where his grandfather lived. The world of the working waterfront inspired Grenier as a child and, as an artist, now inspires his work. Recently he began doing pen and ink portraits of lobster boats and their home ports.

“An honest day’s hard work deserves respect, and it is with respect that I treat each of my subjects,” Grenier explained. Summer is also the season of feasting along the shore and lobster often serves as the centerpiece of summertime meals. Antonina Pelletier offers a review of Maine resident Barton Seaver’s seafood cookbook, Two if By Sea, which is full of tasty seafood recipes, Seaver, who has served as a chef-ambassador for the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative and an international proponent of sustainable seafood, celebrates not only the iconic Maine lobster but also familiar species such as blue mussels and cod. Bon appetit! I hope you are having a relaxing summer and I welcome your feedback on this issue and future story ideas.

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Aquaculture ventures, primarily of shellfish, for decades. The University of Maine's Darling Marine Center in Walpole was a hotbed of fledgling shellfish farmers in the 1970s, led Dr. Herb Hidu. Hidu was hired to establish a shellfish aquaculture program funded by Maine Sea Grant. He was as a pioneer in shellfish aquaculture and his stature served as a magnet for graduate students interested in the burgeoning field. Those students then went on to establish oyster and blue mussel farms in the nearby Damariscotta River.

Salmon aquaculture was also an early entry into the state's aquaculture scene. Swan's Island had an Atlantic salmon farm and processing plant started in the late 1980s. Mariculture Products, later renamed Island Aquaculture, operated under local control until it was purchased by a Norwegian company in 2000 and subsequently closed in 2003. New Brunswick-based Cooke Aquaculture took over three smaller Maine salmon aquaculture businesses in the late 1990s and currently farms in Eastport, Machias and Bar Harbor.

But it was only when the Maine Legislature instituted a new type of aquaculture license in 2006, called a Limited Purpose Aquaculture license (LPA), that the industry took a leap forward, according to Chris Davis, director of the Aquaculture Innovation Center (AIC) at the Darling Marine Center. The AIC is the only center remaining of three innovation centers created by the state Legislature in 1988 to foster development of specific business sectors (the other two were biotechnology and forestry). The AIC focuses on research that aquaculturists need to select the appropriate species and locations for their businesses in Maine. "The LPA provision came in about ten years ago now and makes it much easier to identify initial sites. It's a way for a person to get a foot in the water," Davis said.

Prior to the introduction of LPAs, an individual could only apply for an experimental lease or a standard lease, both of which required extensive investments of time, money and paperwork. In contrast, LPA licenses apply to small tracts of submerged land, just 400 square feet in size, for one year. According to the Department of Marine Resources (DMR), which oversees the aquaculture ap-Continued on page 19

Who's Who in Maine's Aquaculture World

Maine Aquaculture Association https://maineaqua.org

Founded in 1976, the Maine Aquaculture Association (MAA) is a membership organization for aquaculturists. Its members grow finfish, shellfish and sea vegetables in both fresh and saltwater using a variety of farming methods. The MAA and its member growers are widely recognized as pioneers in the development of innovative and sustainable farming aquaculture farming practices. Through a 14-point set of environmental guiding principles, cooperative area management agreements, continuous member improvement training and third party audited best management practices MAA and its members are developing environmentally sustainable aquaculture for Maine and beyond.

The Maine Aquaculture Innovation Center https://www.maineaquaculture.org

The Center was established in 1988 by the Maine Legislature with a mission to assist in developing economically and environmentally sustainable aquaculture opportunities in Maine. MAIC sponsors and facilitates innovative research and development projects involving food, pharmaceuticals, and other products from sustainable aquatic systems; invests in the enhancement of aquaculture capacity in Maine; serves as a source of educational information to enhance public visibility and acceptance of aquaculture; and encourages strategic alliances tasked with promoting research, technology transfer, and the commercialization of aquaculture research.

The MAIC operates the Center for Cooperative Aquaculture Research (CCAR) at the Darling Marine Center, which makes available aquaculture facilities to companies looking to diversify or test new ideas and to those in initial start-up phases. It also oversees the Aquaculture Business Incubator at the Darling Center, which features two 550 square foot lab/culture spaces adjacent to the Flowing Seawater Laboratory. Furthermore, office spaces and a 700 square foot dry laboratory are available in the Marine Culture Laboratory.

The Aquaculture Research Institute at the University of Maine https://umaine.edu/aquaculture

The Aquaculture Research Institute (ARI), established in 2009, brings together researchers and faculty from multiple disciplines at UMaine, key industry partners, and applied RD&D opportunities, to enable UMaine's aquaculture research portfolio to embrace the entire innovation development pipeline.
DMR ROPE STUDY REVEALS OPTIONS FOR WEAK ROPE

By F.B Environmental Associates

The Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team (TRT) met in April 2019 and recommended new regulatory measures for the lobster fishery in the Northeast. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) set a target to reduce the risk of entanglement to North Atlantic right whales by 60 percent. While the State of Maine has recently challenged the 60% goal and is currently assessing its own risk reduction target, each state or lobster management area is working to define regional strategies to reduce the risk of entanglement to right whales in their area. The Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR) staff is currently gathering information on what can be accomplished through meetings with the lobster industry. Potential measures could include a combination of trawl minimums by distance from shore, trap reductions, and the use of weaker rope on all or a portion of vertical lines.

DMR recognized that data on the diversity of gear and vertical line configurations in the fleet were missing in the TRT management discussions, and applied for funding through the Section 6 Species Recovery Grants to States program. The project aimed to develop a baseline of information by region and relative to gear’s use by distance from shore. Awarded in the summer of 2018, the project includes three parts: a gear survey, testing the functional breaking strength of vertical lines in use in the fishery, and understanding the strain vertical lines are under when handling under various conditions. The survey was conducted in August 2018 through January 2019 in collaboration with Maine Lobstermen’s Association, Massachusetts Lobstermen’s Association, the Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen’s Association, the University of Maine, New Hampshire Fish and Game, and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management.

In total, the survey had 647 responses from Maine, 139 responses from Massachusetts, 57 responses from New Hampshire, 13 responses from Rhode Island, and 11 responses from offshore fishermen. The survey was available through an online portal on the DMR website. In Maine, Massachusetts and Area 3, the survey was also administered by phone. Within Maine, the responses were distributed across Zones A through G, Zone A, the largest zone, had the lowest response rate, and Zone D, the third largest zone, had the highest response rate. The survey collected data on the area fished, traps per trawl, and vertical line configuration. Preliminary findings support what was generally understood about the Maine lobster fishery — gear configurations and rope diameter used in vertical lines increase as gear is fished further from shore.

