By Melissa Waterman

Part of the pleasure of attending the annual Maine Fishermen's Forum is the medley of the bureaucratic and the personal, science and anecdotes, the rare and the commonplace. During the recent 40th Maine Fishermen's Forum, held at the Samoset Resort in Rockport, that array was as engaging as ever, spiced up a bit by the appearance once again of David Carraro from the T.V. show "Wicked Tuna."

To no one’s surprise, lobster dominated many of the weekend’s sessions. Preliminary numbers released by the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) show that Maine lobstermen landed $457 million worth of lobster in 2014, a record for the state. The total value of all commercial fisheries landed in Maine came to $585.3 million. And there’s the rub: lobster comprises 78.1% of total landed value.

Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative

For some, the disproportionate weight of lobster among all landings is a cause for worry. The Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative, however, is happy with those numbers. The Collaborative, established in 2013 to replace the Maine Lobster Promotion Council, presented its marketing plan for lobster at the Forum. Executive director Matt Jacobson, former head of Maine & Co., introduced experts from the marketing firm Weber Shandwick, which the Collaborative hired in December, 2014. Weber Shandwick is responsible for such nationally known advertising campaigns as “Got Milk?” and “Pork, the Other White Meat.”

Joe Frydl, strategist at Weber Shandwick, explained the Collaborative’s goal succinctly: “We need to stabilize the price.” The price paid to lobstermen for their catch hit historic lows in 2012 after taking a severe tumble during the recession which began in 2008. That price typically fluctuates greatly during the year based on the amount landed in Maine and the lobstering results in Canada.

So what will Weber Shandwick do for Maine lobstermen? Increase demand for Maine lobster specifically and at a time when most of the lobster is landed, said Frydl, by emphasizing the quality and local characteristics of that lobster. “Seasonality and provenance are popular with diners,” he said. Consumers are searching for food that is in season, locally grown, and has a story attached to it. “The moment you attach a place name to a protein it means something,” he continued, noting that items such as Waygu beef (from Japan), Copper River Salmon (from Alaska) and New Zealand lamb command attention from consumers.

Maine lobster took center stage at the recent Maine Fishermen's Forum. Photo by Mark Haskell.

By Melissa Waterman

Reconstruction of the Eastport breakwater began in mid-March and is anticipated to be completed in two years. A 200-foot section of the breakwater tumbled into the ocean in December, 2014, damaging several boats and sinking the Eastport Port Authority’s pilot boat. Approximately forty commercial vessels once berthed at the breakwater, which is 100 feet by 400 feet in length. Paved and equipped with two hoists, the breakwater was the focal point of Eastport’s commercial fishing fleet.

“You never realize what you’ve got until you lose it,” said local fisherman Scott Emery. “A lot of the boys went on to a mooring, had to buy a skiff, deal with snow and all.”

Continued on page 21
Think spring! That’s what Mainers are saying to each other this month. After a winter of record-breaking snowfall and cold temperatures, we are all ready to see a little green, both on our lawns and in our pockets. This monthMaine lobstermen are painting buoys, repairing traps as they appear from the snowbanks and readying their boats for another successful lobstering season.

Landings jumps into spring by profiling one of the symbols of the season, the alewife. Alewives run up Maine’s many rivers and streams each year in late spring to reach the freshwater lakes in which they will spawn the next generation. Unlike most other states in which these anadromous fish are found, Maine’s alewife populations are considered healthy and sustainable. The Alewife Harvesters of Maine organization works to ensure the fish’s status and to restore many more waterways to the spawning fish, which are the preferred bait for lobstermen fishing in the spring.

We also provide an overview of the 40th annual Maine Fishermen’s Forum. Lobster, which was the highest value commercial species landed in Maine last year, was again a focal point at the Forum. The Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative unveiled its plans for improving sales of Maine lobster; various researchers spoke about the effects of climate change on lobster and other marine species. Department of Marine Resources (DMR) officials explained the new lobster bait regulations that prohibit certain foreign baits; a University of Maine graduate student showed how seafloor ideal for juvenile lobsters to grow has expanded in area due to warmer waters; and to ensure the fish’s status and to restore many more waterways to the spawning fish, which are the preferred bait for lobstermen fishing in the spring. The Fisher of Maine organization works to ensure the fish’s status and to restore many more waterways to the spawning fish, which are the preferred bait for lobstermen fishing in the spring.

The Forum also included fun and celebration. At the final night’s banquet, the Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA) presented its Officer of the Year award to Deer Isle Marine Patrol Officer Owen Reed. The Association’s Outstanding Service award was given to Sarah Cotnoir, lobster zone council liaison for DMR. The city of Eastport is starting its own celebration as work begins on a brand new breakwater. In December, 2014, a 200-foot chunk of the earth-and-rock-filled breakwater tumbled into the sea. This caused serious hardship for the lobstermen who had to find other arrangements for the new breakwater and lobster season just a few months away, those boats are taking stock of where they will be for the next two years while the project is under construction.

Landings continues its series on young lobstermen stepping up as leaders in the industry. Genevieve McDonald of Stonington is one of those people. An energetic young woman, McDonald is involved as a member of the state Lobster Advisory Council. She is also a proponent of women in commercial fisheries, petitioning the international fishing gear maker Grunden to produce a line of gear specifically designed for women. Finally, we hear in this issue from Governor Paul LePage. In the March issue of Landings, we reprinted a story about the Governor’s membership in the Outer Continental Shelf Coalition, which supports offshore energy exploration. Gov. LePage is the first New England governor to join the coalition. In his response to Landings, Gov. LePage emphasizes that his membership is in “no way an endorsement of offshore drilling in Maine waters or other areas that would adversely affect the Maine marine industry,” but is instead a means to stay informed of the issues concerning offshore energy exploration.

We also have an upbeat report from the recent Seafood Expo North America, formerly known as the Boston Seafood Show. The Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative was joined by 14 Maine companies which exhibited at the show. Governor LePage’s words of praise about Maine lobster captured the upbeat mood and optimism for another strong year of sales during the MLMC’s Maine Lobster Reception, which brought together a diverse group of lobster buyers, suppliers and industry stakeholders. As ever, Landings is packed with stories about the diverse people, places and businesses that make up the Maine coast and its commercial fisheries. We are always eager to hear from you about stories that you would like to see covered. Keep in touch!

Patrice McCarron

COASTAL OUTLOOK
Thoughts from MLCA President Patrice McCarron

MLCA fosters thriving coastal communities and preserves Maine’s lobstering heritage

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MLCA is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization, established in 2010, which achieves its charitable mission through programs in education, research and charity.
We received this column from Governor LePage’s office in response to last month’s article entitled “LePage Supports Offshore Drilling.”

Governor Paul R. LePage joined the Outer Continental Shelf Governors Coalition at the invitation of North Carolina Governor Pat McCrory, chairman of the coalition. As the only member from the Northeast, Governor LePage said it is important to stay informed of any initiatives to use offshore energy resources.

“My membership in the coalition is in no way an endorsement of offshore drilling in Maine waters or other areas that would adversely affect the Maine marine industry,” said Governor LePage. “However, it is vital that we know well in advance of any efforts to do so.”

While the Governor believes that Maine and the nation must secure energy independence, he is focused on getting more natural gas to Maine. He is now working with Republican Governor Charlie Baker of Massachusetts to expand a pipeline that will significantly increase natural gas capacity to the region. “Natural gas is the best and cleanest form of energy that we can get to Maine in the fastest timeframe,” said Governor LePage. “Bringing in more natural gas from the vast reserves of Marcellus Shale in Pennsylvania will drive down costs for commercial and industrial companies, allowing them to expand and create well-paying career opportunities for Mainers. It will also lower home heating costs for the Maine people, which is especially important after the brutally cold weather we faced this winter.”

Governor LePage joins the governors of Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia as a member of the coalition.

KYLE MOLTON JOINS STONINGTON ORGANIZATION

By Melissa Waterman

The Penobscot East Resource Center (PERC) hired its first policy director in March. “My role here is one of expanding our capacity to be involved in broader policy discussions,” explained Kyle Molton, 28. “We want to take a thoughtful approach and consider all the implications, from top to bottom, of issues facing fishermen.”

Molton graduated from the University of Maine Marine Sciences program in 2009. He attended the University of Michigan for a Master’s degree in fish and wildlife, during which he worked with commercial fishermen on the Great Lakes. He then received a Knauss Marine Fellowship through which he worked as a staff person for Maine Congresswoman Chellie Pingree in Washington, D.C. “I was involved in federal fishery issues such as the Magnuson Act,” Molton said. “The Knauss Fellowship is a great program because it allows people with science and community experience to get in the door and involved.”

PERC’s many programs reflect the diversity of Maine’s commercial fisheries. The organization has been involved in scallop co-management initiatives, encouraging community-based management of groundfisheries (it is part of the Northeast Coastal Communities Sector), and helping new fishermen deal with the regulatory and financial aspects of fishing, among other things. Molton realizes it will take some time to get his feet under him.

“I think that the licensing discussion will be a major topic this year,” he said. (Continued on page 18)
By Kevin Plowman, U.S. Coast Guard

There have been a lot of new safety rules promulgated by the U.S. Coast Guard in recent years. Beginning on January 1, 2010, vessel construction standards came into effect. These new standards are for commercial fishing vessels less than 50 feet in length operating beyond 3 nautical miles of the baseline of the United States territorial seas. These vessels must be built in a manner that provides a level of safety equivalent to the standards for recreational vessels. Those standards are found in Title 33 of the Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) Parts 181 and 183 and deal with:

- Identification of boats’ hull identification numbers (HIN).
- Capacity plates, safe loading, safe powering, positive flotation for vessels less than 20 feet in length.
- Electrical systems, fuel systems, and ventilation system requirements for boats using gasoline powered engines.
- Navigation lights.
- Start-in-gear protection for outboard powered boats.

