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Maine Lobstermen's Community Alliance

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The news was heartening at the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) lobster science presentation at the Maine Fishermen’s Forum. Lobster settlement is up across the range of the American Lobster Settlement Index (ALSI) area, from Cape Cod to New Brunswick. “There’s been a slump for the past five or six years throughout the Gulf of Maine,” Rick Wahle, director of the Lobster Institute at the University of Maine and director of the ALSI, explained to the audience. “This past year there’s been a pretty significant up-turn.”

The health and well-being of Homarus americanus is foremost on the minds of Mainers. Maine’s lobster harvesters landed 100,725,013 pounds in 2019, marking the ninth year in a row, and only the ninth ever, of landings that topped 100 million pounds. DMR’s senior lobster biologist, Kathleen Reardon, explained that though lobster landings were down 17% compared to the previous year, the impact was offset by a strong price. That decline was due in part to cooler waters and a later molt. “The 2019 season’s pattern was similar to 2008-2009. It was not similar to what we’ve seen during the past ten years, particularly in July,” Reardon said. DMR landings data show that in warmer years, such as 2012 and 2016, lobsters molt earlier in the season, which means by July the fishery is in full steam. In cooler years, such as 2009 and 2019, landings didn’t pick up until August. Another factor that affected the season was the availability of bait. “Total number of trips in May, June and July were 4% down from 2018 and 14% compared to 2016,” Reardon said. The lobster zone that saw the greatest change in 2019 landings was Zone C, where the total harvest dropped by 26% compared to 2018. Zones G and E showed the least change.

Lobsters themselves are also showing physiological changes, according to DMR lobster biologist, Jessica Waller. Intrigued by reports from lobstermen of finding smaller-than-usual egg-bearing females in their traps, DMR repeated a study done in 1994 on the size of female lobsters when they are capable of bearing eggs. The current study took place from 2018 to 2019. Female lobsters were collected in Boothbay and three other areas representing the western and Downeast coast (the midcoast will be sampled in 2020). Fourteen measurements were done on each female, Waller said, and three indicators of egg production identified. In statistical area 513 [western Maine] the carapace size for females was 3.5 inches in 1995. Today it is 3.3 inches. In statistical area 511 [Downeast] the size in 1995 was 3.7 inches. Today it is 3.5 inches. “Water temperature is linked to size at maturity,” Waller said. “At maturity, the female growth rate slows down. They molt on average every other year. So earlier maturity means overall smaller size.”

By Melissa Waterman

REMEMBERING ARNIE GAMAGE

By David Cousens

The lobster industry lost an icon when Arnie Gamage passed away a couple of weeks ago. I first met Arnie in the early 1980s at a Legislative hearing. I remember that day well.

There was a bill to do away with the 5-inch maximum protection on lobsters. I met Arnie, Jack Merrill and Ed Blackmore that day in Augusta. We all thought that with the scientists telling us the lobster industry was in trouble and landings around 20 million pounds, doing away with a measure that protected broodstock was the stupidest thing we had ever heard of. Soon after this, Ed Blackmore recruited all three of us to serve on the board of the Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA). This was the beginning of a 35-year friendship for Arnie and me. I can’t begin to speak of all the positive things that Arnie did for the lobster industry in this state, but I will try to list some of the highlights.

In the late 1980s Arnie was instrumental in starting a collaboration between fishermen and science, working with Bob Steneck from the University of Maine in the Thread of Life in the Damariscotta River. He was also instrumental in forming the South Bristol Co-op.

I’ve always considered Arnie the barometer of the MLA. I can’t count the times when the board would be deadlocked on an issue and Arnie would listen to the whole discussion, not saying a word. Then quietly, with that little laugh he always had, he would cut right to the chase. Nine times out of ten he would be the one to cut to the heart the issue and the board would move in that direction. When Arnie spoke, people listened. Arnie always advocated for what was
COASTAL OUTLOOK  
Thoughts from MLCA President Patrice McCarron

It seems strange to be talking about offshore wind power, lobster settlement, and right whale populations when the world is in such turmoil. From the start of March, when the Maine Fishermen’s Forum took place, to the time of Landings’ publication, the topic on the minds of Maine lobstermen and the state’s coastal communities has turned to one thing: the COVID-19 virus.

Since you are no doubt already over-saturated with news on coronavirus, this issue of Landings focuses on the Maine lobstering world as it was in early March, before the virus infiltrated every aspect of global society. Landings provides highlights of the Fishermen’s Forum, specifically focusing on those issues of importance to Maine lobstermen. The Department of Marine Resources (DMR) presented a comprehensive update on its lobster research efforts last year. One project studied the difference in the size of female lobsters at the time of egg production from 1995 to present day, and DMR researchers documented what most lobstermen have already observed. With warmer water temperatures, females are producing eggs at a smaller size, approximately two-tenths of an inch smaller than 25 years ago.

The American Lobster Settlement Index showed that juvenile lobster settlement has taken an upturn throughout the Gulf of Maine, reversing a four-year downward trend. Some of that increase can be attributed to expanding habitat for the young lobsters in deeper water, where temperatures have risen over the past decade.

Offshore wind power was the subject of an all-day seminar at the Forum. Maine has set an ambitious goal to reduce its carbon emissions by 45% in ten years and by 80% in thirty years. To do that, the Mills administration is supporting offshore wind power, lobster settlement, as well as to continue to promote it to chefs and consumers.

The Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative (MLMC) provided its annual update to lobstermen and outlined the Collaborative’s plans to market Maine lobster in 2020. The MLMC will be focusing on promotions, partnerships and the protection of the Maine lobster brand through a combination of efforts. The aim is to “premiumize” Maine lobster as a desired product within the world of larger food buyers as well as to continue to promote it to chefs and consumers.

Maine fishermen had the opportunity to question officials from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries at the Forum. The focus, not surprisingly, was the federal plan to reduce by 60% the risk of death or serious injury to right whales from fixed gear in New England waters. Lobster industry members asked tough questions of the panel, seeking an explanation of why the lobster industry has been targeted despite a lack of evidence linking Maine lobster gear to right whale deaths or injuries. They questioned the validity of the 60% risk reduction goal, noting errors in NMFS’s own data and the proliferation of right whale deaths in Canadian waters. Phil Torrey, a Winter Harbor lobsterman, spoke for many when he expressed deep frustration with NMFS’s approach. “We’ve done everything we were asked to do. When they were having more babies, all was good. If you show us we’re killing them, we’d do whatever you asked of us. But they are dying in Canada. We just don’t see that the whales are dying because of us Maine fishermen.”

In other news, Landings features a column from Commander Jason Boyer, U.S. Coast Guard, on vessel safety. Boyer, who spoke at the Maine Lobstermen’s Association annual meeting, emphasized common sense measures to make sure the boat and its crew get home safely from every trip. Having one’s vessel inspected at the dock, making sure that captain and crew get enough rest, and using PFDs while working are all actions that can make a big difference in safety.

We continue our series on climate change in the Gulf of Maine with a look at changes in the Gulf’s water. An increase in precipitation in the Gulf’s watershed and warmer water temperatures have had an effect on water clarity, as shown in research by Dr. Barney Balch, Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences. Cloudier water shades the phytoplankton living in the Gulf. Phytoplankton are the basis of the marine food web; changes to their abundance or type can have ripple effects throughout that web.

In this 200th anniversary year for Maine, Landings also continues its profiles of significant Maine harvesters. Winter Harbor gained its name long ago because its harbor did not freeze up in the depths of a Maine winter. The fishing and lumbering port was discovered by wealthy Philadelphians in the late 1880s, although not without a little direct promotion by a native son, Edward J. Hammond, founder of Hammond Lumber.

Finally, Landings remembers an icon of the Maine lobster fishery, Arnie Gamage of South Bristol, who died in early March. Arnie was a long-time member of the Maine Lobstermen’s Association board of directors and a highly-regarded lobsterman both in his community and the state. He worked hard to protect and improve the state’s lobster fishery and was considered the barometer of the MLA board. Former MLA president David Cousins pays homage to a man who was his friend for 35 years.

We look forward to hearing from you with any thoughts on topics for future issues of Landings.
in the best interest of the fishery. He never had the attitude of "this might negatively affect me, so I'm against it." He was a big picture guy, looking out for the industry and the next generation of lobstermen.

