Maine lobstermen landed nearly 98 million pounds of lobster in 2022, down from 110.5 million pounds in 2021 according to preliminary data released by the Department of Marine Resources at the Maine Fishermen’s Forum in March. The value of the 2022 catch was $388,589,931; average price per pound was $3.97. The value dropped significantly from 2021, when lobstermen received $742,168,052 for their catch and the average price per pound hit an all-time high of $6.71.

Governor Mills highlighted the lobster industry’s continued resiliency in the face of significant challenges. “Maine’s lobstermen were facing tremendous uncertainty about their future last year over pending federal whale regulations, compounded by the high costs for bait and fuel,” she said.

The price drop was a hardship for many in the lobstermen who attribute low prices to the decline in landings. “In 2021, coming out of the pandemic, people had money to spend. They were out and about, buying lobster. Things were good,” noted MLA president Kristan Porter. “Then last year, inflation hit, the economy not as great. People were spending more money on groceries and to fill up their car. They weren’t doing the extras, so demand (for lobster) was low. With price being low, a lot of guys did not fish as hard.” [Kathleen slide 7]

DMR data back this theory. According to DMR senior lobster biologist, Kathleen Reardon, in 2022 lobstermen left the dock to

The plaintiffs ask for an injunction to remove lobster from the Aquarium’s “red list” and to award damages as well as a favorable judgement on their claim of defamation.
The winter has come to a close and for most of us, it was a mild one. In April the tempo will pick up along the coast as it does every year. Lobstermen will finish overhauling their gear, repainting their buoys and putting everything in order for the 2023 season. Hopes are high that the season will be a profitable one.

The Monterey Bay Aquarium placed lobster on its “red list” last fall, telling consumers to avoid buying the product because the fishery was unsustainable due to the legal cases being considered in Washington D.C., district court.

To counter the Aquarium’s unsubstantiated claim, the Maine Lobstermen’s Association in March sued the Aquarium for defamation and loss of income. The lawsuit “alleges that Monterey Bay Aquarium knowingly ignored and mischaracterized scientific data to convince the public that, despite their sustainable practices, Maine lobstermen are causing harm to endangered North Atlantic right whales.”

In other news, at the Maine Fishermen’s Forum in early March, the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) released preliminary 2022 landings figures for Maine’s commercial marine species. Nearly 98 million pounds of lobster were landed in the state last year, down approximately 12.5 million pounds from the previous year. The average price per pound was $3.97, down sharply from 2021’s $6.71 per pound. In total, Maine fishermen harvested slightly more than 197 million pounds of seafood in 2022, worth $574 million. Of that total, $388,589,931 came from lobster.

DMR also gave an overview at the Forum of the results of its lobster surveys in 2022. DMR conducts multiple surveys on lobster at different life stages, including larval surveys, settlement survey, spring and fall trawl surveys, netless trap survey and sea sampling aboard lobster boats. The surveys generally indicate fewer lobsters at most life stages, a trend first identified in 2012. The Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative (MLMC) also presented a summary of its 2022 activities and plans for 2023. The Collaborative focused on defending the Maine lobster brand last year in the face of substantial attention to North Atlantic right whales and the lobster fishery. Videos, interviews with lobstermen, social media posts and a strong web site focused on the fishery’s human stories countered negative media. The MLMC’s annual survey of consumer attitudes toward lobster found that few consumers even knew of the right whale situation. Most respondents remained strongly favorable toward the fishery.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) officials also attended the Forum to answer questions concerning NOAA actions. Michael Pentony, Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) administrator, Jon Hare, science and research director at the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, and Eric Reid, New England Fishery Management Council chair, spoke to attendees on issues ranging from offshore wind energy projects to right whale protection measures.

We hear this month from Nick Battista, senior policy officer at the Island Institute in Rockland, on the economic importance of lobstering among coastal communities. While lobstering is spread up and down the coast, 20% of the state’s lobster licenses are held by individuals in five towns. Battista notes that, “as you go east and as you go down the peninsula and out to the islands, communities have a higher percentage of residents with lobster licenses.” In other words, where other opportunities for work are the least, lobstering is of greatest importance.

In this issue we reprint a letter from Warren Fernald first published in Maine Coast Fisherman in 1959. Fernald, a lifelong Islesford fisherman, was the father of Bruce Fernald, who kindly sent us his late father’s letter. Warren, one of the first members of the Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA), urges his fellow lobstermen to also become members. “Until our organization was born, the Maine lobsterman never had an office of their own open all year looking out for their interests and welfare. Never before had they anyone to be on hand at Augusta to fight legislation for them.” True then and true today.
The value of Maine’s 2022 lobster fishery was $388 million, a decline of over $353 million compared to 2021. While this is a significant number, the total value of Maine’s lobster landings didn’t exceed $350 million until 2013. In addition, we know that the value of these landings is not distributed evenly across the coast and that some communities are more dependent on the lobster fishery than others.

Which communities are most dependent on the lobster industry, and how can we better connect changes in the fishery on the water—environmental, economic, or regulatory—to understand broader community impacts?

We see at least three places to start this conversation:

- the ports with the highest percentage of lobster landings
- the communities with the greatest number of licenses and
- the communities with the highest participation rate in the fishery

Lobster landings are concentrated in a handful of communities. In 2021, the most recent year port data is available, ten communities accounted for more than 50% of the state’s total lobster landings, with the top four ports, Stonington, Vinalhaven, Friendship, and Beals, accounting for more than 25% of landings. Following were Spruce Head, Portland, Harpswell, Southwest Harbor, Milbridge, Harrington, and Steuben.

This correlation illustrates the vulnerability to economic shocks that communities with a high reliance on lobstering face. Collectively, 20% of the state’s lobster licenses are tied to five communities. In 2022, Harpswell had 254 licenses, the most of any community in Maine. Deer Isle and Vinalhaven followed with 236 licenses and 220 licenses, respectively. St. George and Friendship rounded out the top five.

More than 200 Maine communities are home to at least one licensed lobsterman. Looking at per capita density of lobster licenses, the top quarter of those towns are east of Boothbay, except for Long Island, Chebeague Island, Harpswell, Phippsburg, Georgetown, and Southport.

Digging deeper, over 10% of the population in 15 communities holds a lobster license. Nine of these are year-round unbridged island communities. The others are Beals, Stonington, Deer Isle, Friendship, Jonesport, and Cutler.

Generally speaking, as you go east and as you go down the peninsulas and out to the islands, communities have a higher percentage of residents with lobster licenses.

In working with Mike LeVert from Stepwise Data Research, our long-time partner on the Island Institute’s Waypoints publications, to understand how this connects to broader socio-economic data, two key trends emerge. When compared to all Maine towns, the 53 communities with the most significant participation in the lobster industry are generally smaller, slower growing, older, poorer, with lower rates of labor force participation, fewer local employment opportunities, and higher rates of self-employment.

This correlation illustrates the vulnerability to economic shocks that communities with a high reliance on lobstering face.

Data show that the importance of lobstering to families like the Kelley family of Steuben cannot be overstated. C. Clegg photo.

Continued on page 4
To the editor:
This year will be my 54th season lobstering from Kittery Point. I’ve been successful, raising a family and supporting my industry whenever I could. Lobstering has given me a wonderful way of life. Only those in the business know what a rush it is to be a lobsterman — “Your worst day at sea is better than any day on land.”

In 1982:
1. bait was $25/drum
2. fuel was $.60/gal
3. deckhands receive 10-15% off the top

In 2022:
1. bait was $325/drum
2. fuel was $6-7.00/gal
3. deckhands receive 20-25% off the top

I’ve been thinking about the difference between a few decades back and now. What hasn’t changed is the lobster boat price! I received $3.00/lb. in both 1982 and 2022. In 1982, two drums of pogies cost $50, 20 gallons of fuel came to $15.00, so my total expenses were $65.00. Just 25 lbs. of lobster at $3.00/lb. covered my daily expenses. In 2022, two drums of pogies cost me $65, 20 gallons of fuel comes to $130, so my total expenses are $780.00. That means I need to bring in 260 lbs. of lobster at $3.00/lb. to cover my daily expenses.

Without reviewing the entire economic picture, it doesn’t take Kudlow or Greenspan to see that if the lobsterman doesn’t receive at the very least a minimum of $5.00/pound at today’s costs, then the dealers soon will be looking out of their windows wondering where all the boats have gone. We need the dealers’ help, just as they need ours or there will be more and more boats for sale. 2021 proved that a decent boat price worked well for both dealers and lobstermen. Local businesses thrived with lobstermen spending on engines, electronics, traps, boats and other gear. The public consumed our product with enthusiasm. A compromise must be achieved where all our families can survive. Unless I’m missing something, only the dealers can make this happen.