In addition to the gear survey, project partners collected used vertical line samples in order to test the breaking strength of rope. Understanding the breaking strength of vertical lines already in use helps inform regulations that outline weak rope requirements. As of June 2019, 215 breaking strength tests have been completed. The manufacturers and types of rope varied, and the average age of the rope ranged from 3 to 6 seasons. Preliminary findings show the smaller the rope diameter, the lower the breaking strength regardless of rope type, and that the presence of knots and splices significantly lower the breaking strength of the rope. Survey results show that 96% of ropes currently fished are modified with a knot, splice, or both. Forty-eight percent have both knots and splices. Given the lower breaking strengths of ropes with knots and splices, most of the rope being fished has a functional breaking strength that is less than the manufacturers’ breaking strength. This suggests that using certain types of knots and splices that are already being fished will help meet weak rope requirements. Preliminary results demonstrate that rope weaknesses as it is fished. Data show a significant, negative relationship between the breaking strength of rope and number of seasons fished.

DMR tested the relationship between rope breaking strength, diameter, rope modifications, and number of seasons fished. Results show that both diameter, rope modifications, and number of seasons fished significantly impact breaking strength. Rope diameter and modifications have the strongest influence on breaking strength followed by the number of seasons fished. A major concern with proposed weak rope requirements is the potential impact to the safety of fishing operations. The project team documented the strain vertical lines are under while being hauled in varying fishing conditions and gear configurations. Eleven fishermen have participated to date. Based on the initial research findings, vertical line strain is most impacted by the combination of traps per trawl and the depth in which the gear is set.

DMR, F.B Environmental Associates (FBE), and the University of Maine are continuing to collect load cell data to understand where and how weaker ropes can be fished safely. Additionally, testing is being conducted to modify existing gear to achieve a weak rope equivalent for consideration as regulations are developed. Lastly, project partners will talk with fishermen to improve understanding of how any trawling up requirements will affect the strain that vertical lines are under. These data will provide insight to the lobster industry determines best fishing practices, and alternative fishing set ups to meet the new regulations.

Test of more than 200 ropes document the reduction in breaking strength from knots and splices. DMR photo.

Some of the ropes tested by DMR. DMR photo.
The following opinion piece by Patrice McCarron, executive director of the Maine Lobstermen's Association, was published in the Portland Press Herald on July 27.

As Executive Director of the Maine Lobstermen's Association (MLA), I applaud Governor Mills' July 11 Message to Maine's Lobster Industry acknowledging the federal government's "disturbing lack of evidence connecting the Maine lobster industry to recent right whale deaths.

Maine's lobstersmen understand that right whales are at risk and we are committed to being part of the solution. But as Governor Mills rightly points out, the data show that Maine is just a small part of a complex problem.

The MLA fully supports Governor Mills' request that the Department of Marine Resources "evaluate a risk reduction target for Maine that is commensurate to any actual risk posed by the Maine lobster industry." What is often lost in this debate is that the population of North Atlantic right whales was only 295 in 1997 when federal regulators first required U.S. fishermen to implement conservation measures. In the ensuing years, the right whale population increased to more than 450 whales. During this time, Maine lobstersmen adopted many measures including removing floating line from the surface of the water, adding weak links to help whales break free from buoy lines, replacing 27,000 miles of floating line between traps with whale safe rope that sinks, removing 30% of Maine's buoy lines, and marking Maine's gear to identify the origin of gear if a whale becomes entangled.

The National Marine Fisheries Service concluded in its 2008 Final Rule that "NMFS believes large whales rarely occur inside many of Maine's bays, harbors, or inlets... These waters were exempted from the federal whale plan, but as a precautionary measure, the state of Maine still requires Maine lobstersmen to implement whale-safe measures there. Published data show that since 2010, changes in ocean conditions have led to major shifts in right whale distribution, making them even more rare in the waters off the Maine coast.

So what is happening to right whales? Accumulating evidence points to climate as a crucial factor in determining right whale distribution, food availability, overall health, birth rates, as well as injury and mortality rates. Importantly, the changing climate has affected the distribution of the copepod, Calanus finmarchicus, the right whale's preferred food. Large aggregations of right whales have followed shifting copepod aggregations to Massachusetts' Cape Cod Bay during winter and Canada's Gulf of St. Lawrence during summer where they spend significant time feeding.

Maine lobstersmen do not fish those waters where more than half the population of right whales are feeding during the winter. The U.S. has also implemented a successful plan to shift shipping traffic and slow ships in U.S. waters when right whales are present. The current crisis for right whales was set into motion when large numbers of them began feeding in Canada's Gulf of St. Lawrence where no effective whale protection measures were in place. Since 2016, 15 right whale deaths and three serious injuries have been attributed to Canadian vessel strikes and gear entanglements. There are simply no mitigation measures that Maine lobstersmen can implement that would have prevented these tragedies. Under the leadership of the Mills Administration, Maine will not sit idly by during this crisis. In addition to identifying measures to reduce the risk Maine's lobster fishery poses to right whales, the Mills Administration has pledged to expand and uniquely mark Maine lobster gear to increase confidence that any unidentified rope removed from whales did not originate from Maine, and to require all Maine lobstersmen to report where and when they fish in order to track potential overlap with whales.

Thank you, Governor Mills, for standing with Maine lobstermen in seeking whale protection measures that reflect the risk posed by our fishery, and demanding sound science to provide assurance that the sacrifices our lobstermen make will actually aid in the recovery of the right whale population.
ing users in the lease application process. The MLA board voted to support advocating that DMR require solicitation of input from area fishermen at a pre- application meeting to ensure that existing users are fully considered before any aquaculture lease siting decisions are made.

DMR held whale meetings in each of Maine's lobster zones in June. There was considerable concern and pushback from lobstermen on the strawsail as spats developed by DMR on trawling up and possible trap reductions in order to meet the federal risk reduction target. The MLA board echoed these concerns over how to find a solution that would keep small boats safe, allow the fleet to remain profitable, keep traps fishing efficiently, and ensure that management measures actually benefit whales. The board of directors reiterated its concern that the risk reduction goal is too aggressive for Maine and does not accurately reflect the risk the Maine fishery poses to right whales.

The MLA has been contacted about the possibility of asking the Legislature to reallocate Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative (MLMC) funds to support fighting the whale rules. Sonny Beal, who serves on the MLMC board, stated that the MLMC has dedicated a portion of its current budget to working on public relations related to the whale rules. To date, the MLMC has created a video showing Maine lobstermen's commitment to sustainability, including right whale protections, and created an information hub on Maine lobster and right whales. The MLA board was not in support of reallocating MLMC funds.

