MORE MAINE LOBSTER PROCESSING, MORE VALUE

By Melissa Waterman

If you want to process lobsters, you’d better have a permit. Actually, quite a few permits. To get started, you must purchase a lobster processor license. To get a lobster processor许可, you must have a permit. Actually, quite a few companies are slowly increasing lobster processing, adding value to Maine’s signature seafood.

It takes a lot of effort, but Maine companies are slowly increasing lobster processing, adding value to Maine’s signature seafood. Photo by Annie Tselikis.

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MAINE LOBSTER MSC-CERTIFIED, FINALLY!

DMR release

On March 10, Governor Paul LePage announced that the Maine lobster fishery had received the prestigious international Marine Stewardship Council’s (MSC) Sustainable Seafood Certification. MSC certification recognizes ecologically sound practices, from harvest of the species through delivery to consumer. Certification provides a competitive advantage in marketing to the growing number of retailers and consumers around the world who place a premium on seafood harvested in an environmentally responsible, sustainable manner.

The Governor made the announcement at the International Boston Seafood Show. “The Marine Stewardship Council’s certification will provide the Maine lobster industry with a globally-recognized seal of approval,” said the Governor. “This certification recognizes our longstanding practices of good stewardship and ensures that every lobster caught in Maine waters can be marketed not only as delicious, healthy food, but also as a resource that meets the most stringent international environmental standards.

Maine Lobster president John Hathaway, Perfect Maine Lobster president Linda Bean, and MLA board member Bob Baines listen to Governor Paul LePage’s announcement at the International Boston Seafood Show in March. Photo by Annie Tselikis.

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FISHERMEN’S FORUM SHOWS HEART OF MAINE’S FISHING COMMUNITIES

By Melissa Waterman

Maine has a mighty long coast, some 250 miles as the crow flies. In fact, the coastline is thousands of times greater than that due to all its many peninsulas, islands and bays. For centuries those 250 miles have been the home of Maine’s diverse fishing industry, an industry made up of men and women who firmly identify with their home harbors.

Yet all those different places, people and styles of fishing come together each year in one place: the Maine Fishermen’s Forum held at the Samoset Resort in Rockport. Why? Because the Forum is organized by the fishing industry for the fishing industry.

An offshoot of work done by University of Maine economics professor Jim Wilson, the Maine Fishermen’s Forum began in 1976 as a place where fishermen could learn more about the changes that the then newly passed Magnuson Fisheries Conservation and Management Act would mean for them. For years the Forum was supported by the University’s Sea Grant College Program until it became an independent non-profit organization in 1984. “We have a great board,” said Chiloa Young, Forum coordinator. “They come from all walks of life. There’s no predominant fishery among them.”

One of the elements that have remained constant over the years is the remarkable array of donations the Forum receives. Everything from the Friday night fish dinner to the health clinic held during the Forum is supported by donations of time, food and funds. The Forum’s 17-member volunteer board is the driving force behind these contributions. “The board members go out and ask for donations...”

Maine coops working for Maine lobstermen. Proud sponsors of the MLA newsletter.

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March is the peak of the busy meeting season for the Maine lobster industry. From the Maine Fishermen’s Forum and the Boston Seafood Show to the Lobstermen’s Town Meeting and the legislative session in Augusta, this month is crazy busy. This meeting madness, however, allows us to see the action of our industry leaders in action and it challenges us to think about what leadership really means. Typically, leaders are those who really can see the forest for the trees; they are those who look at the big picture and have a vision for the future.

Throughout all the meetings in March, lobstermen have had an opportunity to see the industry’s leaders in action. The month kicked off with the Maine Fishermen’s Forum, with Cutler lobsterman Kristan Porter and Chiloo Young guiding the event. The forum is the single event that brings Maine’s diverse fishing industries together each year. It takes a board of dedicated volunteers to keep the event sincere and meaningful and true leaders to pull it off.

The forum also provides an opportunity to honor those leaders who have stood out during the past year, those who go above and beyond the call of duty. The Maine Lobstermen’s Association awarded its Golden V-notch Award to Elliott Thomas of Yarmouth, for his great problem-solving abilities and commitment to keeping Maine’s diverse fishing industries together each year. It takes a board of dedicated volunteers to keep the event sincere and meaningful and true leaders to pull it off.

Lobster, embodied great foresight and considerable patience as he led the Maine lobster industry through a process that took nearly five years. He was helped by his colleague Linda Bean, president of Linda Bean’s Perfect Maine Lobster, who raised the funds necessary to obtain certification but that did not keep John and Linda from doggedly staying the course. Now that MSC certification is a reality, it provides another reason for lobstermen to purchase Maine lobster.

The MLCA has been involved in the process for many years. Anyone who stands out from the crowd provides a flash point for people to form opinions on one side or the other of issues.

Anybody who stands out from the crowd provides a flash point for people to form opinions on one side or the other of issues.
The recent effort by the Maine Department of Marine Resources to conduct community outreach meetings is extremely vital. It might be considered the primary leadership responsibility in conducting relations between the fishermen as citizens and their government representatives. To assess future needs as one of sustainability is also of vital importance when considering the three components of any long-term healthy existence. These components can be categorized as social, economic and environmental. Every fisherman must recognize that we cannot dismiss or trade one element for another and expect our communities to thrive. Long-term sustainability requires the management of all three components in concert.

Social component

Education, education, education: No community can survive without it and every community can potentially thrive with it. Do the fishermen truly understand the value of sustainability and the responsibility they have in support of this social component? There is a growing belief by a segment of the fishermen that education is not necessary and some opinion that education is an interference and/or inconvenience to the fishing industry. This belief is unacceptable and is surely not a threat to community and fishing sustainability.

Other extremely important areas such as zone empowerment, district rights, safety and health should also be improved. For example, random drug and alcohol testing should be considered as an acceptable means of improving the overall health, safety and well-being of our fishing communities. This one particular measure has proven effective in other marine commercial operations.

Environmental component

The "bottom saturation" method of fishing coupled with a healthy lobster biomass without doubt has created ever-increasing harvests for the Maine lobster fishermen. The environmental impacts of this saturation method must certainly have a negative impact on the ocean floor when considering annual gear losses and the materials used for manufacturing the traps. The vertical lines, buoys and associated gear also aid and abet the degradation and harm of the marine environment. Visible and invisible debris from our fishing efforts cannot be denied. Fortunately, and unfortunately, Maine lobstermen are not alone in this problem. Worldwide ocean pollution via various waste streams is a serious threat. We need not look any further than southern New England and what happened there when Long Island was impacted with pesticide runoff just a few years ago. Our debate about sustainability might finally lead us to determine to verify realistically how many traps are truly being fished, how many vertical lines deployed and what impacts the gear losses are having on our marine ecosystem. We have not and cannot accomplish this through the present system of state-issued trap tags.

Economic component

The short-term issues with "product glut" as it affected the boat price during the spring season of 2012 is another example of a long-term debate about our "boat to the plate" business. What might be affecting this component and in what internal arenas may we find the solutions? Buyer and/or Processor transparency (perception of price fixing). Marketing (Note: if it is not working then change it and hold the marketing people accountable.)

Private-Public Partnerships, meaning various state agencies focus and collaborate together with the fishermen on all business aspects of fishing. Aggressive branding and label protection of the "Maine" product. Find solutions to minimize mortality rates from "boat to restaurant." Licensed fishermen via their zone council should initiate a discussion to consider organizing as a associated membership to collectively bargain for minimum sustainable "boat price." Improve revenue reporting. Final thoughts

The idea of possible latent fishing effort as an impediment to the sustainability of lobster fishing is more of an anecdotal worry than probable threat to the fishery. Available data suggest that the latency as a percentage is one of affordable hedging by the license holder. There is certainly some frustration with the management of licenses relative to zone entry and exit ratios. The tag-based ratio is flawed. Basically, the latency statistics can be used as an artificial protective barrier against entry. An active fisherman's best friend is another latent or less active fisherman. That said, the statistics from the 2011 report would indicate that the 296 people awaiting entry represent an overall increase of just six percent in licenses and a nine percent increase in tags based on the average ratio of licenses to tags or roughly 583 tags (not traps) per license. Please note the overall increase is state-based and not zone-based. We need to focus on the industry as a free enterprise business with methodical, pragmatic oversight and account-ability. This requires a leadership focus and effort in bringing business and labor knowledge to the forefront by using best available business techniques and technology for success.

Thanks for listening and best regards,

Michael J. Ames
Zoning District 9, Lic. No. 4300
Editor’s note: This letter was sent to DMR commissioner Patrick Keliher, Mr. Ames fishes from Matinicus Island.

FROM THE DOCK: Sustainability and the Maine lobster fishery

By Mike Ames

The Alewife Harvesters of Maine is a group of alewife harvesters, conservation commissioners, biologists, and concerned citizens who have joined together to conserve alewives and to preserve the river-fishing heritage of Maine. Consider becoming a member today.

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It’s a common complaint – you see Maine lobster advertised on a menu or in a retail market somewhere else in the country or the world, only to find out on closer inspection that it is impostor lobster. It might be an entirely different species of lobster, or maybe it’s an American lobster that’s identifiable by its size or bands as being from someplace other than Maine. Whatever the case, you clearly have a product being mislabeled as Maine lobster taking advantage of strong brand recognition and consumer preference for the Maine name.