Then on July 1, 2013, additional vessel construction standards came into effect. These new standards require that:

- All commercial fishing vessels 50 or more feet in length and operating beyond 3 nautical miles of the baseline of the United States territorial seas must be classified by a recognized Classification Society.
- All commercial fishing vessels 79 or more feet in length and operating beyond the boundary line must be assigned a Loadline. Loadlines are assigned by recognized Classification Societies.

Jump to this year. This fall mandatory dockside examinations for all commercial fishing vessels operating beyond 3 nautical miles of the baseline of the United States territorial seas take effect as of October 15. Those vessels operating with a current and valid commercial fishing vessel safety decal will meet the requirements of having satisfactorily completed the mandatory dockside examination. Vessel owners can avoid the rush by scheduling the dockside examination now.

As of February 16, 2016, commercial vessels will be required to carry survival craft capable of keeping the user out of the water. Buoyant apparatus and life floats do not meet this requirement. Those vessels required to carry survival craft will be required to carry an inflatable buoyant apparatus, a life raft or a life boat depending upon the vessel’s area of operation. At this time we do not know who will be required to carry what for survival craft. When we know we will advise you.

By March 1, 2016, commercial fishing vessels 65 or more feet in length will be required to carry Automated Identification Systems (AIS). Commercial fishing vessels may install a Class B AIS device versus a Class A device if the vessel operates at a speed of less than 14 knots.

Keep in mind that the effective date of the new safety regulations required by The Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2010 is unknown at this time. The new regulations will treat Federally Documented and State Registered vessels the same. All commercial fishing vessels will need to meet these additional safety requirements if they operate beyond 3 nautical miles of the baseline of the United States territorial seas.

If you have questions or would like to schedule a free dockside safety examination for your vessel please contact me at 207-780-3256 office, 207-899-6278 cell, or at Kevin.f.plowman@uscg.mil.
In this series we continue our profiles of some of the young men and women who took part in the Maine Lobstermen’s Community Alliance’s inaugural Lobster Leadership Institute in May, 2014.

By Nancy Griffin

Genevieve McDonald, 32, of Stonington, was one of 11 young Maine lobster harvesters who traveled to Prince Edward Island, Canada, last year as part of a Maine Lobstermen’s Community Alliance program designed to prepare younger fishermen for future leadership roles in the lobster industry. The group members were selected in part to represent several different regions of the coast and all returned home enthusiastic as a result of the experience.

McDonald has been lobstering for the past 11 years out of Stonington, the past five as captain. She started fishing on her own with a 20-foot BHM (Blue Hill Marine) then moved up to a 32’ Holland, Hello Darlin’ II, this past summer. “I found out about my boat from another fisherman on the PEI trip,” said McDonald.

Now she fishes from June to November and has already started her path toward leadership in the industry. She is the first woman to serve on the state Lobster Advisory Council (LAC), appointed last June. “I am the Downeast region representative. Being on the LAC provides an opportunity for me to represent the concerns of the fishermen in Downeast Maine. I think it’s more effective to participate in shaping the future of the fishery from the inside, rather than to fight from the outside. Maintaining diversity within the fleet is very important to me.”

McDonald is also a student in Maine Studies at the University of Maine. She returned to school in order to make a living on the water and get an education. “It provided an excellent opportunity to see how things are done in PEI. I’m still in touch with the two captains I went fishing with, Lonnie Robertson and Jamie Gauthier,” said McDonald, “and we regularly share information about what is happening in each of our fisheries.”

She thinks the Leadership Institute was a great way to get out of the small world that many lobstermen live in. “It provided an excellent opportunity to connect with other fishermen outside of my harbor. Not only in Canada, but also getting to know the other Maine participants on the trip,” McDonald said.

The lower trap limits and shorter, two-month season means the PEI fishery operates very differently than in Maine. “The two fishermen I went with have other jobs. One works on land and the other does tuna-fishing charters.” Canadian fishermen have fixed seasons for all species. On PEI, lobstermen fish within designated LFAs (Lobster Fishing Areas) with traps limits between 272 and 303 per license. “We gained valuable insight into their fishery and ours, the relationship between the U.S. and Canada,” said McDonald, “We’re one big industry and this trip solidified that.”

The future is wide open for McDonald. “I am honored to be the first woman to serve on the LAC. I’ve seen a tremendous increase in the number of women on the water and we should have a voice at the table,” she said.

With an abundance of energy, a resilient brand of optimism, and a penchant for hard work, McDonald brings to Maine’s traditional lobster fishery some of the new blood needed to keep the industry alive. “I plan to fish forever,” she said. “I love being on the water. I love the freedom and independence of lobstering. We have an abundant resource, and I want to help keep it that way.”

Genevieve McDonald making her living on the water. Photo courtesy of G. McDonald.

By Nancy Griffin

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MAINE LOBSTERMEN’S ASSOCIATION UPDATE

Maine Lobstermen’s Association

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

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Maine Lobstermen’s Association Update

Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA) held its 61st annual meeting on March 7 during the Maine Fishermen’s Forum at the Samoset Resort in Rockport. The meeting began with a welcome to all members from David Cousens, MLA president. He requested permission from the members to waive reading the minutes from the 2014 annual meeting and approve them as written, which was granted unanimously. Patrice McCarron, executive director of the MLA, noted that both Clayton Howard, clerk of the MLA, and Mary Anne Mason, MLA’s pro bono counsel, could not attend this year. She then reviewed MLA operating policies regarding the board of directors and nomination to the board. The MLA board cannot exceed 21 members, all of whom must be commercial lobstermen. Twelve seats are up for election this year: seven for a three-year term, four for a two-year term, and one for a one-year term. Patrice presented the slate of nominees, nominated by MLA members and approved by the MLA Directors; members voted in favor of all. Jim Henderson was thanked for his six years on the MLA Board and Dustin Delano was welcomed as a new Director.

MLA ANNUAL MEETING

The MLA will continue to follow these [lobster] bills through work sessions to ensure that the MLA’s perspective is considered through all steps of the deliberative process. Less than a week later, the Lobster Institute held its annual Town Meeting in Saint John, New Brunswick. This year’s meeting focused on labor issues, ocean health, lobster quality and marketing. The meeting brought together a small group of lobster buyers, processors, lobstermen and industry stakeholders from both Canada and the United States, including staff from the MLA. The diverse group of attendees resulted in interesting and productive discussions.

The MLA Board of Directors were re-elected, plus the Board welcomed a new Director, Dustin Delano of Monhegan. We were also grateful for the generous support we received from Brooks Trap Mill, Friendship Trap, McMillan Offshore Survival and Atlantic LED who each donated door prizes for our members. Thank you to all who took the time to attend the meeting.

It is fair to say that 2014 was a great year for many in Maine’s fishing industry, which was abundantly apparent in the generosity displayed during the Friday night scholarship auction. The auction raised a total of $40,000, all of which was awarded to scholarship students in Maine’s fishing families. On Saturday night, the MLA recognized the Marine Patrol Officer of the Year, Owen Reed of Deer Isle, for his service to the industry. Sarah Cotoirn from the Department of Marine Resources received MLA’s Outstanding Service Award.

Many lobstermen head for warmer climates after the Forum; the MLA, however, must keep its nose to the grindstone during March. After the Forum, MLA staff and members attended the Seafood Expo North America (formerly Boston Seafood Show) to see how Maine lobster is faring at that prestigious trade show. Fourteen companies exhibited this year, along with the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative (MLMC). The mood was upbeat and Maine exhibitors were kept very busy. The MLMC hosted a successful Maine Lobster Reception at the Boston Fish Pier, featuring Governor Paul LePage as the keynote speaker.

March is always one the busiest months of the year for the MLA, and this year was no exception. The month kicked off at the Maine Fishermen’s Forum, which is always busy and chaotic but provides a great opportunity to catch up with so many people face-to-face. My kids are now 7 and 9, and they really look forward to their weekend at the Samoset where they get to swim and see their friends who live all along the coast.

The MLA Annual Meeting is one of the highlights of the Forum for me. It is so great to see and hear from MLA members who attend each year and it allows us to give an opportunity to take stock of how the MLA has been doing on behalf of its members. At this year’s meeting, several MLA Board of Directors were re-elected, plus the Board welcomed a new Director, Dustin Delano of Monhegan. We were also grateful for the generous support we received from Brooks Trap Mill, Friendship Trap, McMillan Offshore Survival and Atlantic LED who each donated door prizes for our members. Thank you to all who took the time to attend the meeting.

As lobstermen continue to get their boats, traps and buoys ready for the fishing season in April, the MLA will be wading into the management fray, preparing lots of written comments pertaining to the whale rules and other federal issues. The MLA will be submitting comments on the Draft Marine Mammal Stock Assessments, the proposed rule to dramatically expand right whale critical habitat, and the proposal to amend the whale rules to include additional Maine islands in the ⅛ mile island buffer as well as some expanded gear marking requirements for Jeffrey’s Ledge and Jordan’s Basin. The MLA will continue to keep you informed and do our best to represent the interests of Maine lobstermen as these issues are considered in the coming months.

Happy Spring! As always, stay safe on the water.

Patrice

STEAMING AHEAD
Kevin Plowman of the United States Coast Guard Safety Office spoke to members about Coast Guard-mandated safety requirements. There won’t be many changes that apply to documented vessels fishing in federal waters. Federal safety requirements now apply to all vessels that fish beyond the three-mile limit. The new requirements will include mandatory safety exams and a training program for the person in charge of a vessel. Plowman did emphasize that vessels larger than 65 feet would be required to have an AIS system after March, 2016. Specific construction standards for new boats smaller than 50 feet in length will be coming into force as well, once the regulations are finalized. Members asked questions about repacking requirements for life rafts, expressing concern over the requirement to repack annually. The MLA is pursuing options to extend that time period.