David Kaselauskas
Kittery

Warren Fernald was born in 1927 on Little Cranberry Island, also known as Islesford, the last resident to be born on the island until 2021. He joined the Navy in 1945 and in 1950 returned to Islesford when he began lobstering. One of his six children is Bruce Fernald, who wrote as a letter his father wrote to Maine Coast Fisherman in 1959 concerning the MLA. According to Bruce, “My father was a very practical and conservative man. I’ve always believed when it came to lobstering he could stretch a dollar further than any fisherman I’ve ever known.”

To the editor:
As a very interested member of the MLA and a year around lobster fisherman, I am deeply concerned about both being a success. I often wonder why there isn’t more interest in the MLA. I think we are very much in need of an organization to look out for our welfare and interest. All one has to do is to see that most of the other branches of the fishing industry in the U.S.A. are organized, is to scan through the National Fisherman’s magazine. They all seem to feel that they can not make a proper living unless they help themselves. Why should a lobster fisherman be any different?

I have often been asked, “What good is the MLA? What have they done?” It is to these people I speak. What have they themselves done? Most of them won’t even take time to attend a meeting to find out what is being done, and what can be done, with a little of their help and backing.

I was one of the first to become a member and am going to be the last to give up my support to the organization. It is worth my $5.00 in dues just to meet occasionally with my fellowmen all along the coast and to hear their ideas and problems. If we all felt the same, I am sure we would have a much more secure future.

Until our organization was born, the Maine lobsterman never had an office of their own open all year looking out for their interests and welfare. Never before had they anyone to be on hand at Augusta to fight legislation for them. What more can a man ask for $5.00? The MLA has already, in one small way, saved that amount for each fisherman by keeping his license fee at $5.00 instead of the proposed $10.00.

We have weathered several heavy storms and are still intact. Why give up now? Please think it over and attend some of our meetings. In hopes this will bring a few more members in our organization.

Warren Fernald
Islesford

We also know that identifying communities that depend on lobstering is not always straightforward. We are eager to follow work our partners are doing to dive into socio-economic indicators that can help track trends over time and inform the fisheries management process as well as climate adaptation measures.

Still, by multiple measures, it is clear the data bears out what we have intuitively known to be true — lobstering plays an essential role in these communities and changes in the fishery will impact the broader communities.

Battista continued from page 3

At the same time, when you look at Maine communities with these socio-economic characteristics, the density of a community’s tie to lobstering has a significant positive relationship with the community’s income level. In other words, among communities with a similar structure of population, age, and labor force characteristics, the more robust a connection to the lobster industry within such a community, the higher the community’s income level and the lower its poverty level.

This correlation illustrates the supportive role that lobstering plays in the financial health of relatively small, older communities.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: Today’s concerns are echoes from the past

HY-LINER ROPE COMPANY

Highest quality ropes made in Maine
SuperSink • SteelLiner • EasyPull • Float Ropes
HY-LINER ROPE COMPANY
ST. GEORGE, MAINE

Refrigerate Me!
Larval lobsters that have settled to the bottom are monitored by divers through larval lobsters in Maine waters each year. Newly-hatched lobster pass through DMR's lobster surveys begin at the lobster's earliest life phase — abundance of biologist Becca Peters noted that the average catch of 71- to 80-millimeter lob-
shore trawl surveys which monitor a variety of species caught in the net. DMR Trends in lobster abundance are also monitored through the spring and fall in-
Island areas showed a slight upward trend compared to previous years. Th e mid-coast and Mt. Desert Maine sites in 2022 was higher relative to 2021, settlement by statistical area Russell, explained that preliminary data show that while lobster settlement at the lobster settlement survey. DMR's settlement survey coordinator, Robert
tions in abundance. Th e fl uctuations appear to be within the range of historical years of the DMR larval survey data from Boothbay Harbor show annual fl uctua-
tions in abundance from the surveys conducted by University of Maine and Bigelow Lab from 1989 to 2004. “As abundance continues to be monitored by the annual survey, the cumulative data will continue to build a better idea of what's normal and what's not,” explained Heather Glons, DMR marine resource scientist. Larval lobsters that have settled to the bottom are monitored by divers through the lobster settlement survey. DMR's settlement survey coordinator, Robert Russell, explained that preliminary data show that while lobster settlement at Maine sites in 2022 was higher relative to 2021, settlement by statistical area was still low compared to 2012 and earlier years. Th e mid-coast and Downeast zones.
Sea sampling takes place on board commercial lobster boats throughout the year. Samplers go out with lobstermen three times each month in each zone from May to November, then once a month in each federal statistical area from December to April. Samplers categorize everything that comes up in a trap. As it has for several years in a row, data from last year indicate that in all areas sublegal catch has dropped from its earlier peaks. That decline is the sharpest in the eastern zones.

2022 Maine Lobster Landings and Trips

The 2022 season felt different than previous seasons,” Reardon said. She noted that price paid lobstermen was well below what it was in 2021 while operating costs were at all-time highs. The abundance of lobsters was reportedly patchy as well. In response, lobstermen adapted. Some chose to fish less, others fished more traps per day or let their traps soak longer. "There were a lot less trips made last year," Reardon said. In 2020, Maine lob-
stermen landed 98 million pounds and made approximately 220,000 trips to do so. In 2022, the landing figure was nearly the same but the number of trips was below 210,000. “This is evidence that fishery changed behavior to stabilize the number of pounds harvested per trip,” Reardon said. “It’s also evidence of adaptation by a resilient fishery in the face of change.” DMR's lobster surveys begin at the lobster's earliest life phase — abundance of larval lobsters in Maine waters each year. Newly-hatched lobster pass through four larval stages at the water surface before settling on the seafloor. The last five years of the DMR larval survey data from Boothbay Harbor show annual fluctua-
tions in abundance. The fluctuations appear to be within the range of historical larval abundance from the surveys conducted by University of Maine and Bigelow Lab from 1989 to 2004. “As abundance continues to be monitored by the annual survey, the cumulative data will continue to build a better idea of what’s normal and what’s not,” explained Heather Glons, DMR marine resource scientist. Larval lobsters that have settled to the bottom are monitored by divers through the lobster settlement survey. DMR's settlement survey coordinator, Robert Russell, explained that preliminary data show that while lobster settlement at Maine sites in 2022 was higher relative to 2021, settlement by statistical area was still low compared to 2012 and earlier years. The mid-coast and Mt. Desert Island areas showed a slight upward trend compared to previous years. Trends in lobster abundance are also monitored through the spring and fall in-
shore trawl surveys which monitor a variety of species caught in the net. DMR biologist Becca Peters noted that the average catch of 71- to 80-millimeter lob-
sters peaked in 2012 but the average catch per tow has decreased in all lobster zones since then. “We continued to see this decline in our average catch. The decline has been seen in all four of the depth strata that we sample in and in all regions. The magnitude of declines in average catch, however, has varied by region,” Peters explained. The value of $742.1 million. Landings Maine lobstermen landed 97.9 million pounds last year, with a value of $388.6 million, a sharp drop from the previous year's value of $742.1 million. Landings remained stable in western zones (E,F,G), but there were declines from earlier peaks in eastern zones.

Average of sub-legal lobsters, 2022 fall trawl survey

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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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Cutler, 260-9580
Vice-President: Dustin Delano
Friendship, 542-7241
Treasurer: Jim Dow
Bass Harbor, 460-2565
Secretary: Chris Welch
Kennebunk, 205-2993

Directors
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Joshua Beal, Milbridge, 479-9624
Sonny Beal, Beals Island, 356-1684
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Laurel Brooks, Kennebunk, 468-2167
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MAINE LOBSTERMEN’S ASSOCIATION UPDATE

STEAMING AHEAD
BY MLA PRESIDENT KRISTAN PORTER

We all know that lobstermen are creatures of habit and change comes pretty hard. We use the same size traps with the same heads and same color and same brand wire…. until we realize that others are doing better with something else and then reluctantly try it.

Perhaps you go to haul by yourself for years because that’s the way you’ve always done it. You don’t think a sternman could make you any more money and where would you find anyone worth a damn anyway? Then you finally break down and take someone because your bones ache and you are trawling up now where before you always fished singles. Then you think, “Why didn’t I do this sooner?”

That is the situation MLA has found itself in over the past few years. We’ve all been going about our fishing and depending on our small staff to “just get it done,” even though the work just keeps getting piled on. As the stakes got higher, the MLA board made a bold decision to play offense instead of defense in the whale battle. This decision was definitely the right one but it has been a heavy lift for our small staff and it has taken its toll on the organization. Plus the issues we are now battling are not going away anytime soon.

Every one of us in the lobster industry has felt the stress and the weight of the past few years. The MLA board has in put a lot of hours, and the MLA staff has been grinding and the weight of the past few years. We’ve all been going about our fishing and depending on our small staff to “just get it done,” even though the work just keeps getting piled on. As the stakes got higher, the MLA board made a bold decision to play offense instead of defense in the whale battle. This decision was definitely the right one but it has been a heavy lift for our small staff and it has taken its toll on the organization. Plus the issues we are now battling are not going away anytime soon.