Arnie loved to be on his Peter Kass lobster boat, whether he was lobstering or shrimping or tuna fishing. He was a fixture at the South Bristol Co-op and mentor to young fishermen, including his two sons, Chad and Adam. He was also a fixture in my household. Arnie and I talked every week for about 35 years. The conversation would always start with "What's the price?" Then, "How're they looking?" Then it would lead into the issues the lobstermen were facing at the time. We would talk about our boys and how they were doing. We were both surrounded by sons who were also lobstering; his two and my three. What we discovered over time was that South Bristol was exactly two weeks ahead of South Thomaston in terms of lobstering. When my boys got into their teenage years — and to this day — they always asked me, "Have you talked to Arnie? And what's happening down there?"

As I sit here and try to remember some of the things I want to say about Arnie, the tears are hitting the paper I'm writing on. I will forever miss the conversations we had and his common sense approach to all the issues we've faced in life and in fishing. As much as Arnie cared about the lobster fishery, his greatest love was his family. He and Gail did almost everything together, whether it was work or play. One of their favorite things was going to their kids' and grandkids' sporting events.

Arnie was a tremendous gift to the lobster industry and to all who knew him. He was a loyal friend. I will miss him.
As the Chief of Prevention for Coast Guard Sector Northern New England, I oversee our commercial fishing vessel fleet. I take this responsibility very seriously and dedicate significant focus and attention to improving the overall safety of the fleet. Commercial fishing vessels are the least regulated commercial fleet in the United States. For this reason, I would like to discuss some of my concerns and the things I believe will improve the safety of those who rely on commercial fishing to make their living.

The bulk of commercial fishing vessel regulations are in 46 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 28, including the regulatory requirements for state numbered and federally documented vessels broken down by area fished, vessel size, and number of crew. I urge you to review these regulations and determine if you meet the minimum requirements. I stress minimum requirements because vessel owners can outfit their vessels with additional equipment to better prepare them for an emergency. For instance, not all vessels are required to have an EPIRB, immersion suits, or a life raft onboard. This small investment, however, is extremely minor considering what we are protecting.

We are committed to our commercial fishing vessel examination program. We have two full-time civilian examiners on staff and are in the process of hiring a third. We are also training several active duty Coast Guard members to increase our available examiners and improve our service and response time to the commercial fishing fleet.

On October 15, 2015, it became mandatory for all vessels operating outside three nautical miles to pass a dockside examination and obtain a decal as evidence of compliance. These dockside examinations are non-punitive in nature and only result in a required worklist if all required equipment is not onboard. Those who fish outside of three nautical miles without the required decal risk being boarded at sea by one of our Coast Guard vessels and potentially having their voyage terminated if they meet one of the hazardous conditions contained in 46 CFR 28.65. If your voyage is terminated, you will be escorted back to port to remedy the hazardous condition before being allowed to continue your voyage. Not only is this a huge inconvenience, it will result in financial penalties, lost fishing time, additional fuel consumption and possibly an extended stay at the dock. It makes sense to call us and complete your examination at the dock prior to heading offshore.

Unlike other vessels, commercial fishing vessels do not receive the level of oversight required of Coast Guard-inspected vessels. Consistent with marine casualty trends, this reduction in regulation for fishing vessels contributes to the relative increase in marine casualties. When fishing vessels are converted or altered from their original design to partake in another fishery, the stability of the vessel can be compromised. It is imperative to seek professional advice prior to making changes to your vessel, especially if the modifications increase overall weight, placement of weight in the hull, or require gear to be mounted above the gunwale. Even small changes can significantly reduce the vessel’s ability to recover and remain upright.

Another significant concern is fatigue experienced by vessel crews. Since there is no requirement for Coast Guard-issued credentials, there are no requirements limiting crew watches to 12-hour periods. Fatigue contributes to countless marine casualties, including injuries, collisions, allisions, and falls overboard. Vessel captains should pay particular attention to work hours and adjust schedules to balance work and rest.

As a vessel captain, it is your responsibility to do the same. Your crew and your family depend on you to focus on coming home safely. As the Chief of Prevention, my primary mission is to enhance marine safety and eliminate maritime deaths. As a vessel captain, it is your responsibility to do the same. Your crew and your family depend on you to focus on coming home safely.

We are required to reach you should you find yourself in distress. If you choose not to wear a life jacket, then ensure they are stowed in an area immediately accessible during all phases of the vessel’s operations.

The technological advances to life jackets have eliminated any excuse for not wearing them. Today’s life jackets do not hinder movement or impede vessel operations. They save lives and likely provide the critical time it takes to deploy or use the safety equipment on your vessel or give the Coast Guard time to reach you should you find yourself in distress. If you choose not to wear a life jacket, then ensure they are stowed in an area immediately accessible during all phases of the vessel’s operations.

To schedule a vessel examination, contact Brian Smith at 207-664-3931, or Dan Hieter at 207-838-4440. Brian and Dan are ready to conduct your examination and answer any questions you may have with regard to fishing vessel regulations.

Guest Column: Simple ways to stay safe at sea

By Commander Jason Boyer

New England Marine & Industrial
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Lobster Bands
We carry:
Printed and Non Printed
Shedder
Standard
Cold Water Shedder
Jumbo

Boots:
Guy Cotton
Grundens
Xtratuff
Muck Boots
Servus
Grundens

BUOYS:
Spongex
Sea Alex
Polyform US
Polyform Norway

Rain Gear:
Guy Cotton
Grundens
Helly Hansen
NEMI Rain Gear

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294 Ocean St
Brant Rock, MA
781-834-9301

86 Cemetery Rd
Stonington, ME
207-367-2692

We want your grubby gear. It’s our bag.

Bring your used bibs to the Rugged Seas Table and we’ll give you 5% off any piece of gear we sell. We use what you’ve used to make our ocean gear.
The net effect of all that dissolved and particulate material in the Gulf is to shade those phytoplankton living beneath it. The yellowish water absorbs the blue sunlight that many phytoplankton species need to photosynthesize and grow. Researchers have found that smaller phytoplankton are becoming more common and large phytoplankton species less common, which has implications on the structure of the Gulf of Maine food web.
**Question:** What do I do in the sliver area (from the exemption line to middle and bottom of the vertical line)?

**Answer:** Question: What about green marks now used?

**Answer:** Yes, all vertical lines must be marked.

**Question:** What do I have to do when I move my gear from outside 3nm into exempted waters? And vice versa?

**Answer:** Question: What do I have to do outside state waters (beyond 3 nm)?

**Answer:** Yes, you have to actually make a 36" purple mark on your line. This mark can be made of purple rope that is spliced into your existing vertical line; however, the purple rope section should be 36" in length.

**Question:** What do I have to do when I move my gear from exempted waters, the 6" green mark must be removed from the vertical line. While only three purple marks are required in exempted waters, you do not have to remove additional purple marks when moving gear into exempted waters. When moving gear from exempt to non-exempt waters, a 6" green mark must be added in the top two fathoms of your vertical line. An additional 12" purple mark is also required in the top of the vertical line.

**Question:** What do I do in the sliver area (from the exemption line to federal waters)?

**Answer:** Four purple marks and one green mark are required in the sliver area.

**Question:** What do I have to do in State waters inside the exemption line?

**Answer:** Three purple marks are required inside the exemption line. This includes a 36" purple mark in the top two fathoms of the vertical line and two 12" purple marks at the middle and bottom of the vertical line.

**Question:** What do I do in the sliver area (from the exemption line to federal waters)?

**Answer:** Four purple marks and one green mark are required in the sliver area.

**Question:** What do I have to do when I move my gear from exempt to non-exempt waters? And vice versa?

**Answer:** Question: Why do we have to do this?

**Answer:** By September 1, commercial lobstermen in Maine must change the marks they make on vertical lines. The change is mandated by the state, not federal government.

**Question:** What do I have to do to this?

**Answer:** It is important that we be able to differentiate Maine lobster gear from other Northeast trap/pot fisheries. Currently, all trap/pot gear in New England is marked with the same color (red). Different gear markings by state will enable future regulations to be more spatially specific.

**Question:** Where do we have to do this?

**Answer:** Definition of vertical lines for this purpose is March 20th.

**Question:** What do I have to do in State waters inside the exemption line?

**Answer:** Maine DMR announced new gear marking requirements for Maine lobstermen in November 2019. As with anything new, there have been lots of questions from lobstermen about why these changes are needed. Maine’s Marine Patrol provided a comprehensive overview of the new gear marking regulations during the Maine Fisherwomen’s Forum and answered many commonly asked questions.

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Maine Lobstermen’s Association

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

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS’ MEETING SCHEDULE

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the MLA has suspended all in-person meetings.

