WHAT IS THE MAINE LOBSTER MARKETING COLLABORATIVE?

LD 486, An Act to Provide for the Effective Marketing and Promotion of Maine Lobster was signed into law by Governor LePage in July. The act creates a new public organization to promote and market Maine lobster called the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative (MLMC). The existing Maine Lobster Promotion Council will be dissolved.

We sat down with Department of Marine Resources Commissioner Patrick Keliher to review MLMC’s purpose and organizational structure.

Q: Commissioner, where did the idea for a new lobster promotion group come from?
A: The Lobster Advisory Council started looking at better ways to market Maine lobster two years ago. It formed a subcommittee and hired John Sauve of the Food and Wellness Group in Portland to create a strategy. That was the beginning of the whole concept.

Q: What is the purpose of the new Collaborative?
A: It’s straightforward: to increase demand for Maine lobster with the end goal of driving up the boat price. The old Maine Lobster Promotion Council did not have enough money to do that. The Collaborative does.

Q: What is the Collaborative’s life span?
A: The MLMC has a sunset clause, which means it must be reauthorized by the Legislature after five years (in 2018). That came through loud and clear during our meetings with lobstermen this past January: if it doesn’t work, get rid of it. So if lobstermen show up to the Legislature when the Collaborative is up for reauthorization and say that this thing is no good, it won’t continue.

Q: What is the budget for the Collaborative?
A: In three years, it will be between $2.25 million and $2.5 million. That’s a far cry above the $350,000 allotted to the MLPC and is in line with the marketing budget for other natural resources. It starts out at $750,000 for the first year, $1.5 million in the second year, and $2.25 million for years 3 through 5.

Continued on page 18

HOW TO KEEP A LOBSTER HEALTHY

By Melissa Waterman and Annie Tselikis

According to the Maine Department of Marine Resources, 80% of Maine’s catch grades out as shedders. It is a premium product, known for its sweet taste, soft texture and high nutrition. Lobster is among the freshest of foods, unique because it must be kept alive. These assets combine to make it tricky to get this delicate product to market, and requires close attention to handling practices and quality.

Quality and handling issues have become a bit of a chicken and egg scenario for lobstermen. Do you improve handling and quality as a means to improve the boat price, or wait until lobsters are worth more to care about how they are handled?

Continued on page 19
It’s been another tremendous summer along the Maine coast. As Mainers, we’ll take any day that doesn’t involve snow or freezing rain. So this, like every summer, rates as a good one! As the sun begins to sink a bit lower in the sky, it signals that the fall lobster season is just about here, when Maine’s lobstermen move into their busiest months of the year.

In this issue of Landings, we delve into what it means to land so many lobsters and what lobstermen can do to keep their lobsters healthy. When many of those fall lobsters are soft shedders, taking a few extra minutes to make sure they don’t get injured or cracked can make a real monetary difference.

As one article in the paper explains, lobsters are unusual creatures. Like us, they are living creatures and are vulnerable to injury. But unlike us, lobster blood is not based on iron, and a lobster’s heart is not a muscle. Its blood is based on copper and it has a long heart running along its back operated by nerves, not muscles. Still, no matter how odd a lobster’s anatomy, it bleeds. And when it bleeds, it can become weak and vulnerable to disease. Taking care of each lobster helps to ensure that they retain their health, an asset they need to survive shipping.

Maine’s coast is full of interesting marine creatures, like the lobster, and also remarkable human ones, like former state Senator Dennis Damon. A native of Northeast Harbor on Mount Desert Island, Damon comes from a long line of fishermen yet found his way to a highly respected career as an educator, businessman and state Senator. A profile of Damon is featured this month.

DMR Commissioner Pat Keliher is another intriguing figure on our coast. This past month Keliher staged a series of four meetings with lobstermen to find out from them what was happening in their areas. This was a follow-up to the 16 meetings Keliher held this past January to learn from fishermen what they thought could be done better to manage the lobster industry. Commissioner Keliher gave the news, both good and bad, to lobstermen and listened non-judgmentally as they expressed their frustrations, grievances and hopes for this season. A summary of those meetings begins on page 3.

Landings also continues its new series, From Trap to Plate, with a look at the history of lobster cooperatives and supercoops in the state. According to Maine DMR, there are 16 cooperatives operating in Maine right now, from the tiny harbor of Corea to the cooves of Harpswell and the Cranberry Isles. These are businesses operated by lobstermen, for lobstermen, many of which were created by Damariscotta lawyer Clayton Howard. Landings explores what role they can play in influencing market forces or boosting the boat price for lobsters.

Readers can learn about the new federal whale regulations proposed by the National Marine Fisheries Service. These rules propose that Maine lobstermen ‘trawl up’ gear, and the measures become more aggressive the further one fishes from shore. The proposed regulation also contains two proposed seasonal closures, on Jeffreys Ledge and Jordan’s Basin, which could have a major economic impact on fishermen who set traps in those areas. Fortunately, NMFS officials want to hear how these rules will impact Maine lobstermen through a series of four public meetings to take place the week of August 5. And lobstermen and other industry stakeholders are able to submit comments until mid-September.

The Maine coast is not entirely about lobster but, to be frank, right now it is mostly about lobster. MLA photo.

COASTAL OUTLOOK
Thoughts from MLCA President Patrice McCarron

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By Paul Anderson
Maine Sea Grant director

It seems wind energy is all the rage just now. There’s been a lot of activity in particular in the offshore wind arena. In recent weeks, I’ve been out talking to fishermen in the St. George region and it’s clear that there’s some confusion about the different offshore energy projects underway in the state.

I hope this column can help clarify the research related to offshore wind power that is taking place at the University of Maine. Fishermen and other stakeholders have posed good questions. Not all of those questions can be answered in this article.

Quite simply, UMaine researchers are trying to figure out the best way to harness the wind in hopes that the resulting power can contribute to meeting to a seemingly insatiable appetite for electricity on this planet. It’s a huge global challenge, the solution to which is going to be most effective if addressed locally. Maine’s most abundant energy source by far is offshore wind. The University’s offshore wind research program is aimed at designing offshore wind turbines suitable for Gulf of Maine conditions that can be manufactured in the state.

A few years back, the state Legislature decided to encourage exploration of offshore wind energy as part of a diversified electrical portfolio. Because Maine’s best wind energy occurs in deep water off the coast, one result of that policy was the identification of deep water offshore wind test sites, including one to the south of Monhegan Island. That site, about five square miles, is where the University of Maine has permission to conduct research for its offshore wind program.

The DeepCwind Consortium, a University of Maine-led, 33-member academic-industry consortium, was granted funding from the U.S. Department of Energy, National Science Foundation-Partnerships for Innovation, Maine Technology Institute, and others to investigate how to design and build offshore wind turbines that could float in deep water. Up to now, most wind turbines have been located in shallow water where the turbines can be firmly anchored to the bottom.

The Consortium has developed a turbine, called VolturnUS, suitable for wind and sea conditions in the Gulf of Maine. VolturnUS is designed for manufacture here in Maine, to take advantage of the excellence in construction and engineering in this state as well as our high quality workforce. If successful, we can have a manufacturing center that employs people to build and sell these systems around the world.

The VolturnUS system is a semi-submersible platform with a concrete hull, a composite tower, and catenary moorings with drag embedment anchors. It’s pretty amazing to think that this thing floats, but it does. The 1/8-scale model is being tested this summer off the coast of Castine in Penobscot Bay. Deployed from Cianbro’s Brewer facility on June 2, and plugged into the grid in Castine on June 13, the unit is generating electricity and feeding it to the grid. But more importantly, it’s collecting data that will inform the full-scale design.

The current plan is to keep the 1/8 scale VolturnUS moored off Castine through the summer and collect performance data and make observations about environmental interactions. The University of Maine-led team is designing two, full-scale turbines to be built and installed at the Monhegan test site in 2017. The turbines will be connected to the grid by an underwater cable. Designers are discussing right now including a short cable to Monhegan, thereby allowing

LOBSTERMEN VOICE CONCERNS TO DMR COMMISSIONER KELIHER

By Patrice McCarron
Department of Marine Resources (DMR) Commissioner, Patrick Keliher, hit the road for four meetings in mid-July to update lobstermen on this year’s fishing season and to listen to their ideas and concerns. These meetings are part of the agency’s ongoing effort to keep open lines of communication with the lobster industry. The Governor’s Senior Natural Resources Policy Advisor, Carlisle McLean, attended the Scarborough meeting. This summer’s meetings were lightly attended, drawing approximately 200 attendees, compared to the 16 meetings held last winter which drew more than 1,500 lobstermen.