The MLA and other industry leaders met with Governor Mills on July 9 to express frustration with the risk reduction targets being sought under the evolving federal whale rules. The Governor expressed strong concern over the outcome of June's meetings. The Governor listened intently to the concerns raised and pledged her strong support. As Governor, I will always defend our lobster industry which is why I have directed Commissioner Keliher to evaluate a risk reduction target for Maine that is commensurate to any actual risk posed by the lobster industry,

Governor Mills told the audience, "We are committed to pursuing solutions based on sound science that protect both lobsters and Right Whales."

As Governor, I will always defend our lobster industry which is why I have directed Commissioner Keliher to evaluate a risk reduction target for Maine that is commensurate to any actual risk posed by the lobster industry,

Lobsterman Philip Torrey of Winter Harbor said what many were thinking,"We've done everything they've asked us to. They can't show where we're killing right whales or even seen right whales. And yet every time that you think you've done what you're supposed to do and taken a step forward, you take a deep sigh and take about five steps back," he said. Congresswoman Chellie Pingree summed it up, "There's a right way to do this and a wrong way. These regulations aren't the way."

**BAIT**

**Menhaden**

Maine's state-allocated 2019 menhaden quota of 2,438,677 lbs. was reached by the final week of June. During the state-allocated fishery, DMR reported 87 harvesters declared into the fishery and 56 of those were active and reporting daily. The estimated 234 trips completed during the state fishery were predominantly trips landing less than 6,000 lbs. (107 trips) or trips landing more than 6,000 lbs. but less than 30,000 lbs. (90 trips). Trips that had landings between 30,000 and 60,000 lbs. or greater than 60,000 lbs. were 10.2 % and 5.6% of the fishery, respectively. Preliminary estimates for landings indicate that the state quota was exceeded by 1.5 million lbs.; landing reports are still being received. The bulk of landings occurred during the final four days of June.

The menhaden episodic fishery in Maine (EESA) opened on July 15 with a quota of 4.7 million lbs. More than 528 active Commercial Pelagic and Anadromous license permits issued, with over 159 of those declared into the fishery for the onset of the EESA. DMR estimated the harvest capacity of this fleet to be more than 2 million lbs. weekly, therefore DMR reduced the weekly harvest limit by one truck to avoid the depletion of the menhaden supply at a time when it may not be readily used. Menhaden have now been observed in state waters from Kittery to Downeast Maine.

Maine's state allocation menhaden fishery reopened from July 22 to July 28 due to the addition of quota of 4 million lbs. transferred from partnering states. Daily reporting was required for all harvesters who declared into the fishery.

The small scale/incidental menhaden fishery opened on July 29. Regulations include a daily trip limit of 6,000 lbs; immediate storage of all catch in barrels or totes; transfer at sea prohibited; harvest may occur seven days a week; and monthly reporting required through either standard paper logbook or online via LEEDS.

**Herring**

ASMFC opened the Area 1A period 2 herring fishery on July 14, allowing Category A vessels to land herring four consecutive days per week. One land- ing of up to 160,000 lbs. (4 trucks) is allowed per 24 hour period.

**LOBSTER INDUSTRY MEETING WITH GOVERNOR MILLS**

Kristen Porter and Patrice McCarron met with Governor Mills on July 9 as part of an industry meeting to update the Governor on lobstermen's concerns with the developing federal whale rules. The meeting included representatives from the Maine Lobstering Union, DMR and state legislators, including Genevieve McDonald, Speaker Sara Gideon and President Troy Jackson. Prior to the meeting, Commissioner Keliher updated the Governor on the issue and on the outcome of June's meetings. The Governor expressed strong concern over the magnitude of reductions sought by federal regulators given the lack of data linking the Maine lobster fishery to right whale deaths or serious injuries. The Governor listened intently to the concerns raised and pledged her strong support. Two days later, the Governor issued a letter to Maine lobstermen.

**LOBSTERMEN HOLD RALLY IN STONINGTON**

Stonington lobsterman, Julie Eaton, organized a rally on the Stonington Fish Pier on Sunday, July 21. On her Facebook page, she posted, "It is official!!! We are holding a Lobsterman's Rally (NOT a protest) a peaceful Rally on July 21st on the Stonington Commercial Fish Pier. The purpose of this rally is to inform the public that we are not killing whales in Maine, voice our concerns about the proposed whale regulations and how they will not only affect our own futures and safety but the future of our children and our coastal communities. All are welcomed to attend!!!"

Lobstermen turned out in high numbers along with Senator Susan Collins, Representatives Pingree and Golden and Governor Mills. The rally drew more than 300 lobstermen, family members and industry supporters, as well as state legislators and fishing industry representatives.

Maine's Congressional delegation and Governor Mills all spoke in support of Maine's lobstermen as they face a possible 50% reduction in endlines in order to protect right whales "In the past three years there has not been one entangle- ment [of a right whale] off Maine," stated Senator Susan Collins. "NOAA needs to concentrate on where the whales really are. Now is the time for NOAA to listen to you."

"We've got the Maine Lobstermen's Association and Lobster207 fighting to- gether on an issue where there's common cause and people pulling together with everyone from all of these different communities," stated Congressman Jared Golden. "I know how you are all feeling the way that people sometimes talk about you [is] as part of the problem when you know that you're not... It's upsetting. You know that you care about the environment, you care about the marine economy, you care about marine mammals."

"As Governor, I will always defend our lobster industry which is why I have di- rected Commissioner Keliher to evaluate a risk reduction target for Maine that is commensurate to any actual risk posed by the lobster industry," Governor Mills told the audience. "We are committed to pursuing solutions based on sound science that protect both lobsters and Right Whales."

Lobsterman Philip Torrey of Winter Harbor said what many were thinking,"We've done everything they've asked us to. They can't show where we're killing right whales or even seen right whales. And yet every time that you think you've done what you're supposed to do and taken a step forward, you take a deep sigh and take about five steps back," he said. Congresswoman Chellie Pingree summed it up, "There's a right way to do this and a wrong way. These regulations aren't the way."
July 10, 2019

Dear Mr. President:

We write to urge your intervention in a matter of serious economic importance to the State of Maine. The livelihoods of thousands of hardworking lobstermen and women are currently under grave threat from new regulations under development by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

The voices of hard-working Americans — like lobstermen — are too often ignored by the governing process. Your administration has made a point of targeting regulations that you believe are ill-conceived or overly burdensome. By applying the same logic to Maine’s lobster industry and intervening in the implementation of NOAA’s regulations on Maine lobstermen, you can prevent unfair harm to an iconic Maine industry and save many good American jobs.