STEAMING AHEAD

It’s hard to believe that just a few weeks ago so many of us were able to come together during the Maine Fishermen’s Forum. Our world has changed significantly since then. We now live each day with palpable anxiety as we stare into the face of the unknown. Most of us are holed up at home. Many are coming to grips with the reality of distance learning for our kids who would give just about anything to go back to school. Some, like me, are lucky to be able to work from home. But for too many, work and income has ceased to be a reality.

The news isn’t great for the lobster industry. Markets for seafood are shrinking rapidly, and it appears that we have a long road ahead. Like everyone else in the seafood industry, lobstermen have been hard hit by the closures of restaurants, casinos, cruise ships and pretty much any social gathering you can think of. More than 80% of seafood is consumed through those restaurants and food service so we are highly dependent upon this sector. While the timeline for the coronavirus and its corresponding economic disaster are unknown, we must prepare for long-term impacts.

Governor Mills did not mince words about the importance of Maine’s seafood economy in her recent letter to President Trump urging him to “marshal the resources of the federal government and work with our Congressional delegation to provide tools that will help our seafood industry survive this unprecedented moment.” Mills warned, “It is clear that the collapse of the international and larger domestic markets will devastate Maine’s commercial fisheries.” The Governor called for relief programs to include “direct financial assistance, subsidies, operating loans or loan deferment, [and] modifications to existing programs to make them more accessible to fishing and seafood businesses.”

The MLA is also working to make sure Maine’s lobster industry is not forgotten as Congress hammer out the details of a stimulus package for our nation. MLA teamed up with several Maine seafood industry associations on a letter to our delegation highlighting a list of economic responses for Congress to consider. “Maine’s independent fishermen, harvesters, aquaculturists, shoreside and supply chain businesses are being dramatically affected by this disaster and we need both short-term economic relief and long-term investment to protect, promote, and preserve Maine’s iconic seafood industry and the working waterfront that supports us,” the letter stated.

In the good news category, there is no news to report on whales. In all seriousness, spring is a slow season for the lobster fishery. This gives us time to come together as an industry to understand what is going on and plan for whatever lies ahead. Commissioner Keliher has stated that he does not have any immediate plans to close the lobster fishery in response to the coronavirus, a position that the MLA supports. DMR has also suspended the 30-day wet gear storage rule. If you don’t have a place to sell your lobsters, traps that are out can remain in the water without the risk of an enforcement penalty. If your gear is on land or you are bringing traps in, this will give you time to work on gear marking!

With such a poor market outlook, what should lobstermen do? Lobstermen are a fleet of individual business owners; it is up to each of you to decide whether or not it makes sense to fish. Commissioner Keliher sent a notice to the lobster industry advising harvesters and dealers must put aside their differences and must actively communicate with each other about the realities of the market. He continued, “harvesters must refrain from landing product if there is no market for it” and “dealers must refrain from buying product for which there is no market in order to minimize loss associated with inventory that can’t be sold.” This is prudent advice because overburdening the supply chain when there are so few customers could damage lobster prices in the longer-term.

I reviewed lobster industry data over the last five years to get a sense of how this crisis is affecting our industry now and what we could be facing if this drags on into summer, fall or even winter (see table). By almost every measure, March is one of the least important months of the year for lobstermen, ranking second to last on number of lobster fishing, number of lobster trips made and proportion of annual landings and valuations for our state. But for those who are fishing it is an important month, ranking first in average boat price and fifth for the average value of each trip.

The next three months, April to June, are also fairly slow for Maine lobstermen. While the number of active lobstermen increases each month as gear is set, (69% of active fisherman have their gear out by the end of June), these three months rank low for overall landings and value, and are lowest for average earnings by harvester each month and the average value of each trip by month.

The situation changes dramatically from July to September. August ranks as the month with the most active lobstermen, the highest number of trips, and the highest landings and value. While August ranks lowest for average boat price, it represents the third-highest monthly value for individual harvesters. Overall, the five-month period of July to November accounts for 84% of landings and 80% of value for Maine.

Any scenario in which there is no market for your catch is scary. But based on the natural ebb and flow of our industry, we have some time to plan before the real hurt of this economic crisis emerges. As much as I try to keep some glimmer of optimism, remember that lobsters not harvested are not going anywhere; they will stay on bottom. If they shed, they will harden up and gain value. As we proved in 2019, even if the season is delayed, our stock is still healthy and capable of making up those landings later in the year. Remember, there are many successful lobster fishing areas in Canada that take place over just a few months.

So what’s been done and what is being done? As I mentioned, Governor Mills sent a strong letter to President Trump asking him to dedicate federal resources to support Maine’s seafood industry. The MLA joined four other industry associations asking our Congressional delegation to ensure that the stimulus package has the flexibility needed so that both our self-employed and incorporated businesses can benefit from these federal programs.

Commissioner Keliher is holding a weekly lobster industry COVID-19 call to bring industry stakeholders together and is closely monitoring the situation as it unfolds. The weekly call includes state officials, delegation staff and industry leaders from the harvester and supply chain side so we can collectively understand the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 and strategize on how we can work together to keep our businesses solvent. The MLA is grateful for this opportunity for our industry to work together in a transparent manner.

The MLA remains in close contact with state officials, our delegation, Maine’s lobster dealers, the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative and our board and members. We will continue to try to understand how coronavirus is impacting lobstermen, our industry and our communities. We will continue to keep our politicians informed and let them know what our industry needs to ensure that it remains an economic pillar for Maine when this crisis is over.

The MLA will advocate for rational, sound decision-making by politicians and regulators, and for accessible relief programs and financial assistance to support our industry. This crisis is bigger than all of us, and pretty much everyone in the world has been or will be in the same situation that anyone can fix. For each of us to get through will require patience and discipline. Please know that the MLA will continue to do all that it can to ensure that Maine’s lobstering businesses remain financially solvent as this crisis unfolds. We promise to keep you informed as we learn more.

The Maine lobster industry is strong and resilient. So is the MLA. We are here for you. We will advocate for you. We will get through this. Stay safe and stay healthy.
The Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA) 66th Annual Meeting opened with a tribute by President Kristan Porter to former board member Arnie Gamage Jr. of South Bristol, who died abruptly on Wednesday, March 4, at the age of 67. Porter opened the business portion of the MLA meeting by accepting a motion and a second to accept the minutes of the 2019 annual meeting. He then presented a slate of nominees to serve a three year term on the Board of Directors.

Five board members – Jason Joyce of Swans Island, Sonny Beal of Beals Island, Jack Merrill of Islesford, Bob Baines of South Thomaston and Gerry Cushman of Port Clyde – were reelected, and Thomas Werner of Cape Elizabeth was elected to his first term on the MLA Board. Porter thanked Donny Young of Cushing and Willis Spear of Yarmouth who stepped down from the board for their many years of dedicated service.

Porter then presented the MLA’s Golden V-notch Award to one of the Maine lobster industry’s most highly regarded lobsterman, John Williams of Stonington. “John is a pillar in his community and it’s a hard-working community,” Porter said. “He goes to every meeting we ask him to and some others as well. John’s always said that you have to stay involved or you can’t complain.” Williams accepted the award on behalf of himself and his wife Judy, who has done the driving to most of those meetings over the years.

Coast Guard Chief of Prevention for Northern New England Sector Commander Jason Boyer then addressed the meeting audience on safety at sea. The Coast Guard Northern Sector has three full-time vessel safety examiners on staff and another in the process of being hired. Boyer emphasized that the fishing vessel safety exam program was doing well checking boats at the dock to ensure that vessels are properly equipped and captains don’t get cited at sea and lose their trip. He emphasized, however, that having appropriate equipment on board, does not necessarily save lives at sea. Being prepared and knowing how to utilize this equipment at sea will save lives.

“Do something to make it easier to get to the PFDs when you’re on deck,” Boyer said. “Get an engine kill switch installed if you work alone. Get a personal EPIRB to set off some of the bait crunch. Maine landed as many pounds of menhaden as all lobster landed in 2019 (11.471 metric ton).”

Then McCarron reviewed the status of NOAA’s rules for protecting North Atlantic right whales. The MLA has been fighting at all levels – management, science, legal and with the Congressional delegation – to protect the Maine lobster fishery and has been attacked in multiple areas while doing so. “We are at all the industry meetings, all the zone council meetings, all the DMR meetings, and yet we are attacked for either not doing enough or being in cahoots with the agencies,” McCarron said. She reminded the audience that the MLA is the only entity that gained legal standing in the court case brought by environmental groups against NOAA seeking more stringent right whale protections.