This is an unfortunate situation – an unsuspecting consumer could eat langostino or spiny lobster, thinking it is an authentic Maine lobster. These are products with very different tastes and textures, not to mention different origins and harvesting methods, and we certainly don’t want consumers forming an opinion of Maine lobster based on that dining experience.

Studies have shown that as much as one third of seafood in restaurants, supermarkets and other retail locations is mislabeled according to Food and Drug Administration guidelines. The FDA publishes a Seafood List that identifies acceptable market names for each seafood species, common names, scientific names and vernacular names for each seafood species. American lobster and European lobster are the only species that can use the acceptable market name ‘lobster’ without any other modifier. All other species require modifiers such as rock lobster, langostino lobster or spiny lobster.

The MLPC worked with the FDA to remove Maine lobster years ago as the common name for American lobster on the FDA Seafood List. The guidelines for labeling lobster thus become clear for everyone buying or selling lobster within the supply chain. It allows us to challenge use of the Maine lobster label for products that clearly are not harvested in Maine.

Unfortunately, there is little opportunity for federal enforcement against mislabeling. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) provides fee-for-service inspections related to issues such as labeling and safety concerns for the seafood industry. That means that someone in the supply chain must suspect fraud and be willing to pay for an inspection. Finally, the FDA is responsible for ensuring that food is safe, wholesome and properly labeled. FDA’s priority is food safety, so it devotes minimal resources to detect or prevent seafood fraud unless there are health implications. These government agencies are focused on food safety and financial crimes rather than improper brand use.

One new opportunity for brand protection is the Maine lobster fishery’s sustainability certification by the Marine Stewardship Council. Products using the MSC logo must have built-in traceability in order to prove that the end product is from a sustainable source. Tests have shown that only 1% of seafood products with the MSC logos are mislabeled. This helps ensure that Maine lobster with an MSC logo is actually from Maine. We will have to wait and see how many companies decide to go through the chain of custody certification process that is required to use the MSC logo.

If you see a product mislabeled as Maine lobster, please take a photo of the product and label (menu, sign, ad, etc.) and email it to info@lobsterfrommaine.com along with the location. MLPC will contact the location, verify the lobster source and direct the buyer to authentic Maine lobster. We can also help ensure that companies are not using the term ‘lobster’ incorrectly. For example, MLPC was successful in getting Long John Silver’s restaurant chain to change their opinion of Maine lobster based on that dining experience.
NEW RECRUIT: A life that’s tough, but beautiful

By Annie Tselikis and Melissa Waterman

Beals Island lobsterman Jeff Libby is a pretty relaxed individual. Today at Billings Diesel and Marine in Stonington, he’s covered in grease and dirt, yet he’s quick to offer a joke and a ready smile. Jeff’s 48-foot Dixon is in the shop for a major overhaul. “When I brought the boat [F/V Autumn Gale] down here the guys asked me ‘did anything wrong?’” he laughs, looking at the parts and pieces scattered about the deck. Prior to bringing the boat from Beals Island down to Stonington a month ago, Jeff had been adding five gallons of oil to the engine a day. When she leaves to head home, I don’t fish inside the three-mile line at all. The lobsters were inside while I was outside. They stayed in the bay [Western Bay],” he said. Jeff has decided opinions about his sternmen firing lobsters around, as a changed gauge size or limited lobster landings, such as a 33-foot Young Brothers boat, then a 41-foot Libby, and most recently the Autumn Gale, from which he fishes year-round. Although many lobstermen reported huge catches last year, Jeff said he didn’t make out as well as he had hoped. “I think it was because I don’t fish inside the three-mile line at all. The lobsters were inside while I was outside. They stayed in the bay,” he said. Jeff has some decided opinions about the low price paid to Maine lobstermen for their catch in recent years. “A lot of people make all their money in the summer time but that’s the worst time to land lobsters,” the 27-year-old lobsterman explained. “It’s junk lobsters and that’s half the battle.”

He isn’t keen on many of the ideas that have been kicked around this year to control lobster landings, such as a changed gauge size or limited fishing days. Instead, he favors taking better care of the lobsters. “The product has changed, it’s shifted, and that’s really messed with us. We need to think differently about what we’re doing, we need to pay attention to the handling,” Jeff said. “When I see my sternmen firing lobsters around, I tell them we have to handle those lobsters like eggs.” Everyone needs to be more careful, including the wharf workers and truckers.”

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GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE AND YOU: eMOLT tells a tale of warmth

By Melissa Waterman

In December, 2011, several offshore lobstermen who were participants in the Environmental Monitors on Lobster Traps (eMOLT) ocean temperature monitoring program mentioned to Woods Hole oceanographers that they were seeing unusually high sea surface temperatures and strong currents moving in an odd direction along the outer continental shelf south of New England.

NOAA oceanographer Jim Manning, who coordinates the eMOLT program, and his colleagues at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute decided to take a look. Drawing on data received from lobstermen and from current drifters built by students at Cape Fear Community College in Wilmington, North Carolina, as well as other observational data, Manning and others set about studying what was happening far from land.

This was just the latest result of a long-standing collaboration between Manning and Gulf of Maine lobstermen. Through the eMOLT program, lobstermen throughout the region have attached low-cost temperature sensors to their lobster traps for the past twelve years. The equipment provides researchers such as Manning with a treasure trove of data on bottom temperature. Lobstermen have occasionally measured bottom salinity and current velocity as well. To date, the eMOLT database contains 5 million hourly records of temperature and 80,000 hourly records of salinity.

In addition, simple current drifters have been used to calculate surface currents throughout the Gulf of Maine and further offshore. The current drifters initially were built by students at Southern Maine Community College; today the drifters are being built by students at many other schools around the region. Each drifter uses GPS to communicate its position via satellite. Data provided by the drifters have given scientists insights on how the currents can transport and disperse particles around the Gulf and beyond. Drifters set at the mouth of Buzzard’s Bay, for example, showed what can happen to lobster larvae in the bay. According to Manning and his colleagues at the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, the drifters indicated that stronger currents ten miles out (where greater numbers of female lobsters have migrated recently) may be dragging lobster larvae away from the bay. In the Great South Channel off Cape Cod, drifters tend to float about for weeks, constrained by the currents. Like the drifters, tiny zooplankton are also kept in place. One type of zooplankton, copepods, is the preferred food of North Atlantic right whales, thus in the early summer many of those endangered whales can be found congregating in the Channel.

Curious about what was happening at the outer reaches of the Gulf of Maine, Manning and his fellow scientists speculated that data from eMOLT sensors at two deep water sites would give insight into temperature changes at depth. He asked lobstermen Rob Connelly and Marc Palombo to deploy their traps at two sites located near the shelf break, where the shell begins a sharp drop toward the undersea abyssal plain. When the data from the traps and drifters were analyzed, the scientists concluded that the warm water near the bottom of the outer continental shelf resulted from a direct interaction between the nearby Gulf Stream and the seafloor. In late October of 2011, the Gulf Stream made an unexpected jump to the northeast. Then in December, the Stream’s meanders brought a second surge of warm water onto the continental shelf. All this happened just before the unusually warm 2011-2012 winter season in New England. Glen Gawarkiewicz was the lead author on the resulting scientific paper which was published in August, 2012, in the on-line scientific journal, Nature’s Scientific Reports. Manning is always improving the eMOLT program. One new feature is a real-time bottom temperature sensor that wirelessly transmits data to a shipboard system as it is hauled on deck. His colleague Vitalii Sheremet has introduced a low-cost bottom-current meter that

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Kristan Porter is a busy man. The 42-year-old lobsterman is walking the hallways of the Samoset Resort during the March Maine Fishermen’s Forum with a cheerful smile and watchful eyes. That is as it should be because Porter is president of the Forum’s board of directors, the first fisherman to serve in that post, and this three-day event is full of responsibilities for him and the other volunteer board members.

Porter seems at ease with this role, as he is with his many others: former chair of the Sea Urchin Zone Council, member of the Department of Marine Resources Advisory Council, Maine Lobstermen’s Association board member, former Cutler selectman, and founder of the Maine Draggermen’s Association. Asked if he had any regrets with Porter on the Maine Fishermen’s Forum board. “He’s very dedicated with Porter on the Maine Fishermen’s Forum. Annie Tselikis photo.

Kristan Porter, Nick Lemieux, Trevor Jessiman, and John Williams take a look at gear removed from an entangled whale at the 2012 Maine Fishermen’s Forum. Annie Tselikis photo. Kristan Porter, Cutler

By Melissa Waterman

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Maine lobster was in the spotlight at this year’s Boston Seafood Show with the announcement that the fishery had obtained Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification. Governor LePage announced the milestone and enjoyed the first MSC-certified Maine lobster roll. The certification would not have been possible without the leadership of John Hathaway of Shucks Maine Lobster and Linda Bean of Linda Bean’s Perfect Maine Lobster.