The Commissioner told lobstermen in Rockland, Machias, Ellsworth and Scarborough that he wants to talk to the industry about how to leave the fishery in better shape than it is now. He stated up front that he hears many concerns, but has found no easy solutions.

The most pressing issue, again, has been lobster prices. The Commissioner explained that the price has continued to erode since the world economic crisis in 2008. Both Maine and Canada have had huge landings since then. The difficult 2012 lobster season, marked by warm water, an early shed, record landings and the Canadian blockade of Maine lobster, led to the 16 meetings DMR held last winter. The agenda at those meetings included a discussion of a tiered license system and the need to invest in marketing. While the meetings drew many ideas from individual lobstermen on how to improve things, they also revealed that there is no appetite for change among the industry as a whole.

Since then, DMR’s science staff has continued monitoring lobster populations and is keeping a close watch on environmental conditions. Keliher recently met with a group of Maine lobster dealers and processors who say that they are better prepared this season to deal with increased volume, compared to 2012.

Keliher has been in close contact with New Brunswick’s Minister of Fisheries, Michael Olscamp, about the Canadian lobster seasons. He stressed the administration’s commitment to making sure that Maine lobster continues to have unfettered access to Canadian processing plants throughout the year.

Continued on page 22

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Continued on page 23
GUEST COLUMN: The Upcoming Health Insurance Marketplace

Over the next several issues we will be featuring a series of articles on the new Affordable Care Act which goes into effect in January, 2014, and its implications for Maine’s lobstermen.

Kevin Powers
Maine Community Health Options

Beginning on October 1, those without access to affordable health insurance coverage through work will be able to enroll in available qualified health plans through the new Health Insurance Marketplace (often referred to as the Exchange). As we approach October’s Open Enrollment period, it can be hard to separate the wheat from the chaff when it comes to information about this upcoming opportunity to get health insurance coverage from the Health Insurance Marketplace.

One doesn’t have to look far to see that the Obama Administration’s decision to delay the larger employers’ mandate to offer creditable coverage has fueled the debate further, but that particular delay and the Congressional ruckus shouldn’t obscure the coming practical realities for Americans who have long suffered worsening coverage at higher premiums. Regardless of one’s political perspective, the Marketplace serves scrutiny as a vehicle for enjoying newfound coverage or improved coverage over existing individual and small-group policies.

The concept of a health insurance exchange (now called a Marketplace) is designed to foster competition among insurers and give purchasing power to the entire population of subscribers that has thus far experienced the highest premium prices and worst coverage: individuals and small groups. By aggregating individuals as well as small-group insureds, the Marketplace expands and therefore stabilizes these risk pools, all with an eye to bringing down the cost of coverage.

The Marketplace also allows plan comparison within similar benefit tiers, requires a minimum set of essential benefits, provides an income-based subsidy and small business tax credits to help increase affordability, and applies risk adjustment and reinsurance tools to prevent the Marketplace from becoming a de facto high-risk pool. Today, plans are in the process of being fully vetted by both state and federal authorities to ensure appropriate rates and compliance.

Once plans are approved as Qualified Health Plans (QHPs), consumers will be in position to examine comparable levels of benefits and their pricing — including premiums, co-pays, deductibles and coinsurance. Maine people looking for better coverage options should also examine the provider network of QHPs and compare the summary of benefits and coverage for each plan of interest. All of this should be available through the Marketplace for Maine, and Maine Community Health Options (MCHO) will also provide full description and support tools on our Web site, www.mainoptions.org, in the coming weeks in advance of the October 1st start of Open Enrollment.

Still, you ask, what’s it going to cost? While final rates aren’t approved yet, there’s been a lot of speculation about the direction of rates going into 2014. A “rate shock” has been predicted by some thinking that certain regulatory changes may create higher rates. However, this possibility should be considered on a state-by-state basis, based on the degree of any pre-existing consumer protections. For those states without much prior consumer protection, the newly-introduced standards of guaranteed issue, no pre-existing condition exclusions, no lifetime caps on coverage, and community rating may in fact raise the costs of coverage for some. For states like Maine, however, which have long had greater consumer protections, the health reform law standards require minimal changes, and so rate shock seems unlikely. In fact, rates may even go down for some relative to current pricing, if one is looking at plan types of similar benefit levels.

The experience of a dozen or so state-based exchanges bears this out: the average premium price of the lowest priced “silver level” plan is forecasted to be cheaper than current coverage (Silver level refers to the middle tier of plan coverage amounts, with bronze being the lowest amount of coverage, and gold and platinum higher than silver). In order to help make coverage possible for all people, those with incomes up to four times the poverty level ($45,960 for an individual and $94,200 for a family of four, currently) can get reduced premiums for coverage purchased through the Marketplace. Ad.

Continued on page 22

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By Shelley Wigglesworth

The Nunan brothers — Cooper, 16, and Ben, 15 — are the two youngest sons in a family of five siblings. They live with their parents, Norm and Lisa Nunan, in Arundel and attend Kennebunk High School. The brothers come from a long line of fishermen who have been fishing off the shore of Cape Porpoise Harbor for more than a century. Just like their father, grandfather and generations before them, these young men are continuing with the family tradition of making a living from the sea.

"Most of my family goes lobstering. My dad, brother, cousins and uncle all fish. My grandfather used to go with my dad. My family all grew up with my dad. My family all grew up with him. He goes fishing about ten traps off as I can remember. I went with him been fishing with my dad for as long as I can remember. I went with him for years fishing about ten traps off his boat but that wasn’t enough for me. I had to work my butt off to show my dad I was ready for my own boat and more traps," he said.

Last year the two brothers bought one boat and gave it a shot working together. "We tried going with each other and it didn’t work because a partnership is the worst ship. We didn’t get along," Ben said. "We did things differently and we kept butting heads," Cooper agreed. "It didn’t work out because we would argue a lot. You can’t have two captains on one boat," he said. Both boys speak of the experience matter-of-factly and look at it as not just a lobstering lesson but a life lesson as well.

This season each brother has his own boat. Cooper’s boat is named Cuscaceam Frustration and Ben’s boat is called Devil Dog. Each brother sets 100 traps of his own in addition to helping their father and other family members fish. Both boys use electric haulers though they resort to hand hauling when the machines aren’t working.

When asked what he liked best about lobstering Cooper said, "The best thing is being your own boss. I also like that I get to be on the ocean and I get to see things you don’t see at school or in an office." Ben added that the freedom of the job is what appeals most to him. "When I love about lobstering is that you’re always outside and you are your own boss so nobody is running around telling you what to do," he said. Neither young man spends much time pondering the drawbacks of being a lobsterman, although Cooper had one complaint when he first started out. "I used to get seasick and that is the worst feeling ever. Luckily I got over that," he said. Sounding like a much older lobsterman, Ben lamented the price. "Lobstering is no fun when you are getting paid. Lobstering is no fun when you are selling your lobsters for $2 a pound," he said.

When Cooper isn’t lobstering he often goes striper or mackerel fishing from his boat or fly fishing in the brook behind the family’s house. Ben spends his spare time repairing his traps and working on his boat.

"Lobstering takes up so much of your time that you don’t have time to do too many other hobbies that aren’t related to it. But I wouldn’t change my life for anything," he said.

The future plans of both boys include lobstering out of Cape Porpoise, though they both say college is not out of the question. "I would really like to put my college money into a bigger boat and more traps but with the price of lobsters going down and expenses going up, it would be a good idea to go to college in case I need a back up plan and it would definitely make my parents happy if I went to college," Said Cooper. Ben said he is not 100% sure of what the future holds for him, though he predicts that after high school he will be in the lobstering business for the long haul.

"I’ll probably end up being a lobstermen because it is all I know how to do, and it is all I want to do," he said.

NEW RECRUITS:
Starting out together in Cape Porpoise

Cooper Nunan and a good-looking striped Nunan family photo.

"I've been fishing for eight years now. I started going in my dad’s boat with ten traps. Each year I added a few more traps, and at the end of the year it wouldn’t be enough so I’d either buy some off my dad or he’d give me his junk traps he didn’t fish any more," Cooper said.

Ben followed the same route. ‘I’ve been fishing with my dad for as long as I can remember. I went with him for years fishing about ten traps off his boat but that wasn’t enough for me. I had to work my butt off to show my dad I was ready for my own boat and more traps,” he said.

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FROM THE DOCK

To the Editor:

I read the "So You Want to Know" article in the July issue with great interest. I have seen the results of cannibalism in traps and crates. Rick Wahle stated that no one has seen it in the wild. I would say that this may be true even now. Tethered lobster experiments have always bothered me because they are not what goes on in nature. It would seem to me that any creature who saw possible prey in the open with no place to hide would seem to fit this category.