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To understand more fully members’ perspective on the right whale rules, the MLA conducted a survey of its members in December.

In 2019, after the April Take Reduction Team (TRT) meeting which put the lobster industry on a path to reduce risk by 60%, the MLA conducted a deep dive into the data used by NOAA to set that goal. “NOAA asked only the lobster industry to reduce risk,” McCarron said, “not gillnet or other fishing gear. “In doing so, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) assigned all unknown seri- ous injury or mortality, which represents 73% of all incidents, to the lobster industry.

Concerning herring, McCarron reviewed the reasons for the drop in herring quota which included a poor 2019 herring stock assessment and changes to the herring plan through Amendment 8. A new herring stock assessment is scheduled for June, 2020. Menhaden landings were up sharply in 2019, which offset some of the bait crunch. Maine landed as many pounds of menhaden as all lobster landed in 2019 (11.471 metric ton).

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The MLA's lawyer, Mary Anne Mason, said she is grateful for this opportunity for our industry to work together in a transparent manner.

March 16 - Commissioner Keliber said the lobster industry grapples with the impacts of COVID-19. On March 18, DMR started holding weekly calls among state officials, delegation staff and industry leaders from the harvester and supply chain side to share information and work together to understand the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 on the lobster industry and strategize on how we can keep our businesses solvent. The MLA is grateful for this opportunity for our industry to work together in a transparent manner.

March 18 - Maine DMR sent a Notice to Lobster Harvesters stating that DMR did not have immediate plans to close the lobster fishery in response to the coronavirus. The Commissioner’s message stated, “I am monitoring this situation and am receiving thoughts and guidance from all segments of the industry.” His message continued, “harvesters must refrain from landing product if there is no market for it” and “dealers must refrain from buying product for which there is no market in order to minimize loss associated with inventory that can’t be sold.

March 20 - DMR announced that “access to all Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR) facilities in Augusta, West Boothbay Harbor, Bangor, Lamoine, Jonesboro, and Rockland will be by appointment only.” The DMR strongly urges industry members to submit applications, order tags, upload documents, report landings, etc., via DMR’s online system, LEEDS at https://maine-dmr-lands-prod.pegacloud.com/. If industry members need to apply for or renew a license or order tags, and can only do so on paper, there are applications and order forms available in the entryway of the Augusta office at 32 Blossom Lane in Augusta. There is also a drop box at the Augusta office where applications and order forms can be left for DMR, including license applications and order forms. Only credit cards, money orders or checks are accepted forms of payment. No cash payments are accepted.

COVID-19 and Financial Resources for Business – at press time (3/24/2020), the U.S. Senate announced an agreement on a $2 trillion stimulus package which is expected to be adopted by the House and signed by President Trump later this week. While the details of the package were not clear at press time, the Maine delegation has informed the MLA that the federal package includes $300 million in disaster relief specifically for fisheries due to disappearing economic markets caused by the novel coronavirus pandemic. Continued on page 10

GOVERNOR MILLS TELLS TRUMP NOT TO FORGET ABOUT MAINE’S SEAFOOD INDUSTRY

On March 20, Governor Mills sent a letter to President Trump requesting immediate support for Maine’s seafood industry as it grapples with the economic challenges of coronavirus. "The COVID-19 pandemic is taking a substantial toll on Maine's independent fishermen, aquaculturists, wholesalers dealers and seafood processors. The markets for their products are collapsing both globally and locally... In the long-term it is clear that the collapse of the international and larger domestic markets will devastate Maine's commercial fisheries.”

The letter explains the unique challenges facing the individual sectors of Maine's seafood industry. "Dealers and process are also calling to tell me there are no markets for the product already in inventory,” lobstermen are experiencing reduced prices and severely depressed markets” and "groundfishermen have already leased hundreds of thousands of dollars of quota to access the spring fishery.”

The letter explains that severe market disruptions are anticipated for shellfish aquaculture, softshell clams, elvers, and the northern Gulf of Maine scallop fishery.

The Governor concludes, “We strongly urge you to martial the resources of the federal government and work with our Congressional delegation to provide tools that will help our seafood industry survive this unprecedented moment. This includes, but is not limited to: direct financial assistance, subsidies, operating loans or loan deferment, and modifications to existing programs to make them more accessible to fishing and seafood businesses.”

MAINE’S SEAFOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATIONS ASK CONGRESS TO SUPPORT FISHING INDUSTRY

The Maine Lobstermen’s Association collaborated with Maine Coast Fishermen’s Association, Maine Lobster Dealers Association, Maine Aquaculture Association, and Maine Coast Community Sector on a letter to Maine’s delegation sent on March 20, as Congress develops a stimulus package in response to Covid-19. The letter highlighted the importance of the seafood industry and described the market collapse for most seafood products.

"This disaster is looking to have a long tail and we must start setting our small businesses up for protection now if we wish to survive what is to come. We must assure that our seafood businesses remain solvent during this disaster and able to enter the market when it rebounds,” the letter states. "Maine’s independent fishermen, harvesters, aquaculturists, shoreside and supply chain businesses are being dramatically impacted by this disaster and we need both short-term economic relief and long-term investment to protect, promote, and preserve Maine’s iconic seafood industry and the working waterfront that supports us”

The group highlights a list of economic responses for Congress to consider as it develops a stimulus package. The letter stresses the need for direct economic relief in the short- and long-term and for Congress to ensure that these programs have the flexibility to assist the diversity of seafood businesses including self-employed and small, medium and large corporations. The group also requests that Congress revise the criteria to declare a fisheries disaster to include a public health pandemic and lower the threshold of economic harm to qualify.

COVID-19 AND THE LOBSTER INDUSTRY UPDATES

Weekly Lobster/Covid-19 check-in - Commissioner Keliber is again proving to be a strong leader as the lobster industry grapples with the impacts of COVID-19. On March 18, DMR started holding weekly calls among state officials, delegation staff and industry leaders from the harvester and supply chain side to share information and work together to understand the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 on the lobster industry and strategize on how we can keep our businesses solvent. The MLA is grateful for this opportunity for our industry to work together in a transparent manner.

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Continued on page 10

MAINE LOBSTERMEN’S ASSOCIATION UPDATE

The MLA’s lawyer, Mary Anne Mason, spoke about the court case taking place in U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C. to which the MLA is an intervenor. The Center for Biological Diversity vs. Ross (Department of Commerce) case alleges that NMFS’ violated the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) due to its failure to implement timely, effective measures to protect Right Whales from entanglement in lobster gear.

The case was split in two phases: liability and remedy. In the first phase, liability, the court will decide the legal issue of whether or not NMFS has violated the ESA and/or MMPA. The judge has not yet ruled on this, but it is widely expected that this will happen sooner rather than later. Once there is a ruling, the court will address how to remedy any legal violations which may have occurred. If the judge rules that NMFS has violated the law, the court could impose whale protection measures on the lobster fishery.

Mason explained that the judge’s actions on the case so far are cause for concern for the lobster industry. In October 2019, after NOAA asked for a motion to stay the case until the TIRF rule was published, the judge denied the motion stressing the need to take speedy action to protect the whales. In November 2019 NMFS asked for a summary judgment of the case, arguing that there was no evidence that lobster gear was entangling whales since new regulations were implemented in 2014. In January 2020, NMFS announced that the release of its Biological Opinion on whether fixed gear fisheries jeopardize the right whale population would be delayed until July. However, “the judge is due to release his decision at any time,” Mason said.

McCarron said that the MLA, because of its status as an intervenor in the case, would be in the room to work with all parties if the judge seeks a remedy in this case. When asked why regulations are focused on lobster industry rather than climate change, McCarron responded, “These federal laws don’t regulate the environment, they regulate human interactions.”

The meeting closed on a high note with the raffle of five amazing door prize packages including items ranging from safety equipment and gift cards to sweatshirts and knives contributed by Brooks Trap Mill, Friendship Trap, Sea Rose Trap, Hamilton Marine, Midcoast Marine, Chase Leavitt, Liferaft Services, Rope Razor, McMillan Offshore Survival, Maine Camp Outfitters and MLA.
Additionally, Senator Collins spearheaded the "Keeping Workers Paid and Employed Act" which authorizes $350 billion worth of 100 percent guaranteed SBA loans, a portion of which SBA will forgive based on allowable expenses for the borrower. This small business package also includes $10 billion in direct grants for businesses that do not qualify for the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program, and $17 billion to have SBA step in and make six months of principle and interest payments for all SBA backed business loans. All these measures combined will relieve financial stress from struggling businesses and inject much needed capital into the economy. Employees, sole-proprietors and 1099 contractors will be eligible for assistance through these programs.