Maine lobster was well represented with more than 10 companies making the investment to exhibit at the show: Atwood Lobster/Mazzetta Co, Browne Trading Company, Calendar Islands Maine Lobster, Cobscook Bay Company, Cozy Harbor Seafood, Greenhead Lobster, Linda Bean’s Maine Lobster, Maine Coast Lobster, Ready Seafood, Sea Salt Lobster, Shucks Maine Lobster, The Lobster Company and Maine Lobster Promotion Council. Several large companies who are significant buyers of Maine lobster also exhibited: East Coast Seafood, Inland Seafood, Little Bay Lobster, Lobster Trap Company and Orion Seafood International.
By Shelley Wigglesworth

Color and form came naturally to 31-year-old Luke Hartmann, a lobsterman and jeweler-maker in Brooklin. He grew up in the small area. Currently he fishes with Scott Heanssler on the F/V Patient Lady out of Deer Isle.

He and his wife, chef Devin Finigan, have always enjoyed walking on the beach together collecting colorful sea glass washed in by the tide. Four years ago, Hartmann realized that he had accumulated a significant amount of sea glass. He began playing around with silver wire, wrapping the sea glass and incorporating it into his macramé weaving. Soon he was making necklaces and other forms of jewelry that appealed to him. For the last dozen years since graduating from high school, Hartmann has continued to work as a sternman on boats in the Stonington area. Currently he fishes with Scott Heanssler on the F/V Patient Lady out of Deer Isle.

"I was always envious of those who could bezel-set sea glass, encasing it in silver," he said. A bezel setting is a band of metal with a groove and a flange to hold the gem in place. Hartmann got the chance to learn bezel setting when Devin surprised him with a gift certificate to a jewelry-making course.

"For Christmas in 2009, my wife got me a five hour class with a jeweler in Vermont. In the class I learned basic soldering techniques and how to make a ring," Hartmann said. "I returned home and ordered all the tools I thought I would need and I got my first bunch of silver. The first few pieces were pretty crude but I quickly improved, learning mostly by my mistakes." By the summer of 2010 Hartmann made enough pieces to sell at a local farmers' market. Much to his pleasure, Hartmann's work was well received. "I did a few more shows that year, with each one being better than the previous," he said.

Hartmann's simple, sturdy jewelry pieces include rings, bracelets, earrings, pendants and pins, all handmade in sterling silver or 18 karat gold, and all featuring hand-selected bezel-set sea glass. Each piece is marked SFS, for Sea Found Studio.

Newly added to his jewelry collection is an offering of chainmaille necklaces and bracelets. Chainmaille is the ancient art of creating and linking small metal rings to form a pattern similar to mesh armor. The technique dates back thousands of years when it was used to create lightweight armor that resists piercing and slashing. Today it is still used for items like butcher gloves and shark suits as well as jewelry.

Hartmann developed a passion for the technique after viewing other jewelers on YouTube videos. It is an extremely time-consuming art form. Each finished chainmaille piece takes Hartmann between 20 and 60 hours on average to complete. "I make every loop in one of my chainmaille pieces. Then I solder each and every loop shut. I have even incorporated my sea glass into my chains, creating truly one-of-a-kind pieces," Hartmann said.

Periodically Hartmann has sold his jewelry in retail settings, though he prefers to sell directly to his customers. "I really like the feedback I get firsthand," he commented. This year, Hartmann will be selling his jewelry at the 2013 Sea Glass Festival in Virginia Beach in October, his first national show. He currently sells most of his jewelry on-line via the global marketplace www.etsy.com.

These days, Hartmann leads a busy life balancing his dual careers. When he is not out at lobstering on the Patient Lady, he is at home in his studio creating jewelry. "Lobstering is physically and mentally tough. It leaves my hands swollen so I'm pretty much unable to use them during the summer," he explained. "I'm fortunate enough to have three months off in the winter to try to get as much inventory done as I can before the summer season starts." And though it may be a challenge from time to time, Hartmann said he wouldn't have it any other way. "I love the sea and all of its bounties, from the hundred-year-old bottles that wash up on the shore to the tiny pieces of perfectly formed sea glass on the beaches and the decade-old monster lobsters that somehow squeeze in to traps," he said.

"I got on the first boat I could, which was Stonington, when he began working as a sternman in Brooklin. He grew up in the small town near Deer Isle and attended high school in Stonington, where he was working as a sternman on boats in the Stonington area. For the last dozen years since graduating from high school, Hartmann has continued to work as a sternman on boats in the Stonington area. Currently he fishes with Scott Heanssler on the F/V Patient Lady out of Deer Isle.

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MAINE LOBSTERMEN’S ASSOCIATION UPDATE

Maine Lobstermen’s Association

Advocating for responsible resource management and prosperity for Maine’s commercial lobstermen since 1954.


The 126th Maine Legislature is in full swing. The Marine Resources Committee has been busy considering a variety of fisheries issues. The MLA is closely tracking LD 1997 An Act To Allow the Sale of Incidentally Caught Lobsters. The bill proposes to allow federally-permitted groundfish vessels to land lobster taken as bycatch from Lobster Management Area 3 at the Portland Fish Exchange. The proposal would give the Commissioner the authority to establish landing limits and requires the DMR to report back to the Legislature in January 2016 on the effects of the regulation. The MLA maintains its opposition to landing any lobster caught in dragger gear. The public hearing date is April 8 at 10 a.m.

The Marine Resources Committee has held public hearings and work sessions on two bills to increase investment in marketing of Maine lobster, both of which were strongly supported by the MLA. LD 182 An Act To Support the Maine Lobster Industry proposes a $1 million investment from the General Fund to support lobster marketing. LD 486 An Act To Provide for the Effective Marketing and Promotion of Maine Lobster proposes to raise $3 million from the lobster industry and restructure the promotion council with new board composition, transparency and accountability measures. The Committee is working on amendments to the bill to restructure the proposed funding formula and board composition.

Following the public hearings and work sessions, the Marine Resources Committee voted not to support LD 469 An Act To Allow the Commissioner of Marine Resources To Investigate Price Fixing of Lobster and LD 557 An Act To Change the Age at Which a Person Qualifies for an Exemption from the Fee for a Lobster and Crab Fishing License. A bill aimed at creating another license category, LD 899 An Act To Create a Noncommercial, Nondominated Resident Lobster 6 Crab Fishing License, has not yet been scheduled for public hearing.

Public hearings have been held on three bills aimed at improving passage for alewives on the St. Croix River. The MLA has supported its long-standing position advocating for unconstrained passage of alewives on the St. Croix since its blockage in the 1990’s by supporting LD 72 An Act to Open the St. Croix to River Herring and LD 748 An Act Regarding the Passage of River Herring on the St. Croix River. These bills would ensure that fishways on the Woodland and Grand Falls Dams on the St. Croix River are configured in a manner that allows the unconstrained passage of river herring by May 1, 2013. The Governor submitted LD 584 An Act To Provide for Passage of River Herring on the St. Croix River in Accordance with an Adaptive Management Plan an alternate proposal for limited passage of alewives. The public hearing drew a packed room of supporters of unconstrained fish passage on the St. Croix, with only a handful of people testifying in opposition to these bills.

Two bills seeking to give the DMR the authority to develop fisheries management plans. LD 778 An Act To Develop Principles To Guide Fisheries Management Decisions and LD 811 An Act To Provide Guidance for the Development of State Fisheries Management Plans will be heard by the Marine Resources Committee in early April. LD 482 An Act To Improve the Quality of the Data Used in the Management of Maine’s Fisheries, which would make improvements to the state’s data collection program for fisheries, will also go to public hearing in early April.

Three bills have been submitted to deal with lobster zone boundary issues. LD 810 An Act To Amend the Lobster Trap Tag System Rules for Certain Zones proposes to reduce the number of traps that Zones F and G lobstermen can fish in their non-declared zone from 49% to 25%. LD 1020 An Act Regarding the Swans Island Lobster Zone proposes to establish the Swans Island Lobster Conservation Area in law (rather than regulation) and set the maximum allowable number of traps and tags to 550 (rather than 475). LR 1681 An Act To Ease Compliance and Enforcement near Lobster Zone Borders has been submitted but the bill has not yet been printed.

Two bills have been submitted to provide incentives to establish more lobster processing in Maine: LD 643 An Act To Create a Tax Incentive Program To Improve the Maine Lobster Industry and LR 94 An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Provide Funds for the Development of Lobster Processing Capacity in the State (at press time this bill has not been printed).

Several bond or tax proposals have been submitted: LD 358 An Act To Protect Family Farms and Working Waterfront Subject to Estate Tax and Reduce the Maine Estate Tax Exclusion; LD 273 An Act Authorizing a General Fund Bond Issue To Fund the Dredging of Casco Bay and the Expansion of the Portland Fish Exchange; LD 378 An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Complete Renovations of a Pier at the Gulf of Maine Research Institute; LD 1101 An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Support Waterfront Development; LD 939 An Act To Restore Maine’s Groundfish Industry.

The bills’ progress can be tracked or you can listen live online to public hearings and work sessions through the state’s legislative website, www.legis.gov. You can receive weekly email updates from the Marine Resources Committee clerk by calling 287-1337 or emailing Diane. Steward@legislature.maine.gov.