Amy Lent, director of the Maine Maritime Museum in Bath, spoke about the new lobster exhibit opening at the museum on July 26. The exhibit, which will fill a 6,200-square-foot building, will cover the cultural history and economic importance of the lobster industry. Part of the display will be a wall of lobster buoys from throughout the coast. Each buoy will have recorded information about the lobsterman, his boat, his traps, and how he fishes which visitors can interact with. Lent urged lobstermen attending the Forum to come to the MLA booth to add their information to the exhibit. She will be accepting buoys after the exhibit opens as well.

Patrice reviewed the MLA’s past year. Among the highpoints: the longstanding Department of Justice consent decree against the organization was lifted in July. She thanked MaryAnne Mason for her pro bono work on behalf of the MLA to make this historic event happen. Health insurance coverage was also a big part of 2014. MLA Navigator April McNutt helped lobstermen and their families understand the Affordable Care Act provisions and assess health insurance plans offered in the state. Now the big push is “coverage to care,” making sure that lobstermen understand what their plan provides and how to get care.

Patrice then touched on the major issues of 2014. The federal rules regarding vertical lines in the water, promulgated to protect endangered whales, go into effect on June 1. She said that more than 50 meetings were held with lobstermen during the past five years to get input on these rules, which primarily require traveling up in certain parts of the Maine coast. The MLA recently worked with the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) to expand the number of islands in which singles are permitted and to ensure that lobstermen can apply for exemptions to the rules based on safety issues.

As a result of a court case filed by several conservation organizations, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has published a proposal to greatly expand right whale critical habitat designation to encompass nearly the entire Gulf of Maine. The MLA is opposed to the proposal. Comments are due to NMFS in April.

Under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), countries that export seafood to the United States must meet MMPA standards. A recent Trade Court case ruled that the U.S. must start enforcing that provision, which could affect lobster imports from countries such as Canada. NMFS is expected to reissue its draft rule in June. In the fall the New England Fishermen Management Council (NEFMC) raised concern about the amount of cod caught in lobster traps. The sharp restriction in the cod quota and proposed expansion of areas closed to fishing led some groundfishermen to publicly question the impact of lobster traps in areas where they themselves could not fish. The MLA and DMR quickly responded to the argument that the cod in lobster traps is at all significant and called for immediate studies to see how many fish really ended up in traps.

The NEFMC’s Essential Fish Habitat Amendment was released last fall. Ten years in the making, the Amendment proposes new closures in federal waters off the Maine coast to bottom-tending mobile gear. While lobster traps are not specified in the Amendment, the MLA has called for language that makes clear lobster traps will not be affected by these closures in the future and called for no new closed areas and no opening of existing closed areas. The Council is now reviewing public comments on the Amendment.

Patrice then went through the preliminary lobster landings figures released the previous week by DMR. Total pounds landed in the state were 123,676,100; the value increased by $9 million over the previous year, to $456,935,346. She also noted that this spring the Legislature will be deciding on a number of bills that affect lobstering. A book of those bills was available at the MLA booth.

Hugh Reynolds, president of Greenhead Lobster in Stonington, addressed the members on the subject of maintaining high-quality lobsters. 2014 was a good year for exporting Maine lobster, with new markets developing in South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, and China. Lobster is a celebratory food in Asia, Reynolds said. There are six to eight big holidays each year when lobster is very popular and another 50-hour journey for a lobster to go from the dock to the consumer in Asia. Soft-shell lobsters can make it to Asia if they are taken care of properly from the moment the trap hits the rail. “You have to keep the stress down all the way along,” Reynolds said. That means making sure the water quality in the tank on the boat and at the dealer is good, that the dealer doesn’t slam the crates around, and so forth. “There are 12 to 15 steps involved in the process and the lobster is subject to risk at all of them,” he said. “But it is remarkable what can be done if it is done properly.”

David Cousins then addressed the members about his February column in Landings on managing the season in order to stabilize price. He received comments, both pro and con, about that column. His thoughts were based on the problems that arose in 2012 when the shed came on early and no processors in Canada were geared to handle it. Slowing down the catch until around the third week in July seems to make sense because then everyone knows there’s a place to move it. The aim is to have strong demand and a quality product to meet that demand, so maybe it makes sense to land lobsters later rather than earlier.

The MLA thanked Brooks Trap Mill, Friendship Trap, and Atlantic LED for their generous donation of door prizes. The meeting closed with selection of the following raffle winners: MLA t-shirt and V-notch tool – Craig Stewart, Bruce Fernald, Dick Carver, and David Johnson; drillLocations:Class – Matt Donnell, Daphne Reynolds, and Sheldon Goldthwait. The free 2016 MLA membership from the V-notch survey drawing went to David Blackman.

**FEDERAL PROPOSED RULEMAKING ON WHALE RULES**

NMFS proposes to amend the regulations implementing the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan, based on proposals discussed at the January Take Reduction Team meeting. For Maine, this action proposes a 1/4 mile buffer in waters surrounding the Maine islands of the Matinicus Island Group (Metinic, Small Green, Large Green, Seal, and Woody Bull) and Isle of Shoals Island Group (Duck, Appledore, Cedar, and Smuttynose), in addition to Monhegan, Matinicus, and Criehaven included in the original rule, to allow fishing with single traps.

In addition, NMFS proposes additional gear marking requirements for those singles being fished in the Isle of Shoals buffer (red and orange), as well as in a large area around Jeffery’s Ledge (red and green) and Jordan’s Basin (red and purple). The mark must equal 12 inches in length and buoy lines must be marked three times (top, middle, bottom) with the appropriate unique color combination for that area. NMFS proposes a phased-in implementation of the new gear marking. Industry would have 30 days from publication of the final rule to mark gear fished in the newly exempted areas and 90 days from publication of the final rule to mark gear in Jeffery’s Ledge and Jordan’s Basin areas. Comments are due April 20.
The Board of Directors met on March 17. The meeting began with a closed session, with officers absent, to conclude nominations and elect MLA officers. The Directors unanimously elected David Cousens, President; Jim Dow, 1st Vice President; Kristen Porter, 2nd Vice President; and Arnold Gamage, Secretary/Treasurer.

At the regular meeting, Chris Hall from Maine Maritime Museum provided an update on lobster burry collection. The Museum would like to request the right to receive more buoys and stories from lobstermen.

The Board discussed the lobster bills that were printed as of March 17. A public hearing for four of those bills was scheduled for the next day.

The MLA Directors voted to oppose LD 563 An Act Regarding the Purchase of Trap Tags in the Lobster Fishery. This bill seeks to address latent trap tags by establishing minimum landings requirements in order to purchase a full complement of tags. The MLA Directors stated that the lobster industry must be fully engaged in any conversations on how this reform would happen. The MLA Directors were in full agreement that if the lobster entry system is to be reformed, it must be done in a comprehensive manner. It is impossible to judge how a proposal such as LD 563 would affect the lobster fishery without it being fully vetted as part of a larger reform strategy. MLA directors believe that the lobster industry is split on whether or not latent effort is a problem. Most believe that effort that is not in the water is good thing – less traps in the water and less pressure on the resource. If this latent efforts were going to be fished it likely would have been by now, given the record catch and strong prices. There is much concern about how to deal with latent effort in a way that would not create a ‘use or lose it’ mentality, resulting in more gear in the water.

Other lobstermen firmly believe that you cannot reform Maine’s lobster entry system without first dealing with latent effort. Maine experience’s the mid-1990s in implementing trap limits is a case in point. The trap limit was enacted without a program to freeze or tier lobstermen who were fishing below the new trap limit. Many of these lobstermen were taking traps out of the water to meet the new trap limit, others were building up to the new trap limit, and still others were building up to the new trap limit. The MLA supports this change, and is very proud of the changes made for veterans to maintain access to limited entry fisheries during the last legislative session. As a result of this work, the Legislature amended the law pertaining to those who serve in the military by expanding the time during which they can get their license back from six years in the military to ten years. The current statute allows veterans to receive a limited entry license, if the person 1) held a license within a year of entering the service, 2) did not serve more than 10 years in the military, 3) was not dishonorably discharged and, 4) requests the license within a year of discharge from the service.

The MLA supported this change, and is very proud of this exemption that Maine has in place to honor the service of veterans. There is a lot of pent up demand from many to gain access to the lobster fishery, and veterans are one of the few groups who already have a strong program in place to ensure they don’t lose their place in the fishery. Based on issues of fairness, the MLA is opposed to any proposal which circumvents the Apprentice Program and/or the zone waiting list. The MLA opposes this license transfer proposal.

The MLA opposes the provision in this bill which would allow a retired marine patrol officer to be eligible as a lobster and crab fishing license with a 200 trap limit.

The MLA supported the concept of the final provision, that lobstermen not have to do the mandatory logbook program more than four times in any 10-year period. The MLA Directors proposed an amendment that would have the harvester logbook rotate through all lobstermen on a set schedule, rather than choosing lobstermen at random to ensure that all participate in the reporting on a equal basis.

The MLA will hold a conference call to discuss lobster bills when they are printed in order to present testimony at the public hearings.

MAINE PROPOSED RULEMAKING

Whale Rules (Chapter 75 Protected Resources): This rule-making is necessary for consistency and compliance with the federal requirements of the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (ALWTRP). The Maine’s Marine Mammal Protection Act and the Endangered Species Act (other wise known as the “whale rules”). Proposed rule addresses changes to the whale rules which were published by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on June 27, 2014, and which go into effect in Maine on June 1, 2015. The new whale rules require a minimum number of lobster traps per trawl based on the different lobster zones and distance from shore to reduce the number of buoy lines in the water column. The various changes apply to areas of Maine's Pocket Waters, inside the Maine Silver Area and Federal Waters. Maine DMR must adopt additional gear marking, a new 6-mile line, minimum trawl lengths and some island buffers in regulation for compliance and consistency with the federal whale rules. Opponents on this rulemaking should go to Sarah Cotnoir at 207-624-6596.