The details of these federal assistance programs are evolving. Currently, there are several loan programs available. More information can be found on the Programs to offer financial resources for Maine’s business are evolving. You can find information on these programs on the Maine DMR website (https://www.maine.gov/dmr/about/COVIDInfo.htm#SBA), Maine Department of Economic and Community Development website (https://www.maine.gov/governor/mills/covid-19). Here are some highlights:

Finance Authority of Maine (FAME) COVID-19 Relief Loan Programs - The Finance Authority of Maine ( FAME) is offering loan programs to eligible Maine businesses and individuals/employees who experience hardships due to COVID-19.

COVID-19 Relief Consumer Loan Program provides no-to low-interest consumer loans of up to $5,000 (minus any unemployment benefits received by borrower) through a loan guarantee program involving Maine’s banks, credit unions, and FAME. Interested borrowers should contact their local bank or credit union (not FAME) to see if the lender is offering this program and to apply. A borrower may apply for up to three (3) loans, one per each 30-day period.

COVID-19 Relief Business Direct Loan Program provides FAME Direct Loans of up to $50,000 with special terms available to Maine-based businesses experiencing interruption or hardship due to COVID-19.

COVID-19 Relief Interim SBA Finance Loan Program provides FAME Direct Loans of up to $100,000 with special terms available to eligible borrowers who provide proof of commitment for SBA financing. The FAME loan would be originated for use to the business owner until the SBA loan is funded. The SBA loan would then pay-off the FAME loans.

COVID-19 Relief Lender Insurance Program provides commercial loan insurance of 50-75% to lenders who make loans to Maine businesses experiencing interruption or hardship due to COVID-19.

SBA Loans - The U.S. Small Business Administration is offering low-interest federal disaster loans for working capital to small businesses suffering substantial economic injury as a result of the Coronavirus (COVID-19). Governor Mills has received SBA designation to qualify Maine’s small businesses for this program. SBA’s Economic Injury Disaster Loans offer up to $2 million in assistance to small businesses to help overcome the temporary loss of revenue they are experiencing. These loans may be used to pay fixed debts, payroll, accounts payable and other bills that can’t be paid because of the disaster’s impact. The interest rate is 3.75% for small businesses. The interest rate for non-profits is 2.75%. SBA offers loans with long-term repayments in order to keep payments affordable, up to a maximum of 30 years. Terms are determined on a case-by-case basis, based upon each borrower’s ability to repay.

SBA’s Economic Injury Disaster Loans are just one piece of the expanded focus of the federal government’s coordinated response, and the SBA is strongly committed to providing the most effective and customer-focused response possible. For questions, please contact the SBA disaster assistance customer service center at 1-800-659-2955 or e-mail disastercustomerservice@sba.gov. Applicants are encouraged to apply for a disaster loan online at https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela/. If you do not have access to a computer or smartphone, please call SBA at 1-800-659-2955 for assistance.

**IN-PERSON MEETINGS CANCELLED**

The Maine Legislature’s Marine Resources Committee cancelled its remaining public hearings and work sessions. This means that public hearings were not held on LD 2149 An Act To Protect the Lobster Industry by Providing to Consumers Information Regarding Live Lobsters Sold in the State and LD 2150 An Act To Amend the Laws Governing the Issuance of Wholesale Seafood Licenses with Lobster Permits. It is anticipated that unresolved bills will be carried over to the next session.

ASMFC’s Spring Meeting scheduled for May 4 through 6 has been cancelled. ASMFC will consider holding an extended meeting August 3 to 6. ASMFC has asked Commissioners and proxies to keep calendars open May 5 and 6 to conduct any necessary business via webinar. FMI: www.asmfc.org.

Maine DMR’s public hearing regarding fishing industry impacts of the proposed Portland Harbor private dredge and CAD cell construction scheduled for March 25 was cancelled. The City of Portland seeks to create a Confined Aquatic Disposal (CAD) cell in the Fore River. The CAD cell construction will excavate approximately 376,858 cubic yards of sediment over approximately 8.9 acres. This material will be disposed offshore in federal waters at the Portland disposal Site. The Portland waterfront dredging consists of 21 public and private piers, 10 marinas/boat yards, the public boat launch, and commercial barge landing, estimated to remove 244,678 cubic yards from 46.8 acres. This material will be disposed of in the proposed CAD cell in South Portland. The comment deadline on the potential impacts of the proposed dredging operation on fishing in the area to be dredged and on impacts to the fishing industry of the proposed route to transport dredge spoils to the Portland disposal site has been extended to April 10.

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

Bottom Line
Super 46 Wesmac
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The global spread of COVID-19 has caused the worldwide shut down of restaurants, casinos, cruise ships, social gatherings, and business events where most lobster is consumed. At grocery stores, consumers are focused on shopping for essentials and food products with a stable shelf life.

Because of this unprecedented event affecting global markets, the MLMC is shifting program resources to ensure we can have the maximum impact on demand as markets re-open. As our industry grapples with the impacts of this crisis, we are continuing to work to protect the Maine Lobster brand, provide crisis communications services to support the Maine lobster industry and develop materials to promote Maine Lobster.

We are monitoring the market impacts of COVID-19 closely and working with representatives from all sectors of the industry to reassess our marketing approach given these new circumstances.
MLA MEMBER DISCOUNT DIRECTORY

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Discount: Special rates for MLA members and Business supporters. Please contact the MLA for booking information, or mention MLA when booking.

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Legal Services

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(Port Clyde, ME) -- 10% off all legal services for MLA members. 207-691-2633

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

Mount Desert Oceanarium
Bar Harbor, ME -- Free admission to commercial fishermen and their families.

Cross Insurance Arena
Special discounts to shows at the Cross Arena in Portland! Use promo code GFRIEND at checkout. Order by phone, online, or in person at the box office.
Info at www.maine lobsters.org

Maine Foodie Tours
Kennebunkport, Portland, Bar Harbor, Boothbay Harbor, ME -- 10% off all culinary walking tours. 207-233-7485

Lobster & Seafood

Crazy Lobster & Shellfish
Port Chester, NY -- 20% off shellfish.

Cape Porpoise Lobster
Cape Porpoise, ME -- 10% off picked lobster

Winter Harbor Fishermen's Coop
Winter Harbor, ME -- 10% off picked lobster meat. 207-963-5857

Newspapers

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


Propellers

New England Propeller Inc
Plymouth, MA -- Discounts on marine propellers, shafting, and related items, sales & repairs. 508-746-8804

Nautilus Marine Fabrication, Inc.
Trenton, ME -- 5% Discount on propeller reconditioning.

Refrigeration Services

Applied Refrigeration Services
Windham, ME -- $250 off new installations.

Safety Training & Equipment

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

McMillan Offshore Survival Training
Drill Conductor training. 207-338-1603

Trap Builders, Stock & Supplies

Sea Rose Trap Co
S. Portland -- 5% off list price on traps. Must show MLA card.

Show your MLA card to receive great discounts at these fine businesses!
What effect will the multiplying wind power proposals proliferating in New England have on commercial fisheries? The answer appears to be “We don’t really know” to judge by the presentations at the all-day Wind Power Seminar held at the Maine Fishermen’s Forum in early March.

The Gulf of Maine has not yet seen any proposals for wind energy development in federal waters but, said many of the speakers, there will surely be several in the future. Currently only the University of Maine’s Aqua Ventus project is moving forward in Maine’s state waters off Monhegan Island.

Where we are now

Melissa Winne, energy policy analyst in the Governor’s Energy Office started the seminar with an overview of Governor Janet Mills’ policy on renewable energy. Mills called for a 45% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030 and an 80% reduction by 2050. The Governor has set a goal of carbon neutrality in the state by 2045. The state’s Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) has been set at 80% by 2030 and 100% by 2050, a marked increase from the previous 40%.

Where will all that non-carbon-emitting energy come from? Some will come from wind power and some of that wind power will come from offshore. Gov. Mills set up the Maine Offshore Wind Initiative in June 2019 to focus on renewable energy and that survives in the Gulf of Maine. “There’s been some work on the electromagnetic effects on lobsterers and skates,” he said, “but what of the effect of the plumes generated by the turbines in the air and in the sea?”

The challenge is answering questions such as these at the same time that the wind development is occurring. “The pace and scale is fast and big,” he said.