The fact that green crabs as well as lobsters may be preying on juvenile lobsters, even in tethered studies makes me uneasy. The fact that I am occasionally finding green crabs in water up to 7 fathoms (~40 feet deep), far from the near-shore environment I am used to seeing them in, doesn’t seem to bode well for the future of the near-shore lobster industry.

Elliott Thomas
Yarmouth

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FROM THE DOCK

Ben Nunan, left, and Cooper Nunan, right, both lobster from Cape Porpoise, but not together. "You can’t have two captains on one boat," said one brother. Nunan family photo.

"You can’t have two captains on one boat," said one brother. Nunan family photo.

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"You can’t have two captains on one boat," said one brother. Nunan family photo.
NMFS proposes to amend the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (Plan). The proposed rule revises the management measures for reducing the incidental mortality and serious injury to North Atlantic right whale, humpback whale, and fin whales in commercial trap and gillnet fisheries to meet the goals of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

In a 2003 meeting, NMFS and the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team agreed to manage entanglement risks by first reducing the risk associated with groundlines and then reducing the risk associated with vertical lines. In April 2009, NMFS fully implemented the final rule for its broad-based gear modification strategy including sinking groundline requirements, expanded weak link rules, gear marking requirements, changes in boundaries, seasonal gear modifications, expanded exempted areas, and regulatory language changes. These rules replaced the Seasonal Area Management and Dynamic Area Management programs.

The approach for the proposed vertical line rule focuses on reducing the risk of vertical line entanglements in high impact areas, versus the broad-scale management scheme used for the sinking line rule. Using fishing gear survey data and whale sightings per unit effort (SPUE), a “co-occurrence model” was developed to determine the areas where fishing gear density and whale density overlap. In the summer of 2011, NMFS held 15 scoping meetings to solicit feedback on the vertical line risk reduction strategy. Additionally, several states (including Maine Department of Marine Resources, in consultation with the lobster industry), scientists and conservation organizations submitted proposals. NMFS designed the proposed vertical line rule based on comments from the scoping meetings and many of the measures submitted through the stakeholder proposals.

Public comment deadline is September 16. Comments may be submitted, Attn: Large Whale Proposed Rule online at www.regulations.gov/#/docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2013-0095; click “Comment Now!”. By regular mail to Mary Colligan, Assistant Regional Administrator for Protected Resources, NMFS Northeast Region, 55 Great Republic Dr., Gloucester, MA 01930; or by fax to 978–281–9394.

Public hearings on the rule will be held on August 5 at UMaine Machias Science Room, Machias; August 6, Ellsworth Public Library, Ellsworth; August 7, Oceanside High School, Rockland; and August 8, Portland City Hall, Portland. All meetings are from 6 to 9 p.m.

**EXISTING WHALE RULES REMAIN IN PLACE:**

- Universal measures:
  - No buoy line floating at the surface
  - No wet storage of gear; must be hauled every 30 days
  - Fishermen are encouraged (not required) to maintain knot-free buoy lines

  Maine lobstermen, fishing inside the exemption line:
  - Universal measures
  - Lobstermen must comply with one of the three following options:
    - All buoys must be attached to the buoy line with a 600 lb weak link, or
    - All buoy lines must be made entirely of sinking and/or neutrally buoyant line, or
    - All Ground lines must be made entirely of sinking and/or neutrally buoyant line.

  Maine lobstermen, fishing outside the exemption line:
  - Universal measures
  - Groundline must be comprised entirely of sinking line (sg of 1.03 or greater); the attachment of buoys, toggles or other floatation devices to groundlines is prohibited.
  - All buoys, flotation and/or weighted devices must be attached with a weak link having a breaking strength of 600 lbs or less. The weak link must be designed so that the bitter end of the buoy line is clean and free of knots when the link breaks. Each weak link must be installed as close to the floatation and/or weighted device as possible; and

  Maine lobstermen, fishing is federal waters:
  - All of the above
  - No singles allowed, multiple trap trawls only; and
  - Limit of one buoy line on all trawls of five traps or less.

**SUMMARY OF PROPOSED VERTICAL LINE RULE FOR MAINE LOBSTERMEN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area/Zone</th>
<th>Minimum Traps/Trawl</th>
<th>Seasonal Closure</th>
<th>Gear Marking</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Exempted State waters</td>
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<td>12” mark (6” blue and 6” red)*</td>
<td>12” mark (red)*</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Zones A to G (1 to 6 miles)</td>
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<td>Jeffrey’s Ledge (Oct 1 to Jan 31)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Zones A to C (6 to 12 miles)</td>
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<td>Jeffrey’s Ledge (Oct 1 to Jan 31)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Zones D to G (6 to 12 miles)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Jeffrey’s Ledge (Oct 1 to Jan 31)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Zones F and G (12+ miles)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>March 1 to Oct 31</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Zones F and G (12+ miles)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 1 to Feb 29</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Public Meetings Scheduled for August

- Aug 5, UMaine Machias Science Room, Machias
- Aug 6, Ellsworth Public Library, Ellsworth
- Aug 7, Oceanside High School, Rockland
- Aug 8, Portland City Hall, Portland

Coordinates for Jeffrey’s Ledge closure:
- NW corner: 43° 15’N, 70° 25’W
- SW corner: 43° 15’N, 70° 00’W
- NE corner: 43° 15’N, 70° 25’W
- SE corner: 42° 50’N, 70° 00’W

Coordinates for Jordan’s Basin closure:
- NW corner: 43° 15’N, 68° 35’W
- SW corner: 43° 05’N, 68° 35’W
- NE corner: 43° 25’N, 68° 05’W
- SE corner: 43° 05’N, 68° 20’W
Dennis Damon, state senator, businessman, and fisherman

By Melissa Waterman

Dennis Damon likes to tell stories. Which is a good trait for a fisherman, state politician and businessman. Get him talking about his childhood or his eight years in the state legislature and you are treated to a tide of words and well-constructed sentences spoken in the strong Maine accent of his hometown, Northeast Harbor.

Damon never set out to be a politician. He grew up as the youngest son of Llewellyn and Dorothy Damon, the last of six children. His oldest brother was 26 years old when Damon was born in 1948. “My parents were 45 and 46 when they had me. I think I was a bit of a surprise,” Damon said dryly.

Lew Damon was a fisherman, as his father and grandfather had been before him. He was born and raised on Deer Isle and, like most Deer Isle men of the time, started fishing at an early age. Dennis also began to fish with his dad when he was young. “He was a fisherman in the truest sense,” Damon said about his father. “Dad looked me in the face and said, ‘You ever think about going to college?’ I said something cocky like, ‘So, what are you going to do next?’”

Finally he said, “You ever think about going to college? I would have been watching me from down below for all I know,” Damon said. “But his decision showed he had a lot of confidence in me.”

That confidence persuaded Damon to enter the University of Maine in Orono in 1967. “It was difficult,” Damon admitted. “There was the culture shock and the academics.” Damon decided to major in physical education and biology. And he got to do something that he had always wanted to do: play football. “I came from a small high school [in Northeast Harbor]. There were only 29 people in my class. And we played basketball in the winter. We didn’t have a football team,” he explained. “The university did have football teams, ‘You know the first football game I ever saw in person was at the University and I played in it,’” Damon said, shaking his head. “I played offensive tackle.”

After he graduated in 1971, Damon started work as a teacher and coach in Orono. Later he took a position at the new Mount Desert Island region high school, where he stayed for 14 years. He started an American Legion baseball team, the ‘Acadianis’, on the island in 1979, which still exists today. He was named Coach of the Year twice, eventually became Zone 1 commissioner, and finally, Field Director of the American Legion of Maine, a position he still holds.

In the mid-1980s, Damon, now married with three children, turned his ambitions elsewhere. “In 1985 I went into a property management business with a friend. Then I started up my own management company, O.C. Management. But I wanted more diversity in my work,” Damon said. He knew of some property for sale in Southwest Harbor, once a dairy farm, which had a fine spring on it. He purchased the property and started a bottled-water business, called Mount Desert Spring Water. With a partner from Massachusetts, he started a transportation company, Norumbega Moving and Storage. “I had no experience in business. I just created these businesses from scratch,” Damon said cheerfully. Running his businesses gave Damon some understanding of the frustrations as well as the pleasures of being a small businessman in Maine. “I know about staying awake at night worrying about insurance, meeting payroll, all those things,” he said.

In 1991, the chair of the Hancock County Democratic party called Damon with a question: “how about running for Hancock County commissioner?” Damon said cheerfully. “It surprised me. I was interested in democracy with a small ‘d’. I taught civics. For the democratic process to work, everyone must participate,” Damon said. So he decided to participate, “Damon said. So he decided to participate, “Continued on page 16

By Melissa Waterman

Dennis Damon, raised in Northeast Harbor, was the youngest of six children.