Maine’s historic lobster industry is an economic engine for our state, directly producing almost $500 million in revenue and an estimated $1 billion in total economic impact each year. This industry supports 4,500 lobstermen and their families, as well as thousands of others employed by lobster dealers and seafood processors, vessel and trap manufacturers, restaurants and businesses, and rural communities along Maine’s coast.

Under pressure of threatened lawsuits to protect the endangered North Atlantic right whale, and the development of an Endangered Species Act (ESA) Section 7 review of the American lobster fishery, NOAA is pushing forward with the development of new regulations that will force significant economic hardship on Maine lobstermen without clear evidence that these regulations will have a positive impact on whale conservation efforts.

This is not the first time that Maine lobstermen have been subjected to NOAA regulations regarding right whales. Past administrations have imposed similar measures that provided little positive effect on the struggling whale population, but required significant operational adaptations by lobstermen who have had to bear safety and economic costs. Maine lobstermen have already incorporated significant changes to their gear, including weak links, converting to sinking rope between traps, and removing thirty percent of their buoy lines from the Gulf of Maine.

Meanwhile, some Canadian fisheries continue to use heavier gear or floating lines that are more likely to cause a serious entanglement. In the past two years, fourteen of twenty-two confirmed right whale deaths were found in Canadian waters. So far in 2019, there have been six right whale deaths, all of which took place in Canada. Three of those deaths have been attributed to ship strikes, not fishing gear entanglements. And three right whales have suffered non-fatal rope entanglements in Canadian waters this year compared to no such incidences in the Gulf of Maine.

In the regulatory process, Maine lobstermen have been largely forgotten. This dynamic was evident in April, when NOAA’s Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team (ALWTRT) announced plans to reduce the perceived risk of death to these whales from vertical trap lines by 60 percent, despite the fact that Maine lobster gear has not been conclusively tied to any of these tragic deaths.

As a result of strong pressure from NOAA and out of concern that their dissent would lead to more stringent rope or trap reductions, Maine lobstermen and industry representatives participating in the ALWTRT meeting agreed to these measures. Their concern was warranted given that NOAA’s Deputy Assistant Administrator for Fisheries warned ALWTRT members that if they did not put forward ideas, NOAA would formulate a plan for them without industry input. The Maine Department of Resources (DMR) staff participating also agreed to these measures while reserving the right to object to the final rule as implemented by NOAA. Furthermore, conservation groups on the ALWTRT were openly advocating for a 100 percent line reduction to so-called “rope-less fishing,” which given the lack of existing effective technology, would likely result in shutting down the lobster fishery altogether.

Numerous stakeholders in the ALWTRT process, including the Maine DMR and the New Hampshire Department of Fish and Game, have raised concerns that the risk reduction tool used by NOAA in this process is flawed because it assigns higher risk to regions with more fishing gear rather than to regions with more whales present in the water.

NOAA officials have also admitted that the tool has not been through a scientific peer review, a cornerstone of fishery management decisions. NOAA has also stopped flying aerial surveys in the Gulf of Maine, leaving it with limited information about whales in the Gulf of Maine to use as inputs for the risk reduction tool. NOAA has shifted its limited aerial resources to Canada which may potentially indicate it believes Canadian waters to be an area of greater risk, a belief that is shared by Maine lobstermen who clearly state that right whales have been spotted in their fishing areas only a handful of times in the past decade.

In summary, under pressure from the ongoing lawsuit filed against the agency and the development of an ESA Section 7 review for the American lobster fishery, NOAA is moving forward with mandated vertical trap line reductions that may look good on paper, but are unlikely to prevent right whale deaths. There is no worse government regulation than one that will both fail to produce the desired outcome and impose severe economic hardships upon working men and women and the communities they support.

We want you to know that a failure of the lobster fishery would devastate entire Maine communities. All of us know too well what happens to Maine towns when an anchor industry fails; they nearly disintegrate, and it can take decades to recover. This must be avoided.

For centuries, Maine lobstermen have been responsible stewards of our marine resources. Indeed, their livelihoods depend on it. That is why successful efforts by NOAA to save the right whales must focus on developing effective regulations that will actually reduce the risk to right whales while limiting negative impacts on fishermen.

We, along with the lobster industry in Maine, stand ready to work with your administration to achieve that outcome. We would be pleased to meet with you or your staff personally as well as to facilitate a meeting with Maine lobstermen to discuss this situation. We know from experience that they would greatly appreciate having an opportunity to have their voices heard.

Continued on page 8
Governor Mills letter to Maine lobstermen

There is a disturbing lack of evidence connecting the Maine lobster industry to recent right whale deaths. To the contrary, the six right whale deaths in Canada this year, in addition to the three right whales recently discovered entangled in Canadian waters, are evidence that the Maine lobster fishery is not the primary problem for right whales.

Based on the lack of evidence connecting the Maine lobster fishery to recent right whale mortalities and the risk of negatively and profoundly altering our fisheries because of these pending regulations, I have directed Commissioner Keliher to evaluate a risk reduction target for Maine that is commensurate to any actual risk posed by the Maine lobster industry – not the 60 percent risk reduction target designed by the National Marine Fisheries Service. The Commissioner will come back to the industry in August, as promised, to share the Department’s findings and put forward a plan to reduce risk in Maine.

Maine's lobster industry is a critical pillar of our state's economy and it is that way because of your hard-work and that of generations before you. To people around the world, Maine lobster is more than just a culinary delicacy, it is a way because of your hard-work and that of generations before you. To people around the world, Maine lobster is more than just a culinary delicacy, it is a proud symbol of our state's strong work-ethic and our unshakable grit and determination. Today, Maine's 4,800-plus commercial harvesters and nearly three hundred wholesale dealers support their families, breathe life into their communities, provide jobs, and help sustain a unique and treasured way of life.

Maine's lobstermen are outstanding stewards of our environment. To paint these hard-working, small businesses as whale killers, as these environmental groups are doing, is pure and unmitigated, and unethical. It will hurt one of the last great fisheries in America: Maine lobster. I am not saying the loss of right whales is not a problem it is; but penalizing Maine lobstermen won’t save these whales.

The vast majority of deaths have occurred in Canadian waters and in U.S. waters south of Maine. The spike in whale deaths began around 2010, and what NOAA terms a ‘mass event’ started in 2017. None of the ‘mass event’ deaths occurred in Maine waters.

Right whales do get entangled in fishing gear, but the gear-like gill nets and crab traps-could be from anywhere along the Atlantic seaboard where the whales swim. A study (published last month in the journal Diseases of Aquatic Organisms) reviewed all 70 right whale deaths from 2003-2018; entanglement was identified as the cause of death in 22 cases, 14 of which were recognized as Canadian snow crab fishing gear, I was identified as U.S. gear, and the remainder unidentified.