The DMR will hold a public hearing on April 6 at 6 p.m. in Hallowell; deadline for comments is April 16.

ADOPTED RULES, EFFECTIVE MARCH 9

Lobster Trap Tag Attachment: Lobster trap tags can now be secured into the trap with hog rings or by methods other than snapping the tag together. The amended regulation reads, “The lobster trap tag shall be affixed to the bridge of the lobster trap so that the tag information is clearly visible for inspection by a Marine Patrol Officer”.

Kittery Trawl Limit: The trawl limit in the vicinity of Kittery has been adopted in regulation with no change. The current statute (law) to regulation to be consistent with all other state trawl limits and to simplify the process if changes are requested by the industry.

Hancock County Trawl Limit: The Hancock County trawl limit was amended so that it does not conflict with federal whale rules which require changes to minimum trawl lengths and which go into effect on June 1. Therefore, the Hancock County triplets limit will end at the new 6-mile line.

Attendees at the 61st Maine Lobstermen’s Association Annual Meeting. MLA photo.
Frenchboro Island Limited Entry program: An Island Limited Entry program was created on Frenchboro, allowing up to 14 commercial resident island lobster license.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE (AS OF 3/19/15)

LD 98 An Act Amending the Trap Limit for the Swans Island Lobster Conservation Area (Emergency); Sponsored by Sen Langley. This bill amends the number of traps for lobstermen in the Swans Island Lobster Conservation Area from 550 to 600. The Marine Resources Committee unanimously supported this bill during a work session; it has not yet been voted by the full House and Senate. As an emergency measure, it will go into effect upon the Governor’s signing.

LD 563 An Act Regarding the Purchase of Trap Tags in the Lobster Fishery; Sponsored by Rep Kumiega. This bill attempted to address latent effort in the lobster fishery by proposing that any lobsterman who had not reported lobster or crab landings during the two years prior to January 1, 2015, be not allowed to purchase more than 300 trap tags in the year 2016. For future years, it would require the DMR Commissioner to establish by rule a minimum landings threshold for lobstermen to be eligible to purchase the maximum number of trap tags. If the license holder does not report the required landings, s/her is not eligible to purchase more than 300 trap tags in any subsequent license year. A public hearing was held on March 18 and there was no support for the bill. Immediately following the public hearing, the bill sponsor, Rep Kumiega, moved that the Committee suspend rules and go immediately into waiting list. The motion was supported, and the bill is effectively dead.

LD 490 An Act To Extend the Legal Hours for Harvesting Lobster; Sponsored by Rep. Chapman. This proposal would extend the legal hours to harvest lobster during September and October. It would allow lobstermen to harvest lobster during September and October. This proposal would extend the legal fishing hours during September and October to begin 2 hours before sunrise. The Marine Resources Committee held a public hearing on March 18. Maine DMR and the Penobscot Bay Pilots Association testified against the bill citing enforcement and safety concerns; MLA and DELA testified neither for nor against the bill citing a mixed response from lobstermen; and one lobsterman testified in favor of the bill.

LD 491 An Act To Lower to 70 to 65 the Age at Which a Person May Obtain a Lobster and Crab Fishing License for a Reduced Fee; Sponsored by Rep. Gilway. This bill proposes to lower the age that a person may purchase a reduced fee lobster license from 70 to 65 year old. The Marine Resources Committee held a public hearing on March 18; only the sponsor testified in support of the bill. It was opposed by DMR and MLA; DELA testified neither for nor against.

LD 492 An Act To Expand Eligibility for Lobster and Crab Fishing Licenses for Veterans (Emergency); Sponsored by Rep Alley. This bill proposes to expand lobster and crab fishing license eligibility to include: children by blood, child by adoption, stepchild, step-parent, grandchild, grandparent, nephew or niece. The recipient does not have to go to the waiting list. This bill further proposes that a retired Marine Patrol Officer is eligible for a lobster and crab fishing license with a 400 trap limit. Finally, this bill proposes that lobstermen not have to do the mandatory logbook program more than 4 times in any 10-year period.

LD 493 An Act To Create the Ocean Acidification Council; Sponsored by Rep. Devin. This bill would establish the Ocean Acidification Council to identify, study, prevent, remediate and mitigate the effects of ocean acidification on species that are commercially harvested and grown in the State’s coastal and ocean environments. It provides for 16 public and private council members. The council must submit an annual report to the Legislature and may accept funding from outside sources. The Marine Resources Committee held a public hearing on March 11; more than 16 groups submitted testimony. Maine DMR and DEP opposed the bill while a variety of NGO’s, academics, and businesses supported it.

LD 427 An Act To Address and Mitigate the Effects of Marine Debris; Sponsored by Rep. Devin. This bill is a concept draft which proposes to enact measures to address and mitigate plastic pollution in the marine environment, including but not limited to microdebris pollution (particles of plastic approximately 5 to 10 micrometers). The Marine Resources Committee held a public hearing and work session; but tabled the bill citing a need for more information from the bill sponsor.

LD 730 An Act To Make Technical Changes to Maine’s Marine Resources Laws; DMR bill sponsored by Sen. Baker. This bill makes several changes to Maine’s marine resources laws. Those relevant to the lobster industry include: 1) Clarifies that a student lobster and crab fishing license holder may designate up to 3 sponsors; 2) Deletes the Kittery lobster trawl limit from statute. All other trawl limits are in department rule; 3) Clarifies that a student lobster and crab fishing license holder must declare a lobster management zone and may not fish a majority of the license holder’s gear outside the declared zone; and 4) Provides that the coordinates for the Swans Island Lobster Conservation Area are presented in latitude and longitude format and not Loran format. The Marine Resources Committee will hold a public hearing on March 23.

LD 800 An Act To Prevent Passage of Skeiewes into the Grand Falls Dam on the St. Croix River; Sponsored by Rep. Turner. This bill proposes that the fishway on the Grand Falls Dam on the St. Croix River be configured to prevent passage of river herring into the lakes that form the headwaters of that river, including, but not limited to, Grand Lake Flowage, Big Lake, West Grand Lake and Spednic Lake. This bill has been referred to the Marine Resources Committee.

LD 425 An Act To Prohibit False Labelling of Marine Organisms; Sponsored by Rep. Chapman. This bill proposed to require clear and conspicuous labeling of a marine organism offered for sale if the marine organism is produced using genetic engineering and is labeled with the same name as its non-genetically engineered counterpart. Failure to provide the required labeling is a civil violation. The Marine Resources Committee held a public hearing and work session in March. The majority of the Committee voted Ought not to Pass; however a divided vote is anticipated.

LD 1026 An Act To Make Confidential the E-mail Addresses of Applicants for Department of Marine Resources Licenses; DMR bill sponsored by Rep Parry. This bill proposes an e-mail address recorded on a license application is confidential except for the use of department personnel or law enforcement personnel or for the purpose of court proceedings.

LD 1038 An Act To Amend the Emergency Rule-making Authority of the Department of Marine Resources; DMR bill sponsored by Sen Langley. This bill expands the emergency rule-making authority of the DMR Commissioner to allow the department to amend rules to expand opportunity in a fishery if the amendment is in compliance with a federal or state law enforcement or management plan.

LR 775 An Act To Increase Entry into Lobster Fishery; Sponsored by Rep Kumiega. This bill has not been printed but it will seek to expedite long waiting lists for the lobster fishery.

LR 776 An Act To Establish a Limited Lobster and Crab Commercial License; Sponsored by Rep. Kumiega. This bill has been printed but however it will be a proposal to establish a new license with a lower trap limit.

LR 511 An Act To Improve Enforcement of Maine’s Marine Resources Laws [DMR bill]. This bill is not printed but will include a proposal for license revocation for first offense of scrubbed lobster and covert electronic surveillance with probable cause.

LR 1490 An Act To Allow Retired Marine Patrol Officers To Obtain up to 2 Marine Fisheries Licenses. This bill title was included in LD 896, sponsored by Rep Alley.

LR 515 An Act To Provide for Improved Reporting of Marine Resources Landings [DMR bill]. This bill is not printed.

Marine-related Bonds

LD 998 An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Collect Data on and To Monitor Ocean Acidification; Sponsored by Rep Parry. The funds provided by this bond issue, in the amount of $3,000,000, will be used to collect data, monitor waterways and perform tests related to the known increasing ocean acidity along the Maine coast and its impact on natural wildlife and commercially important species in Maine waters, such as lobsters and clams.

LD 254 An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Support Waterfront Development; Sponsored by Sen. Haskell. The funds provided by this bond issue, in the amount of $10,000,000, will be used to fund a grant program to invest in projects that contribute to economic activity, environmental protection and community development along the State’s waterfronts. It also enacts a grant program for waterfront development, which is modeled after the Riverfront Community Development Program.

Track legislation at

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Lobster is, after all, food, so seasonality and connection to place must translate into a taste that a consumer can notice. Weber Shandwick’s marketing campaign aims to emphasize the better flavor and texture of Maine soft-shell lobster, which makes up the majority of lobster landed in the state.

“The problem is that no one outside of Maine knows that soft shell tastes better,” Frydl said. “This is the message we want to get out to the fancy chefs: ‘Maine New England soft shell lobster.’” To do so, the company will target the small group of celebrity chefs who influence the larger restaurant world. The plan is to concentrate on fine chefs in the Northeast region to introduce them to Maine soft-shell lobster.

Weber Shandwick’s Mike Wehman spoke about how that message will be conveyed. “We have to tell the stories that will make people want to eat more Maine lobster,” he said. The company will concentrate on educating the public about the quality of Maine soft-shell lobster and its distinct taste and texture, and foster menu innovations so that lobster will appear on more menus in many different ways. Part of that effort will involve bringing prominent food writers to Maine to experience the lobster fishery themselves.