Every one of us in the lobster industry has felt the stress and the weight of the past few years. The MLA board has put in a lot of hours, and the MLA staff has been grinding through just trying to stay on top of everything. Not only is there more work to do, but the issues we are grappling with are extremely complicated. And the stakes are high: we know that we are not only on the cusp of seeing lobstermen start to fall out of the business, but also we may actually lose our fishery. The MLA cannot tackle these issues without our talented legal team and outside help from consultants. So on top of everything else, we can’t even be in this game unless we continue to raise money.

There is no doubt that it is time to bring in some reinforcements. Everyone knows Patrice. She has been at the helm of the MLA for 23 years, and she is still there, guiding us through the issues that the industry has weathered in recent years. We’ve all been going about our fishing and depending on our small staff to “just get it done,” even though the work just keeps getting piled on. As the stakes got higher, the MLA board made a bold decision to play offense instead of defense in the whale battle. This decision was definitely the right one but it has been a heavy lift for our small staff and it has taken its toll on the organization. Plus the issues we are now battling are not going away anytime soon.

Every one of us in the lobster industry has felt the stress and the weight of the past few years. We’ve all been going about our fishing and depending on our small staff to “just get it done,” even though the work just keeps getting piled on. As the stakes got higher, the MLA board made a bold decision to play offense instead of defense in the whale battle. This decision was definitely the right one but it has been a heavy lift for our small staff and it has taken its toll on the organization. Plus the issues we are now battling are not going away anytime soon.

That’s exactly what our new COO, Amber-Jean Nickel, will be doing. Her job is to ensure that the MLA, as an organization, can continue to do what it does best — stand up for its members wherever and whenever. She will make sure the bills are paid, that the staff is working efficiently, that the MLA is ready for an ever more complicated future so that MLA’s voice remains strong and powerful at the state, regional and federal levels.

The board feels really good about this change. We have done so much with so little for way too long that it’s a relief to be able to add another skilled professional to the MLA team. It’s like making a major investment in your fishing business — you are nervous about making the change but in the end you usually wonder why you waited so long.

The lobstering world is no longer a stable, predictable space. It is changing whether we like it or not. I can assure you that the MLA will continue to evolve so that we become even stronger as we navigate this complicated future. The MLA knows what is at stake and just how much we have to lose. I promise you that the board will continue to guide the organization through these changes and we will not forget why we are here. We are here for you, our members.

Thank you for all of your support!

MALT ANNUAL MEETING

The 69th annual meeting of the Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA) took place on March 3 at the Samoset Resort in Rockport. MLA president Kristin Porter opened the meeting by welcoming attendees. He thanked the board and staff for their tremendous effort over the last year. He introduced Amber-Jean Nickel, the MLA’s new chief operating officer. MLA executive director Patrice McCarron has transitioned to become MLA’s policy director.

Porter offered a slate of candidates to serve on the MLA board. The following were unanimously approved for three year terms: Bob Baines of Spruce Head, Sonny Beal Jr of Beals, Gerry Cushman of Port Clyde, Jason Joyce of Swans Island, Jack Merrill III of Northeast Harbor, Troy Plummer of Boothbay, and Thomas Werner of Cape Elizabeth.

John McCarthy of Vinalhaven was elected for a one year term to replace Mark Jones. Porter thanked Mark Jones of Boothbay Harbor, who is stepping off the board after 20 years of service.

Patrice McCarron gave a brief overview of significant events that the industry has weathered in recent years. In 2021 the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) released its Biological Opinion which required a 98% risk reduction in the lobster fishery by 2030. In May 2022 the first phase — a 60% risk reduction — went into effect. The lobster price tumbled in 2022 while bait, fuel and other expenses skyrocketed. 2023 brings with it new 100% harvester reporting for all Maine lobstermen and electronic tracking for all federal vessels. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) draft Addendum 27 was also released proposing to increase the minimum gauge...
for LMA 1. In 2024, the first offshore wind leases in the Gulf of Maine will take place and in 2026 NMFS begins the next phase of rulemaking to get new right whale regulations in place by 2028.

Concerning offshore wind leases, McCarron noted that five companies currently have expressed formal interest in the Gulf of Maine draft call area, which begins 20 nautical miles from shore. The state’s Offshore Wind Roadmap was released in February. That document reflects the 18 months of effort by its Fisheries Working Group to ensure fisheries issues were addressed, among them a recommendation to site any wind leases outside of LMA 1.

Concerning right whales, McCarron said the good news is that 15 calves have been born thus far this year; 20 were born last year. She then reviewed the lobster fishery’s right whale protection measures which began 25 years ago. "You guys do everything that is asked of you," she said. "You rig your gear so that a whale is likely to break free if it gets entangled. Lobstermen are at 95% compliance with the 2022 regulations." She reiterated the positive impact lobstermen’s efforts have had on right whales — zero documented right whale deaths in Maine lobster gear and zero documented entanglements since 2004.

Despite the six-year pause authorized by Congress in December 2022, the lobster fishery is still scheduled for 98% risk reduction in 2030. This is why MLA has taken the bold step of suing National Marine Fisheries Service. "We are not exaggerating concern about this fishery," McCarron said.

She thanked MLA members and Legal Defense Fund supporters for making the lawsuit possible, and explained that those funds also support developing new gear innovations, working with academic scientists to better inform the issue, and a communications strategy to ensure the public understands all the Maine lobstermen have done, and continue to do, to protect right whales.

She then introduced MLA’s legal team: Ryan Steen from Stoel Rives, Paul Clement from Clement & Murphy and MLA legal counsel Mary Anne Mason.

Steen explained that MLA is currently involved in two lawsuits. One was brought by four national environmental organizations against NMFS, arguing that the agency was not doing enough to protect right whales and that the Biological Opinion and Take Reduction Rule were unlawful and insufficient. The MLA is an intervenor to that case. In July 2022 Judge Boasberg of the D.C. District Court ruled in favor of some of the plaintiff’s claims but did not close the lobster fishery.

The second case was brought by the MLA against NMFS in September 2021. "We challenged NMFS’s Biological Opinion and Take Rule. The risk reduction goal is not feasible," Steen said. "The Agency made numerous decisions in the face of uncertainty that the lobster fishery is taking many whales each year, a worst-case scenario." The MLA’s legal team contended that doing so was contrary to the Endangered Species Act (ESA). However, in September 2021 Judge Boasberg rejected those claims. "The judge did not engage in our arguments. He said that the agency is the expert and I need to bow to the agency’s actions," Steen explained.

Steen then introduced Martin Durabrite from Durabrite.

When asked why he chose to join the MLA board of directors, when he was around ten he got the urge to go fishing. After completing an outboard engine program at the Marine Mechanics Institute in the mid-2000s in Florida, he returned to the island to lobster. McCarron also serves as secretary on the Zone C Lobster Council.

When asked why he chose to join the MLA board, McCarthy said: "I believe the MLA is important because advocates for the lobster fishery as a whole. The fishery needs an organization that fights for us now more than ever and I am proud to be a board member."

When that happens, Clement continued, the easiest thing for the judges to do is to defer to the expert. His strategy is to identify cross-cutting errors in how the agency approached the case. In MLA’s case, this is the government’s focus on worst-case scenarios which is in violation of the ESA. "When there are issues with the science and a need to extrapolate from limited data, the agency gives the benefit of doubt to the whales. Why is that problematic? It’s inherently guessing," Clement said.

On February 24, Clement gave oral arguments to the three-judge panel at the D.C. Appellate Court. From the judges’ questions, he felt that they understood the MLA’s arguments and how it was a cross-cutting issue that affected all NMFS’s calculations in the Biological Opinion. "They appreciated that in an area with so many unknowns, if you use the worst-case scenario assumptions, a wholly distorted analysis is the result," Clement said. The judges asked parties to the case to return in March for a supplemental briefing on how Congress’s December legislation providing a six-year pause allows a different remedy than previously. "It’s a good sign they want more information," Clement said.

Mary Ann Mason, MLA’s attorney since 2007, spoke next. "I never contemplated litigation until I realized that NMFS was on a forced march to the lobster fishery’s extinction even when the science sent them somewhere else," she said. "Litigation is not the first and best option because it’s expensive and you don’t always get what you want. But we must do it. The three judges in the most expert court in the country on administrative law now have heard us. We have got ourselves in a position to have a future."

**CONGRATULATIONS TO MLA’S RAFFLE WINNERS!**

This year’s winners were Daniel Brooks, Abbi Beal, Dan Staples, Nick Lemieux, Chris Guilford, Ryan Lemieux, Michael Hyvarian and Ted Ames. Prizes included: engraved traps, bait, boat lights, gift certificates, sweatshirts, hydroflasks, and MLA swag. We are incredibly grateful to our generous sponsors: Nor’East Bait, Maine Camp Outfitters, Brooks Trap Mill, Sea Rose Trap, Midcoast Marine, and Durabrite.