Maine Lobstermen’s Association

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LOBSTER BYCATCH, MARKETING AND ALEWIVES DEBATED AT LEGISLATURE

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~ Editor’s note: Steaming Ahead will reappear in the May issue. ~
The MLA weighed in against new rules proposed by the Maine Board of Pesticide Control to weaken mosquito spraying regulations. The state wants to change the rules to facilitate government-sponsored, wide-area, mosquito-control programs without the need to obtain consent from each individual landowner or other spraying limitations. The state is concerned about threats to public health from mosquitos carrying West Nile Virus (WNV) and Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE). The MLA urged the Board of Pesticide Control and the Center for Disease Control to rethink its strategy to protect public health.

**Mosquito Control**

Mosquito pesticides also affect lobster larvae, according to recent Maine Pesticide Control Board illustration.

The MLA takes very seriously the public health concerns, but wholly disagrees with the state’s approach. A government-sponsored, wide-area mosquito control program could put the lobster fishery at risk. The use of adulticides to control mosquito populations is not effective. Since lobster and mosquitoes are both arthropods, many chemicals designed to kill mosquitoes also have lethal or sub-lethal effects on lobsters. In addition, the cumulative effects of such spraying are not understood. Laboratory studies conducted to understand the causes of the 1999 Long Island Sound lobster die-off showed pesticides did have both lethal and sub-lethal effects on lobster. In 2012, Connecticut state agencies found traces of pesticides in lobster following reports of weak and dying lobsters. MLA is also very concerned about the potential for drift and non-target application of pesticides in and around the shoreline, even if sensitive sites are excluded from aerial programs.

In the event that one of these diseases becomes a public health issue in Maine, the MLA strongly urges the Board of Pesticide Control to educate the public on prevention efforts such as eliminating breeding sites, encouraging natural predators, and proper personal protection to prevent bites. If education is not enough and additional mosquito control is necessary, the MLA urged BPC to implement a strategy to use mosquito control methods such as larvicides, specifically products such as Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis, which is known to have the least potential impact on lobster and other marine species.

**MLA TRACKS MARINE MAMMAL SCIENCE**

MLA director Patrice McCarron travelled to St. Petersburg, Florida in March to attend the Atlantic Scientific Steering and Reviewing Committee (ASRG) meeting. As part of MLAs efforts to advocate for Maine lobstermen in the federal rulemaking process for whales, MLA has found it necessary to monitor the scientific process that guides the annual assessments for marine mammals.

One of the key issues that MLA has raised is how the scientific process is itself subject to political influences. The ASRG advises the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on methods used to assess stock status and, importantly, the assumptions and decisions that drive these assessments given the limitations of available data. NMFS is in the process of drafting new advice to guide the marine mammal stock assessment processes, known as GAMMS III (Guidelines for Assessing Marine Mammal Stocks), which will have a huge impact on how marine mammal populations are estimated. The agency recently implemented new regulations on how to count seriously injured and mortalities among whales. Combined, these new regulations will change how NMFS assess the impact of fisheries on endangered marine mammal populations and how lobstermen are managed.

**OPENING GROUNDFISH CLOSED AREAS**

The New England Fishery Management Council is accepting public comment on Framework 48 until April 9. Framework 48 includes a proposal to modify a regulatory process to ensure sectors can request access to portions of yearround groundfish closed areas. This change would provide additional opportunities to target healthy fish stocks but still maintain closures to protect habitat.

Framework 48 proposes a change to the FMP that would allow sectors to submit limited requests for exemption from portions of yearround closure areas. Specifically, sectors could request exemption from the year-round groundfish mortality closures, except for where they overlap current or proposed habitat closed areas. These areas are the existing habitat-closed areas specified at §648.81(b) and the Phippenes Ledge area under consideration as a potential habitat management area. Sectors also would not be exempt from the Western GOM Closed Area, where it overlaps with a GOM Rolling Closure Area in effect. At this time, the GOM Rolling Closure Area III overlaps the northeastern corner of the Western GOM Closed Area, so sectors would not be allowed to request access to this portion of the Western GOM Closed Area during May. The Council further limited sector exemption requests to Closed Area I and II to February 16 through April 30th to protect spawning groundfish. This measure is proposed to help mitigate the expected reductions in FY 2013 catch limits by allowing sectors to potentially increase access to healthy groundfish stocks such as GB haddock, pollock, and redfish that may be more abundant in these areas.

**MAINE DREDGING PROJECTS**

In 2013 the Army Corp of Engineers (ACOE) expects to undertake two projects, the Piscataqua River/Simplex Reach and Portland Harbor. The ACOE has funding for the Piscataqua River/Simplex Reach project and began construction in February. The approximately $13 million needed for the Portland Harbor project is in the President’s proposed budget. The ACOE expects to issue a request for bids for that project in the spring of 2013 and begin work in November if Congress appropriates the funds. Local interests are working to ensure that provision for lobster relocation is made a condition of approval for the project’s water quality certification.

The ACOE is working on several other operations and maintenance dredge projects in Maine: Beals Island/Pig Island Gut ($4 million; the ACOE intends undertake these two projects together when funding and a draft study shows ACoe needs to complete Endangered Species Act consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regarding potential adverse effects on the piping plover; Royal River ($3 million); Scarborough River ($3.4 million); Biddeford Pool (no estimate provided), Saco River (no estimate provided), Kennebunk River (no estimate provided), and York Harbor ($8 million).

The ACOE prioritizes funding for maintenance dredging based primarily on the tonnage of commercial freight that passes through a federal navigation project. Accordingly, smaller projects such as no commercial shipping, like most of those in Maine, do not rank among the ACOE’s funding priorities.

The ACOE has proposed certain navigation improvement-related projects in Maine. These include Scarborough ($3.8 million), ACOE needs authorization under the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) and a federal appropriation to complete this project, for which a feasibility study has been completed. The ACOE expects to release that study for public comment this spring. An additional project is planned for the Piscataqua River ($5.3 million). ACOE needs WRDA authorization and a federal appropriation to complete this project, for which a feasibility study is being prepared. If the project is approved and funded, $3.4 million for both projects will be available for public comment. The study should be available for public review and comment in the next several months. Under the ACOEs’ authority, Saco would be financially responsible for future maintenance costs. These costs include an estimated $1.4 million for each nourishment undertaken three or four times over the next 50 years.

**US/CANADIAN LOBSTER TOWN MEETING**

A MLA educator coordinator Antje Tselikis attended the annual U.S.-Canada Lobster Town Meeting, held in St. John, New Brunswick, in late March. The two-day gathering convened fishermen, lobster dealers, government employees, industry association representatives and members of marketing entities from MAINE LOBSTERMEN’S ASSOCIATION UPDATE

Continued on page 14
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New England and the Canadian Maritimes. The roundtable discussion that began on Friday morning with a conversation about improving product quality and handling evolved into a dialogue about the recent Marine Stewardship Council certification for the Maine lobster fishery and discussion of which provincial lobster fisheries will be moving forward on certification in the future. Presentations and discussions in the afternoon focused on ocean wind energy and the move within the United States toward Marine Spatial Planning. The majority of the discussion from the half-day Saturday session covered issues of lobster markets, promotion and profitability.

**TAA UPDATE**

We’re getting there! After almost three years since participants signed up for the federal TAA program, we are now in the process of wrapping up the project. The contract must be completely closed out by September 23 this year. As a result we have a few deadlines before that in order to ensure that participants who plan to complete their TAA programs still have plenty of time to do so.

**Many thanks to these fine businesses, our Keeper members!**

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<th>Atlantic Edge Lobster</th>
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The Maine Lobstermen's Association held its annual meeting on March 1 at the start of the Maine Fishermen's Forum, held at the Samoset Resort in Rockport. The meeting opened with voting for a slate of nominees for the board of directors. Lawrence Pye and Brian McLain were thanked for their years of service on the board, and David Cousins of Spruce Head, Jim Dow of Bass Harbor, Jay Smith of Nobleboro, Craig Stewart of Long Island, and Elliott Thomas of Yarmouth were re-elected for three-year terms.

Patrice McCarron, executive director, read the following anti-trust statement on the record: The MLA is committed to full compliance with all federal and state antitrust and competition laws. Members are reminded that it is inappropriate for independent lobster harvesters to engage in communications or conduct that could lead to or support an implicit or explicit agreement on the price or volume of current or future lobster landings. Such communications could take place in or in connection with any meeting of official function of the MLA.

Rear Admiral Daniel Abel, Commander USCG District 1, was not able to appear as scheduled. Kevin Plowman, Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety Examiner, Northeast Sector, addressed the membership on the confusing status of federal vessel safety requirements for fishing boats. The Coast Guard Reauthorization Act of 2010 required that fishing vessels pass a mandatory safety exam by October, 2012. The Coast Guard Reauthorization Act of 2012 bumped that requirement to October, 2013, and made the exam mandatory every five years. Plowman said that other safety measures would be instituted, once regulations are promulgated, but that will likely take some time.

Patrice then reviewed MLA highlights from the past year. The MLA created the Maine Lobstermen’s Community Alliance (MLCA), a nonprofit organization focused on Maine’s fishing communities with an educational, charitable and scientific mission. The MLCA produces Landings, formerly known as the MLA newsletter, and has its own web site, www.mlcalliance.org. The MLA will continue to act as the advocate for Maine’s lobster industry.