Got Bait?
People certainly like to eat lobsters. But what lobsters like to eat is a major concern of the lobstermen who want to catch them. While many lobstermen still rely on traditional baits such as herring and menhaden, quotas set by regulations during the past five years have reduced the availability and raised the price of both fish.

Lobstermen therefore have turned to cheaper, imported bait, items such as tuna heads from Vietnam or alphonsino racks from New Zealand. DMR officials became worried. “The intent [with the Prohibited Baits list] was to prevent harm, not in response to any harm,” explained Chris Vonderweidt from DMR. In 2012 the state legislature passed a law to ensure the review of bait used by lobstermen. In 2013, 42 different species of fish were being sold as lobster bait. DMR hired Kennebec River Biosaiences to assess the risk to Maine coastal waters and creatures from those species.

“Maine is a relatively pristine environment still,” said Cem Giray of Kennebec River Biosaiences. “But it is changing. We estimated the risk associated with introduction of each bait type.” Viruses such as viral hemorrhagic septicaemia and white spot syndrome, which affect fish and shrimp respectively, came to the U.S. via frozen seafood imports; much of the nontraditional lobster bait also arrived frozen. The firm reviewed the risks these baits pose based on possible pathogens, toxicity threat to lobsters, and larger ecological consequences.

The new bait rules go into effect on June 1. Vonderweidt noted that some larger bait dealers, such as O’Hara Bait in Rockland, might not have time to sell off their inventory before the rules come into effect. “Exemptions are available for businesses that contact the agency directly,” he said.

DMR’s List of Prohibited Baits

Atlantic salmon
Alphonsino from New Zealand
Cobia from South Atlantic Ocean
Cod from U.S. or Canadian West Coast
Flat fish from the Pacific Ocean
Hake from the U.S. West Coast
Horseshoe crab from Asia
Pollock from the Pacific Ocean
S. American pilchard from U.S. or Canadian West Coast
Carp from Asia
Catfish from Asia
Mudshad from the U.S.
Northern pike from Canada
Freshwater drum from the U.S. or Canada
Tilapia from Vietnam

Impact of climate change
The Forum session on climate change in the Gulf of Maine also led, inevitably, to lobster. Scientists from the Gulf of Maine Research Institute (GMRI) kicked off the session with presentations about Gulf of Maine water temperature in recent years. Water temperature influences all aspects of lobster fishing, 2012 was a year of unprecedented warmth throughout the Gulf of Maine, beginning in early May. Lobsters began to shed their carapaces much earlier than usual, throwing processors and seafood distributors into a tizzy.

Andy Pershing noted that, due to record-breaking temperatures in 2014, the Gulf of Maine began 2015 unusually warm, an ominous start to the new year for lobstermen. But, according to data from the NERACOOS buoy system, water temperatures dropped sharply during February. Pershing predicted that this year the Gulf’s water temperature would remain cooler than in past years throughout the spring, both onshore and offshore.

Marissa McMahan, a doctoral student at Northeastern University, brought another perspective to the discussion with her presentation on black sea bass. McMahan took a look at what these highly territorial fish were eating in Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Maine. “In southern Massachusetts, they eat predominately scup, squid and crabs. In Maine, they eat crustaceans -- crabs, shrimp and lobsters,” she explained. McMahan’s data indicate that black sea bass have not yet spawned in Maine waters. When and if they do, the impact on juvenile lobsters could be severe.

Lobstermen in Maine appear to be well aware of the fact of climate change, according to a 2014 survey on fishermen’s views of climate change conducted by the Center for American Progress. “The Maine lobster industry is far and away the most willing to believe in climate change among New England fishermen,” said Michael Conathan, the organization’s director of ocean policy. Of those surveyed, 63% of Maine lobstermen say they have noticed warmer water temperatures, versus 40% of New England groundfishermen and 44% of Massachusetts lobstermen. Sixty-eight percent of Maine lobstermen said they were sure climate change was occurring. Of those 68%, 40% were very or extremely sure. However, among all New England fishermen, 65% thought that climate change could force them out of their fishery in the future. Among Maine lobstermen, that percentage was much smaller, less than 50%.

What to do about Northern shrimp
On Saturday, a crowd of disgruntled lobstermen attended the public hearing on Amendment 3 to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commissions (ASMFC) Northern Shrimp Fishery Management Plan. In the past, lobstermen often finished lobstering in late fall then rerigged their boats to fish for northern shrimp during the winter months. But the shrimp fishery has been closed for the past two winters due to extremely low populations of shrimp.

Northern shrimp are an Arctic species and in the Gulf of Maine are at the southern extent of their natural range. Female shrimp bearing eggs migrate to shore in the winter, when the coastal water is the coldest. After the eggs hatch (between February and April) the females return offshore.

Amendment 3 to the management plan proposes creation of a limited-entry program to control the number of fishermen allowed to catch shrimp. Currently the fishery is open to all. Some Maine fishermen harvest the shrimp by trawling; others, predominately around the Pemaquid peninsula, use shrimp traps. “We want to know how you would like to see the fishery and population look in the future,” Toni Kerns of ASMFC said to open the hearing. She asked those present to comment on such tricky items as how to structure a limited-entry system and whether to set a total quota for the fishery or allocate that quota on a state-by-state basis.

“Yes, we need a limited-entry system,” said Gary Libby of Port Clyde. “Yes, effort should be capped. The TAC (Total Allowable Catch) should be set as it is done now, by trawl or by trap.” Libby, who sits on the New England Fisheries Management Council, said that he favored the notion of an individual vessel quota or a quota allocated to a sector, as is done in groundfish management.

One of the issues in the shrimp fishery is the fact that the shrimp come in from different areas at different times. “Vessels in the Gulf. Typically vessels in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and southern Maine catch the shrimp earlier in the winter than do vessels in Downeast Maine. Often those fishermen are cut out of the season altogether when the quota for shrimp is caught by the more southern boats.” He thinks a state-by-state allocation is crucial. Otherwise it is a derby and Hancock and Washington counties lose out because the season closes before the shrimp get up there.

Arnie Gamage, a South Bristol lobsterman and shrimp trapper, spoke vehemently about the Amendment. “Your plan might work if we were at the top of our game but we’re not. We can’t manage this fishery even two weeks ahead. I think a state-by-state quota is O.K. But we have got to stop taking the shrimp
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Photos and videos can be easily uploaded at www.dropitto.me/mainemaritime using the password "lobster". Questions? Contact Curator of Exhibits Chris Hall at 207-443-1316 or hall@maritimeme.org.

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ALEWIFE HARVESTERS OF MAINE TAKES STOCK

By Melissa Waterman

In April, Maine lobstermen begin to think about a small anadromous fish whose presence in local rivers heralds the advent of spring. Alewives come back to the rivers of their birth in order to spawn the next generation of the small silvery fish much desired by lobstermen as bait. Forty Maine towns hold the rights to fish for alewives as they run up into local lakes. Twenty-four of those towns currently have active alewife fisheries.

The lead organization representing alewife fishermen is the Alewife Harvesters of Maine (AHM). The AHM was created in 2007 largely through the efforts of Jeffrey Pierce, an alewife fisherman and carpenter from Dresden. The impetus for starting the group was Amendment 2 to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s (ASMFC) River Herring Management Plan. The Amendment proposed closing commercial and recreational fishing for alewives and shad beginning in 2012, unless a state could prove it had a sustainable management plan acceptable to the ASMFC.

"When they were holding Amendment 2 hearings, no one showed up downeast," recalled Theo Willis, adjunct research professor at the University of Southern Maine, who helped organize the AHM. "In the midcoast, though, there were at least 50 people in the room. But they spoke as individuals. There was no unified voice and it was pretty clear that without a strong voice we would get squashed."

The issue was whether Maine’s alewife runs were well managed and sustainable. Maine had long had a tradition of alewife harvests each spring, but whether that meant the runs were sustainable was at question. So Pierce and fellow harvesters worked with the Department of Marine Resources to gather pertinent data.

Some of that data came from fish scales. "Fish scale samples are the primary tool used to evaluate if harvests are sustainable," Willis explained. If the fish coming to a given river are young, the odds are they have not spawned yet or so, only for one year. If there are fish of many ages in a population, it’s likely that some of those fish are probably repeat spawners, which is sign of a sustainable stock.

The state’s River Herring Sustainable Fishing Plan, which called for a limited season, 72-hour closures to allow fish to return to the sea, and restrictions on gear, was accepted by the ASMFC. The scale samples indicated that Maine’s existing runs had a strong diversity of ages, suggesting that the runs were healthy.

The AHM turned to other issues. In 2010, the organization formed its first board of directors. About that time, the Natural Resources Defense Council and other conservation organizations proposed that river herring be listed under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). If listed, strict restrictions on alewife and blueback herring harvests would be put into place. The AHM again worked with the DMR to counter the move, despite that alewives were endangered throughout their range.

In 2013, the National Marine Fisheries Service declined to pursue listing the fish species. In 2015, the New England Fisheries Management Council also decided that there was not enough information to list the river herring as endangered under the ESA.

While reacting to possible federal restrictions, the AHM also focused on helping municipalities restore and open up additional runs for alewives. Opening the St. Croix River to alewife migration was another major effort pursued by AHM. Alewife passage up the river has a run has one," he said.

Pierce never expected to become an alewife enthusiast. He worked many years with a historic building restorer, John Bradley, before starting his own business. In 1998 he and his wife moved, from Phippsburg to Dresden, to an old house on the town’s Mill Stream. "We bought it in the spring and I saw all these fish in the stream," Pierce recalled. "A friend said to me, ‘that’s lobster bait.’"