**MLA DIRECTORS MEETING SUMMARY**

On March 20 the MLA Board of Directors met via Zoom to discuss MLA’s position on ASMFC draft Addendum 27, two state bills scheduled for public hearing before the Marine Resources Committee and a proposal for an offshore wind procurement bill in the Maine Legislature.

Concerning draft Addendum 27 the board voted to endorse the status quo option (no change to the current fishery) regarding potential gauge changes proposed. While the board understands that increasing the LMA 1 gauge could help to expand overall lobster abundance, they believe this action is premature.

There were several overarching concerns.

ASMFC has not conducted a market study to understand the implications of increasing the minimum size for LMA 1, which accounts for the vast majority of U.S. landed lobster, while Canada’s minimum gauge will remain unchanged. This proposal could increase the cost of lobster to consumers and negatively impact the boat price for U.S.-caught lobster.

The Board recommends using a 10-year reference period, rather than a 3-year reference period which includes the highest landings on record, to measure a decline before contemplating a management response.

LMA 1 would be impacted far more than other LMA’s as a result of the proposed gauge increase. For example, Zone A lobstermen fish side-by-side with the Canadian lobstermen. The lobsters below the new U.S. minimum gauge would be thrown back and immediately caught by Canadian fishermen. MLA 1 lobstermen already have the strictest definition of V-notch and oversize lobster. They already throw back lobsters that can be legally landed by others.

The lobster resource is not in crisis and it is not necessary to increase the gauge at this time. Lobstermen continue to report long string strong years classes on the bottom, along with huge numbers of eggers and V-notch lobsters.

LD 710 proposes to provide a one-time, $1 million general fund appropriation to reimburse lobster fishing associations and labor unions for legal costs involving the federal whale regulations. The MLA board voted to support LD 710 but would not support diverting funds from other important programs to support the industry’s legal defense.

[Note, at the March 23 public hearing, the sponsor presented new language but would not support diverting funds from other important programs to support the industry’s legal defense.]

The MLA voted to oppose LD 811 to create a new, restricted over-70 lobster license. This bill would exempt applicants from the state’s lobster entry program by creating a new, restricted over-70 lobster license. This bill would exempt applicants from the state’s lobster entry program.
and instead grant a 100-trap license to anyone who had previously fished for five consecutive years. The MLA will not support any changes that result in more fishing effort given the pressure the fishery is under to reduce effort due to the whale rules, which threaten to put many lobstermen out of business. It is also not fair to those currently in the apprentice program or on the waiting lists to create a new license that circumvents this entry program.

Finally, the board discussed an offshore wind procurement bill that is being drafted for consideration by the Maine Legislature. The bill seeks to develop 1,000 MW of offshore wind (equal to ~56-67 turbines) by 2030 and 2,800 MW of combined wind and solar (up to 155-187 turbines) by 2035. MLA was invited to provide input for the draft bill along with the MLU, several labor union representatives and non-profit organization representatives in an effort to address overarching concerns of stakeholders.

The Board was reminded that BOEM is actively moving through the offshore wind leasing process. To date, it has removed the area within 20 miles of the coast from development and the MLA continues to push the Fisheries Working Group (FWG) recommendation not to site within LMA I. BOEM plans to announce "Wind Energy Areas" in the fall of 2023 and issue offshore wind leases in the Gulf of Maine by late 2024.

The MLA expressed concern over what offshore wind would mean for Maine and for its fisheries and ocean. The MLA restated its opposition to offshore wind and will continue to emphasize that if offshore wind moves forward in Maine it should be sited outside LMA I.

SAVE MAINE LOBSTERMAN UPDATE

This year is off to a great start with the Maine Lobstermen’s Association playing offense in several areas.

The MLA recently joined with a group of other lobster businesses and trade organizations to file a lawsuit against the Monterey Bay Aquarium for making false and defamatory statements about Maine lobster fishing practices and for misleading consumers and commercial lobster buyers about the integrity of the Maine lobster harvest.

Obviously, filing a lawsuit was not our first choice. After much consideration, the MLA decided to move forward with a lawsuit for several reasons. Port Clyde fisherman Gerry Cushman, a plaintiff in the case, summed it up best when he said, "Our stewardship practice is a tradition that defines what Maine is all about. The barrage of lies about Maine fishing practices must be confronted and defeated by truth.

In late February, a federal appeals court in Washington, D.C. heard MLA’s challenge to a lower court ruling that rejected MLA’s challenge to NMFS’s Biological Opinion. The lower court’s decision resulted in fast-tracking the federal government’s 10-year whale plan and requiring Maine’s lobstermen to implement an unachievable 90% risk reduction as quickly as possible for the federal lobster fishery to avoid closure. Fortunately, Maine’s Congressional delegation made specific incidental death or serious injury of marine mammals) rather than a state waters trap/pot fishery should be listed as a Category II fishery (occasional on the endangered North Atlantic right whale species compared to how it has treated offshore wind developers and other ocean-based industries. He added that the administration’s actions were aimed at appeasing environmental groups that have similarly targeted lobstermen. “Am I concerned about hypocrisy in how the federal government deals with the Maine lobster fishery, as opposed to big energy projects?” Golden asked. “The answer is 100% yes, because for four years now I have been constantly harassing the federal government to show us one piece of evidence that Maine’s lobster fishery is at all responsible for any kind of entanglement of whales, let alone a death of a right whale.”

Meanwhile Congressional Republicans plan to hold hearings on the Biden administration’s offshore wind policy. Rep. Jeff Van Drew of New Jersey opened the first public hearing on March 16 in his home state. “It is time we examine the process,” he said, raising concerns about the government’s lack of interest in understanding if there is a link between the increase in whale strandings and deaths this winter and offshore wind development.

“If offshore wind industrialization moves forward, it will be the most profound transformation of the Atlantic coast in the history of the United States of America,” said Van Drew, adding that BOEM has engaged in a rushed and sloppy approval process. “The truth is our government is acting more in the interest of the rich and powerful than the interest of the people of America,” he said.

Meghan Lapp, fisheries liaison at SeafoodSource Ltd. in North Kingstown, R.I., a major Northeast port for squid and other fisheries, said that “BOEM has refused to de-conflict wind energy areas before permitting.” According to Lapp, “There is a lot of discussion, a lot of meetings, but never anything actionable.”

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The Maine 131st Legislative is in session. The Marine Resources Committee is chaired by Sen. Cameron Remy of Lincoln and Rep. Allison Hepler of Woolwich. Public hearings will be held in person, but online options will be offered. The committee’s live stream can be accessed through the Legislature's calendar at https://legislature.maine.gov/Calendar/ by searching the date. Sign up for weekly scheduling updates online at https://lists.legislature.maine.gov/sympa/info/ mar-jp or by emailing Linda LaCroix at ML@legislature.gov or 207-287-1337.

The following bills have been proposed for consideration by the Legislature this session.

LD 710 An Act to Fund the Lobster Legal Defense Fund, sponsored by Rep. Faulkningham of Winter Harbor. This bill originally proposed to provide a one-time $1 million general fund appropriation to reimburse lobster fishing associations and labor unions for legal costs involving the federal whale regulations. The sponsor amended the bill to change the funding mechanism to direct 20% of Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative funds to the LDF until 2030. The bill does not seek any General Fund support. The Marine Resources Committee held a public hearing was held on March 23 and work session on April 6.

LD 841 An Act to Create a Restricted Senior Lobster and Crab Fishing License, sponsored by Rep. Perkins of Dover-Foxcroft. This bill proposes a new restricted license for lobster and crab fishing license for individuals 70 years or older which is exempt from current entry requirements. Under this proposal, those age 70 and older who previously held a Class I, Class II or Class III license for at least 5 consecutive years would be eligible for a license that is limited to 100 lobster traps. The Marine Resources Committee held a public hearing was held on March 23 and work session on April 6.

LD 563 An Act to Assert State Sovereignty over Ocean Waters up to 12 Nautical Miles off the State’s Coast, sponsored by Senator Brakey of Androscoggin. This bill proposes that, notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, the State of Maine owns and may exercise jurisdiction over and control all waters, closures and gear modifications. These changes differentiate the Massachusetts state waters’ trap/pot fishery from the Category I Northeast/Mid-Atlantic American lobster trap/pot and Category II Atlantic mixed species trap/pot fisheries.

With regard to Maine’s efforts, NMFS responded that “the lack of attributed North Atlantic right whale entanglement in particular areas does not necessarily mean entanglement did not occur,” and that the acoustic data collected by the state of Maine showing the rarity of right whales in Maine waters are too “limited in scope” to “designate the Maine state lobster fishery as a distinct fishery.”