The TAA program is coming to a close this year. Overall, it’s been a very successful program. More than 2,600 participants from Maine signed up to take part in the program and thus far, 1,394 have completed a long-term business plan, nearly 52% of the total who started. One hundred and two workshops have been held throughout the coast during the past two years, on such topics as Lobster Market Overview, Alternative Business Enterprises, and Business Planning. The program will end this fall.

The Lobster Industry Profitability Study undertaken by the Gulf of Maine Research Institute (GMRI) in collaboration with the MLA is nearly complete. MLA staff collected financial information from a subset of lobstermen while GMRI conducted a survey of 1,200 lobstermen in 2010 on the cost of lobstering. The data were analyzed by zone and the size of the lobsterman’s business to develop a financial computer model to understand how factors affect profitability. GMRI is creating a computer-based simulator that will allow users to test what happens to profitability at different bait and fuel prices. One of the project’s products will be a profit simulator based on zone and size of operation that can be used by individual lobstermen.

Patrice gave a brief update on the status of proposed whale regulations to include the number of vertical lines in the water. The draft regulations are due to be released by NMFs later this year with final regulations in place by 2014. The MLA, working with the Consortium for Bycatch Reduction, produced a report on how lobstermen are coping with the problems produced by sinking groundline, based on zone and trap configuration. In addition, MLA conducted underwater video documentation to assess the chafing issue reported by so many lobstermen.

The results of the MLA board’s two-day retreat held in February were presented. In order to discuss strategies looking ahead, lobstermen must understand where we are. While Maine lobster landings have shot through the roof in the past decade, Canadian landings have done the same and represent a much larger proportion of North American lobster landings in total (Maine landings are less than 40% of total landings in 2011). Within in Maine, the timing of landings has changed. In June, 2012, landings doubled over the previous year. In August, the landings were the second highest ever recorded. August landings were the third highest ever recorded (Aug, 2011, was the highest). Shredders continue to be a problem being landed, and most must un-haul in the summer and fall months. The geographic location of landings has also shifted. The majority of lobsters landed in Maine are landed from Zone A, C and D. Lobster landings in Hancock County have doubled in the past three years. With water temperature in the Gulf up and showing no sign of dropping, high landings can be expected for some time, barring a catastrophe.

The board reflected on possible strategies that could improve the overall health of the lobster industry. Members wrestled with the questions of what lobstermen can do to improve the situation and what steps they could take as an industry to ensure that they land the highest quality product possible. Shrinkage is a major factor affecting the price paid to lobstermen. Because Maine lobstermen primarily land soft-shell lobsters, handing practices become crucial to reducing shrinkage. As a lobster dealer who spoke to the board during the retreat said, “You can’t create quality, you can only maintain what you have.” The better the quality of a lobster, the more opportunity it has to be sold in the market. It may not necessarily get a better price, but it has the possibility of getting that price. A damaged or ailing lobster does not.

The board agreed to present a multi-pronged approach to improving the price to the membership. First in importance is to build demand for Maine lobster in order to keep pace with the supply, thus the MLA has supported the marketing bill before the Marine Resources Committee. The other tasks will be to encourage lobstermen to land the best quality lobster possible in order to maximize potential of each lobster in the market (best practices from trap to truck) and to maximize the value of the lobster landed. In the short-term, the MLA proposes to promote best handling practices to lobstermen, common-sense techniques that each individual lobsterman can choose to use as he or she sees fit. Certain habits, like throwing lobsters from the crate to the tank, storing lobsters in the sun, storing lobsters in warm or low saline water or hoisting crates by one becket will lessen a lobster’s value. Keeping lobsters cool, moist, and well-oxygenated and handling them as little as possible will result in more high-value lobsters, even among shedders. The membership endorsed this strategy.

MLA members then heard from Department of Marine Resources Commissioner Pat Keliher and Governor Paul LePage at the MLA annual meeting on March 1. Photo by Mike Young.

From left to right, MLA president David Cousens, DMR commissioner Pat Keliher, and Governor Paul LePage at the MLA annual meeting on March 1. Photo by Mike Young.
from the businesses that they buy or sell to. We have a great response. The Portland Fish Exchange always provides the fish for the Friday night dinner no matter what sort of a year they’ve had,” Young said.

Togue Brawn, owner of Maine Dayboat Scallops, helped organize multiple suppliers for the seafood reception this year, including Bagaduce River Oyster Company, Johns River Oysters, Browne Trading and Cantrell Seafood. As she noted in an email, “Everyone is expected to do something to help out. Chiloa lets people know what needs to get done and people just take it on. She’ll send out an e-mail with something that needs to get done and whoever can do it just replies to all.”

At the Friday night auction, bidders can buy goods and services donated by a spectrum of fishing industry businesses. “People really are happy to donate to the event because we welcome all fisheries here,” Young continued. “And every penny raised goes to the scholarship drawing the next night.” Each year the Forum awards up to 20 $1,000 scholarships to children and grandchildren of anyone actively participating in Maine’s seafood industry who are undergraduates in at least the second year of college (see sidebar). These scholarships represent the true heart of the Forum.

“People have come in [during the Forum] and handed me rolls of cash. They say that it is strictly for the scholarships,” Young said. “An insurance vendor’s wife made a quilt this year and he brought it in to put in the auction.” Since its inception in 1998 the Forum scholarship fund has awarded $254,500 in scholarship aid to students from fishing families.

The mix of educational seminars, trade show booths and family events makes the Fishermen’s Forum a rare type of event. “That’s what the Forum generates—generosity and good will,” Young said. “It’s a neutral place to meet with others, scientists or whomever. And it’s a family vacation too!” The Island Fishermen’s Wives Association, one of the Forum’s founding members, has contributed funds to the family events each year, which include everything from cooking classes to movies and face painting for the children.

The University of Southern Maine School of Nursing sets up shop at the Samoset each year to provide free health checks for fishermen and their families. “It’s also all volunteer. We do feed them pizza at lunch each day,” Young explained. The student nurses check participants’ glucose, cholesterol, and blood pressure and even give booster shots for tetanus. The Maine Lobstermen’s Association has donated to the health screening each year to help cover the costs of supplies. At the last two Forums a dermatologist joined the nursing team. “He came to scan for skin cancer. Fishermen spend a lot of time in the sun,” Young said. More than half the individuals scanned last year were referred for further examination; one person was diagnosed on the spot with melanoma.

The Forum’s Trade Show has evolved over the years into a complex of marine equipment dealers, non-profit organizations and service providers. A fisherman can find just about everything he or she might need, from marine insurance or lobster bait, to a new engine or the latest in propeller design. Many of the vendors at the Forum also donate to the scholarship auction. “I have heard from vendors that we have very intelligent fishermen up here. Another [businessman] said that the show is peerless in maine. Another [businessman] said that the show is peerless in maine, another fisherman said that the show is peerless in maine. Another [businessman] said that the show is peerless in maine.”

young. “Those pages are an opportunity for someone who has passed away or give a donation in honor of that person to the Forum. The pages recognize the diversity of fishermen working along the coast of Maine, from long-time lobstermen to younger men recently lost at sea. Such recognition is just part of Maine’s fishing heritage, according to Young. “Those pages are an opportunity to honor our fishermen,” she said.

The pages also make a reference to the Forum’s Annual Proceedings which are not only suited for the current year but are scanned by other Maine fishermen which often leads to additional services.

The Forum’s Trade Show has evolved over the years into a complex of marine equipment dealers, non-profit organizations and service providers. A fisherman can find just about everything he or she might need, from marine insurance or lobster bait, to a new engine or the latest in propeller design. Many of the vendors at the Forum also donate to the scholarship auction. “I have heard from vendors that we have very intelligent fishermen up here. Another [businessman] said that the show is peerless in maine. Another [businessman] said that the show is peerless in maine. Another [businessman] said that the show is peerless in maine.”

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INSIDE THE DMR: Lobster science programs robust, despite budget woes

By Melissa Waterman

Science programs cost money, that’s a cold, hard fact. And in these days of shrinking federal and state budgets, it’s hard to keep the money coming for the meticulous data gathering that is necessary for proper management of Maine’s lobster fishery. Yet the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) science bureau has managed to keep most lobster science programs afloat, trimming costs as needed yet maintaining critical streams of data.

In 2012 the department eliminated the port sampling program for lobster, a program that had been in existence since 1967. The program was created back then in order to gain information on the commercial catch of lobster in the state. Through one-on-one interviews with lobstermen at the dock, DMR was able to gather data on the number of traps hauled, bait used, soak time and length of time fishing, among other facts, providing the first understanding of the amount of effort lobstermen put into the fishery.

"We eliminated the port sampling program because we now have mandatory 10% harvester reporting," explained Linda Mercer, director of the science bureau. "We get the same information on catch and effort as we did in the port sampling program, so it was partially redundant." The at-sea sampling program for lobster also provides some of the same data that port sampling did. "We can get length and other biological information from sea sampling, although we sample fewer trips," Mercer continued. "So we decided to shore up the sea sampling program." There has been no loss of critical data from the expiration of the port sampling program but there has been a different sort of loss. "I’m sorry we lost the contact at the dock with the lobstermen. That was an important piece of the program," Mercer said.

The mandatory commercial dealer program that requires all lobster dealers to report landings by month to the DMR continues unabated. That program is funded through the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSSP), a federal/state program established in 1985 in conjunction with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC). It is the principal source of fisheries data for the Atlantic states. Maine has been contributing data to the ACCSP for ten years now.