How the lease process works

Brian Hooker, a marine biologist at BOEM, pointed out that there are a lot of offshore wind projects in the works. Currently in the United States fifteen offshore leases have been approved by BOEM. Eight site assessment plans have been approved and six construction and operation plans are currently under review, with an additional four to six similar plans to be submitted this year.

The lease process for an offshore wind project is a lengthy one, he noted, comprising specific planning and analysis, leasing, site assessment, and construction and operation stages. Within those stages are five specific times for public comment but the BOEM Gulf of Maine Task Force offers an important avenue for fishermen to get their perspectives heard throughout. “The Task Force is an opportunity to pre-select areas before a developer asks for approval to build a project,” he said.

What is Maine’s role

In Maine two major state laws — Site Review and the Natural Resources Protection Act (NRPA) — govern projects in state waters, explained Nick Ward from the Department of Marine Resources. Under NRPA, a permit is required for activities that impact natural resources regardless of the project’s size. To receive a permit, the project must not unreasonably interfere with or harm recreational or navigational uses, among other standards. DEP does permit wind power demonstration projects in state waters if the project has no more than two turbines and whose purpose is to test wind power technology. “This streamlines permitting,” Livesay said.

Another route for review by the state is through Maine’s Coastal Zone Management Plan. Any project proposed in federal waters must show consistency with the adjacent states’ Coastal Zone Management Plan. In Maine, this “consistency review” is conducted within the Department of Marine Resources. Maine will be the first state in the nation to feature a floating wind turbine when the Maine Aqua Ventus project is completed. Jake Ward, Vice President for Innovation and Economic Development at the University of Maine, highlighted changes to the project, which had been on hold for several years. In place of the original proposal to build two 3-MW wind turbines, the project plan has evolved to construct one, larger turbine capable of producing 10 MW of electrical power.

The turbine will be made of pre-cast segmented concrete, similar to that used in the Penobscot Narrows Bridge, and will be constructed in Maine. The floating structure will be attached to the seafloor with blow anchors and attached by up to 3000 feet of chain. The base diameter of the 10 MW turbine will be 311 feet and column diameter will be 37 feet. The turbine will be assembled in Searsport and towed to its site off Monhegan.

In late 2019, the state’s Public Utilities Commission approved a 20-year power purchase agreement with Maine Aqua Ventus, the turbine’s parent company. “We are finalizing the new design and then will re-start the permitting process,” Ward explained. “The goal is to develop technology that will convert wind to energy and that survives in the Gulf of Maine.”

Continued on page 19
AT THE FORUM: NOAA OFFICIALS ANSWER TOUGH QUESTIONS ABOUT WHALE PLAN

By Melissa Waterman

A panel of five officials from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration spoke to and answered questions from a largely polite audience of lobstermen and others at the Maine Fishermen's Forum in March. Chris Oliver, the head of NOAA Fisheries based in Washington, D.C., stated the obvious when he said, "A lot of people are not terribly thrilled with the proposed 60% risk reduction target. Many are not happy with DMFs (Department of Marine Resources) plan either."

He said he was frustrated over how the media reported on NOAA's response to the DMR's proposed whale plan. He emphasized that the NOAA Fisheries did not reject DMR's proposed plan to protect right whales from mortality or serious injury but rather pointed out to DMR that the plan fell short of NOAA's 60% risk reduction goal. To achieve that goal, Maine's plan will be evaluated with the plans from Massachusetts and other states. "I'm sorry my letter to [Maine Department of Marine Resources] Commissioner Keliher was read as a rejection because it wasn't," said Michael Pentony, Regional Administrator for the Greater Atlantic Region Fisheries Office, who sat next to Oliver.

Oliver reiterated that the vast majority of fishing gear in New England waters at the moment is lobster gear and that is why the lobster fishery is being asked to reduce vertical lines. He also stated that the agency is talking with counterparts in Canada, urging them to do more to protect right whales when in Canadian waters. "Canada is making a number of promising efforts," he said, "but we need to do more to control the tool to make Canada take action. The hole gets bigger whenever deaths occur, period."

Phil Torrey, a Winter Harbor lobsterman, spoke for many when he expressed deep frustration with NMFS' approach. "We've done everything we were asked to do. When they were having more babies, all was good. If you show us we're killing them, we'd do whatever you asked of us. But they are dying in Canada. We just don't see that the whales are dying because of us Maine fishermen." McCarron echoed Torrey's words. "The impacts of what happens in Canada directly affects us here. NOAA leadership should be concerned. Whales are dying and they are dying there. We are left picking up the pieces."

Kris Portman, President of the Maine Lobstermen's Association (MLA), echoed Torrey’s words. "It was a standing room crowd at the NOAA panel discussion. Photo by M. Young"
The Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative (MLMC) gave its annual report on activities to industry members at the Maine Fishermen’s Forum. MLMC executive director Marianne Lacroix opened the session by introducing the MLMC’s new board chair, Brian Langley, former state legislator and representative to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and owner of the Union Lobster Pot restaurant in Ellsworth. Several new members were appointed to the MLMC board late in 2019 (see sidebar).

Lacroix spoke about the MLMC’s current efforts to “premiumize” Maine lobster. The intent is to differentiate Maine lobster from other lobster in the marketplace by emphasizing its origin, sweet flavor and seasonality. The MLMC is concentrating on boosting domestic demand for Maine lobster and has diversified from its primary audience – chefs and consumers – to the food supply network, which includes distributors, restaurant chains and others.

“This year we are emphasizing promotions, partnerships and protection,” Lacroix said. To further promote Maine lobster, the MLMC has set up an advisory council of people working within the supply chain who will provide insights on the consumption of Maine lobster. A new “Buyer’s Guide to Maine Lobster” will be published soon to help food suppliers understand more about the state’s lobster. The MLMC will also expand its webinar programs on lobster and video and digital content on its web site for the food supply network.

For chefs and consumers, a new Maine Lobster Hotline is scheduled to debut in July. The one-day Hotline will feature a panel of experts who will answer any questions about the Maine lobster fishery and lobster in concert with a partnering grocery store chain. In September, Sweet Maine Lobster Butter is scheduled to be introduced to the public, highlighting different ways to use lobster.

Allyson Hoar, a public relations specialist from MLMC’s PR firm Weber Shandwick, spoke about the partnership element of this year’s planned activities. The MLMC will work with partners who can highlight Maine lobster’s special qualities and who can reach a quantity of people. Such partners will include food service companies, wholesale food distributors and retail or grocery chains.

The MLMC will devote a larger portion of its budget this year to protecting the Maine lobster brand, Lacroix said. “We want to prepare for what might be coming, whether it’s coronavirus, tariffs or lower landings,” she said. A new video on the sustainability of the lobster fishery was released during the Forum featuring lobsterman, Sonny Beal of Beals Island, and DMR senior lobster biologist Kathleen Bearden.

The MLMC has been aggressively monitoring media coverage and content on social media sites regarding the Maine lobster industry and right whales. “Most of the coverage is local, not national,” she said. To protect Maine lobster’s brand reputation, the MLMC has created a dedicated web page on the fishery and right whales (https://rightwhalesandmainelobster.com/). produced two videos on the Maine lobster fishery, proactively engaged with media in all forms, and produced social media stories to use on Facebook and other sites.

MLMC plans to host a Call to Action web tool to help generate letters to NOAA and others involved in the whale issue. The MLMC will generate op-ed pieces to address misleading claims and is working to place these pieces in national publications and outlets read by policy makers to emphasize Maine’s proactive stance to protect whales.

“We plan to be flexible to react to conditions as they change throughout the year,” Lacroix said.
MAINE FISHERMEN’S 2020 FORUM SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Twenty-seven young people received scholarships from the Maine Fishermen’s Forum this year, totaling $60,000. This was made possible by proceeds from the 2020 Live and Silent Auctions totaling $18,901 and several dedicated scholarships. In honor of its 45th anniversary, the Forum Board presented a special award of $4,500, an anonymous fisherman made a generous $12,000 donation, and Dave Garbo, founder of Garbo Lobster in Connecticut, donated $15,000 in honor of his associates in Maine.