SCRUTINY OF OFFSHORE WIND DEVELOPMENT GROWS

In March, Maine Congressman Jared Golden told Fox News that the federal government has held Maine lobstermen to an unfair standard over their impacts on the endangered North Atlantic right whale species compared to how it has treated offshore wind developers and other ocean-based industries. He added that the administration’s actions were aimed at appeasing environmental groups that have similarly targeted lobstermen. “Am I concerned about hypocrisy in how the federal government deals with the Maine lobster fishery, as opposed to big energy projects?” Golden asked. “The answer is 100% yes, because for four years now I have been constantly harassing the federal government to show us one piece of evidence that Maine’s lobster fishery is at all responsible for any kind of entanglement of whales, let alone a death of a right whale.”

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and all submerged lands lying under those waters, within the rise and fall of the
tide seaward 12 nautical miles. The Marine Resources Committee has sched-
uled a public hearing for April 6.

LD 16 An Act to Make Technical Changes to Maine's Marine Resources Laws
(DMR Bill), sponsored by Representative Hepler of Woolwich. The bill proposes
to amend several definitions, clarify apprenticeship requirements for tribes, clari-
fies hallmark licensing requirements, and updates the administrative suspension
process for certain circumstances.

LD 370 An Act to Protect Marine Resources in Maine, sponsored by Sen. Reny of
Lincoln. This is a concept draft that proposes to protect marine resources in
the State.

LD 258 Includes Department of Marine Resources Biennial Budget. Referred to
Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs. DMR's budget includes
several initiatives comprised of a net increase of $5,170,676 in General Fund,
which includes $3,600,600 in one-time funding, net increase of $240,349 in
Federal, and a net increase of $416,824 in Other Special Revenue. This budget
addresses some of the agency's highest priority needs. The requests include
$3.6 million to replace the agency's 70 year old Cessna plane with a Kodak 100;
$200k for ongoing maintenance of the Boothbay lab; an increase of $100k to
maintain DMR's boat fleet; and $125k to cover increased Marine Patrol fuel
costs. The Appropriations Committee has held numerous public hearings on
the budget package.

LD 574 An Act to Amend the Laws Governing Working Waterfront Covenants, spon-
ored by Rep. Biefly of Westbrook. This bill proposes to allow certain nonprofit
corporations or charitable trusts that are authorized  to hold conservation ease-
ments to also be allowed to hold working waterfront covenants. The Agriculture,
Conservation and Forestry Committee held a public hearing March 13.

LD 191 An Act to Amend the Laws Regarding Certain Business Equipment Tax
Benefits, sponsored by Sen Stewart of Aroostook. This bill proposes to exclude
from eligibility for the business equipment tax exemption and the business
equipment tax reimbursement a person that, based on 3rd-party certifications,
bans, boycotts or otherwise restricts or prevents the sale or distribution of any
product that is legally produced, harvested or grown in the State. The Taxation
Committee held a public hearing on February 14.

MLA LEADERSHIP

Kristan Porter is the president of the Maine Lobstermen's Association board of directors,
elected in March, 2018. The board of directors is the organization's gov-
erning body and legally responsible for the actions of the MLA. It guides the MLA, specifically in areas
of strategy, policy decisions and financial manage-
ment. The board hires high-level staff, evaluates and approves the MLAs annual budget, and takes
policy stances on pertinent issues. Kristan leads the board at its regular meetings, acts as MLA
spokesperson, and interacts with MLA staff.

Amber-Jean Nickel is the MLAs Chief Operating Officer. She makes sure that the MLA has the staff and
infrastructure needed to pursue its mission, ad-
vocating for a sustainable lobster resource and
for the fishermen and communities that depend on it. Those duties include oversight of all facets
of the organization, including strategic develop-
ment, finances, operations, and staff manage-
ment.

Patrice McCarron is now the MLAs policy director. Patrice works directly on the key policy issues fac-
ing Maine's lobstermen, including the ongoing battle over North Atlantic right whale protection
measures and rapid development of offshore wind energy. Her responsibilities include evaluating rele-
vant policy issues, commenting as directed by the
MLA board on policy proposals, working with the
MLAs legal team, and interacting with state and federal elected officials and agencies.

LD 742 An Act to Divest State Pensions from Companies Boycotting Maine Lobster,
sponsored by Sen. Brakey of Androscoggin. This bill proposes to require the
Maine Public Employees Retirement System to divest any stocks, securities or
other obligations of any corporation or company that trades in lobsters and
that has publicly stated it will not trade in lobsters caught in Maine waters
or caught by any Maine commercial lobster license holder. The Labor and
Housing Committee held a public hearing on March 9.

Offshore Wind Bills Not Yet Printed

LR 1544 An Act to Allow Lobster Fishing in Federal Waters Under the Federal
Golek Harpswell.
LR 171 An Act to Defend Maine's Lobster Industry and Protect the Industry's
LR 1793 An Act to Assist Lobster Fishing Apprentices to Obtain a License Within 5

Offshore Wind Bills Not Yet Printed

LR 741 An Act Regarding the Procurement of Energy from Offshore Wind Resources,
sponsored by Sen. Lawrence of York.
LR 1481 An Act to Require Federal Offshore Wind Development to Benefit Maine Communities,
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*WE GOOFED.
These generous donors were accidentally omitted from our 2022 recap. We are no less appreciative despite our oversight.

Donations listed were received by 3/22/23.

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MARKETING UPDATES

The MLMC plans to continue highlighting the positive attributes of Maine Lobster and the fishery’s long history of sustainability. Three upcoming campaigns for the year include:

- Celebrating our ‘Maine Characters’ by profiling different people in the lobster industry and sharing their stories with new bios and lifestyle photography shared across social media, our website, and in media outreach
- Leveraging the popularity of the air fryer and inspiring consumers to create easy Maine Lobster dishes at home
- Capitalizing on lobsterman Jacob Knowles’ TikTok fame by pairing him with a top-tier culinary influencer to create video content on the water highlighting the sustainability of the fishery that we can put paid promotion behind on our social channels

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The delays we are experiencing in receiving supplies and materials continue – and in the meantime, we’re still rebuilding our workforce and focusing on our customers’ orders.

We’re all in this together and rest assured, we are doing everything in our power to get back to our normal level of customer service as soon as possible.

Thank you all for your patience.

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Brunswick, ME -- Free initial consultation and review of previous tax returns. 207-607-7118

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

Newspapers

Commercial Fisheries News
Deer Isle, ME -- Discounted annual subscription rate for $18.75 with MLA membership noted on check. 800-989-5253

National Fishermen, North Hollywood, CA -- Special annual subscription rate for $12 for 12 issues. 800-959-5073

Propellers

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

Nautilus Marine Fabrication, Inc.
Trenton, ME -- 5% Discount on propeller reconditioning. 207-667-1119

Fuel & Electricity

Penobscot Marine Museum
Searsport, ME -- Free admission for MLA members. 207-544-8230

Museums & Entertainment

Penobscot Marine Museum
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Show your MLA card to receive great discounts at these fine businesses!
It’s April. Is your boat in the water? Are your traps repaired? Are your ropes and traps?

It would not be surprising if you answered “Yes” to all the above questions. The dust from handling ropes and traps can bring on congestion and perhaps a cough that hangs around while you are busy with the rope and traps, but which mysteriously disappears once you are back on the water and not indoors working with rope.

In occupational health and safety studies it is classic to find that symptoms disappear when workers leave a workplace environment that exposed them to dust, chemicals or repetitive tasks, for example. If you felt as if you had long-lasting congestion or a cold during the winter months when you worked inside with old rope and on other gear-related tasks, there is a good chance that you were exposed to a dust that contained endotoxin.

What is endotoxin?

Endotoxin is present in very low levels in the environment. It is present in higher levels in rural areas and in even higher levels in agricultural settings or where textiles are processed. Endotoxin is the material or dust which is left over when Gram-negative bacteria die (Gram-negative bacteria are those that don’t absorb a colored stain during the identification process). Endotoxin can be present in substantial amounts on dry trap rope. Algae and seaweed on rope and the rope itself harbor Gram-negative bacteria. When the rope is out of the water, the algae die, then the bacteria die, leaving a dust that contains endotoxin.

Making the connection between rope dust and endotoxin

Nearly 20 years ago, I went to Vinalhaven Island with several exposure scientists from the Harvard Chan School of Public Health. After taking a variety of particulate measurements in a lobsterman’s workshop, the researchers took some rope back to the lab and analyzed the dust on it for endotoxin. And guess what? The endotoxin level on the rope was very much higher than the background endotoxin level.

Lobstermen inhale the dust on ropes and traps when working with them. This inhaled dust results in symptoms that include cough or persistent cough with or without phlegm, tightness of chest, shortness of breath, increased susceptibility to lung infection and loss of pulmonary function with continued exposure.

But because the symptoms of endotoxin exposure are similar to those of flu, colds and COVID-19, it is difficult for healthcare providers to differentiate between this exposure and the illnesses. Moreover, many doctors would not know to connect your symptoms with your exposure to rope.