Pierce investigated and found that access to the stream on his property was being leased out by the town for alewife harvests. He inquired of Department of Marine Resources (DMR) staff how to improve the run and gain the right to harvest the alewives. To do so he had to get approval from the town and to get that, he had to have a harvest plan.

"Well, I did that," Pierce said. He and his young children cleaned up the stream, removing old tires and taking down beaver dams. He worked with DMR staff to develop a yearly harvest plan, erring on the side of caution in terms of take. "One old guy said to me, ‘Kill them all and you’ll be back where you started in no time.’ We took 2,000 pounds that first year," Pierce said.

In 2007, Pierce received a letter from DMR explaining that the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission planned to prohibit alewife harvests in the state because the fish were declining throughout their range. That didn’t sit well with Pierce. He gathered friends and fellow alewife harvesters to attend the final public meeting on Amendment 2 and voice their strong opposition to the notion that alewives were overfished in Maine. "And then we organized," he explained. Mike Kane, Peter Mayo and other alewife fishermen set up the AHM to make sure that their opinions had weight at the state and the federal levels.

Now, eight years later, Pierce has taken a new route to Augusta. In 2014 he was elected to the Maine House representing Arrowsic, Dresden, Georgetown, Phippsburg, part of Richmond, and Woolwich. "I got a bee in my bonnet in 2012 to run. I didn’t win but that was O.K. I had fun doing it and met lots of good people. Plus I was helping get the elver fishermen organized," he said, referring to the Maine Elver Fisherman Association, of which he was executive director. He decided to run in 2014 because, as he put it, "I realized that all Mainers just want a fair shake." Pierce sits on the Joint Committee on Marine Resources. "I feel good about it [being in Augusta], I am enjoying my time on the committee."
Lobstering requires a strong back, a sturdy boat and a whole lot of bait. If you don’t have good bait and enough of it, you are not going to catch many lobsters.

So when the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) in 2012 cut the allocation of menhaden that could be caught, it affected Maine’s lobstermen. Menhaden, also known as pogies, are the second-most used bait among the state’s lobstermen, according to data compiled by the Maine DMR. The migratory fish can be found along the Eastern seaboard, from northern Florida to the Gulf of Maine. The reduction fishery harvests the fish for their oil; the bait fishery catches menhaden for lobster bait.

The ASMFC 2012 benchmark assessment was an update of the official assessment produced in 2010 which had concluded that menhaden populations were experiencing overfishing. To ensure the sustainability of the fish, which is an important food for a multitude of marine species, particularly striped bass, the ASMFC reduced the total allowable catch of menhaden to 170,800 metric tons, a 20% reduction from landings in 2011. That quota was allocated among different states based on each state’s landing history for 2009-2011. When the quota in a particular state was met, the fishery in that state had to close.

“One of the issues was the model [used in the assessment process] had a retrospective pattern,” explained Michael Waine, fisheries management plan coordinator for ASMFC. “That means when you add in a new year of data the results of the previous years assessment change. Overall, the model was having a hard time fitting the data so it was giving inconsistent results.”

Those who processed the fish for its oil, specifically companies such as Omega Protein, based in Virginia, argued that the 2012 stock assessment was flawed.

To improve its assessment model, the ASMFC’s menhaden technical committee first created two new regional adult abundance indices, generated using nine fishery-independent survey data sources. In addition, the assessment broke the overall fishery into component parts based on geographic location and the use of the fish. It divided the menhaden fishery into the northern bait and reduction fisheries and the southern bait and reduction fisheries, then took a look at the age of the fish caught in each fishery.

“For two years we went through every data set that had menhaden in it. We looked again at one reduction fishery data set going back to the 1950s that we had previously examined for length [data] and found that it had maturity data as well,” Waine explained.

Landings data used in the assessment indicated that older menhaden are much more likely to be found in the northern range of the fishery, with fish caught in New Jersey and northward being primarily three to four years in age. “The assessment model recognized that a higher proportion of older fish, greater than four years in age, survive and produce an abundance of eggs,” Waine said.

The assessment also examined menhaden mortality rates, i.e. the number of fish that were being removed from the stock due to fishing or natural death. It found that menhaden are experiencing some of the lowest levels of fishing mortality recorded since 1955. The stock is projected to be at about 170% of its target abundance level measured in terms of annual egg production. The menhaden population is near record levels and is currently well above historic averages.

“This is exactly how science works, as a progressive exercise,” Waine said, referring to the previous two years of work on the assessment model. “We saw there was a problem and that the problem was getting worse so the technical committee reevaluated the mechanisms involved. The committee wanted to ensure that the resource was being managed with the best available science.”

"Similar issues existed in the last peer reviewed assessment [2010 assessment], but ultimately that assessment passed review and was acceptable for management use," Waine added. "In 2012, when the technical committee updated the assessment the problems had gotten worse, so even though updated assessments are not peer reviewed the technical committee still stepped back and wanted to dig deeper to fix the issues."

ASMFC manages menhaden on the basis of the stock’s biomass and fecundity. That means it looks at how many fish are out there and how many eggs are produced by those fish. Older fish are assumed to produce more eggs. The goal of menhaden management is to have enough eggs available in the ocean each year to take advantage of favorable environmental conditions, thus fecundity is judged one of the most reliable measures of sustainability.
MLA RECOGNIZES TWO AT FISHERMEN’S FORUM

Outstanding Service Award

The Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA) presented its Outstanding Service Award to Department of Marine Resources (DMR) resource management coordinator Sarah Cotnoir on March 8. The MLA’s Outstanding Service Award is a way to recognize people within the state’s lobster industry who go above and beyond the call of duty.

“Sarah has the really tough job, of working with lobstermen from all across the state. She often has to take the brunt of being the bearer of news of change and, as we all know, lobstermen do not usually respond well to change,” said MLA president David Cousens.

Cotnoir, 48, began work in the department in 2000 in an administrative post. She soon was promoted to serve as DMR’s liaison with the seven lobster zone councils. The lobster zone council has authority to set the number of traps in their zone and the entry/exit ratio for new entrants. Each zone sends one representative to sit on the state Lobster Advisory Council. Cotnoir’s role is to ensure that the zone council members are up to date on all state, regional and federal issues. As important, she is also responsible for conveying the local concerns of council members to DMR officials.

“The sheer geography of the Maine coast demands that she put in many long hours. Sarah does this with patience and tremendous competency,” Cousens continued. “And more often than not, with a bright smile.”

“The scope of Sarah’s responsibilities is daunting. She organizes zone council meetings, runs the zone elections in the fall, coordinates proposed changes to lobster regulations, and attends all the meetings,” said DMR Commissioner Patrick Kellicer, who attended the presentation. “It’s a stressful job and she handles it with great professionalism.”

Cotnoir, who lives with her husband in Chelsea, expressed “utter shock” at the award. “This is my job and it’s the best job I’ve ever had,” she said. “I think it’s really important that the issues and concerns of lobstermen be heard and addressed.”

Officer of the Year Award

DMR Marine Patrol Officer Owen Reed received the Officer of the Year award from the MLA at the Forum banquet as well. “He’s young and he’s sharp and we are proud to present this award to Owen Reed,” said MLA president David Cousens.

Reed, 24, is a 2010 graduate of the Maine Maritime Academy. He worked as a small vessel operation at the Academy. He also worked as a firefighter and EMT in Bangor and Castine and as an EMT for the Peninsula Ambulance Corps in Blue Hill and the Bagaduce Ambulance Corps.

After joining the Bureau in 2012, Reed was stationed in the mid-coast area, then serves, “said Marine Patrol Chief Jon Cornish.

“Owen has the integrity to know right from wrong, the diplomacy to deal with any given situation appropriately, and the compassion to apply the appropriate level of law enforcement to correct any deficient acts. These qualities are very much appreciated by both the department and the industry that he serves,” said Marine Patrol Chief Jon Cornish.

Reed, 24, is a 2010 graduate of the Maine Maritime Academy. He worked as a small vessel operation at the Academy. He also worked as a firefighter and EMT in Bangor and Castine and as an EMT for the Peninsula Ambulance Corps in Blue Hill and the Bagaduce Ambulance Corps.

After joining the Bureau in 2012, Reed was stationed in the mid-coast area, then was transferred to the Deer Isle region. Hancock County has seen a marked increase in lobster landings during the past four years; Stonington has been the top port in the state by value for six years running.

With so many lobsters coming over the rail, Reed and his fellow officers’ work load increased. As did the nature of marine resource violations. “In my opinion, one of Owen’s best qualities is his ability to distinguish between an intentional violator and someone who has made a mistake. He understands the benefits of not only addressing a violation but building a trust and rapport with local harvesters. This gained trust has allowed Owen to build some great marine resource cases,” Cornish added.

In 2013 Reed was responsible for prosecution of a dozen violations of the state’s lobster conservation laws, including license violations, gear violations, and five prosecutions for illegal lobsters. In 2014, Officers Reed and Rustin Ames helped build the case against Stonington lobsterman Theodore Gray, who was successfully convicted of molesting lobster equipment, possession of 269 undersized lobsters and possession of 123 V-notched lobsters.

Although young, Reed has won the confidence of Marine Patrol veterans and the respect of fishermen in the Deer Isle region. “He’s an outstanding individual, both in his job and in his personal life,” said Section V Sergeant Troy Dow.

“Owen is always thinking of new ways of accomplishing difficult tasks. He is very diligent. He doesn’t stop until he gets his guy.”

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Fishing is one of the most dangerous occupations in the United States. Between weather, gear, and the mechanics of fishing, lobstermen face potential danger every day. How can they reduce their risk of injury? A seminar at this year’s Maine Fishermen’s Forum, called “Reducing Risk on Deck in the Lobster Fishery,” took a look at this question. The two presentations addressed two distinctly different but equally important aspects of day-to-day safety.