Other factors contributing to or correlating with the spike in right whale fatalities since 2010:

The six deaths in 2019, as of the date of this letter, occurred in Canadian waters, with three deaths preliminarily linked to ship strikes. Canada lowers the speed for ships in shipping channels upon a whale sighting; yet Maine lobstermen have reported that they are still clocking ships exceeding the speed limits at almost double the speed. Studies have also found that ocean noise from ships can be a significant source of stress, which may be affecting both calving and the increase in ship strikes.

NOAA has continued to grant seismic testing permits in the areas where the whales roam. This testing has been preliminarily tied to interfering with the whales’ sonar.

The U.S. Navy, this past fall, implemented changes to its activities near right whale habitat along the east coast and especially off the coast of Florida near the whale’s calving habitat. The risks to the whales from the Navy’s various test increasing the safety risk. Our industry takes safety seriously; these rules will make it much more dangerous.

Furthermore, Maine’s lobster industry is one of the most sustainable fisheries on Earth. Our commercial lobstermen and -women care for marine life and are outstanding stewards of our environment. To paint these hard-working, small businesses as whale killers, as these environmental groups are doing, is purposely directed at the good American people, who sincerely want to save whales.

Former Governor LePage Letter to President Trump

Here are the facts:

Maine's lobster industry switched to marked gear and weak links in the late 1990s to reduce entanglements and allow for any entanglement involving gear from Maine to be identified as such. The whale population almost doubled since the adoption of those changes. Maine's lobster fishery adopted additional modifications in 2009 and 2014.

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The U.S. Navy, this past fall, implemented changes to its activities near right whale habitat along the east coast and especially off the coast of Florida near the whale’s calving habitat. The risks to the whales from the Navy’s various test

Julie Eaton addresses the crowd at the July lobstermen rally. MLA photo.
Offshore wind turbines generate vibrations that also may interfere with whale sonar. Troublesome about this problem: the offshore wind industry is backed by several of the same big environmental groups now portraying our lobster fishery as whale killers. Moreover, the lobster fishery’s need to access the Gulf of Maine presents an obstacle to the growth of offshore wind. Reducing the fishery may have a tangible, financial benefit for offshore wind's investors and the environmental groups the investors support. This is a significant conflict of interest and our lobster industry will never have enough money to fight them. You and I, as businessmen, do not fear lawsuits. Bureaucrats do. Instead of accepting the lawsuit and having these issues and the related science aired in court to allow reasonable people to arrive at reasonable, common-sense solutions, NOAA is caving, making Maine's lobster industry the scapegoat. As with Maine's softwood lumber industry, Maine's lobster industry is collateral damage: How much can a small, poor, hardworking state like Maine take from the 1,000-pound gorilla at NOAA?

The process by which NOAA has handled this issue has been marked by poor communication, a lack of notice, and a rush to implement; it has been the epitome of federal bureaucracy and the opposite of how government should operate. This entire rulemaking process has been a disservice to the hardworking people in this industry, our state, and the American taxpayer. Therefore, based on our discussions, we offer the following suggestions to address this issue:

- Take action on known facts, not speculation. Use real data.
- Identify what else has changed in the right whale's habitat since 2010, since lobstering hasn’t.
- Put the resources and the regulations where the whales are dying, which is not the Gulf of Maine. Regulations must be specific to how/where the fishing and entanglements happen, not one-size fits all.
- Require NOAA to give equal attention to all possible factors rather than single out those unable to fight back by choosing one causal factor to provide a big statistical change but not a real-world change, destroying one of our planet’s most sustainable fisheries in the process.
- Conduct better research on what gear is causing fatal entanglements;
- Review the regulations implemented since 2009 to identify any unintended consequences harmful to whales.
- Increase research, including more flyovers, on whale migration in the Gulf of Maine. Maine’s lobster fleet already report whale sightings. They could be a valuable partner in whale protection; instead, NOAA is making them the enemy.
- Let the lawsuit go forward. NOAA must be an impartial arbiter rather than caving to big-money environmentalists. Continuous lawsuits are not a solution either, but this calls for independent review.

Maine's entire lobster industry is in turmoil because these businesses cannot plan what their next year will look like. This issue reminds me of the plight of the coal miners in West Virginia for whom you have advocated so passionately. Liberal environmentalists disparage the hard, dangerous jobs done by real people. Maine lobster is an American icon, as is the image of our lobstermen and -women—small businesses whose families have gone to sea for decades and who care deeply about our environment, including whales. Unfortunately, Maine is collateral damage when it comes to farming, fishing, and forestry—our prime industries. All we hear is how the federal government’s decisions on trade and tariffs are better for the country. The good people of Maine need to be a priority. In the meantime, let’s use common sense and take action that will truly protect the right whales.

Sincerely,

Paul R LePage
Honorary Chair
Maine People Before Politics

MLA President Kristan Porter’s Letter to the Bangor Daily News

July 20, 2019
I applaud Gov. Janet Mills’ pledge to ensure that any new whale protection measures reflect the actual risk posed by Maine’s lobster fishery and are based on sound science to ensure these sacrifices will benefit right whales.

Maine lobstermen remain committed to being part of the solution. But we cannot solve a problem that occurs largely outside of Maine waters. Research points to climate change as the critical factor in determining right whale distribution and health. Large numbers of right whales now feed primarily in Massachusetts’ Cape Cod Bay and Canada’s Gulf of St. Lawrence.

While right whales are rare along Maine’s coast, lobstermen adopted many whale conservation measures over the past 20 years, including removing floating line at the water’s surface, adding weak links to buoy lines, removing 27,000 miles of floating groundline, removing 30 percent of buoy lines and marking gear to identify its origin. Efforts by U.S. fishermen supported an increase in the whale population from 295 to 450 whales during this time.

Now the federal government is asking Maine lobstermen for an additional 60 percent risk reduction. This does not pass the straight face test for a fishery that has only one confirmed right whale entanglement and no confirmed mortalities.

Maine lobstermen stand ready to help right whales recover. But as Governor Mills rightly points out, Maine’s solution must reflect the real risk our fishery poses to right whales. Maine lobstermen should not be forced to implement changes if those measures won’t actually help the right whale population recover.

LIFEJACKETS FOR LOBSTERMEN

They say a good idea is never too late. The Lifejackets for Lobstermen vans have certainly proved that! The two vans came to Maine in May and returned again in late July, offering lobstermen the opportunity to try on and purchase, at a discount, the perfect PFD for themselves.

“Everyone knows someone who never came home, I’d never worn a lifejacket, and I never really thought about it. [Lifejackets for Lobstermen] called me to do a survey and it got me thinking, and I keep thinking about it,” said a lobsterman from Chippsburg as he bought a new lifejacket.