Biofilms

Then there are biofilms. Biofilms are a collection of microorganisms that readily accumulate on living and inanimate material, such as algae, fish scales, and plastics. In a 2021 review article entitled “Microbial Life on the Surface of Microplastics in Natural Waters,” the authors stated that all the dominant microorganisms in biofilms that cover microplastic particles are Gram-negative bacteria. Surprisingly, different kinds of bacteria prefer different types of plastic. For example, the Alphaproteobacteria prefer the polyvinylchloride plastics (think PVC lobster buoys).

You can assume that there are biofilms of Gram-negative bacteria on algae, on the microplastics that are lodged among the algae, on poly rope, and probably on lobster buoys. Although a few of these Gram-negative bacteria may be pathogenic, they are not a problem until the bacteria die, and we inhale the endotoxin that is left behind as dust.

To reduce exposure to endotoxin on trap rope, the rope should be dunked in a hot water bath, such as the hot tank that some fishermen have on board, or put through a dilute chlorine bath. Perhaps also acceptable would be to give the rope a good rinse after being sun-dried, then dry it again before working with it. Regarding the PVC buoys, they probably do not present much of a problem, but they do “live” at the air/water interface that these biofilms enjoy. You might want to think about this if you are working with buoys (painting or taping) that have been in the ocean. The good news is that endotoxin-related symptoms will likely disappear once you are no longer working intensively with rope, buoys and traps, and are back on the water most of the day.

TO YOUR HEALTH: Use caution when handling dry trap rope

By Ann Backus, MS

It’s April. Is your boat in the water? Are your traps repaired? Are your ropes ready to fish? At what price to your health was all this work? Did you experience respiratory symptoms during the time you were working with the ropes and traps?

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MAINE FISHERMEN’S FORUM RECAP: LOBSTER MARKETING COLLABORATIVE

By Melissa Waterman

Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative (MLMC) executive director Marianne Lacroix presented an overview of the Collaborative's past year and upcoming activities at the Maine Fishermen’s Forum.

The MLMC began in 2013. Currently its annual budget is $1.5 million. It uses that budget to promote lobster sales within the United States alone. In 2022 the MLMC focused on three things: drowning out any negative noise about lobster and right whales; sharing the lobster fishery’s story and facts; maintaining the brand while driving up demand for Maine lobster.

During 2022, the MLMC concentrated efforts on generating positive media related to lobstermen and right whales. It created a website (rightwhalesandmainelobster.com) to provide facts about the fishery and lobstermen's perspectives. It also developed and shared messaging broadly about the fishery and its relation to right whales through fact sheets, webinars and paid advertising.

The Collaborative produced a five-part video series last spring on the fishery's sustainability. "Sustainability at Work: Preserving Our Oceans" has received more than 4 million views. Additional actions related to sustainability include a national celebrity will go fishing with Jacob Knowles, a Gouldsboro lobsterman with a large Tik Tok following, and travel along the coast while posting the adventure on Tik Tok. The Collaborative brought attention to Maine lobster through innovative products using lobster. The MLMC’s Maine Lobster Innovation Guide focused on home cooks interested in new ways to incorporate lobster in dishes. In addition, it plans to create media content related to a day in the life of a lobsterman which is designed to work well on phones and tablets.

The Collaborative will continue to generate positive news about Maine lobster through holiday promotions, National Lobster Day and Maine's Lobster Week. It plans to create media content related to a day in the life of a lobsterman which is designed to work well on phones and tablets. The summer will be a publicity campaign focused on the Maine lobster roll.

And last, but not least, the MLMC will continue to generate positive news about Maine lobster through holiday promotions, National Lobster Day and Maine's Lobster Week. It plans to create media content related to a day in the life of a lobsterman which is designed to work well on phones and tablets.

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And last, but not least, the MLMC plans to take advantage of the current craze for Tik Tok. A culinary celebrity will go fishing with Jacob Knowles, a Gouldsboro lobsterman with a large Tik Tok following, and travel along the coast while posting the adventure on Tik Tok.

To learn more about MLMC, visit www.lobsterfrommaine.com and www.rightwhalesandmainelobster.com.

The Collaborative continually focuses on protecting the brand identity of Maine lobster. MLMC graphic.

The Innovation Guide helps cooks use lobster in new ways. MLMC graphic.

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National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) officials met the public during an afternoon session at the Maine Fishermen’s Forum in March. Michael Pentony, Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) administrator, Jon Hare, science and research director at the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, and Eric Reid, New England Fishery Management Council chair, formed the panel.

Among the issues in the minds of many attending were possible leasing of the Gulf of Maine for offshore wind development, future right whale protection measures, and the dual roles GARFO plays in the region.

Gerry Cushman, a Port Clyde lobsterman, questioned Pentony on how his agency interacts with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM). He questioned what sense it made to begin offshore wind projects while so much federal emphasis is being put on protecting endangered right whales, harming the ability of lobstermen to fish.

“We are doing everything we can to get BOEM the information that we think they need and should be using,” Pentony replied. He urged fishermen to stay engaged in BOEM’s long review process for approving any leases in the Gulf of Maine. “What’s going to happen in the Gulf is totally different than what’s happening elsewhere because there will be floating turbines here. And yes, all the Gulf of Maine is critical habitat for right whales. As long as the states want offshore wind in the Gulf we will have to engage with BOEM,” Reid, a former commercial fisherman and now fisheries consultant, pointed out that offshore leasing is new in the Gulf. “You have the opportunity to craft what happens. The Wind Map [Governor's Offshore Wind Roadmap, released in February 2023] is fabulous,” he said. “You have to engage every single time. If you don’t do it, then it’s all on you.”

By MLA staff

Jimmy Wotton of Friendship received the Department of Marine Resources’ (DMR) Andy Mays Award of Excellence. The award is named for Southwest Harbor fisherman Andy Mays, who passed away in 2017, but who left an important legacy of participation in the management and regulatory process. DMR Commissioner Patrick Keliher made the presentation to Wotton.

“This award is being presented in recognition of your expertise across numerous fisheries and your willingness to engage the department in a constructive way that contributes to the prosperity of all Maine fishermen,” said Keliher.

Wotton currently serves as vice-chair of the Zone D Lobster Council and as a member of the Scallop Advisory Council. He has held licenses in multiple fisheries including lobster, scallop, urchin, menhaden, river herring, and halibut. “Jimmy [shares] his broad base of knowledge with our advisory councils and through his collaboration with the department. That kind of strong working relationship is vital for the sustainability of our commercial fisheries,” said Keliher.

Marine Patrol Specialist Evan Whidden, who serves in the DMR’s Marine Patrol Section 2 (Freeport to Bremen), received the 2023 Maine Lobstermen’s Association Marine Patrol Officer of the Year Award at the Forum. The award is an annual recognition of a Marine Patrol Officer who provided outstanding service in support of the Maine lobster industry.

Whidden grew up in a fishing family and worked as a commercial lobsterman. He joined Marine Patrol in 2020 and is stationed in Boothbay Harbor serving as captain of the P/V Endeavor. In 2022, he spent a remarkable 945 hours underway, hauling an impressive 11,921 traps, the most in Maine. He inspected the lobster traps of 351 fishermen, which culminated in over 60 violations. “Evan’s experience growing up in a fishing family and working as a lobsterman gives him a unique perspective and makes him a great asset to Marine Patrol,” said MLA president Kristan Porter. “There is no doubt that his leadership and self-motivation has ensured a fair fishery for all lobstermen.”

MAINE FISHERMEN’S FORUM RECAP: 2023 AWARD WINNERS

Evan Whidden, Marine Patrol Specialist, receives the Maine Lobstermen’s Association Marine Patrol Officer of the Year Award from Commissioner Keliher.

Ben Marten, Maine Coast Fishermen’s Association executive director, asked the panel about the dual responsibilities of GARFO. “Is advocacy for fishermen part of GARFO or the Fisheries Science Center?” he questioned. After noting his agency’s conservation and management duties as laid out in the Magnuson-Stevens Act, Pentony spoke about the larger picture. “This Administration [Biden] is going for offshore wind. Our agency [NOAA] wants us to work with BOEM to make that happen,” he said.

Patrice McCarron, policy director at the Maine Lobstermen’s Association, questioned Pentony on the agency’s vision for ropeless fishing in the lobster fishery. She referenced GARFO’s Roadmap to Ropeless Fishing, released last summer, which envisions strategic adoption of ropeless fishing in the areas that pose the highest risk to right whales. Specifically, the report states that ropeless fishing gear is a tool that would allow fishermen access to fish in right whale closure areas. She also pointed out that in Pentony’s court declaration, made pursuant to the NGO’s legal case against NMFS, he stated that presently, a 98% risk reduction in the lobster fishery can only be achieved through full closure of both state and federal waters or by broad-scale adoption of ropeless fishing.

“NMFS is sending conflicting messages to the industry. One the one hand you say it is a tool to get guys fishing who are shut out due to closures. On the other hand you are saying the only way for the fishery to continue is if everyone converts to ropeless. If everyone must use it, many won’t be able to,” McCarron said. “Broad scale adoption would but many out of business. It’s very confusing, very conflicting.”