Scott Fulmer, a researcher at the University of Massachusetts who focuses on ergonomics, asked the lobstermen in the audience how many years they had been fishing. In total there were 265 years of combined experience in the room. “Experience,” said Fulmer, “is the best teacher.” Safety scientists look to the fishermen’s own knowledge and approximately 160 hours spent observing lobstermen at work.

“We began this study in 2012 after two fatal overboard falls,” said Montreuil. Based on questions to lobstermen about 50 falling incidents, Montreuil and Coulombe found that a majority of falls were caused by ropes or lines on deck, a loss of balance, or while snaring buoys. Montreuil said the risk rated the highest by lobstermen (on a scale of 1-10) was weather, at an average of 6.5. Ranging below that were such things as the captain’s attitude, line and rope control, and the sternman’s attitude.

The top ten prevention strategies suggested by lobstermen were improved adherence to the deck (by using a non-stick surface, for example), better communication among the crew, improved arrangements for handling rope, a pace of work adapted to the situation, and improvements to the sorting table or gunwale.

“We hope to produce a video as a tool [to] initiate discussion with lobstermen,” Montreuil said. “We also have three types of bench and hauler layouts designed with input from lobstermen that we will be testing this summer. For more information, the full report can be found at www.irsst.qc.ca/fishing.

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over the Grand Falls and Woodland dams had been blocked since 1995 due to claims by sport fishing guides that the fish affected small mouth bass populations. A law passed in 2013 opened up the river to alewives once again. A bill proposed in the current legislature, LD 800, has the potential to reclose the river to alewives.

“The Association is in what I’d call its late adolescence,” Willis commented. “Early on it was literally just Jeff and a couple of other guys. As issues have come up we’ve refined tactics and pulled in other people.” Now the organization, with funding from the Broadreach Foundation, has completed its first strategic plan. It conducted a survey of alewife harvesters to find out what they needed to be a strong industry. The answer was the AHM. The goal of the plan is to restore the 41 historic alewife runs in the state within ten years and increase the number of alewives within the state. Among the various objectives in the plan is to create a “How To” manual for towns and individuals on establishing and maintaining a sustainable alewife run.

Molton continued from page 3

said. “The lessons learned in the lobster industry can be applied to other portions of the fishing industry in the state. I also think we will be placing a bigger focus on shrimp and ground-fish issues.” Amendment 18 to the New England Fisheries Management Council’s groundfish management plan will also be a focal point for Molton. The Amendment is designed to prevent fleet consolidation in the groundfish fishery. The Amendment would put caps on the accumulation of groundfish quota and institute protections for owner-operator vessels. “I’ll be monitoring Amendment 18 closely. We will advocate for the smaller, community-based fishermen,” Molton said.

Molton is excited to be living in Stonington rather than Washington, D.C. “There are a lot of challenges working in D.C. There is such a layer of struggle there. It’s really refreshing to be here and working with fishermen,” Molton said. “I’ve already given the shocks and struts on my vehicle a real workout!”
MAINE LOBSTER BUSINESSES STAR AT SEAFOOD EXPO

By MLA staff

The Boston Seafood Show, now known as Seafood Expo North America, is always a March highlight. The Expo draws seafood producers and buyers from throughout the world for a three-day cornucopia of everything related to seafood harvesting, distribution and consumption.

This year fourteen Maine lobster businesses and one organization exhibited at the show, along with the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative (MLMC). More than 25,000 people attended, with a record number of exhibitors and amount of floor space sold. The mood at the show was positive and energized, as masses of buyers and seafood suppliers jammed the aisles.

“Maine lobster was certainly a star of the show,” said Matt Jacobson, executive director of the MLMC. “Global interest in our harvesters and value-adding processors and dealers has never been higher. It is an exciting time in Maine’s lobster industry.”

In addition to the Maine companies that had booths, others from Maine came to walk the aisles and get up to speed on the latest trends. As always, sustainability was a large part of the messaging from the seafood suppliers, and there continued to be a strong emphasis on traceability as well as on new products geared toward convenience at both the food service and retail levels.

“It was a great show this year,” Patrice McCarron, executive director of the Maine Lobstermen’s Association, said. “I barely had a chance to catch up with many of the Maine companies because they were so busy talking with buyers. That’s a good problem to have.”

Governor LePage was joined by Department of Marine Resources Commissioner Patrick Keliher and Economic and Community Development Commissioner George Gervais to tour the show and visit with Maine’s exhibitors. On Monday evening, the MLMC hosted a Maine Lobster Reception at the Boston Fish Pier attended by more than 200 dealers and buyers of Maine lobster. Gov. LePage addressed the audience and spoke about the broad appeal of Maine’s signature seafood. He beamed with pride as he proclaimed Maine lobster to be the best lobster in the world.

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The Lobster Company

More than 25,000 people prowled the aisles at this year’s Seafood Expo. Photo by P. McCarron.

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The total value of Maine's commercial marine resources landed in 2014 jumped by more than $44 million compared to 2013 and reached an all-time high of more than $585 million. The overall rise in value can be attributed largely to an $86 million increase in the value of lobster and an additional $1.8 million in the value of scallops.

For the third straight year, Maine lobster harvesters landed over 120 million pounds. The fishery increased in value over 2013 to record high of nearly $457 million paid at the docks.

The increase in landings and in price was felt throughout the coast. The bump in soft shell lobster landings in 2012 which occurred in June did not happen again. Rather, in 2013, the peak volume of lobster was landed during the late summer and fall months. The strongest landings continued to come from eastern zones, namely zones A, B, C and D.

The lobster boat price has taken an upward turn since its sharp dip in 2012, while landings have remained stable. This is a sign of increased demand for Maine lobster, and the shift in the strongest landings to the fall rather than spring and early summer months. Overall landings of lobster from both Maine and Canada combined have increased exponentially since the early 2000s.
When the breakwater was completed in 1962 it was called “The Million Dollar Pier,” a title that reflected its cost at the time, explained Eastport Port Authority director Chris Gardner. “It was built on the site of the former Mearl Corporation, which made pearl essence,” Gardner said. “It had a twenty-year lifespan.” In 1982, the town had a survey done of the breakwater which found it to be in good repair. In 1985, an additional 50-foot-wide section was installed which brought the breakwater to its current dimensions. The breakwater was constructed of metal sheets driven into the seafloor and connected with rods to form boxes. Those boxes were filled with rock and dirt and then paved over. In 1994 a failing section of the breakwater was repaired, in fact the very section that collapsed in December. “The inner working of the pier [in that area] had let go, so it was dug up and reattached,” Gardner explained. “That was considered the more stable part of the pier.” The breakwater continued to show its age. In 2002 an inner corner failed and was quickly corrected. During the winter of 2010-2011, a sink-hole developed on the breakwater’s north side; repairs were finally completed in 2013. The city of Eastport, which owned the pier, and the Eastport Port Authority, which managed the facility, lobbied state and federal officials for the funds to rebuild the breakwater. “It took us the better part of four years to bring attention to the pier,” Gardner said. The reconstruction project had gone out to bid in December, 2014, a week before the catastrophic collapse; bid responses were received by the city in January, 2015. “We just didn’t make it in time,” Gardner said.

Finding a new home for the winter wasn’t easy for Eastport’s fishermen. The area has a strong scallop and urnch fleet, many of which start lobstering when the spring rolls around. There are few protected mooring areas and no other breakwaters. “Even after the collapse the commercial fishing vessels didn’t want to leave the inner basin,” Chris Bartlett, Maine Sea Grant marine extension agent, said. Ten boats decided to stay put. One would think that staying at a berth on a partially collapsed breakwater would be a bad idea, at least in the eyes of one’s insurance company. But, according to Bartlett, the owners of those ten vessels applied for and quickly received hold harmless insurance waivers of up to $400,000 for vessels under 50 feet. It’s a sign of how difficult it is to be on a mooring in this area of 50-foot tides and fierce northeasterly storms. “Three boats are still here this week despite the start of construction,” Bartlett added.

Eastport fishermen concentrate on scalloping during the winter months. So having a place to unload their catch is critical. The Port Authority re-opened the city’s small fish pier south of the breakwater to a few boats. Emery moved his boat to the pier but soon regretted it. “Well, one night the wind came up and the lines parted and she went on the rocks. I’ve got two holes in her I’ve got to fix,” he said. The Port Authority has contracted with Childs Engineering to conduct an underwater and above-water inspection of the fish pier.

Several scallop vessels which typically work up Cobscook Bay moved their boats to moorings in Pembroke and Whiting. Others stayed in Eastport, shifting to moorings in Broad Cove and Deep Cove. The Port Authority owns land at Broad Cove and, according to Emery, ramps and floats can go in there for fishermen’s skills.

“Having a hoist is a huge issue,” Bartlett noted. “Some harbors with different buying wharfs or co-ops have several available. Here there is no other.” The Port Authority plans to salvage one hoist from the breakwater and install it on the fish pier.

“We are meeting with the fishermen almost weekly. They know that for the next two years this breakwater will be shut down and that the city can’t provide them with berthing,” Gardner said. “Fishermen are a very resourceful bunch. They will find a way.”

**The Rebuild**

CPM Constructors of Freeport was awarded the contract to rebuild the Eastport breakwater for $14.95 million. Funding includes $6 million from the federal government, $6.95 million from the state and $2 million in local funds, with $1 million from the Eastport Port Authority and an anticipated $1 million from a Community Development Block Grant. The Maine Department of Transportation will be providing nearly $2 million in additional funding. A new fuel system requested by the U.S. Coast Guard for its Eastport station will be included in the work. The Coast Guard will pay for all additional costs of the fuel system.

“There will be another three-quarters of a million dollars at the other end [when the breakwater is finished] for floats and docks and such,” said Port Authority director Chris Gardner. “We recognize the value of the breakwater as it pertains to this area. It’s a huge part of the local economy and it’s a tribute to its value that so many are reinvesting in it.”