“I’ve never fallen overboard, but I lost a boot once. That scared me enough. My sternman got his leg caught in some rope and got pulled to the rail but got out before going over. That scared me more than it scared him. My sternman’s my nephew,” said a lobsterman from Bass Harbor.

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MAINE LOBSTER AND RIGHT WHALES

With new regulations being enacted to protect endangered North Atlantic right whales, the Maine Lobster industry is facing a situation that is complex and continually changing. You can now find the most up to date information about the issue, as well as a video featuring the voices of our fishermen, in the industry’s new content hub at RightWhalesandMaineLobster.com. The goal of the hub is to present to industry members, media and interested parties a balanced view of the issues.

The MLMC has been working closely with the DMR, MLA and MLDA to make sure the industry’s voice is heard. Through the content hub and other communications, we will continue to emphasize the importance of maintaining the economic health of the fishery and our coastal communities while also demonstrating our commitment to taking reasonable measures to protect right whales.

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Mike Mayo  (207) 542-1879

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Bass Harbor  
Wayne Rich  (207) 244-9623

29 JUNE  
Messalook Reach, Beals Island/Jonesport  
Jay Mills  (207) 598-6347

7 JULY  
Stonington  
Cory McDonald  (207) 664-4525

11 AUGUST  
Marvin Bracket  
Pemaquid  
Brent Fogg  (207) 380-4909
Shelia McLain  (207) 677-2100

17 AUGUST  
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Lisa Kimball  (207) 332-3968
Amy Tierney  (207) 317-1576

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TO YOUR HEALTH: BLOOD PRESSURE A SILENT MENACE

By Elisabeth Maxwell

According to the American Heart Association, nearly half of all adult Americans live with high blood pressure; many people don’t realize they are suffering from it at all. It is possible a person can experience high blood pressure for years without recognizing any symptoms. If left untreated, high blood pressure can cause damage to the heart and blood vessels and lead to an increased risk of heart attack and stroke.

Jordan Porter, a doctor of nursing practice and family nurse practitioner at the Down East Community Hospital has strong family connections to the lobster fishery. "Historically, high blood pressure has been dubbed the ‘silent killer’ among the medical community because a large proportion of those living with high blood pressure do not exhibit any symptoms," he explained. "Undetected, long-standing high blood pressure significantly increases the risk of heart failure, stroke, kidney disease, abnormal heart rhythms like atrial fibrillation, heart attack, and dementia." The severity of these conditions is why it is so important for all adults to connect with a primary care provider (physician, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant) for blood pressure screening and an assessment of risk factors. The United States Preventive Services Task Force, the American College of Cardiology, and the American Heart Association recommend that all individuals 18 years or older should be screened at least yearly for high blood pressure, he noted.

There are many risk factors associated with high blood pressure. These include:

- **Age:** Risk of high blood pressure increases as you grow older.
- **Family history:** It is more likely for you to have high blood pressure if family members are also affected by it. If possible, talk to close relatives to find out if they have a history of high blood pressure.
- **Weight:** Being overweight or obese can cause an increased demand of blood to supply tissues with oxygen and nutrients. This high blood volume may lead to increased pressure on blood vessels.
- **Tobacco:** Smoking and chewing tobacco causes an immediate, temporary increase in blood pressure as well as long-term damage to the lining of artery walls. Over time, the arteries become narrower and increase the risk of heart disease.
- **Sodium:** High levels of sodium in your diet can cause high blood pressure by retaining fluids.

**Potassium:** Sodium levels in our cells are balanced by potassium so if your diet is too low in potassium, it can lead to increased levels of sodium and thus increased blood pressure.

**Alcohol:** Long-term, heavy drinking can seriously damage heart health and lead to a variety of complications including high blood pressure.

If you are at risk for high blood pressure or other related cardiovascular conditions, your doctor may recommend that you monitor your blood pressure on a regular basis. This may be done by learning how to operate and read a blood pressure cuff at home, or by using automatic cuffs that can be found in some pharmacies and other health facilities such as gyms or wellness centers. Because high blood pressure is so common, it is important to monitor your blood pressure even if you do not visit a doctor on a regular basis.

Your blood pressure naturally varies throughout the day and may be affected by your daily activities. Therefore, it is important to look at long-term trends when diagnosing high blood pressure. If you are not visiting a doctor regularly, keep a written log of blood pressure measurements so that it is easier to identify a trend.

"Lifestyle changes to reduce the risk of high blood pressure include weight loss, a healthy diet rich in fruit, vegetables, whole grains, poultry, fish, and low-fat dairy products (the DASH diet), less than 1500 mg of dietary sodium intake daily, moderate-intensity aerobic exercise of 30 to 40 minutes at least 3 to 4 days a week, and limiting alcohol consumption in men to two or fewer drinks daily and in women to one or fewer drinks daily. Weight loss and dietary changes are considered to have the greatest positive effects on lowering blood pressure," said Porter.

While lifestyle changes can be sufficient for some people, others will need to take medication to control high blood pressure. There is a wide range of medications that may be prescribed depending on an individual’s specific situation and conditions. You should never use someone else’s medication because of the side effects and complication risks.

"The decision to initiate medication for high blood pressure is individualized and involves shared decision-making between the patient and the primary care provider," Porter said. "Medications for high blood pressure have been extensively researched over the past several decades with great outcomes for risk reduction."

He noted that in large studies, treatment with medications produced a nearly 50% relative risk reduction in the incidence of heart failure, a 30-40% relative risk reduction in stroke, and a 20-25% relative risk reduction in heart attack. Continued on page 21
Senator Collins said, "In the past three years there has not been one entangle-ment [of a right whale] off Maine. NOAA needs to concentrate on where the whales really are. Now is the time for NOAA to listen to you."

In May, Maine's Congressional delegation wrote to acting NOAA director Neil Jacobs, asking him to ensure that decisions regarding right whales were based on sound science, that risk reduction standards were comparable in both the U.S. and Canada, and that the lobster industry be consulted throughout the decision-making process. In July, the delegation wrote to President Trump, pointing out that the forthcoming regulations are "a matter of serious economic importance to the state of Maine" and that they will force "significant economic hardship" on the lobster industry without concrete evidence they will benefit the whales. On July 16, Maine former Governor Paul LePage voiced his concern over the pending whale regulations in a letter to the President. He wrote, "Although well-intended, there is no evidence to support that the proposed restrictions on lobstering in Maine waters will save even one whale. This is unfortunately another federal overreach in response to big money environmentalists. It will hurt one of the last great fisheries in America: Maine lobster. I am not saying the loss of right whales is not a problem it is; but penalizing Maine fishermen won't save these whales."