Photo by Melissa Waterman.

Beth Gronros and Dennis Damon confer at the start of the annual Fishermen’s Forum Friday night auction. Damon has been the lively auctioneer of the event for many years. Photo by Mike Young.
STEAMING AHEAD

Let’s face it, times are tough these days. Lobstermen are not happy with the price being paid, and who can blame them. Quite frankly, the price paid to the boats stinks. But how do we deal with the situation will have a great bearing on our future.

I attended all four of the Commissioner’s meetings with the lobster industry this past month, and I have to say, they were uninspired. They were poorly attended, and most of those who did attend came to bitch.

To the Commissioner’s credit, he came to listen to lobstermen, and did so patiently and sincerely. There were some smirks of constructive feedback peppered throughout the meetings, but for the most part, folks showed up to vent.

I fully understand the frustration. I understand that people want someone to blame. And as I’ve said before, there is plenty of blame to go around. But if we really want to change things — that is, to not be in this exact same situation next year, and every year after that — we need to talk about what lobstermen can do to help themselves.

I know that many of you feel that the dealers are screwing you over. Maybe they are — I really don’t know each person’s situation. One thing that I can assure you is that accusing dealers of price fixing — an allegation that has been thrown around for more than 50 years — is not going to solve all of your problems. The MLA’s concern with this issue is very serious. If it is happening, it should be stopped.

But we can’t let our anger towards the dealers cloud our vision of things we actually can change.

During the Machias meeting, I asked several lobstermen what they were doing to better their situation. Was their co-op or buying station actively shopping around each winter to find a dealer who will work with them on price, or do they just sell to the same old dealer each year? Do they know who buys their lobsters beyond their local buying station? Do they know how their lobsters grade out, or how much is lost to shrinkage on a weekly or monthly basis? Most shock their heads “No”, and said that they are fishermen who just want to fish.

Lobstermen are in charge of the supply of lobster – and there is a lot of power to be had in that. If you don’t think your dealer is treating you fairly, shop around. Get informed about where your product is going and use that information to shop for the best price for your lobster. It may not be the magic bullet that makes all of the industry’s troubles go away, but it is a place to start.

The other issue that really struck me during these meetings is how quickly many lobstermen dismiss the impact that the volume of lobster we’ve been landing in recent years has had. In 2008, Maine lobstermen landed less than 70 million pounds. In 2012, we landed 126 million pounds. During those same five years the world has been in a financial crisis. Do the math: that is an 80% increase in five years. And that does not account for a single Canadian lobster which, we all know, significantly impact our markets. What this means is that somehow Maine found 80% more customers to buy its lobster than in 2008! Plus we recruited those customers during a recession.

I raise these issues because there are lots of things we can talk about which could impact our situation. A young, hard-fishing lobsterman from Casco Bay suggested at the Scarborough meeting that Maine should consider a closed season to let our newly molted lobsters harden up before we land them, giving us a more shipable, higher-yield lobster. He also suggested that the fishery then come back on-line by phasing in trap numbers so that we don’t go back to the market with a perfect solution? Maybe not. Worthy of discussion – YES!

A lobsterman in Machias asked me after the meeting why no one suggested trap reduction. A trap reduction, he explained, would lower operating costs and potentially slow down our landings to give the market more time to adapt. He said that if he had 200 or 300 fewer traps to maintain, he’d be in better financial shape than he is now. I asked him why he didn’t bring it up at the meeting. He answered, “Why bother? No one would support it.” We all know from experience that he’s probably right, because that just seems to be the way those discussions go at public meetings. Which is too bad because there are many lobstermen out there who support this approach.

The Lobster Advisory Council’s survey in 2008 found that 56% of lobstermen would support a trap reduction in their area.

The Commissioner stated at each of the meetings that he believes lobstermen would land the same amount of lobster with fewer traps, if everyone reduced proportionately, and the industry would become more profitable. But he believes it is up to the industry itself to take this on because it is an economic, not a conservation issue. Unfortunately many lobstermen demonize anyone who even dares to mention trap reduction. He was not saying a trap reduction is the right choice for our industry — maybe it is, maybe it isn’t — I’m just saying shame on us for not talking about it!

The Commissioner came out to listen to lobstermen, and he got an earful. Many of the issues lobstermen raised with the Commissioner, frankly, were yesterday’s news. There were complaints about the last gauge increase, complaints about the last marketing fees, complaints about lack of processing infrastructure, complaints that no one is working for them, that no one has their back.

Some of these concerns are real, some are not. But if this industry wants to move forward, it is going to have to let go of the past, let bygones be bygones, and start working together for its future. With more than 5,000 lobstermen what we are dealing with, there are many lobstermen out there who support this approach. Which is why yesterday’s news is not news. What was news was that the Commissioner, frankly, would listen to lobstermen and did so patiently and sincerely. There were complaints about the last gauge increase, complaints about the last marketing fees, complaints about lack of processing infrastructure, complaints that no one is working for them, that no one has their back.

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lobsters to emphasize the cost of這些措施 during so they were dis-
 presentations (see page 1). The next MLA Directors meeting will be held
September 10 at Darby’s Restaurant in Belling.

NOAA PARTIALLY APPROVES ATLANTIC HERRING AMENDMENT 5

NOAA Fisheries has partially ap-
proved Amendment 5 to the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan. Amendment 5 was developed to im-
prove the Atlantic herring fishing catch monitoring program and ad-
dress bycatch issues in the fishery.

The proposed rule to implement Amendment 5 was published on June 3; the comment period ended
July 18. NMFS determined that a few measures in Amendment 5 lacked adequate rationale or development
by the Council, and had legal and practical concerns about implementing
those measures as they were set
approved. The disapproved measures are: a dealer reporting requirement;
a cap that, if achieved, would require vessels discarding catch before it had been sampled by observers (known as slippage) to return to port; and a requirement for 100% observer cov-
erage on Category A and B vessels, coupled with a limited industry con-
tribution of $825 per day toward ob-
server costs.

BAIT SUPPLY GETS TIGHT

Lobstermen should brace for higher bait prices. New Jersey announced the closing of its commercial men-
haden season on July 26 because its allocated quota had been harvested. This is a major source of fresh bait for Maine lobsters. A local bait dealer told the MLA that Maine fishermen will likely see more
boxed and bagged frozen fish being offered. Due to the cost of pre-buying and inventorying this product, lob-
stermen should expect to see a cor-
responding price increase. There is a possibility that pogies could become available out of Virginia from Omega Protein’s landings. However, there is significant cost in transporting bait from Virginia rather than from New Jersey. These fish are consider-
ably smaller than the pogies Maine fishermen are accustomed to. There is some good news. Redfish are re-
portedly starting to trickle in, which coincides well with demand for that bait source. Herring continues to be
landed from Area 1A, and the Area 3 herring fishery opens in October.

BROKEN OR LOST LOBSTER TRAP TAGS TO BE REPLACED FOR FREE

Due to reports of broken and lost lob-
ster trap tags in the mid-coast and downeast regions, the Maine DMR
leads lobster buyers to want to get a better deal. Many lobstermen give
reporters their slip price each week, leaving out the anticipated bonus
as well. The MLA office receives too many calls from people looking for
a source for “those cheap lobsters they’ve been reading about.” The lob-
ster industry would be well-served to
keep the boat price out of the papers and focus on retail or wholesale pric-
es – prices that the mainstream pub-
lie can relate to. Otherwise, you are
just helping to put more downward pressure on lobster price.

MBA COMMENTS ON SHIP STRIKE, LOBSTER RULES

The MLA submitted comments urg-
ning NOAA Fisheries to make its ship strike rules permanent. The Maine lobster fishery and other fixed gear fisheries along the east coast have been subject to ongoing regulations at great economic, operational, and safety cost to the industry. The MLA
strongly believes that the shipping industry should remain engaged in
the management process and do its part to help these whale species re-
cover.

Specifically, the MLA wants to see
NMFS continue its existing speed re-
strictions for ships during migration periods along three regions of the U.S. East Coast (North, Mid-Atlantic, and Southeast). These measures apply
to vessels that are 65 feet in length or greater, except federal agency ves-
sels. The MLA would like these rules to apply to federal vessels as well. The MLA does not support phasing out these rules out until the endangered whales show signs of recovery.

The MLA also supports other meas-
ures already in place to protect whales from ship strikes, including consultations on federal ship opera-
tions under the Endangered Species Act, developing an expanded out-
reach and education program, modi-
lfying ship routes in areas of high whale activity, and focusing efforts on
protecting whales in areas where whales occur in times and places not cov-
ered by seasonal speed restriction zones. Written comments on the pro-
posed ship strike regulations are due
August 6.