“The target for risk reduction is changing each year,” Pentony replied. “Ropeless gear can be a tool and opportunity for fishermen. What’s shifting is the area that needs to be closed. We can have more, smaller, discretionary closures with ropeless. However, the size and duration of the closures will likely increase. By 2030, we may have large, long closures.”
COMMUNITIES COME TOGETHER TO SUPPORT SAVE MAINE LOBSTERMEN

By Kevin Kelley, MLA director of advancement

"It takes a village" is an expression that means many people must cooperate to achieve a goal, and this has certainly been true over the past few weeks as community after community has come together to help #SaveMaineLobstermen. "Chowder's On" in Kittery

On February 26, "Chowder's On" took place at the Kittery Community Center. Organized by Betsy Wish, Charlene Hoyt (the wife and mother of local lobstermen), and lifelong lobsterman and Maine Lobstermen's Association member Dave Kaselaukas, the event brought together well more than 100 people who enjoyed homemade lobster stew, clam chowder, and pie!

"Kittery, the oldest town in Maine, is where so many locals are either related to or have known lobstermen for most of their lives. It is a community where folks understand that lobstering is so much more than a job. It's a way of life shared by generations, by many families where their lives. It is a community where folks understand that lobstering is so much more than a job. It's a way of life shared by generations, by many families where their lives. It is a community where folks understand that lobstering is so much more than a job. It's a way of life shared by generations, by many families where their lives. It is a community where folks understand that lobstering is so much more than a job. It's a way of life shared by generations, by many families where their lives. It is a community where folks understand that lobstering is so much more than a job. It's a way of life shared by generations, by many families where their lives. It is a community where folks understand that lobstering is so much more than a job. It's a way of life shared by generations, by many families where their lives. It is a community where folks understand that lobstering is so much more than a job. It's a way of life shared by generations, by many families where their lives. It is a community where folks understand that lobstering is so much more than a job. It's a way of life shared by generations, by many families where their lives. It is a community where folks understand that lobstering is so much more than a job. It's a way of life shared by generations, by many families where their lives. It is a community where folks understand that lobstering is so much more than a job. It's a way of life shared by generations, by many families where their lives. It is a community where folks understand that lobstering is so much more than a job. It's a way of life shared by generations, by many families where their lives.

"With so many businesses and individuals eager to jump on board our event, Charlene, Dave, and I found that we were able to accomplish one of our goals -- to support the MLA's efforts to protect Maine's lobstermen. We also felt it was equally important to raise awareness for the many ways the health of our community depends on the health of the lobstering community," said Wish.

Dozens of local businesses donated items for the silent and live auctions, and volunteers helped set up and take down the auditorium. No detail was overlooked as Betsy, Charlene, Dave, and their team went all out to ensure not only a lively and fun event but also an informational one. Dave discussed the challenges currently facing Maine's lobstering families. This event raised more than $23,000 for our Save Maine Lobstermen campaign!

"I've watched my husband, Scott Hoyt, lobster in Kittery Point since he and I started dating in 1986," said Charlene Hoyt. "His ethics and moral compass are outstanding. He lives by the highest standards of sustainability and respect. He taught our sons these standards as they grew up fishing with him on Slow Mocean. Our youngest son, Mark, began hauling his own traps at 11 years old, earned a degree in Fisheries Management from Unity College, and has built a strong, commercial lobstering business on his own boat, Ledgehammer.

For Charlene, organizing the "Chowder's On" event was also personal. "To see this industry's extraordinary reputation dragged through the mudflats and defamed feels like a brutal attack not only to the industry, but to our family. It feels as if each lobsterman is being found guilty before being proven innocent, and that is in direct opposition to all we believe in. Character is everything, and the Maine lobstering industry exemplifies stellar character in every regard," she said.

She also encourages other communities to get involved. "Our event blew our expectations right out of the ocean waters. The community showed up big and beautiful, with open hearts, minds, and wallets. Betsy and I encourage communities all along the seacoast to make some noise. You'll be surprised by how much enthusiasm exists and just how much love and support are ready to ignite from your spark of energy," she said.

Upcoming events include a Lobster Festival sponsored by the city of Auburn on May 6 and a concert in Portland on May 7. Check out the calendar at www.mainelobstermen.org for details.

Southport Was the Place to Be

That energy continued up along the coast when, on Friday, March 10, Robinson's Wharf in Southport was the place to be! Maine's own country band 12/OC had the entire wharf celebrating the pub's 'opening night' of sorts for 2023. More than 100 people bought tickets to enjoy the music, food, and drink along with an opportunity to bid on dozens of amazing donations from local businesses in the silent auction.

Staff at Robinson's went out of their way to ensure not only a successful fundraising event, but also a fantastic celebration of the importance of lobstering to their community. Special thanks to recently retired MLA board member Mark Jones for all his work on this event as well. When every penny is counted, we expect this event will have raised roughly $30,000 for our campaign.

Support from Towns is Growing

Voters and residents in several Maine towns have either agreed or voted to make donations to MLAs Save Maine Lobstermen legal defense fund. On March 11, voters in Harpswell approved a $10,000 donation; on March 20th, voters in Friendship approved $10,000 and on March 21, voters in Bristol approved a $3,000 donation. The communities of Cutler, Mount Desert, Sorrento, Stonington, and Kittery have also made or approved donations thus far this year.

In 2022, MLA received donations from the communities of Boothbay, Cranberry Isles, Ellsworth, Friendship, Georgetown, Jonesport, Long Island, Machiasport, South Thomaston, Stonington, Tremont, Vinalhaven, and York, as well as the State of Maine.

If you would like to host a fundraising event in your community, please contact Kevin Kelley at 967-4555 or Kevin@mainelobstermen.org.
fish far fewer times than in any other year since 2008 when DMR began collect-
ing this data. Overall trips fell below the previous low reported in 2020 due the
pandemic.

Overall, Maine fishermen harvested slightly more than 197 million pounds of
seafood in 2022, worth $574 million. According to DMR, that value is consistent
with the average value between 2011 and 2020, which was $586.6 million.

There was some good news for Maine fishermen in 2022. The value of Maine’s
menhaden landings in 2022 increased by more than $1.6 million over 2021, reaching
$12,066,941 in 2022. “Maine achieved a major win in 2022 for both lob-
ster and menhaden harvesters, with an increase in state quota from 2 million
pounds to more than 24 million pounds,” said Keliher. “That ten-fold increase
in state quota will provide both menhaden and lobster harvesters much-need-
ed certainty in their ability to harvest and source bait.”

The value of Maine scallops in 2022 was $8.7 million, one of the highest in the
history of the fishery and making it the fifth most valuable overall for the state
last year. Alewife landings increased last year, both in poundage and value.
Alewife harvesters caught 3.3 million pounds, an increase of 1.4 million pounds
over 2021, and earned $1.5 million; in 2021 the value was $723,291.

The price of elvers jumped by nearly $300 per pound in 2022, resulting in a val-
ue of $20,163,965, placing it as the state's second most valuable commercial
fishery. The value of Maine-caught elvers reached $2,131 per-pound, which has
only been exceeded twice in the history of the fishery.

Soft shell clams landings were valued at $16,676,325, making the fishery the
state's third most valuable last year. "By funding new positions at DMR to ad-
dress climate change impact on clams and other nearshore species, the state
has taken the vital step in supporting the resilience of this and other impor-
tant fisheries in the nearshore, like mussels, seaweed and worms,” said DMR
Commissioner Patrick Keliher in a press release.

STONINGTON, KNOX COUNTY PORTS
RANK HIGHEST IN VALUE

Three of the top four fishing ports with the highest value of seafood landings in
Maine in 2022, were located in Knox County, according to the Department of
Marine Resources.

Stonington, located in Hancock County, once again led all ports in Maine, with
the value of landed species totaling $44.7 million. This is down from $77.3 mil-
lion in 2021, which was a record year.

Vinalhaven ranked second in terms of value at $30.5 million, down from $55.7
million in 2021. Vinalhaven's landings were worth $33.7 million in 2020, $39.7

Friendship was third. Its landings were valued at $23.5 million in 2022, down
from $40.8 million in 2021. Friendship's landings were valued at $19.5 million in

Spruce Head ranked fourth in value last year at $18.3 million, down from $31.2
million in 2021. Spruce Head's landings were valued at $16.9 million in 2020,

In terms of pounds, Stonington was also the top port in Maine with 11.6 million
pounds landed in 2022. Friendship was fifth at 7.2 million pounds. Vinalhaven
was sixth at less than 7.2 million pounds. Spruce Head was seventh at 4.9 mil-
lion pounds. Tenants Harbor was eighth at 3.8 million pounds.