"The program wasn’t set up to fund programs on a long-term basis. It was more on a start-up basis," Mercer said. Each year the DMR must reapply for the funds. "We’ve always been funded through the ACCSP for ten years now." Yet the flow of data on Maine’s most valuable marine species continues, despite perennial budget dilemmas. "I’m confident we are collecting good data. Despite perennial budget dilemmas, the flow of data on Maine’s most valuable marine species continues."

Lobstermen and other commercial fishermen can count on Scania for the power they need, when they need it. Scania engines are built to exacting standards for outstanding performance, extraordinary fuel economy and extended service intervals.

Fuel saving lobster boat engines in stock!

On average, Scania engines attain one to two GPH better fuel economy than competing engines. So for every 1,000 hours you run your engine, you can enjoy:

• $4,000 to $8,000 savings on fuel alone!
• 60% longer service intervals and fewer service parts
• Increased operation revenue and hundreds less in service costs
Marine Patrol Specialist Matt Talbot was given the annual Officer of the Year award and Marine Resources Commissioner Patrick Keliher received the MLA award for Outstanding Achievement during the Maine Fishermen’s Forum in March.

Specialist Talbot was responsible for the arrest of two midcoast men for possession of over 400 v-notch lobsters. Specialist Talbot is a twelve-year veteran of the Marine Patrol and serves in the Rockland to Searsport area.

Commissioner Keliher was honored for his outreach efforts to industry and for his work to improve department morale and effectiveness. Keliher was praised for reaching out to the state’s lobstering industry to involve lobstermen in the decision making process.

MLA board member Elliott Thomas received the Golden V-notch Award from MLA director Patrice McCarron. Thomas has served on the MLA board for many years. He also serves on Maine’s Commercial Fishing Safety Council.

Present your MLA membership card at the following businesses and receive generous discounts!

**Accutech Marine Propeller**
Dover, NH -- 20% off propeller repair; discounts vary by manufacturer for new propellers, shafting and other hardware.

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

**Bessy Bait, LLC**
Seabrook, NH -- 5% off each barrel on multiple barrel purchases at the Seabrook NH location with proof of MLA membership.

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

**Coastal Hydraulics**
Seabrook, NH -- 10% discount on all in stock items.

**Friendship Trap Company**
Friendship, ME -- 5% off list price on traps when you show your MLA membership card.

**Harold C Ralph Chevrolet**
Waldoboro, ME -- 10% off parts and labor.

**Hews Company**
South Portland, ME -- 10% off hydraulic components and cable craft cables.

**Maine Camp Outfitters**
Sunset, ME -- 10% off all apparel and promotional product orders.

**Maine Lobstermen’s Association**
Kennebunk, ME--10% off to harvesters on MLA merchandise.

**Maine Maritime Museum**
Bath, ME -- Free admission.

**McMillan Offshore Survival Training**
Belfast, ME -- 10% discount on USCG Drill Conductor training.

**National Fisherman**
North Hollywood, CA -- Special annual subscription rate of $12.95, use J12MLA code for discount.

**Newcastle Chrysler Dodge-Jeep**
Newcastle, ME -- 15% off parts and service. Receive $200.00 additional discount on all new and used vehicles. Please bring ad copy in at time of sale.

**Nicholas H Walsh, PA**
Portland, ME -- 25% off legal services.

**North Atlantic Power**
Exeter, NH -- 10% off service repairs of twin disc transmissions, 15% off any new MGX series.

**Penobscot Marine Museum**
Searsport, ME -- Free admission.

**Sea Rose Trap Co.**
Scarborough, ME -- 5% off trap list price.

**Sea Side Rope Inc.**
Warren, ME -- Show MLA membership card to receive discounts off retail pricing.

**Smithwick & Mariners Insurance**
Falmouth, ME -- Discounted vessel insurance plus 5% discount with proof of CG approved Drill Conductor course within the last 5 years.

**SW Boatworks**
Lamoine, ME -- Show MLA card to receive $500.00 discount on a new hull or top.

**Weathervane Seafood Inc.**
Kittery, ME -- 10% of all shipping (mail orders) and retail orders.

**Winter Harbor Co-op**
Winter Harbor, ME -- 10% off fresh picked lobster meat.
By Landis Hudson

This spring the Maine Legislature is set to hear from the public on bills to restore river herring (alewives and blueback herring) to the St. Croix River. The St. Croix could be the biggest source of these fish, offering many acres of freshwater lake habitat for spawners before they return to the ocean where the fish spend most of their lives. I expect that legislators will hear from lobstermen, Passamaquoddy Tribal members, scientists and alewife harvesters, all in favor of reopening this once-important river. At the same time that our legislators are getting up to speed on where, when and how river herring live and reproduce, efforts are underway to consider listing alewives and blueback herring as endangered species throughout their ranges on the East Coast. Why all this interest? And why should you care about the fate of these fish?

Alewives and blueback herring are hard to tell apart; they are usually managed and harvested together and known as "river herring." It’s no secret to lobstermen that river herring make good bait. Sales of alewives fill the coffers of those Maine towns that have the rights to harvest and sell alewives. Nineteen Maine municipalities are now allowed to harvest alewives four days per week. The fish can move freely up river the other three days. Maine's Department of Marine Resources works with these towns to ensure that the number of returning adults alewives is maintained. In 2012 over 1.6 million pounds of alewives were sold bringing more than $825,000 into Maine's economy, substantially more than the 1.1 million pounds harvested in 2011.

Last year marked the highest statewide alewife harvests recorded since 1979, a positive-sounding trend. Overall since the 1970s, however, we have seen a greater than 93% decrease in commercial landings of river herring nationally. It’s a dire situation. Extinction risk models are being analyzed by the National Marine Fisheries Service for alewives and blueback herring right now. The results of these analyses will determine if one or both species receive an Endangered Species designation. Currently alewives and blueback herring are a NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service "species of concern."

When it comes to local food, river herring are the original "Made in Maine" product. For thousands of years they have been caught by humans and devoured by all sizes and shapes of other creatures in lakes, rivers and ocean.

The life cycle of river herring is similar to that of the Atlantic salmon—the adults return to rivers to lay eggs in freshwater, then return to live most of their lives in marine waters. The spring migration of river herring into our rivers creates a pulse of energy after long and hungry winters. Alewives and blueback herring are not glamorous species; their volume is their value. Where other creatures have developed tricks like camouflage, speed or concealment to elude predators, these fish have simply relied on numbers, coming up Maine's rivers to spawn in the spring in such great numbers they could be eaten by a whole host of creatures such as bald eagles, osprey, great blue herons, cormorants, mink and bear, yet enough would remain to reproduce and return to the ocean.

River herring eggs feed lake-dwelling creatures. After a few months of freshwater growth the young-of-year fish move back down rivers to the ocean, providing an energy-rich snack for other predators they encounter, and serving as a "prey buffer" to hide salmon smolts moving in the same waterways.

Certainly their status in Maine has risen over the past decade as scientists have come to understand their ecological value. Scientists now theorize that damming of coastal rivers contributed to the collapse of the cod fishery in the Gulf of Maine by reducing the numbers of alewives, one of the cod’s principal prey. Scientists believe that groundfish stocks in the Gulf of Maine will benefit from restoration of river herring populations.
It’s not only the meat in lobsters and other shellfish that is valuable to humans. Researchers have found that the shells, which are often discarded, contain a component known as chitosan that has therapeutic and medicinal purposes.

Richard Wahle, a research associate professor at the University of Maine School of Marine Sciences, explained that the shells of lobsters and other crustaceans are made up of many components, including carbohydrates, proteins, and minerals, which create the framework for the shell. Chitosan is a polysaccharide (sugar).

“Those [components] give the exoskeleton its characteristics such as color, texture, flexibility, and other biological properties,” said Wahle. Researchers at Purdue University School of Veterinary Medicine in Indiana tested a form of chitosan derived from shrimp and lobster shells to determine whether it could be used to repair damaged spinal cords in guinea pigs.

To test this hypothesis, the researchers isolated and compressed a section of guinea pig spinal cord. Then they applied the chitosan and added a fluorescent dye which could only be viewed under the microscope, the researchers were thrilled to see that the tissue remained unstained. They concluded that chitosan had repaired the damaged membranes. The researchers were even more excited when they tested to determine whether the spinal cord could transmit electrical signals to the brain through the tissues repaired by chitosan. They found that 30 days after injecting chitosan, electrical signals which previously had been unable to travel through damaged tissues were being received by the brain.

Chitosan has not yet been tested on human patients with spinal cord injuries because the research is still in the early stages. However, researchers are encouraged by the results of the study. Dr. Richard Borgens, who led the team, isn’t claiming that chitosan will be a cure for spinal cord injuries but hopes that it can be used to improve the quality of life for disabled people. “There will never be one ‘magic bullet.’ It will take multiple therapies targeted to each phase of the injury process to provide quality of life for those injured,” he said. Dr. Borgens said that the research center at the university has already discovered three other therapies for nerve damage which have since been patented.

Researchers at the Army Institute of Surgical Research in San Antonio, Texas, conducted experiments with live rats. They found that the use of chitosan resulted in the regrowth of nerve axons in a spinal cord injury. The researchers described the regrowth of nerve tissue as “miraculous.”