The MLA also submitted comments to NMFS on the proposed regulation to implement a transferable trap pro-
gram for the federal waters of Area 2, Outer Cape and Area 3. The MLA supported the implementation of
this program, but raised a concern regarding the provision that would require any Area 1 permit holder
who participates in this transfer pro-
gram to forfeit his Area 1 permit. The MLA recommends that Area 1 per-
mits be transferred in a manner that avoids any economic penalty for the
permit holder and is designed to
ensure that all permit holders have an opportunity to acquire permit rights in Area 1. The MLA is also concerned that they do not want to see tags on Maine vessels move to other states. Written comments are due July 29.

FAREWELL TO BARNACLE BILLY

The MLA bids fair winds and fol-
lowing seas to MLA Business Mem-
ber, Billy Tower, who passed away in
July at age 86. Barnacle Billy, as he was known to his many customers, founded Barnacle Billy’s restaurant in Perkins Cove, Ogunquit, in 1961. He offered his warm hospitality, lo-
cal lobster and famous rum punch to celebrities, past U.S. presidents,
celebrities and visitors for more than 50 years. MLA sends its condolences to his wife Bunny, his four children and
to all his family and friends.

The Bait Report

2013 Herring Catch and Quota

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Quota (as of 7/25)</th>
<th>% of quota</th>
<th>2013 quota</th>
<th>2012 quota</th>
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<tr>
<td>Area 1A</td>
<td>7,472</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>24,826</td>
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<td>Area 1B</td>
<td>2,024</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<td>Area 2</td>
<td>21,537</td>
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<td>22,146</td>
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<td>Area 3</td>
<td>37,034</td>
<td>45%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>48,086</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>89,480</td>
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Data from the NMFS Weekly Atlantic Herring report. Area 1A quota reaches 5,000 mt. The seasonal allocation from January-May, is reduced for the 1,425 mt average in 2011, and excludes the 295 mt set-aside for fixed gear fisheries west of Cutler, ME until November 1, 2013. Area 1A percent of quota includes current ME state-only vessel landings. NMFS closed the directed herring fishery in Management Area 2 on April 7, 2013, because over 95 percent of the catch limit for that area has been caught.
TOP TEN REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD SUPPORT THE MLA

RELIABLE
Things that don’t work, don’t last. Maine lobstermen organized the MLA in 1954, forming the largest fishing organization in the state. Nearly 60 years later, the MLA remains accountable to its membership of commercial lobstermen and maintains its successful track record in advocating for Maine’s lobster industry.

PROGRESSIVE
After 59 years of representing Maine lobstermen, the MLA knows the industry and understands the issues. So that’s why we are always staying one step ahead of the game, thinking about where you and your children and your grandchildren want to be in the years ahead.

TRADITION
It’s important to know where you come from. The MLA is part of the centuries-old traditions of Maine lobstermen: independent, self-sufficient stewards of the resource who share values of family, fairness and hard work. The MLA’s efforts reflect these traditions every day.

GRASSROOTS
The MLA is governed by a board of 23 commercial lobstermen who were elected by the membership to represent the industry. MLA Board members travel to monthly meetings and attend a variety of meetings around the state on their own time and on their own dime because they are deeply vested in our future.

ACCOUNTABLE
The door is always open; the phone is always answered. The MLA is accessible to all its members, through its monthly board meetings and annual meeting every March. All MLA meetings are open for members to attend.

RELEVANT
To make a difference in this constantly changing world, the MLA has to stay on top of the issues. The MLA facilitated a study on factors affecting the profitability of the industry and provided seminars on business training, marketing and lobster quality to give lobstermen the tools they need to remain profitable.

EFFECTIVE
MLA’s actions have positively affected every Maine lobsterman. Whether it’s passage of the law that made sternmen self-employed workers, a prohibition on oil and gas refineries off Maine’s coast, or crucial lobster conservation measures, the MLA has led the industry in getting things done. The MLA remains the “go to” source for reliable information on issues that affect Maine’s lobster industry.

TRANSPARENT
MLA understands that its work reaches beyond its membership and may affect all Maine lobstermen. That is why the association mails its newsletter each month to every commercial lobsterman in Maine through Landings, and makes it available on the web for the general public to enjoy.

COLLABORATIVE
It’s hard to make a difference if you work alone. So the MLA works with industry, science and other organizations to ensure that the needs and perspectives of Maine lobstermen inform our advocacy work. In addition, MLA started the non-profit Maine Lobstermen’s Community Alliance to further education, research and charitable work in Maine’s lobster industry.

CLOUT
With the support of you, our members, the MLA makes things happen in Augusta, regionally and in Washington, D.C. The power of one lobsterman is limited; the power of many is tremendous. It’s hard to make a difference if you work alone. So the MLA works with industry, science and other organizations to ensure that the needs and perspectives of Maine lobstermen inform our advocacy work. In addition, MLA started the non-profit Maine Lobstermen’s Community Alliance to further education, research and charitable work in Maine’s lobster industry.

MLA Leadership represents fishing communities statewide and diverse lobstering operations. Photo by Annie Tselikis.

Three generations of the Schwab family depend on a healthy, sustainable resource. Photo by Karan Cushman.

The next generation gets an early start with collaborative research by participating in the annual MLA v-notch survey. Photo by Andy Mays.

Education coordinator Annie Tselikis leading a training on the lobster market and supply chain. Photo courtesy Penobscot Bay Press.

Standing room only crowd at MLA’s annual meeting at the Maine Fishermen’s Forum. Photo courtesy Mike Young/MFF.

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Bottom line, the MLA has your back.

If you make your living in the lobster industry, there is no other organization that can provide the peace of mind, knowing that your best interests are always being looked out for.

Time to renew your MLA membership.
Introducing: A Wax-Free, 100% Recyclable Box for Lobsters and Seafood that Really Works!

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12” Display with Built In C-MAP Chartography
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• MORE Paint!
• MORE Hauler Parts!
• MORE Rain Gear!
• MORE Safety Supplies!

1-800-426-4526 www.brookstrapmill.com
To fill a live lobster order for the Fourth of July holiday, we negotiated a fair price with a buyer through Open Ocean Trading’s platform. We were paid within hours of delivery, and my co-op and our buyer both left looking to make future transactions.

MAINE CO-OP MANAGER
Market mechanisms that affect the ocean are becoming more acidic and warmer. Not only is the ocean altering, rapid. Not only is the ocean altering, becoming more acidic and warmer decade by decade, but ways of selling lobsters are changing as well. To help lobstermen better understand the market mechanisms that affect the price paid for their catch, we begin a new series focusing on the movement of lobster from the trap to the plate. For many years, Maine lobstermen typically sold their catches to the owner of the local wharf, at the price he set. The lobstermen bought bait, fuel and other items from the wharf owner also at prices set by the owner. If the harbor was large enough, there might be two or three wharfs operating in the area, giving a lobsterman a bit of flexibility if he didn’t like the prices offered by a particular wharf. But, if the harbor was small and isolated, as so many in Maine are, then there might be just one buying station. If a lobsterman didn’t like the price offered, his options were few. Back in 1947, Pemaquid area lobstermen decided to do something to change this system. They formed the Pemaquid Fishermen’s Cooperative in order to get a better price for their lobsters, as well as reduce the costs of fuel and bait for members. If the cooperative turned a profit at the end of the year, that profit was divided among the coop members. Stonington lobstermen soon followed, setting up their cooperative in 1948. But then the urge to form a lobster cooperative seemed to quiet down. It wasn’t until the 1970s that a flurry of new lobstermen’s cooperatives popped up along the coast. Most of these were organized by Damariscotta lawyer Clayton Howard. Howard, now 70 years old, helped lobstermen in South Bristol, New Harbor, Port Clyde, Spruce Head, Vinalhaven, Bucks Harbor and the Cranberry Isles, among others, move into a new world, a world in which they were the owners of their lobsters. "The cooperative presented the chance for lobstermen to interject some competition in a harbor where before there might be just one wharf," he explained. Lobstermen were able to form cooperatives under the federal Fishermen’s Collective Marketing Act (FCMA), passed by congress in 1934. The Act was designed to give harvesters more leverage in their negotiations with fish buyers and processors. The FCMA provides associations of fishermen with a limited exemption from the general prohibition on price fixing and other types of otherwise-anticompetitive conduct prohibited by the Sherman Anti-Trust Act. In addition, Maine had its own law that supported creation of fishermen’s cooperatives. The Maine Fish Marketing Act exempts the activities of a qualified fish marketing association from state antitrust laws, provided that the association meets specific standards. A fishermen’s cooperative must be a Maine nonprofit corporation, all members must be "engaged in the fishery business," and a majority of the members must be Maine residents. Reassuring lobstermen that joining a cooperative would not harm them financially was time consuming, Howard remembered. Wharves at that time also provided lobstermen with private financing for such things as gear or a new boat. The loan was repaid over time by a portion of the lobstermen’s catch. "To compete with that we had to have some high-end source of financing," Howard said. So he set up the Fishermen’s Credit Union to provide lobstermen in the various coops with business loans. "I ran that from my office for a few years," he said with a laugh. The credit union eventually merged with Midcoast Credit Union in Bath. The lobstermen’s cooperatives did one thing that private wharf owners did not: each member was paid by check once a week, rather than in cash at the end of the fishing day. Howard set up a system whereby a lobsterman could have 10% of his weekly check deposited into the credit union. That money was put aside so that the individual could pay his federal and state taxes in the winter months, at a time when many lobstermen were not fishing and making income. Continued on page 21