$6,000 Winners (2) from Anonymous Fisherman’s Donation of $12,000
Joseph Graziano, Mason Oliver

$4,500 Winner from Maine Fishermen’s Forum Board in honor of $45th Anniversary
Dorothy Ann LeMoine

$3,000 Winners from Dave Garbo’s Donation of $15,000
Ashley Eagley, River Fenton, Sydney Hall, Lillian Sherburne, Emma Wallace

$1500 Winners from Maine Fishermen’s Forum
Christopher Bates
Jacob Boyce
Jacob Brewer
Abigail Brewer
Makenna Brooks
Kylie Caramihalis
James Carroll
Eliot Erickson
Ava Gaulkin
Marina Ann Godin

Golden Bears continue from page 1

DMR also undertook an at-sea survey of lobster larvae along the coast last year, which will continue this year. Nets are towed through the top several feet of ocean surface to determine the abundance of lobster larvae, changes in abundance over the summer months, and size of larvae found. “The sites [of the tows] were last surveyed twenty or thirty years ago,” Waller said. “We want to do a comparison.”

Other DMR lobster surveys show results similar to past years. The department’s ventless trap survey, which gives data on sub-legal lobsters, was similarly positive to previous years to the east and west. From Friendship to Schoodic, however, the number of sub-legals was down, similar to figures prior to 2011.

DMR’s commercial sea sampling program showed that the amount of sub-legal lobsters remains higher when compared to historic levels. The number of sub-legal lobsters dropped in zone B, C and E. In other zones the numbers were up or similar to 2018.

DMR’s trawl survey, which takes place in May and October each year, provides data on all marine species found in Maine waters. In 2018 there was a decrease in the number of lobsters caught during the fall survey. However, said Reardon, the average number of lobsters caught in the deeper water, greater than 35 fathoms, during the fall survey has gone up. “The average catch fluctuates,” she added. “In Penobscot Bay, the average catch is up. In Mt. Desert area, the average catch peaked in 2015 and has been down since then. In Downeast, it peaked in 2016.”

Settlement of young lobster appears to have broadened, according to Wahle. In 2016 his project began to sample in deeper water than could be accessed by divers. The data indicate higher settlement in deep water, particularly off the Downeast coast. “Deeper water settlement mirrors the thermocline,” Wahle explained. A thermocline is a steep temperature gradient in a body of water. In Maine, this is typically a cold layer of water on bottom with a warmer layer at the surface. “There’s not much of a thermocline in Downeast water and so habitat expansion has been slight,” In the area west of Penobscot Bay, habitat expansion into deeper, formerly cooler water, has been more significant.

Advocating for fishermen
In 2019 the Responsible Offshore Development Alliance (RODA), a group of fishing industry associations and companies, signed a ten-year Memorandum of Understanding with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and BOEM to collaborate on the science and process of offshore wind development along the Atlantic Outer Continental Shelf.

“The wind developers were going on a divide-and-conquer mode and fishermen realized they needed to speak with one voice. After a year and a half we have about 150 members now and are expanding to the West coast,” said Annie Hawkins, RODA executive director.

The Alliance has advocated for fishermen on issues such as the layout of turbines, the size of transit lanes, and other subjects. “Our aim is to not constantly be in a reactive state but to find ways to coexist in a meaningful way,” she said. Recently RODA helped create another group, the Responsible Offshore Science Alliance (ROSA). ROSA’s goal is to advance regional research and monitoring of fisheries and offshore wind interactions in federal waters. The organization recently hired its first executive director.

Aqua Ventas continued from page 16
There are deep roots in the community of Winter Harbor. The small town, once part of Gouldsboro, has been a haven for fishermen since European settlers first ventured into the area, in part because its large inner harbor typically does not freeze over in the winter months. Over time those who were successful as fishermen made homes for themselves and their children in the tiny Downeast town. The names of fishing families like Torrey, Knowles, and Backman can be found in the town's earliest documents and in the phone book today.

Winter Harbor was settled in 1762 as a plantation originally known by the unenticing name “Mussquito Harbor.” It was renamed Winter Harbor in 1854 as it became a fishing community as well as a shipping port for lumber products. In 1856, the Coast Guard constructed the Winter Harbor Light on Mark Island to guide vessels to the harbor through the ledge-strewn waters of Frenchman’s Bay. The light-house was manned by lighthouse keepers and families until 1933.

Lumber, cod fish and herring kept Winter Harbor a sturdy but not particularly prosperous community during the 1800s. It wasn’t until the latter part of the century that Winter Harbor’s economy began to change when wealthy “rusticators” from mainland Philadelphia found their way to the small town. A small hotel, the Hotel Hanover, was built in 1860. More than two decades later native Edward J. Hammond, founder of Hammond Lumber, started thinking big about his home town. The wealthy were flocking to nearby Mt. Desert Island; why not to Winter Harbor as well? With two Boston partners he built the 150-room Beacon Hotel in 1887, as well as a casino near the Town Dock. Hammond went on to provide the land and materials for construction of Winter Harbor’s Town Hall in 1904, now known as Hammond Hall.

In 1889 the Gouldsboro Land Improvement Company purchased 300 acres of farmland on Grindstone Neck to construct a summer colony. The Company hired Nathan Franklin Barrett to design a subdivision. He planned for 198 cottage lots of one acre or larger and arranged the lots along parallel roads, with Grindstone Avenue running the length of the peninsula. Within the first year nearly 30 large summer cottages were built or under construction. Soon an oceanfront clubhouse and casino were constructed, followed by the Grindstone Inn and the Grindstone Neck Golf Course. The inn burned in 1956, but the clubhouse, church and golf course remain.

The influx of wealthy summer residents and the related construction boom increased Winter Harbor’s population and brought new forms of employment to the town. The new residents required skills not typically associated with a working fishing and lumber port, such as carpentry, property maintenance and other services. Its growing population prompted Winter Harbor to separate from Gouldsboro and incorporate as a town in 1896. Another feature of Winter Harbor was its Naval Radio Station. The station, situated on Schoodic Point east of the harbor, came about due to another wealthy summer visitor, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Rockefeller petitioned the federal government to move the Otter Cliffs Naval Radio Station on Mt. Desert to land he had donated in Winter Harbor. Moving the Radio Station would allow construction of Acadia National Park’s motorcar loop road, a key element in Rockefeller’s vision of the Park. The government finally agreed to the change, and the Naval Security Group Activity Winter Harbor began operating in 1935. It was a critical radio station during World War II and was eventually decommissioned in 2001. The 100-acre site then reverted back to the National Park Service.

The College of the Atlantic in Bar Harbor worked with Maine Sea Grant to conduct an oral history project in Winter Harbor in 2017. Stories, memories, and perspectives of local fishermen and families and other community members were captured in a geographically-referenced web site available through the Winter Harbor Historical Society and at https://coagis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=aa33cbebf431540efb5bf6f4a14422322.

The Grindstone Inn, 1930. Image courtesy of Maine Memory Network.
# DMR Aquaculture Lease Applications for March (as of 3/24/2020)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicant</th>
<th>Site Details</th>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Size (acres)</th>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Lease Type</th>
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<td>Midnight Brewer</td>
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<td>Deer Isle</td>
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<td>North Haven</td>
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<td>Standard</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Public Hearing pending as of 10/17/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milliken Oyster Co.</td>
<td>West shore, X of Jacks Point, Damariscocotta River</td>
<td>Newcastle</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Public Hearing Postponed 3/20/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrangusquet Oyster Co.</td>
<td>X of Bowman Isl &amp; Stockbridge Pt, Casco Bay</td>
<td>Freeport</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Site Review Pending as of 12/11/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Tide Shellfish Farm, LLC</td>
<td>X of Stage Isl, Stage Island Bay</td>
<td>Georgetown</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Lease Granted 1/13/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timothy Johnson</td>
<td>X of Croe Isl, Middle Bay</td>
<td>Margarets</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Comments due 4 pm 1/27/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love Point Oysters, LLC</td>
<td>X of Winslow Park, Casco Bay</td>
<td>Freeport</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Site Review Pending as of 1/13/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love Point Oysters, LLC</td>
<td>X of Crab island, Casco Bay</td>
<td>Freeport</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>Oysters</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Site Review Pending as of 2/20/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine Ocean Farms, LLC</td>
<td>X of Wolfe's Neck, Recompense Cove</td>
<td>Freeport</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Site Review Pending as of 12/13/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine Source Seaosd</td>
<td>X of Lane's Isl, Casco Bay</td>
<td>Yarmouth</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>Oysters</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Site Review Pending as of 12/19/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amanda Moeser</td>
<td>X of Lanes Isl, Inner Casco Bay</td>
<td>Yarmouth</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>Oysters</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Site Review pending as of 0/30/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hook Sea Farms Inc.</td>
<td>X of Wiley Pt &amp; X of Fitch Pt, Damarisc. River</td>
<td>South Bristol</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Site Review pending as of 9/19/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheepwater Ventures LLC</td>
<td>X of of Chebeague, Casco Bay, Long Island</td>
<td>Chebeague Isl</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>Marine Algae</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Site Review pending as of 10/7/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spinning Cove Shellfish, LLC</td>
<td>X of R9 90 Bridge, Spinnny Creek</td>
<td>Holton</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Site Review complete 3/18/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summit Point LLC</td>
<td>X of basket Isl, Casco Bay, Long Island</td>
<td>Chebeague Isl</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>Marine Algae</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Site Review pending as of 12/19/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summit Point LLC</td>
<td>X of Clapboard Isl, Caso Bay, Falmouth</td>
<td>Cumberland</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>Marine Algae</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Site Review pending as of 12/19/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taunton Bay Oyster Co., Inc.</td>
<td>X of Cedar pt, Taunton Bay</td>
<td>Hancock</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>Oysters</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Lease Granted 3/11/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Bay Oyster Co.</td>
<td>X of Old House Cove, Western Bay, South Bristol</td>
<td>Bar Harbor</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Public Hearing Postponed 3/20/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stelle Neck Oyster LLC</td>
<td>X of Lanes Isl, Casco Bay</td>
<td>Yarmouth</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Site Review pending as of 11/15/20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more information, visit Maine DMR website at: https://www.maine.gov/dmr/aquaculture/index.html. Subscribe to DMR updates on aquaculture leases: www.maine.gov/dmr; scroll to bottom of page, under "Connect with Us", click on "subscribe to email/text notifications"