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**Demolition of the Eastport breakwater began in March. Photo by C. Bartlett.**

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**Lobster boats in Eastport face two years of uncertainty while their crumbling breakwater is rebuilt. Photo courtesy of C. Schmitt, Maine Sea Grant.**

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There's a 50/50 percent chance that Maine's summer lobster harvest will begin later than usual, according to the Gulf of Maine Research Institute. This winter's below-normal temperatures and stormy weather have cooled the waters in the Gulf of Maine. That means lobsters, which spend their winters in deeper waters offshore, will likely get a late start migrating to the coast and shedding their shells, according to scientists at the nonprofit research institute. The forecast is based on 13 years of data on lobster landings and water temperatures measured at 50 meters – about 164 feet – below the surface at four buoys off the Maine coast, from southern Maine to Downeast. The institute plans to issue its forecast every Wednesday through April. Check the weekly updates on the lobster forecast at www.gmi.org/our-work/research/projects/gulf-maine-lobster-forecasting.

**PROMOTION AT MARINE PATROL BUREAU**

In March, Rene Cloutier, a 21-year veteran of the Maine Marine Patrol, was promoted to Major. As Major, Cloutier will serve as second-in-command to Colonel Jon Cornish, responsible for operational field command, as well as planning, coordinating, assigning, and overseeing Marine Patrol enforcement activities.

"Major Cloutier is a seasoned Marine Patrol professional who has consistently set a high standard of excellence for himself and those around him throughout his career," said Department of Marine Resources Commissioner Patrick Keliher. "Rene has a deep passion to protect the resource while also ensuring a strong relationship with the industry. This has been a major asset for both enforcement and resource management."

In March Harbor Seafoods and The Mazzetta Company joined the Maine lobster fishery client group certified as sustainable by the Marine Stewardship Council of London. Christian Limberg, president of Harbor Seafood, and Mazzetta's Dave Fitzgerald will take seats on the client group's board of directors.

The client group's members already include Shucks Maine Lobster, Linda Bean's Perfect Maine Lobster, Goat Island Lobster, Amalgamated Seafood and Cape Seafood. Shucks President John Hathaway said the group was excited about the expanded membership. Sustainability and traceability are among consumers' major concerns when it comes to purchasing seafood and "there is no better story in the seafood industry than Maine lobster," he said.

A second Maine lobster client group, The Maine Certified Sustainable Lobster Association (MCSLA), continues to seek its own Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification. The MCSLA was founded by Cozy Harbor Seafood, Craig's All Natural, East Coast Seafood, Garbo Lobster, Inland Seafood, Mazzetta Company, and Orion Seafood International. In addition, Maine Coast Lobster, Eastern Traders/Barry Group and Cape Bald Packers are current members. Thirty-three other seafood companies currently are seeking membership. MCSLA's MSC certification process began in September, 2014, and is expected to be completed by this October.

**RESULTS COMING IN FROM SHRIMP SAMPLING PROGRAM**

Samples taken by Maine fishermen on behalf of the DMR this winter indicate that levels of northern shrimp are still at historically low levels. Three trips comprising a total of 13 tows in western Maine in January and February landed 4,290 pounds of shrimp. Vessels fishing in mid-coast Maine also brought in a modest amount, 3,510 pounds from three trips and 18 tows. Trap shrimp fisherman caught 520 pounds of shrimp off South Bristol during February and the first week of March. The sampling program is a joint effort of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and the DMR. Four trawlers and five trappers have been selected to conduct limited fishing in order to collect these samples. The samples will be used to track the timing of egg hatch and other information about the population. The results are available at www.maine.gov/dmr/ rm/shrimp/2015sampling.htm.

Forum continued from page 11 with all the eggs on, we have to get them after the eggs drop," he said. "I think daily trip limits for everyone would be fair." Jim Hanscom of Bar Harbor thought shrimping later in the season was a good idea. "You know if you can't make money on shrimp, you are not going to go. Downeast we get them at the tail end of the season, early March, and there are no eggs on them. We should have a small quota fishery again just to get it going."

Maintaining the opportunity for fishermen to move into and out of shrimp fishing, based on the strength of the shrimp population, was important to Tod Miller of Matinicus Island. "But if you have to have limited entry, then I say 'no' to any catch share or sectors. The state should be able to manage its share as we see fit," he said. "Fleet diversification is important. We're down to just lobster now."
LOBSTER BOOMS MAINE EXPORTS

by Darren Fishell

first published in the Bangor Daily News. Reprinted with permission

Surging lobster prices last year helped turn around two years of decline for the total value of Maine’s exports, which rose about 3.4 percent despite decreases in the value of wood product shipments abroad.

Wood products, including paper, still made up a larger share of Maine exports than all fresh and frozen seafood products, but the value of seafood exports has tripled, increasing steadily since 2009. Wood product exports have jogged up and down in recent years, dropping sharply in 2014.

Those movements drew the two major industries to the closest export value in two decades, as wood product exports fell 14 percent, to $690.8 million, while Maine’s seafood exports grew 22 percent, to $472.8 million.

“Things change according to exchange rates and according to markets, and China slowing down a bit that was the result of a change in export reporting and not actual output from Maine,” said Janine Bisaillon-Cary, president of the Maine International Trade Center.

Of the state’s top 25 exports, wood pulp exports dropped the most by value, declining by about $92.7 million, or 48 percent from the previous year. Coated paper and another category of paper, including labels, also fell in export value in the past year.

Export trends can be a signal of economic output as well as changing markets or even changing shipping routes, which could be changing for pulp markets in the next year. The drop in pulp exports in 2014 coincided with the bankruptcy of market pulp producer Old Town Fuel and Fiber, which is now back online under the ownership of Wisconsin-based paper maker Expera Specialty Solutions.

That shift and the addition of tissue-making machines this year at Woodland Pulp in Baileyville could mean continuing decline in pulp exports as pulp produced in Maine gets processed domestically.

“That’s a great thing in Maine because we’re adding more value,” said Patrick Strauch, executive director of the Maine Forest Products Council.

Changes in shipping patterns can also cause fluctuations in Maine exports, as indicated by the sharp decline in the export value of electronic circuits, which dropped sharply in 2013. Bisaillon-Cary said at the time that was the result of a change in export reporting and not actual output from Maine.

Drilling down to specific products, the value of fresh lobster exports rose about 18.4 percent in 2014, making up more than 15.5 percent of the value of all Maine exports. With the per-pound price jumping more than a fourth, lobster hit an all-time high value for landings last year, at $456.9 million, and making up more than 13.5 percent of the value of all Maine exports.

Maine’s Lobster Marketing Collaborative was behind rising global demand for soybeans, which in China drove much of the increase in lobster exports, as the Maine specialty gains traction as an upscale dining option there.

The country is also behind rising global demand for soybeans, which in China drove much of the increase in lobster exports, as the Maine specialty gains traction as an upscale dining option there. Th e country is also behind rising global demand for soybeans, which in China drove much of the increase in lobster exports, as the Maine specialty gains traction as an upscale dining option there. Th e country is also behind rising global demand for soybeans, which in China drove much of the increase in lobster exports, as the Maine specialty gains traction as an upscale dining option there.

And as a signal of the curious fluctuations to which export markets are prone, petroleum gas — including propane — emerged as the state’s second-highest value export in 2014, as more shipments move through the state by rail, driven by a boom in domestic oil production from hydraulic fracturing of shale primarily in Pennsylvania, North Dakota and Canada.

Petroleum gas exports — at $22 million two years earlier — grew to $210.34 million in value in 2014, making up about 7.8 percent of the state’s total exports for the year. Coated paper and paperboard made up the state’s third-highest export in 2014, followed by wood, airplane parts, electronic circuits and wood pulp.
MAPS SHOW LINK BETWEEN WARMER WATER, LOBSTER HABITAT

By Melissa Waterman

It’s a lot of work, picking a good place to live. You have to think of so many factors: property taxes, schools for the kids, the distance to your job. But for a juvenile lobster, finding a place to live is pretty simple. When it comes time to settle on the bottom a young lobster looks for four key factors: a rocky area at the right depth, with the proper salinity and temperature.

Marine biologists have determined that for these youngsters, the ideal conditions are a depth generally less than 50 feet (15 meters), temperatures between 50 and 64.5°F (10 and 18°C), and salinity in the range of 15-31 parts per trillion. Kisei Tanaka, a doctoral student at the University of Maine, has produced maps showing the range of suitable lobster habitat along the Maine coast and how the amount of that habitat has changed over time. Drawing on 34 years of temperature and salinity data (1978 to 2012), he has created a suitability index for both juvenile and adult lobsters along the coast, which shows optimal environmental conditions ranked from 0 (very unsuitable habitat) to 1 (very suitable habitat). Tanaka has produced these maps for both the spring and the fall seasons because, as he said, “The lobsters have different needs in the spring and the fall.”

Tanaka’s habitat suitability index maps show a distinct change over time in the amount of inshore area available during the spring season in which young lobsters could thrive. Between 1980 and 1989, the amount of prime lobster habitat began to expand in the midcoast area, specifically around Penobscot Bay, as well as in pockets of southern Maine. In the offshore waters, no change occurred. In the 1990s, that expansion crept east along the coast, with the areas off Deer Isle and Winter Harbor showing marked expansion. During the last decade, the expansion of suitable area continued, most notably throughout Downeast Maine. During the fall season, however, Tanaka’s data do not indicate as distinct an expansion of suitable habitat.

What has caused the spread of good lobster habitat? “Temperature and salinity have changed due to climate change,” Tanaka said. He added that his maps could also be constructed to reflect the habitat needs for other benthic species, such as scallops and sea urchins. But, Tanaka cautioned, the maps are just a reflection of the data used. “[The data] need to be fine-tuned by fishermen and resource managers,” he said.