Representative Pingree told lobstermen at the rally what many of them were likely thinking, "There's a right way to do this and a wrong way. These regulations aren't the way."

By Melissa Waterman

Hugh Reynolds exudes energy. The president of Stonington-based Greenhead Lobster talks fast, moves fast, and gives the impres-sion of a man who knows where he's going. And one place he's going to is Bucksport, where the company in late July opened a new 15,000-square-foot lobster processing plant in the Bucktown Heritage Park.

"I've been in the business 22 years, primarily in live lobster," Reynolds said. "We're changing now, concentrating on the domestic market and 'Made in Maine'. The new plant will use high-pressure processing equipment to produce flash frozen raw tails and fresh cooked lobster claws and knuckle meat. "We will use a proprietary technology to ensure an extended shelf life for the claws and knuckles," Reynolds added.

Some might wonder why Reynolds would open a new plant so far from his home base in Stonington. The answer is simple. "Bucksport is the closest location to Stonington with adequate water and sewer infrastruc-ture," he explained. "We will need between 8,000 and 12,000 gallons of water per day just for hygiene. Finding enough labor and sewer connections in Stonington were obstacles that we could overcome with enough money. But ultimately the one thing we couldn't overcome there is finding enough water."

It's not the first time that Reynolds has set up shop away from Stonington. In 2016 Greenhead Lobster opened a 20,000-square-foot lobster holding facility in Seabrook, New Hampshire, just 30 miles from Logan International Airport in Boston. Proximity gave Greenhead the ability to ship live lob-sters with minimal delay to anywhere in the world, particularly to the then-burgeoning Asian market.

"I won't beat around the bush, the tariffs [retaliatory tariffs imposed by China on American goods] have hurt exports to China. Canada is making up for it," Reynolds said. "The new plant is one way to capture the value of lobster for the domestic market. The Bucksport facility will run nine months each year, employ approximately 40 people and process between 2 and 3 million lob-sters in its first year, according to Reynolds.

Hugh Reynolds cuts a big ribbon at the opening of the company's new plant in Bucksport. Photo courtesy of the Castine Patriot.
Seaweed aquaculture businesses have blossomed in the state due in part to increased consumer interest in this "super food." Maine Sea Grant photo.

Aquaculture continued from page 3

proval process, each license is specific to certain gear and certain species and thus can be approved without the more extensive review that is required for experimental or standard leases. Obtaining an LPA license requires attending a mandatory DMR meeting on topics such as biosecurity, animal health and public health risks associated with aquaculture activities.

Sebastian Belle, director of the Maine Aquaculture Association, concedes that the aquaculture sector has grown in recent years, but not at an alarming rate, in his opinion. "If you look at the data, we have increased by 200 acres in the last twenty years," he said. "It’s not as big a growth spurt as many believe." He does agree that LPA leases have made entry into the aquaculture world easier for individuals. "The LPA process lowered the barrier for working waterfront families who were interested in diversifying their income," he said. "It’s a non-confrontational process designed to allow people to test a site at a small scale. If it’s a bad spot they can change before they go through the long process for a permanent lease."

An additional impetus for the growth of aquaculture ventures in the state has come from a program created by a collaboration of public and private entities. Called "Aquaculture in Shared Waters," the Maine Sea Grant program helps fishermen or those from fishing communities learn how to start an aquaculture business. Funding comes from the National Sea Grant Program and takes place in cooperation the University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Maine Aquaculture Association, Maine Aquaculture Innovation Center, Coastal Enterprises Inc., and the Island Institute in Rockland.

Dana Morse, Maine Sea Grant extension agent based at the Darling Center, has been involved in the program from its inception in 2013. "Aquaculture is growing internationally, nationally and regionally," Morse said. "It’s an opportunity for fishing families to diversify their income. [Aquaculture in Shared Waters] is a dedicated training program that delivers technical information to people interested in aquaculture. More than 150 individuals have attended the 11-week program since 2013, studying everything from site selection, equipment, permitting and regulation to environmental monitoring, business planning, and financial management. ‘Fifty or so have started new businesses or augmented an existing business as a result of the training,’ he said.

Morse sees the uptick in aquaculture ventures in Maine as the product of a happy confluence of forces, not the result of one driving factor. "Globally aquaculture is going up and Maine is known for its high-quality products like oysters and mackerel. Also there’s a strong interest in good food tied to place. Overlay that with chefs doing cool things with seafood and it all comes together — you have something with energy. Maine is definitely on the radar screen for people interested in shellfish, seaweed, even salmon farms on land," he said.

Davis noted that the Aquaculture Top Gun contests, begun in 2018, have generated even more attention on Maine aquaculture. The collaborative effort, led by the Maine Center for Entrepreneurs (MCE) in partnership with the Gulf of Maine Research Institute, Maine Aquaculture Association, and FocusMaine and sponsored by the Maine Aquaculture Innovation Center, features fledgling aquaculturists making five-minute pitches about their businesses to a panel of business experts. The two winners each year received $5,000 each to expedite their company’s growth. "Most have been interested in oyster aquaculture," Davis said. "There’s a tremendous market now and the Maine brand is strong."

But oysters are only one of many marine species cultivated in Maine’s waters. "Maine aquaculture has distinguished itself over the years by its diversity of species," Belle noted. "We tend to grow more species at any one time, which is good. If you grow lots of things, if any one species does poorly you have another to move to." During the past 28 years he has seen the aquaculture industry in Maine shift to one increasingly composed of people from commercial fisheries as well as newcomers to the state. But he worries that changing demographics may put the brakes on the sector’s growth. "You see us marching up the coast. Maine is one of the most popular states to retire to. Increasingly the majority living in a coastal community didn’t grow up on the coast. They don’t think of the ocean as a place to make a living," he said.

"I think we will continue to see a diversification of species, people and places related to aquaculture," Morse said. "There are still a lot of good places to grow things on the coast."

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OCEAN HIGH SCHOOL HIRES FIRST EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Maine Ocean School, the state's latest magnet high school, located in Searsport, hired its first full-time executive director in July. Kylie Bragdon is a fourth-generation lobsterwoman born and raised in Winter Harbor, where she serves as a town selectman. She previously worked at KidsPeace, a special purpose private school in Ellsworth.

The Maine Ocean School is a public magnet high school that provides a "hands-on, minds-on" education on the water, in the lab, and in the classroom. Students pursue a theme-based high school education focused on Maine's maritime connection, with an emphasis on leadership, work ethic, and the transferable skills associated with careers involving the ocean. The first class of students began attending the tuition-free school in 2018.