Standard Lease: term is up to 20 years; size is up to 100 acres; renewable

Experimental Lease: term is up to 3 years, size is up to 4 acres; non-renewable

Limited-purpose aquaculture license (LPA): term is annual, size is up to 400 square feet; renewable

**Department of Marine Resources aquaculture permit process**

- **Scoping Session**
- **Application Submitted**
- **Public Comments**
- **Site Review**
- **Public Hearing**
- **DMR Decision**
ACOUSTIC MONITORS TRACK WHALES UNDERSEA

Two passive sound collection programs are underway in the Gulf of Maine to help researchers with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution learn more about North Atlantic right whales. Using this data, boats can be notified of any whales in the area and can slow down in response to avoid collisions and help protect the whales. One program will use fixed microphones mounted on the bottom of the ocean floor and will be periodically checked for audio data collection. The other program will use underwater gliders to record acoustic information and report back to researchers in near real time on the location of whales.

NEW CANADIAN REGULATIONS ANNOUNCED TO PROTECT RIGHT WHALES

Canada announced new regulations to protect the endangered North Atlantic right whale. From April to November, the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada will close fishing in areas of the Gulf of St. Lawrence where whales are gathering in large numbers. If whales are detected in an area of the Gulf more than once during a 15-day period, that fishing zone will be closed for fishing until the end of the season on November 15. Previously, the zone would be re-opened after 15 days. Temporary fishing closures will also expand into the Bay of Fundy. Transport Canada called for a voluntary speed limit in the Cabot Strait as a part of its plan to protect the whales, which pass around Cape Breton on their way to the Gulf of St. Lawrence. First announced in February, the voluntary speed limit asks vessels over 13 meters to slow down to 10 knots in a portion of the Cabot Strait between April 28 and June 15, and between October 1 and November 15. These measures are in additional to new gear marking requirements for Canada’s fixed gear fisheries, effective for the 2020 fishing season. At a minimum, gear marking will be required at the top, middle and bottom of the vertical line or every 27.4m (15 fathom) throughout the length of the rope. Each strand marking must be a minimum of 15cm (6 inches) in length. Up to 3 colors are required to identify the region fished (color 1), the species fished (color 2) and the fishing area (color 3). For example, the Gulf region will be marked with blue (color 1), the snow crab fishery orange and lobster fishery yellow (color 2). LFA 24 is green and LFA 26A is white (color 3). Colors 1 and 2 will be wove into the rope at the same location, while color 3 (representing your fishing area) will be added to a subsequent segment of rope immediately after the segment of rope with the first two colors.

NMFS STUDIES FISH TO FORECAST EFFECTS OF WIND TURBINES

A three-year study of cod and other commercial fish species is underway around New England offshore wind energy sites, part of a National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) project to better understand how proposed turbine arrays will affect the environment and fisheries. With universities and other partners, NMFS deployed a Slocum electric glider, a type of autonomous underwater vehicle that has proven highly successful in long-term oceanographic studies. The glider’s instrument payload includes a hydrophone to detect the sounds of whales and of fish spawning, and an acoustic telemetry receiver to pick up signals from fish that have been captured and released with acoustic tags to track their movements.

WAITING LIST BILL (LD 28) PUT ON HOLD TO GATHER MORE INFORMATION

LD 28 An Act Regarding Access to Lobster Licenses proposed to allow anyone who has completed the lobster apprentice program and been on the waiting list for 10 years to receive a lobster license. The bill was first introduced in 2019 and carried over to 2020 in order to consider consequences of pending federal whale rules on the lobster industry. Governor Mills signed into law an amended version of this bill that creates a Resolve directing the DMR to report back to the Legislature in 2021 on the biological status of the lobster fishery, status of exit/entry ratios by lobster zone, latency of lobster licenses and trap tags, and revisit the findings of the limited entry report prepared by the Gulf of Maine Research Institute in 2012.

NEW BEDFORD, STONINGTON REMAIN IN LIST OF 2018 TOP PORTS

New Bedford, Massachusetts, once again was ranked the most valuable port in the country, according to NOAA’s U.S. Fisheries 2018 report. That makes the 19th year at the top for New Bedford. U.S. fishermen landed 9.4 billion pounds of fish valued at $5.6 billion at ports around the nation. New Bedford and Dutch Harbor, Alaska, continue in the list of top ports based on landings of sea scallops in Massachusetts and pollock in Alaska. Top ports by value in the New England/Mid-Atlantic region include Cape May/ Wildwood, New Jersey ($86 million), Point Judith, Rhode Island ($81 million), Stonington, Maine ($80 million), Hampton Roads Area, Virginia ($55 million), and Gloucester ($53 million). Highest value species in 2018 included lobster ($684 million), crabs ($645 million), salmon ($598 million), scallops ($541 million), and shrimp ($496 million). Top ports by landings in the New England/Mid-Atlantic region are Reedsville, Virginia (353 million pounds), New Bedford, (114 million pounds), Cape May/ Wildwood, New Jersey (102 million pounds), Gloucester (59 million pounds), Point Judith, Rhode Island (48 million pounds), and Portland, Maine (46 million pounds).
FUN TIMES AT THE 2020 MAINE FISHERMEN’S FORUM

From left, Rep. Genevieve McDonald, MLA president Kristan Porter, MP Officer of the Year Tyler Sirois, MLA executive director Patrice McCarron. Photo by M. Young.

Jamien Hallowell, center, receives the DMR Andy Mays Award of Excellence from DMR Commissioner Keliher on behalf of Arnie Gamage's family. Michelle May on left.

MLA membership director Andi Pelletier, left, and former MLA Board member Jay Smith who offered $1000 to the MLA Legal Defense Fund if 30 other people made a donation of $500 or more. Photo by M. Perez.

Art Green and Jimmy Stewart relax at the Friday night dinner. Photo by M. Young.

Senator Collins congratulates Randy Cushman, who was honored by the USCG for his heroic actions at sea when the F/V Hayley Ann capsized in January. M. Young photo.

Chris and Scott Smithwick of Smithwick and Mariners Insurance at the Forum trade show booth. M. Young photo.

Left, Mike Dassett spends some quiet time knitting trap heads. Right, Hilton Turner gets a double surprise at the Forum. Photos by M. Young.
LOBSTER GIRLS AT WORK

You can’t keep a good woman down or, in this case, a girl. Children in Maine’s lobstering families are introduced to the fishery when they are young, and girls are no exception. We offer here a few pictures submitted through Instagram of lobstering girls at work. Look for more perspectives on the fishery in coming months!

Cameron Hilton with her catch and her dog Fathom. Photo from Cody Nunan.

Jaylin Jones banding lobsters aboard the FV Nai & Gianna, Stonington. Photo from Ashley Oliver.

Liberty Clark, age 8, has five traps she hauls every week with her dad from Southwest Harbor. Photo from Chris Clark.

Mia Real baiting up aboard the FV Restless Logan, South Harpswell. Photo from Melissa Moody.

Alexis O’Connor, Bailey Island. Photo from Mary Moon.

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