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

Atlantic Edge Lobster
BBS Lobster Trap
Beals Joesport Coop Inc
Bell Power Systems Inc
Bowdoin College Dining Services
Branch Brook Farm
Calendars Island Maine Lobster LLC
Cape Porpoise Lobster Co Inc
Channel Fish Co
Chapman & Chapman
Chase Leavitt & Co.
Chrisanda Corp.
Coastal Documentation
Conary Cove Lobster Co
Cooks Lobster House
Cousin Maine Lobster
Cushing Diesel, LLC
Damariscotta Bank & Trust Co
DB Rice Fisheries
Eastern Tire & Auto Service
Eaton Trap Co. Inc.
Farm Credit of Maine ACA
Finest Kind Scenic Cruises
F W Thorston Co Inc
Georgetown Fishermen’s Coop
Glens Lobster Co
Grundens USA Ltd
Gulf of Maine Lobster Foundation
Guy Cotton, Inc
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Harold C Ralph Chevrolet
Interstate Lobster Inc
Island Fishing Gear & Auto Parts
Island Fisherman’s Wives Island Seafood, LLC
Jeff’s Marine, Inc
John Bay Boat Company
Keg Store
Kent’s Wharf
Kips Seafood Co
Lake Pemaudic Inc
Linda Bean’s Maine Lobster
Little Bay Lobster Inc
Lobster ME
Lobster Products Inc
Lonnie’s Hydraulic Inc
Maine Court Petroleum, Inc
Maine Financial Group
Maine Lobster Promotion Council
Maine Port Authority
Maine Salt Company
Maine Sea Grant
Marine Hydraulic Engineering Co Inc
Midcoast Marine Supply
Nautilus Marine Fabrication Inc
Neptune Inc
New England Marine & Industrial Inc
Nova Tec Brands LTD
Penobscot Bay & River Pilots Assn
Penobscot East Resource Center
PI Lobster Company
Plante’s Buzzy Sticks
Polyform US
Promens Saint John
Quahog Lobster Inc
Ready Seafood
Red Hook Lobster Pound
Rockland Savings Bank
Sawyer & Whitten Marine
Sawyer & Whitten Marine Sea Side Inc.
Shucks Maine Lobster
South Bristol Fishermen’s Co-op
Stonington Lobster Coop
Superior Bait and Salt
Superior Marine Products
The Compass Insurance Group
The First NA
Vinalhaven Fisherman’s Co-op
Weirs Motor Sales Inc
Worcester’s Lobster Bait
to run and subsequently won. After four years he ran for another term and won again. Through his tenure as a county commissioner, he had the chance to work with Jill Goldthwait, the independent senator from Mount Desert Island. Goldthwait impressed him. "I thought she was doing a real good job and that I could do a good job too," he recalled.

Damon entered the Maine Senate in 2002 and served until term-limited out in 2010. He quickly assumed a position of leadership, chairing both the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources and the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation. As he found when attending the University of Maine years before, life in Augusta took a little adjusting to. "You see, I’ve never taken being told what to do or say well," Damon explained. "In the Legislature you are part of a political caucus of your party and there were times I did not agree with the 'party line'."

During his eight years, Damon spearheaded several initiatives that he feels helped the state and its fishermen. He led the fight to get a Working Waterfront Access Program funded through a bond referendum and to be taxed at present-use value. "We feels helped the state and its fishermen, even if they get into it sometimes. It has to do with respect. I know what you do, how hard you work, and you know how hard 1 work. In the Legislature it's similar. If someone from across the aisle wants to work with me, I respect that," he said. He feels that those who are elected to the Legislature have an obligation to represent the best interests of their constituents as well as the state as a whole. He recalls attending the University of Maine years before, life in Augusta took a little adjusting to. "I've never taken being told what to do or say well," Damon explained. "In the Legislature you are part of a political caucus of your party and there were times I did not agree with the 'party line'."

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Can't wait for the next issue of Landings?

Do you have fishing photos you want to share?
Stories to tell?
Want to catch up on news and info from around the region?

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By Marianne Lacroix

The Maine Lobster Promotion Council (MLPC) is working with the media to make sure that people are seeing positive stories about Maine lobster. Everyone in the industry can help reinforce optimistic messages by remembering a few points when speaking to journalists (or when journalists are present):

• Keep comments and discussions about price between buyers and sellers, not in the media.

• Don’t use derogatory terms to talk about Maine lobster; it is a luxury food item.

• Be a great sales person for the product and the industry. Start the conversation with everything that is amazing about Maine lobster, including its sustainability, MSC certification; handling techniques; lobster fishing heritage; harvested in the U.S.A.; and its superior taste.

The MLPC has been spreading the word about Maine lobster in key markets, particularly in New York City. Our first media hit was a three-day series in online foodie publication Serious Eats. Their writers provided readers with valuable information about buying, cooking and handling Maine lobster. They also conducted a very advantageous comparison of hard-shell lobster versus soft-shell lobster. Soft-shell was the clear winner, based on taste and texture.

We also wanted to make sure that consumers knew when the shedder season got underway to help boost demand as those lobsters hit the market. With the donation of hundreds of pounds of lobster from Maine lobstermen, MLPC held a three-day fundraising event in New York City at the end of June. In addition to raising over $10,000 for victims of Hurricane Sandy, the event generated press coverage with stories in a dozen New York metro region media outlets, including the New York Times, The Village Voice, Tasting Table, Gothamist, Thrillist and Metro NY. The total audience reached was over 10 million readers (go to www.lobsterfrommaine.com to see coverage). People lined up on city streets during a grueling heat wave for a taste of Maine lobster.

The MLPC would like to offer its sincere thanks to all the fishermen and organizations who made this event possible with their generous donations, including:

Beals-Jonesport Co-op
Beals Lobster
Calendar Islands Maine Lobster
Cranberry Island Fishermen’s Co-op
DB Rice Fisheries
DC Air & Seafood
FW Thurston
Garbo Lobster
LePage Bakery
Linda Bean’s Perfect Maine
Luke’s Lobster
Miller’s Wharf
Port Clyde Fishermen’s Co-op
Shucks Maine Lobster
South Bristol Fishermen’s Co-op
Spruce Head Fishermen’s Co-op
Stoneington Lobster Co-op
Trenton Bridge Lobster Pound
U.S. Fis
Vinalhaven Lobster Co-op
Winter Harbor Lobster Co-op

MLPC developed a media tour for a reporter from Business Insider, a digital business publication with 24 million unique monthly visitors. When she came to Maine, she went out on a lobster boat, visited a dealer and processor and interviewed scientists and other industry people to develop a profile on the sustainability of Maine lobster and the state of the industry as a whole. We will share the story through the Web site after it is published.

MLPC also sponsored a Maine Lobster Antenna-to-Tail dinner at City Grit, an innovative supper club in New York City. Chef Mary Frances Heck prepared items such as Knuckle Sandwiches, Lobster Bisque, Reconstructed Chowder, and a Clam Bake Main Course for 40 guests and selected media. The event was featured on NewYorkMag.com, Pure Wow and Refinery 29 and illustrated the range of ways in which lobster can be prepared.

All these media efforts are designed to increase demand for Maine lobster by highlighting its positive attributes and making sure that Maine lobster is at the forefront of the mind of potential customers.
Q: Where does that money come from?
A: Annual surcharges on harvester and processor licenses. Those charges gradually increase for each of the first three years. So, for example, in the first year the surcharges range from $31.25 to $93.75 for lobstermen, and $250 for a business with a wholesale seafood license with lobster permit. By 2016, that amount caps at $165 to $240 for lobstermen, and about $1,000 to $4,000 for lobster processors. The surcharges then stay at that level through to 2018, although I must annually review the surcharges starting in 2014.

Q: And where does that money go?
A: To the Lobster Promotion Fund, which is held by DMR. DMR then moves the money to the MLMC where it must be used for the purposes of the Collaborative. Remember, the MLMC is not part of state government. It is a public instrumentality, which means its money can't be touched by other parts of state government or the Legislature.