ALEWIFE AND BLUEBACK HERRING NOT ENDANGERED

As part of its joint responsibility with US Fish and Wildlife Service for implementing the Endangered Species Act, NOAA reviewed whether alewife and blueback herring require protections under the Act. A comprehensive status review determined a low risk of extinction for alewife and blueback herring throughout their range as well as for four alewife distinct population segments (DPS) and three blueback DPSs along the east coast of the U.S.

While river herring have declined from historical numbers, recent fisheries management efforts in place at the federal and state levels help to reduce the risks from fishing mortality for these species. Although some areas within the range continue to struggle, robust populations of these broadly distributed species are found in other portions of their ranges, with some areas supporting populations in the millions or hundreds of thousands. With continued management and additional efforts to improve habitat connectivity, populations in areas of the range that are at low levels may also see improvements in the future.

CANADA ASSESSES ITS MARINE MAMMAL PROTECTIONS

The Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) submitted a “progress report” in July detailing protections for over 200 Canadian fisheries that interact with marine mammals, including the two most valuable — lobster ($2.1 billion CD) and crab ($1 billion CD). The submission is the first test of Canada's ability to meet upcoming requirements in the U.S. Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). By January 1, 2022, all countries with fisheries interacting with marine mammals that export seafood products to the U.S. will have to demonstrate they have marine mammal protections that are the same or of comparable “effectiveness” to measures taken in the U.S. Canada is the largest seafood supplier by value to the U.S., at $4.3 billion CD in 2017.


SCALLOP FISHERY GOING STRONG

America's harvest of scallops is increasing to near-record levels at a time when the shellfish are in high demand and the value of the fishery has surged in recent years. Sea scallops, harvested mostly by boats operating in the Atlantic Ocean, are one of the most valuable fisheries in America. New data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) says the harvest topped 58.2 million pounds last year, the highest total since 2011 and the fifth-highest in history. The scallop industry is thriving as a result of years of conservative management that has allowed the valuable shellfish to grow. Federal fishing managers are working on potential changes to the rules governing the scallop industry that could go into effect in 2021. Fishermen who operate small boats are hopeful for the management changes will work for vessels of all sizes.
ARTIST CAPTURES FLAVOR OF MAINE’S WORKING HARBORS

By Melissa Waterman

As a child, Jeff Grenier, 41, discovered the ocean. That wasn’t hard to do in a place like Friendship, Maine. “My grandfather’s rowing skiff was tied up at Harlan Wallace’s wharf [now part of the Friendship Fishermen’s Co-op]. He [Bill Jameson] would take us out on his boat. I learned geography on that boat,” Grenier recalled.

Grenier received a degree in fine art from the University of Maine at Machias. He tried teaching art for a time then moved out of state to work as a land surveyor, like his father Drew. But the pull of his home state grew stronger and in 2017 he moved back with his wife and five children.

“The way life unfolds is never quite the way we imagine it as kids,” Grenier said. “I would have pursued lobstering, but I learned early on that without a close relative in the business it was virtually impossible to get into it.”

In 2016 a friend challenged Grenier to take part in something called Inktober. Participants have to create one ink drawing a day for the month of October. Grenier had never pursued ink drawing before but found that he enjoyed the medium. “It turned out to be a blast. The Maine coast was the theme of nearly every drawing I made,” he said. “After the end of Inktober, I was drawing boat portraits for lobstermen, sport fishermen, and recreational boaters.”

Grenier showcases his work, which also includes fine drawings of Maine game fish, on his web site www.littlecranberryart.com. His pen and ink drawings focus not only on the beauty of the Maine coast but also the details of its working waterfronts and the men and women who make their living on the sea. “An honest day’s hard work deserves respect, and it is with respect that I treat each of my subjects,” Grenier explained. “Some boats are a little more used than others. A little grime, a little rust, missing paint or some worn-off lettering doesn’t bother me. Each boat represents so much to each owner. I hope to capture what they see and feel about their boats in each drawing I create.”

He’s received a lot of questions about his web site’s name and, like many things, it’s related to his childhood. “I thought of one of the places my grandfather brought me so many times, Little Cranberry Island in Friendship. It’s tiny, but perfect, in my eyes,” Grenier explained. “There’s a lot of good family memories there!” Grenier’s art can be found at his web site, at www.instagram.com/littlecranberryart and at www.facebook.com/littlecranberryart.
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MAINE MARITIME MUSEUM PLANS UPDATE OF “LOBSTERING AND THE MAINE COAST”

By Chris Timm, Maine Maritime Museum

On June 5 Maine Maritime Museum had the pleasure of hosting the Maine Lobsterman’s Association (MLA) Board of Directors for their monthly meeting. The MLA Board toured the “Lobstering & the Maine Coast” exhibit and offered feedback on how the exhibit can be updated with relevant and up-to-date information. “Lobstering & the Maine Coast” is housed in a 6,200-square-foot, two-story building on the Museum’s campus. The exhibit opened in 2015 and was developed with expertise from the Maine Lobstermen’s Association, University of Maine’s Darling Marine Center, the Gulf of Maine Research Institute, and others.

MLA Board members suggested several additional concepts for the exhibit that the Maine Maritime Museum looks forward to adding in the months ahead. One new item will be near the entrance to the exhibit, where the history of the lobster trap is told, from early lath variants to the modern welded mesh trap. The museum will add an interactive display that explains the welded mesh trap in greater detail. What are its components? What are its characteristics? And what is it like to open one up time after time? In the lower level of the exhibit, a century of changes in lobster boat design is documented through our historical working watercraft collection. This is complemented by a number of videos that show modern lobster boats under construction and in action. We will add information that answer questions such as what are the key mechanical and technological components on a modern lobster boat? We plan on displaying equipment, from pot haulers to VHF, that will educate our visitors about the tools of the trade.

The exhibit currently displays a wall of buoys donated by lobstermen from throughout the coast. Using a touch-screen kiosk, visitors can view photos and information related to each buoy, including the lobsterman’s name, location, boat name and, in some cases, personal stories contributed by the lobsterman. Our intent is to constantly add more stories from the men and women who fish as ongoing documentation of the lobster fishery. To do so we will need help from all Maine lobstermen to expand both the buoy wall and kiosk.

“Lobstering & the Maine Coast” portrays lobstermen’s increasingly complex roles as harvester-scientist-entrepreneurs, and the skills needed to transport, market, and profit from a perishable seafood. We hope to add to the exhibit materials that reflect contemporary issues in the fishery, including how the industry—and more importantly, individuals—navigate complex regulations and changing ecological conditions.

Maine Maritime Museum plans to phase in these updates, and others, through 2020. We would love to hear your thoughts. Please contact me at ctimm@maritimeme.org.