“Those are preliminary results, but they are extremely promising,” said Dr. John Muschler, the lead researcher on the project. “We are encouraged by these results and are looking forward to further studies.”

In the case of uncontrolled bleeding, it may occur during a military battle, chitosan can be used as a dressing. The material forms an immediate seal of a wound which then allows time for a patient’s own blood clotting mechanisms to take effect.

In a technical report published by the Army Institute of Surgical Research in 2004, the authors noted that chitosan has the potential to bring 25 million military and other traumatic wound settings where massive hemorrhaging leads to depletion of blood clotting factors. Chitosan-based dressings were used successfully to control bleeding after the removal of dead tissue. The patients would otherwise have required a trip to the operating room or cautery to control bleeding.

More recent research suggests that chitosan may also possess antibacterial properties. HemCon manufacturers report that their chitosan-based dressings provide a barrier against a spectrum of nasty bacteria, including the antibiotic-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, the source of many infections contracted at hospitals.
companies holding a lobster processor-tails only permit grew from six in 2010 to ten in 2012. This growth came after the Maine Legislature passed a law in 2010 allowing the processing of lobster parts, such as knuckles, claws and split tails.

Companies that have a wholesale seafood with lobster permit, such as Hanaford Supermarkets or your local fish market, numbered 364 in 2012, a figure that has remained steady during the past three years.

DEFINITIONS OF LOBSTER PERMITS

Wholesale seafood license with lobster permit, $443
A person holding a wholesale seafood license with a lobster permit may buy, sell, process or ship lobster or properly licensed or lawfully imported lobster meat or parts, transport lobster or properly licensed or lawfully imported lobster meat or parts anywhere within the state limits.

Lobster Processor License $500
A Lobster Processor License (LPL) authorizes a wholesale seafood license with lobster permit holder to remove lobster tails and parts in the shell from the lobster

Lobster Processor Tails only License $159
A Lobster Processor Tails only License (LPTOL) authorizes a wholesale seafood license with lobster permit holder to remove lobster tails in the shell from the lobster

Lobster Meat Permit $159
A lobster meat permit authorizes a wholesale seafood license holder or a retail seafood license holder to remove lobster meat from the shell for sale. There are two exceptions:

1. Wholesale seafood license holder may, at the license holder’s regular establishment, cut lobster or properly licensed or lawfully imported lobster meat or parts, transport or ship lobster or properly licensed or lawfully imported lobster meat or parts, to another state or to the Canadian province Nova Scotia. It sells fresh-picked meat throughout the United States as well as live lobsters, and recently became part of Maine Seafood Ventures, selling frozen lobster.

John Ready briddles a bit at the but in something even more complex: unity. “You have everyone [in the lobster industry] hated one another,” he said. “Now, you can’t do that. We compete, sure, but it’s an industry. We must be professional and work together. Fishermen, dealers, buyers, shippers, processors. We have to act together to increase brand awareness or we will be no better off than last year.”

These permits don’t come cheap, according to Chad Dorr, president of Dorr Lobster in Milbridge. A wholesale seafood with lobster license cost $443. His lobster processor-tails only permit is $159; the lobster processor permit costs $500; and a permit to transport lobster out of state runs $312. “Yes, if you look at all a dealer has to pay [to be properly permitted], it is a lot,” Dorr said.

Although his processing plant is small, Dorr must follow the same requirements as larger companies do. He must create a federally-approved HACCP plan for his facility and follow it to the letter. HACCP certification has been used by the FDA since the mid-1990s to ensure that seafood and other food products are reliably safe for human consumption. Not only must Dorr have a HACCP plan approved by the FDA, he must also have one person on staff who is trained in HACCP procedures. That person in turn must take an FDA-approved HACCP training course. “The course runs about $300 to $500,” said Dorr. Dorr understands the value of having a HACCP plan designed to prevent any safety problems occurring during processing. “But I’m small,” he noted. “The return is small too.”

So why bother with processing in the first place? Dorr, after all, sells picked meat primarily to local restaurants and a selection of lobster products through the company Web site. “The reason we process is to compensate for loss,” he explained. “Let’s say I get a hundred pounds a week of lobsters I know aren’t healthy enough to make it on a truck. I can’t afford to lose that.”

John Ready, co-founder with his brother Breckinridge and Ready Seafood in Portland, acknowledges that it takes a lot of time and a “tremendous” number of permits to get a processing business off the ground. “You can look at all that and bitch and moan or just do it. It’s the cost of doing business. There are a lot of regulations in place. You deal with it.” To his mind making a go of it as a processor calls for much more than permits.

“You have to have a strategic plan, discipline and direction. You can’t do all constant complaint that Canadian processors enjoy certain federal and provincial subsidies for their businesses. “You build a business model to be as efficient as you possibly can be with the resources you have,” he said. “Lots of times when there’s free money [given out by government agencies] being efficient goes out the window.”

Albert Carver, president of Carver’s Shellfish on Beals Island, sees more difficulties for smaller businesses getting into the processing business than in years past. A seafood processor for 37 years, Carver ticks off the obstacles that a new company must face. “You have to have the capital for the plant and the infrastructure. The infrastructure includes the sewer, and the water and electricity. You need freezing units, not just some cooling. And then the regulations keep changing. You’ve got to keep up with that,” he said.

But more processing is definitely needed in Maine. Gaining every last cent from a fish on Beals Island, sees more difficulties for smaller businesses getting into the processing business than in years past. A seafood processor for 37 years, Carver ticks off the obstacles that a new company must face. “You have to have the capital for the plant and the infrastructure. The infrastructure includes the sewer, and the water and electricity. You need freezing units, not just some cooling. And then the regulations keep changing. You’ve got to keep up with that,” he said.

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COZY HARBOR CERTIFIED BY THE BRITISH

Cozy Harbor Seafood has achieved British Retail Consortium (BRC) Grade A certification for its food safety and quality management program. The BRC evaluates both manufacturers and retailers in the food industry, based on food safety, quality control, site standards and other categories. Cozy Harbor is the only U.S. lobster processor to receive the Grade A certification.

The company also introduced its new Frozen Lobster Grill Cuts at the International Boston Seafood Show in March. "The lobster market in the U.S. has exploded over the last year, with lobster roll trucks and lobster shacks popping up not just in Maine, as far west as California," said John Norton, president. "Lobster is an affordable luxury for consumers any time of year. Our new Frozen Lobster Grill Cuts take the mess out of preparation, and allow foodservice operators and retailers to enter the untapped market for convenient lobster."

MASSACHUSETTS CONTEMPORARY SALE OF LOBSTER TAILS

Since 1997, a Massachusetts law has allowed wholesale lobster dealers to process lobsters into frozen, shell-on tails for distribution outside the state, but not for in-state sale and use. A proposed bill would allow Massachusetts lobsters that are processed into frozen, shell-on tails and parts to be sold and used in the state. The bill would put Massachusetts on a legally level playing field with Maine, which authorized the production of in-state lobster parts in 2010. "We believe that by allowing the in-state sale of this product we can increase local demand and production and thereby improve the price per pound paid to our Massachusetts commercial lobstermen," said Bill Adler, executive director of the Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association.

NOAA TO CONDUCT SURVEYS IN PENOBSCOT BAY NEXT MONTH

The NOAA ship Thomas Jefferson will be conducting hydrographic survey operations throughout Penobscot Bay from May 1 through July 31 this year. The Thomas Jefferson is a 208-foot, white survey vessel and deploys two, 31-foot aluminum survey launches. The survey vessels carry NOAA markings, can be identified on AIS, and will be monitoring VHF channels 13 and 16. Survey operations will be conducted 24-hours a day from the ship and from 7:30 a.m. through 6 p.m. with survey launches. Mariners are requested to exercise caution when transiting the operational area. When towed hydrographic instrumentation is deployed, the Thomas Jefferson will be restricted in her ability to maneuver. Questions or concerns can be addressed to the ship's Field Operations Officer via phone at 757-647-0187 or 808-434-2706 or via email at ops.thomas.jefferson@noaa.gov.

DMR SPRING Trawl Survey STARTS IN MAY

The Department of Marine Resources will start its annual spring trawl survey on May 6. Prior to 2000, fishery-independent data were not available for nearly 80% of the Gulf of Maine’s inshore waters. The inshore trawl survey was established to fill that gap by collecting data on the fish and biological communities in this area and create a time series for long-term monitoring of inshore stocks. Each spring and fall since 2000 the department has conducted a trawl survey using commercial fishing vessels as a survey platform. This spring the trawl survey will begin in New Hampshire waters and make its way east during the month. After two days in New Hampshire the survey will move into Casco Bay, then to the Boothbay and Pemaquid area by May 15, followed by Penobscot Bay during the week of May 20, Stonington and Mount Desert Island during May 27. The trawl survey will take place in Downeast waters during the week of June 3. A mailing giving the specific times and places will be mailed to all lobstermen in early April. For more information contact Sally Sherman, sally.sherman@maine.gov.

LOBSTER TOPS LIST AS CANADA’S MOST VALUABLE SEAFOOD EXPORT

The federal Fisheries Department says $4.1 billion worth of Canadian seafood landed on tables in more than 100 countries last year, with lobster remaining the most valuable export.