Q: So when does the Collaborative start and who will be serving on it?
A: The law will come into effect in mid-October. The MLMC will have a 11-member board of directors and new staff. The board will be made up of members active as seafood processors and one will be from the state's lobster dealers. The two remaining seats will be public seats. Everyone serves a three-year term. Representatives of the Department of Economic and Community Development and DMR also will be ex officio members of the Collaborative.

Each of the seven lobster zone councils will put together a list of up to three people they think should serve on the Collaborative board. The Lobster Advisory Council will put together a list of people active as seafood processors or lobster dealers. And they will also make a list of people with marketing and promotion or retail sales experience to be possible public members. And I will choose the directors based on those lists.

Q: It sounds like there's quite a bit of organizing to be done before Oct. 1.
A: Yes, there certainly is! DMR is working right now with the existing Promotion Council on making this transition. I'm looking at a lot of the past work that's been done on lobster marketing and economics in order to front-load the process. I want the Collaborative to hit the ground running.

Q: That brings us to a question that many people are asking: what should lobstermen expect to see from this Collaborative?
A: We all know that nothing is going to happen overnight. The law says explicitly what the Collaborative will do: undertake promotional marketing programs in cooperation with the lobster industry; promote national and international markets for Maine lobsters; provide material and technical assistance to businesses seeking to market Maine lobsters; conduct other efforts as necessary to increase the sales of lobsters harvested or processed in Maine. By January of next year, the MLMC has to present a detailed three-year marketing plan on how it's going to do this to the Legislature's Marine Resources Committee.

The MLMC will need more than a couple of months to show progress in achieving its goals. But built into the law are ways to measure its effect. The MLMC must have an annual audit of its expenditures, and provide an annual report of its activities to the Marine Resources Committee and the Lobster Advisory Council, and to a meeting of Maine's lobstermen, which probably will take place at the annual Fishermen's Forum. Furthermore, the MLMC must undergo a third-party, independent audit for all its activities from 2014 to 2017. Based on that audit and the recommendations of the Lobster Advisory Council, the Marine Resources Committee will decide whether to renew the MLMC in 2018.

Q: What do you think is most important for people to understand about the new Collaborative?
A: That improving the price paid for Maine lobster really has to be a shared process. The MLMC will meet at least four times a year or more. The meetings are open to the public. Anyone can and should come to make their opinions known.
No matter how you slice it, the facts are real: everyone in the supply chain is losing money – a lot of it – due to shrinkage. Shrinkage refers to the lobsters which don’t survive their trip through the supply chain. A dead lobster costs money. Not only can you lose money – a lot of it – due to shrinkage, you are real: everyone in the supply chain to. 2% of the 2012 catch perished before making it to market, that represents a loss of nearly $7 million in revenue for Maine lobstermen. If 2.5% of the lobsters perished, that loss rises to $8.5 million. That money is being left on the table. Shrinkage not only hits lobstermen in their wallets; it is also the bane of lobster buyers. Dealers bear a great deal of risk in moving a perishable live product. Dealers encounter shrinkage after lobstermen have paid. It is usually discovered at out of crates. “Tselikis explained that that threshold, the price will be further reduced. So what does it take to keep lobsters alive and reduce the amount lost to shrinkage? “Attention to detail and a basic change in handling habits,” said Annie Tselikis, who managed the TAA program for the Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA). Through the Maine Lobstermen’s Community Alliance (MLCA), Tselikis is conducting a series of at-the-dock workshops with lobstermen to discuss lobster handling practices that promote strong, shippable lobsters. “Basically you want to do things that keep the lobster’s shell whole, keep the animal as unstressed as possible, and give it the temperature and oxygen it needs to stay vigorous.” Tselikis has spent much of the last year gathering data on lobster health to convey to lobstermen, everything from molt characteristics to lobster physiology and the impact that quality has on lobster markets. “Molting is an exhausting process for lobsters,” Tselikis explained. “The lobsters generally dehydrate just before the molt and then rapidly consume a lot of water in order to crack open that shell.” Juvenile lobsters will molt five to seven times each year until they reach about a pound in weight. After that the males will molt about once a year and reproductive females every two years. After shedding the old shell, the animals continue to suck up seawater for up to ten days in order to expand their new, paper-soft shell. Any lobster can be harmed by rough handling. But because Maine lobstermen fish primarily on shedding, they need to pay extra attention. “It really starts at the hauler,” Tselikis said. Molting is an exhausting process for lobsters, Tselikis explained. “The lobsters generally dehydrate just before the molt and then rapidly consume a lot of water in order to crack open that shell,” Juvenile lobsters will molt five to seven times each year until they reach about a pound in weight. After that the males will molt about once a year and reproductive females every two years. After shedding the old shell, the animals continue to suck up seawater for up to ten days in order to expand their new, paper-soft shell. Any lobster can be harmed by rough handling. But because Maine lobstermen fish primarily on Shedders, they need to pay extra attention. “It really starts at the hauler,” Tselikis said. Molting is an exhausting process for lobsters, Tselikis explained. “The lobsters generally dehydrate just before the molt and then rapidly consume a lot of water in order to crack open that shell,” Juvenile lobsters will molt five to seven times each year until they reach about a pound in weight. After that the males will molt about once a year and reproductive females every two years. After shedding the old shell, the animals continue to suck up seawater for up to ten days in order to expand their new, paper-soft shell. Any lobster can be harmed by rough handling. But because Maine lobstermen fish primarily on Shedders, they need to pay extra attention. “It really starts at the hauler,” Tselikis said. Molting is an exhausting process for lobsters, Tselikis explained. “The lobsters generally dehydrate just before the molt and then rapidly consume a lot of water in order to crack open that shell,” Juvenile lobsters will molt five to seven times each year until they reach about a pound in weight. After that the males will molt about once a year and reproductive females every two years. After shedding the old shell, the animals continue to suck up seawater for up to ten days in order to expand their new, paper-soft shell. Any lobster can be harmed by rough handling. But because Maine lobstermen fish primarily on Shedders, they need to pay extra attention. “It really starts at the hauler,” Tselikis said.
Do lobsters bleed?

By Sarah Paquette

Lobsters are strange creatures—they have a long tube for a heart, a heartbeat that is controlled by nerves, not muscle, and blood that is clear in color. That blood, which is called hemolymph, becomes a milky-white, filmy material when the lobster is cooked.

So what happens when a lobster is injured and bleeds? “The blood clots very quickly,” explained Joe Kunkle, a research professor at the University of New England in Biddeford. “If it is a simple injury, you can put it back into the water and don’t have to worry. If the lobster is kept out of the water for a short time after an injury, it clots even more effectively.”

“I had always been taught to get them [lobster] back into the water as soon as possible after v-notching or if they were injured,” explained Sonny Beal, a Beals Island lobsterman. “But then I learned that it is better to hold them onboard for a few minutes to help stop the bleeding.”

Kunkle said the amount of time it takes for blood to clot depends on the severity of the injury: “An injury to the carapace is dangerous because clotting may interfere with the heart. Injury to the underside [of a lobster] could result in clotting interfering with the nervous system.”

The pumping of blood is not controlled by the heartbeat humans and other mammals have. A lobster’s heartbeat is controlled by nerve impulses. By contrast, mammals have a heartbeat that is controlled by muscles.

A lobster’s heart is located on its back, or dorsal side, and runs the length of the tail to the brain. “[Lobsters] take in blood at the tail and pump it to the heart and antennae,” said Kunkle. “Pulmonary organs help pump the blood to the antennae. Blood is pumped up one side and back down the other.” Side vessels carry blood laterally to the legs.

With each beat, a lobster’s blood is pushed from the heart into major arteries that lead to the sensory organs in the head and into arteries that lead to the abdomen, stomach, and ventral (underside) nervous system. There the blood is emptied into cavities called sinuses and surrounds the lobsters’ organs.

Diane Cowan, founder and director of The Lobster Conservancy, said that this is called an open circulatory system. “But it’s not completely open,” she noted. “Blood vessels carry the blood away from the heart while venous blood is pooled in the sinuses and uses gravity to move.”

Lobsters have capillaries in their gills where oxygen exchange occurs. “One difference between lobster blood and human blood is that human blood (hemoglobin) contains iron while lobster blood (hemolymph) contains copper,” Cowan said.

Department of Marine Resources lobster biologist Carl Wilson said that lobster blood clots rapidly which makes analyzing blood samples difficult. “It clots within a matter of minutes. We have to work quickly when we take samples for protein analysis,” he said. The level of protein or sugar in the blood of a lobster indicates how healthy the animal is. “When a lobster molts, it fills the cavity with seawater which dilutes the blood protein levels,” Wilson said. “Some dealers take blood samples and analyze them to determine the shipability of the lobster.”