Lobster continues to represent the largest proportion of the value of Maine's
seafood. However, in 2022 it represented only 68% of the total value, compared
to 82% in 2021 and 79% in 2020.
JONESPORT AQUACULTURE FACILITY GOOD TO GO

Kingfish Maine's permit to build a recirculating aquaculture system facility in Jonesport has been upheld by the town board of appeals. A loan insurance request has been approved by the Finance Authority of Maine for project preparation. In a unanimous vote, the board of appeals denied the nonprofit organization Protect Downeast's appeal of the planning board's approval of the building permit.

The company also received unanimous support from the Finance Authority of Maine for loan insurance on a direct loan by Machias Savings Bank relating to the $110 million land-based aquaculture facility. Groundwork is expected to begin sometime this year on the 50,000 square foot facility.

NOAA CONDUCTING ECONOMIC SURVEY OF FISHING BUSINESSES

NOAA’s Social Sciences Branch is collecting commercial fishing business cost information from federally permitted vessel owners that were active in 2021 or 2022. The survey, last conducted in 2016, tracks trends in costs over time, assesses economic fishery performance, and ultimately informs management decisions. The online survey is available at https://www.fishingscostsurvey.com/.

The survey ends September 1. The survey is also available via phone interview or by responding to a hardcopy of the survey that will be mailed to each vessel owner by NOAA’s survey firm, ICF. You may request a phone interview by calling 508-495-2015.

NEW INGREDIENT IN P.E.I. BAIT ALTERNATIVE

A P.E.I. company is adding seal meat to its bait sausages, hoping to capitalize on the abundance of seals in Maritime waters while helping fill the gap left by dwindling numbers of herring and mackerel. Bait Masters started producing bait sausages in its $1.4-million facility in Nine Mile Creek in April 2021, using a mix of fish, fish oil and other organic matter in a biodegradable casing. The new bait sausages are half seal and half mackerel and are meant for lobster traps and crab pots. The company’s site says a sausage will last four to five days in the water, compared to two to three days for traditional bait. Bait Masters made 2,000 new seal-mackerel sausages which were pre-sold to lobstermen, and will be asking for feedback during the spring fishery.

NOAA APPROVES 1/2" WIDE ROPE FOR OFFSHORE

On March 13, NOAA Fisheries announced that it has approved 1/2-inch rope manufactured by Neocorp rope for use as wide rope in the LMA3 offshore lobster fishery. The rope is a braided rope with a breaking strength of 1870 lbs and must be attached to other rope with a double sheet bend to allow for a clean break. The rope is white with a black tracer and can be purchased at Ketcham Supply in New Bedford.

HELP FOR TOWNS ASSESSING WORKING WATERFRONT

The Maine Coast Fishermen’s Association and Tidal Bay Consulting have created a tool for towns to collect data on their working waterfront’s infrastructure and economic impact in an effort to keep them operating. The Working Waterfront Inventory Template is designed to be especially useful for small coastal communities in the face of increasing shoreline development. “Before towns can address issues and plan for the future, they need to know what they have for working waterfronts,” said Jessica Joyce, principal of Tidal Bay Consulting, a nonprofit based in South Freeport. The template is available at https://www.mainecoastfishermen.org/working-waterfront-inventory.

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

- Accutech Marine
- Propellor
- Agri-Access
- Atlantic Edge Lobster
- Bar Harbor Bank & Trust
- Beals-Jonesport Coop Inc.
- Beals Lobster Pier
- Bowdoin College Dining Services
- CEI
- Chapman & Chapman
- Chase Leavitt
- Coastal Documentation II
- Coastal Equipment Corp.
- Conary Cove Lobster Co.
- CSL Plasma
- Downeast Dayboat
- Farrin’s Boatshop
- Finestkind Scenic Cruises
- First National Bank
- F. W. Thurston Co. Inc.
- Georgetown Fishermen’s Cooperative
- Gulf of Maine Lobster Foundation
- Guy Cotten, Inc.
- Harbor Bait
- Infab Refractories Inc.
- Inland Seafood
- Interstate Lobster Co.
- Island Fishing Gear & Auto Parts
- Island Fishermen’s Wives
- John’s Bay Boat Co.
- Kittery Point Yacht Yard
- Lobster Trap Co.
- Lonnie’s Hydraulic Inc.
- Machias Savings Bank
- Maine Center for Coastal Fisheries
- Maine Financial Group
- Maine Lobstermen’s Community Alliance
- Maine Ocean Lobster
- Maine Sea Grant
- Marine Hydraulic Engineering Co. Inc.
- McMillan Offshore Survival Training
- Middcoast Marine Supply
- Middcoast Solar LLC
- Milton Cat
- Nautilus Marine Fabrication
- New England Marine & Industrial Inc.
- New England Propeller
- Northeast Marine Survey
- Novatec Braids LTD
- Oliver Investments, LLC
- Pack Edge
- Port Clyde Fisherman’s Cooperative
- Port Lobster Co.
- RE Thomas Marine Hardware
- RG Tax. Accounting and Resolution
- Riverdale Mills
- Rope Razor
- Seacoast Lobster Bands
- Seacoast Tours of Freeport
- Shearwater Marine Surveying
- South Bristol Fisherman’s Cooperative
- Superior Marine Products
- Tenants Harbor Fishermen’s Cooperative
- The Clam Shack
- Varney Insurance Inc.
- Vinalhaven Fisherman’s Cooperative
- William Coffin & Sons
- Winter Harbor Fishermen’s Cooperative
- Woods Hole Group
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Auburn Lobster Festival, May 7
Proceeds from buoy painting contest to benefit Maine Lobstermen’s Association. Details at www.auburnlobsterfestival.com

May 1-3

May 2
Aquaculture Public Hearing, Pemaquid Mussel Farms, 4 p.m., Mount Desert Island High School Library, Bar Harbor.

May 6

May 7

May 9
Maine International Trade Center presents Maine’s Future in the Global Market, 9:30-10:30 online. FMI: www.mitc.com/education-events/events.

2023 scholarship winners
The Maine Fishermen’s Forum board awarded educational scholarships to 23 students from Maine fishing families at the Forum in March. The funding for these awards is donated by Forum attendees, fishermen and organizations.

Myles Brown – Deer Isle
Jinny Davis – Addison
Rylee Eaton – Little Deer Isle
Jewel Farrin – Bristol
Jacob Gell – Deer Isle
Kollel Hardy – Ellsworth
Elaine Hutchins – Fort Kent
Brantley Kane – Addison
Meghan Keizer – Tenants Harbor
Jameson LaBrecque – Boothbay
Riley Lapointe – Harpswell
Jillian McDonald – Deer Isle
Samuel Miller – Tenants Harbor
Jonathan Parker – Deer Isle
Benjamin Pearce – East Boothbay
John “Jack” Pellechia – Cape Elizabeth
Jackson Percy – Phippsburg
Madison Pinkham – Georgetown
Ryleigh Raber – Falmouth
Taylor Santaguida – Brunswick
Mason Savary – Bath
Marissa Wood – Machiasport
Josiah Yeaton – Phippsburg

In Memoriam: Ron Peck
Ronald R. Peck, 81 years old, of Kingston, Mass. died on March 6 after a month-long battle with COVID. He owned and operated New England Propeller for many years.


Ron's work ethic and ability to think outside of the box to problem solve were second to none. He leaves his wife of 61 years, Alice Hardy Peck; his sister Nancy Merry and husband Robert and his children Douglas Peck and wife Lori; Sally Balch and husband Ken; Kelly Clink and husband Clarence; and Alison Sopher and husband Sam as well as nine grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

April 3
Offshore Wind Research Consortium Advisory Board meeting, 9 a.m.–1 p.m. Public may join meeting via Zoom at https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86565093501?pwd=bzolTHhUPUT099success.

Lobster Zone A Council meeting, 4 p.m.

April 4
Aquaculture Public Hearing, Maine Island Aquaculture, 11:30 a.m., North Haven Community Building.

April 5
MLA Board of Directors meeting, Darby’s Restaurant, Belfast.

April 6
Marine Resources Committee, 1 p.m. Cross Office Building Augusta or Online. Public hearing on LD 563 and work sessions on LD 710 and LD 811, FMI: https://legislature.maine.gov/committee/#Committees/MAR.

April 8
Deadline for comments on ASMFC draft Addendum 27. FMI: www.asmfc.org.

April 10
Zone E Lobster Council meeting, 4 p.m., Lincoln County Regional Planning Office Wiscasset.

April 12
NEFMC Herring Committee webinar. FMI: www.nefmc.org.

Zone B Lobster council meeting, 5 p.m., Mt. Desert Island High School library.

April 18-20

April 24-27

May 1-3
May 2
Aquaculture Public Hearing, Pemaquid Mussel Farms, 4 p.m., Mount Desert Island High School Library, Bar Harbor.

May 6

May 7

May 9
Maine International Trade Center presents Maine’s Future in the Global Market, 9:30-10:30 online. FMI: www.mitc.com/education-events/events.

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