Fisheries Minister Keith Ashfield said Sunday that Canada exported $41 million more in fish and seafood products in 2012 than the year before.

"The strong exports in 2012 demonstrate the trust consumers place in our fish and seafood products worldwide," he said in a statement.

More than 60 per cent of Canada’s seafood exports were shipped to the United States last year at a value of $2.6 billion.

But the department said China and the European Union remain major markets, each taking in hundreds of millions of dollars worth of Canadian seafood products last year.

The federal government is calling for a trade agreement with the EU that would scrap costly tariffs on most fish and seafood products.

Gerald Keddy, parliamentary secretary to the minister of international trade, said he hopes to gain support for a trade deal while attending an international seafood show in Boston this week.

"Canada has a historic opportunity to gain preferential access to the European Union, a 500-million consumer market and the world’s largest importer of fish and seafood, importing an average of $25 billion annually," he said in the statement.

Aside from lobster - which accounted for $1 billion of Canada’s overall seafood exports last year - the department said snow and queen crab, Atlantic salmon and shrimp were among the country’s most valuable.

New Brunswick was Canada’s largest exporter of seafood last year, with exports valued at $697.2 million, followed by Nova Scotia at $515.4 million and British Columbia at $871.5 million.

The department said some 80,000 people work in the industry, including commercial fishing, aquaculture and processing.
edged. One seat on the Forum’s board of directors was reserved for a representative of the Maine Scallopers Association. Porter was asked to take that seat sixteen years ago (the seat is now an at-large seat) and became its president four years ago. “He’s an excellent leader,” Raymond added. “I was thrilled to see him take the position as president. Of course, he’s a lot more casual than me!” she said with a laugh.

Porter also became aware of the MLA through interactions with MLA president David Cousens over the years. Eventually Porter was asked to serve on its board, which he has done for the last ten years. “Don’t be fooled by Kristan’s quiet manner,” said Patrice McCarron, executive director of the MLA. “He’s an effective leader for downeast communities. He’s one of those special people who has put in the time to understand the system and is driven by his passion to make things better for his local fishermen and for Maine. Porter remains pleasantly matter-of-fact about all that he has contributed to Maine’s fishing industry. “You know, you do one thing and then you get asked to do another. That’s just the way it is,” he said.

Kristan Porter, left, and fellow Forum board member Maggie Raymond at the 2013 Maine Fishermen’s Forum. Photo by Mike Young.

April 3
ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Technical Committee meeting, 9 a.m., Hanover, Maryland.
TAA Lobster Marketing and Branding Workshop, 5-8 p.m., Rockland Lighthouse Museum, Rockland.

April 4
Zone G Lobster Council meeting, 6 p.m., Kennebunk Town Hall.
Sea Urchin Zone Council meeting, 6 p.m., Ellsworth City Hall.
TAA Lobster Marketing and Branding Workshop, 5-8 p.m., Gulf of Maine Research Institute, Portland.

April 8
Zone B Lobster Council meeting, 6 p.m., Mount Desert Island High School.
Public Hearing for LD 1097 An Act to Allow the Sale of Incidentally Caught Lobsters, 10 a.m., Room 206 Cross Building, Augusta. FMI: 287-1337

April 9
DMR Advisory Council meeting, 1 p.m., Hallowell.

April 10
TAA Lobster Marketing and Branding Workshop, 5-8 p.m., Machias Savings Bank, Machias.

April 11
TAA Business Planning Workshop, 5-8 p.m., Ellsworth City Hall.

April 13
TAA Lobster Market Overview Workshop, 5-8 p.m., Gulf of Maine Research Institute, Portland.

April 16
TAA Product Quality and Handling Workshop, 9 a.m., and TAA Alternative Enterprises Workshop, 1:30 p.m., Penobscot East Resource Center, Stonington.

April 17
TAA Lobster Market Overview Workshop, 9 a.m., TAA Developing Your Business Plan Workshop, 1:30 p.m., Penobscot East Resource Center, Stonington.
TAA Product Quality and Handling Workshop, 9 a.m., and TAA Alternative Enterprises Workshop, 1:30 p.m., Rockland Lighthouse Museum.

April 18
TAA Lobster Market Overview Workshop, 9 a.m., and TAA Developing Your Business Plan Workshop, 1:30 p.m., Rockland Lighthouse Museum.

April 23-25
New England Fisheries Management Council meeting, Mystic, Conn.

April 24
TAA Lobster Market Overview Workshop, 5-8 p.m., Machias Savings Bank, Machias.
TAA Alternative Enterprises Workshop, 5-8 p.m., Rockland Lighthouse Museum, Rockland.

April 25
TAA Alternative Enterprises Workshop, 5-8 p.m., Ellsworth City Hall.

Upcoming
May 1
TAA Product Quality and Handling Workshop, 5-8 p.m., Rockland Lighthouse Museum, Rockland.

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TAA Product Quality and Handling Workshop, 5-8 p.m., Gulf of Maine Research Institute, Portland.

May 5
TAA Energy Conservation Workshop, 9 a.m., and TAA Product Quality and Handling Workshop, 1:30 p.m., Maine Maritime Museum, Bath.

May 7
TAA Alternative Enterprises Workshop, 9 a.m., and TAA Developing Your Business Plan Workshop, 1:30 p.m., Maine Maritime Museum, Bath.

May 7-9
Managing Our Nation’s Fisheries 3, Washington, D.C.

May 8
TAA Alternative Enterprises Workshop, 5-8 p.m., Machias Savings Bank, Machias.
TAA Product Quality and Handling Workshop, 9 a.m., and Alternative Enterprises Workshop, 1:30 p.m., Ellsworth City Hall.

May 9
TAA Lobster Market Overview Workshop, 9 a.m., TAA Developing Your Business Plan Workshop, 1:30 p.m., and Marketing and Branding Workshop, 5 p.m., Ellsworth City Hall.

May 15
TAA Lobster Market Overview Workshop, 5-8 p.m., Rockland Lighthouse Museum, Rockland.
A long time ago someone, somewhere made a quietly profound statement: “Knowledge is power.” Knowing what’s happening now in the world of fisheries management, what happened in the past, and what could possibly be on the horizon for the future adds greatly to a lobsterman's power. So, in order to make knowledge readily available to anyone interested in Maine’s lobstering industry, the Maine Lobstermen’s Community Alliance (MLCA) has made all issues of Landings, once known as the MLA Newsletter, available in searchable form on its Web site.

Landings is the MLCA’s monthly publication which offers articles on marine science, resource sustainability, economic development and the people that make up Maine’s fishing communities. Through Landings, MLCA educates the public and lobster industry about the characteristics of Maine’s lobstering traditions, its history and heritage, research undertaken to maintain lobster populations, and lobstermen’s stewardship practices.

Recently the MLCA completed transferrence of the newsletter contents from 2009 to the present into an archival form on its Web site (www.mlcalliance.org). Organized into five categories – Community Voices, Management, Science, People, and Miscellaneous – the hundreds of articles published on everything from right whale physiology to the 2013 herring season can be searched by topic.

Anyone, from a fisherman who wants to know the current members of the state’s Marine Resources Committee to a high school student interested in the history of Maine’s lobster cooperatives, can search the newsletters with a click of the keyboard. Articles can be searched by the date they were published, key words within the story, title, author, or category by simply using the search bar on the News page of the MLCA Web site. Each issue of Landings and earlier MLA newsletters are also available to download as pdf files.

The MLCA’s mission is to foster thriving coastal communities and preserve Maine’s lobstering heritage. Landings is just one of the tools the MLCA uses to educate both local and distant communities, but it is the feedback on this tool that drives its publication. Without letters, questions, and ideas from lobstermen or other industry people, Landings would not be successful in educating its readers. Interaction and discussions are important.

That’s why the MLCA is drawing on other tools to interact with interested parties. Through the MLCA Facebook page, the organization is able to respond to individual questions and concerns and provide up-to-date information on happenings in Maine’s lobstering communities. It is also a great place to share pictures of interesting marine finds and MLCA events.

Landings could not exist without the help of MLCA’s sponsors and advertisers. Their generous contributions each month cover the cost of producing the publication and mailing it for free to all of Maine’s lobstermen and other industry stakeholders.

These companies represent an important part of Maine’s diverse fishing industry. Economists have said that each dollar earned by a Maine fisherman multiplies three times in the local economy as that fisherman buys his fuel, bait, boat equipment and groceries from local businesses. The dollars contributed by the MLCA’s sponsors and advertisers are the foundation of Landings, dollars which now have multiplied into broad public access to information about Maine’s lobster industry through the new searchable Web site.

THE MAINE LOBSTERMEN’S COMMUNITY ALLIANCE IN ACTION

By Sarah Paquette and Melissa Waterman

Penobscot Bay Lobster Co-ops
Maine Co-ops working for Maine lobstermen

Stonington Lobster Co-op
Spruce Head Fishermen’s Co-op
Port Clyde Fishermen’s Co-op
Vinalhaven Fishermen’s Co-op

Thank You MLA for your efforts in producing an excellent and informative newsletter for the lobster industry. Keep up the good work!

Penobscot Bay Lobster Co-ops now features all past newsletters in a searchable format.

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