Maine lobstermen land the majority of their catch when lobsters are at the low point in the growth cycle, having just molted. Ensuring that these lobsters survive their trip on the truck is essential. Shipping shedders too soon after they molt puts them at high risk of mortality. A 2006 Canadian paper written by scientists from the Atlantic Veterinary College Lobster Science Center, Fishermen and Scientists Research Society, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada concluded that the lowest blood protein values in a lobster come immediately after it molts. By waiting to ship a newly molted lobster, lobster mortality is likely to go down.

“I remember hearing about research on handling and how to reduce limb loss in traps in Australia a few years ago and wondering why it mattered. But lesions and wounds make a big difference [in the quality and shipability of a lobster],” Wilson said. “I think it’s great that Maine is now focusing on those issues.”
“Boat price is the biggest driver of profitability,” said Alexa Dayton, Coordinated Training and Outreach program manager at the Gulf of Maine Research Institute (GMRI) in Portland. Dayton has just completed a complex analysis of lobster businesses in Maine begun in 2011 in collaboration with the Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA). MLA and GMRI staff gathered financial data from more than 1,000 lobstermen, including one-on-one interviews with selected lobstermen from each zone, to construct an analytical model that illustrates the effect of economic, regulatory, and operational changes to a lobsterman’s bottom line.

Fishermen were asked detailed questions about their businesses. They provided information about how many traps they fished during each quarter of the year, the soak time for those traps, the number of days per week they went lobstering, and the amount of fuel needed to get to those traps. In addition, they estimated how much they spent each year on fuel, bait, oil changes, gear, crew costs, and general vessel maintenance and repairs. These questions, and others, were designed to give picture of the economics of each person’s business, as of 2010.

Dayton and colleagues at GMRI then constructed a computer-based application called lobsterman to help lobstermen. Called a “vessel level simulator,” the Excel spreadsheet allows an individual lobsterman to tweak various elements—fuel price, catch volume, equipment costs—to see what would happen to his profitability. “We are hoping we can change this to an online system, like a mortgage calculator, to make it simpler to use,” Dayton said. Lobstermen who tested out the vessel level simulator say that it reflects well what they know about their own businesses. “Those lobstermen generally have a handle on their business,” Dayton said, “but this allows them to estimate the potential future impacts of changes in fuel or bait price for example. Young fishermen just getting started will also really find it valuable as a way to understand the business side of lobstering.”

Dayton used the data to run some scenarios about the lobster industry in the state as a whole. She ran one simulation that used last summer’s lobster abundance and fuel and boat prices as its template. “I wanted to see what would happen if we increased the volume and ran more pounds through the system, with the decrease in boat price. I found a huge decrease in profitability. As the volume went up, profitability did not go up equally,” she explained.

The financial data were used by the MLA this spring in support of the lobster marketing bill before the Marine Resources Committee. “We took all the data and did an analysis of the bill’s impact” at the state level. What we found is that effects differ greatly depending on the size of the [lobsterman’s] business. Larger operations can withstand fee increases more readily, where smaller operations find it more challenging. But, if the marketing bill can increase the boat price by even 10%, it will pay off in terms of profitability for all lobstermen,” she said.

GMRI plans to publish a report later this fall summarizing the findings of the project. “Lobstermen know that changes in regulations, such as sinking line, or in gear and fuel make a huge difference,” said Patrice McCarron, executive director of the MLA. “This study didn’t generate any huge surprises, it just quantified what lobstermen have been saying for years, and gives us the hard data to work with.”

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By Melissa Waterman

Howard took the cooperative concept one step further. “Once a cooperative was formed, it had clout within in its particular harbor but it really didn’t have any influence on the price at the wholesale level. If we could get power at that level, then the coops could affect the price,” he explained.

So he set out to organize a “cooperative of cooperatives” in the mid-1970s called the Maine Association of Cooperatives or Big MAC for short.

Ten lobster cooperatives anted up $10,000 each to become a member of Big MAC. The cooperative bought Maine Coast Seafood in Spruce Head from the Lewis family and hired a general manager. Howard started talking to lobster buyers down in Boston, alerting them that the landings from ten lobster cooperatives were available... for a good price. “I negotiated with those buyers to get a dime or so more per pound. We would get the catch from the coops, grade them down in Spruce Head, cook and pick some, and then ship them all over,” he said. One of the unanticipated results of Big MAC’s success in getting a higher price for its ten members was that other coops could negotiate better prices as well. “The coop managers would say to their own buyers, ‘Look, Hook Lobster Company [in Boston] just paid [Big MAC] a nickel more,” Howard said. “They used us as a lever.”

Big MAC also provided its ten members with something desired by every Maine lobsterman: good bait, in this case alewive. “We contracted with Damariscotta Mills to pay the town so much per year for the alewife catch there. Basically we rented the stream,” Howard said. It meant a lot of long hours at night but getting a good supply of alewives in the spring was an important benefit to Big MAC’s members.

Big MAC made some money but, according to Howard, it never was fully capitalized to survive in the global market. Even though it did several million dollars worth of business, Big MAC never had much of a cushion to fall back on when things went wrong, as they inevitably did.

One day an $80,000 shipment of lobster to Paris ended up condemned in an airport in Germany. The customer did not pay Big MAC and so “we were essentially out of operating capital,” Howard explained. Although Howard sued the airlines that caused the lobster to be delayed in shipment and eventually won, Big MAC went into Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Howard and a few partners put up money to get the coop out of bankruptcy, reorganized and put it up for sale. “Anthony’s Pier 4 in Boston bought it,” Howard said. “So all the coops got back exactly what they put in to it. No one lost out.”

Owning the lobsters is one thing but taking charge of marketing the lobsters is another. The time, expense and headache that go into being a lobster purveyor has discouraged lobster cooperatives from entering the game. Interstate Lobster Cooperative in South Harpswell took a stab at selling its own lobsters in the mid-1980’s. The small cooperative, formed in 1974, decided to buy a truck and start selling directly to buyers in Canada and Boston. After several years, members agreed that the aggravation of maintaining a truck and drivers was more trouble than it was worth.

Recently other lobster cooperatives have considered taking on the added workload of grading and shipping the lobsters themselves. The Spruce Head Fishermen’s Cooperative weighed the pros and cons of leasing a nearby grading and storage facility several years ago but decided the time wasn’t right for making that transition. The Vinalhaven Fishermen’s Coop also considered grading its lobsters but realized that limited space on land precluded that possibility and that the members weren’t ready to start grading on the boat.

Change comes slowly to the Maine lobster industry. “Lobstermen aren’t flush with cash they can gamble with. If there were adequate capitalization by the lobstermen, not the government, then the coops could have an opportunity to do something like another Maine Association of Cooperatives,” Howard said. But, he continued, “This is still one of the wildest industries in the world. You would have to have a very good manager and dedicated board of directors to make it work.”
OFFSHORE WIND POWER PROJECT ON HOLD
Statoil North America decided in July to halt efforts to develop an offshore wind energy project twelve miles off Boothbay Harbor because of legislative changes to the state's energy policy contained in LD 1472, which passed unanimously earlier in the session. Those changes stalled Statoil’s approved project while allowing the University of Maine a second chance to submit a proposal for an offshore wind test turbine.
As a result, Statoil told the Maine Public Utilities Commission that it would put development of the Hywind Maine project on hold until the fall.

Governor LePage stipulated that the University’s proposal for a membrane and Composites Center be allowed to bid on the project, despite the fact that the university chose not to bid when the project was first proposed three years ago. The measure gives the university until the first of September to submit its own proposal. Yet university officials have admitted that the school does not have the capacity to do such a project on its own and requires the support of a private corporation such as Statoil.

P.E.I. HAPPY, NEW BRUNSWICK LOBSTERVER ANGRY
The Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) decided that the minimum size for a legally-caught lobster in Northumberland Strait off Prince Edward Island will increase slightly this year. The minimum carapace will increase to 72 mm this year, up from 71 mm in 2012.
The fall lobster season in the Northumberland Strait began on August 9.
P.E.I. lobstermen expressed pleasure at the decision. The island has a strong cannon industry that processes the smaller lobsters for lucrative niche markets. New Brunswick lobstermen, on the other hand, wanted a greater size increase in order to meet demand for larger lobsters from their buyers.
DFO Minister Keith Ashfield said he had been hoping an industry-driven consensus on the minimum legal size for lobster could be reached. “The lack of agreement has reluctantly required me to make a decision in order for the season to open as planned. The department will review the findings of the independent Maritime lobster panel set up by the provincial governments of P.E.I., Nova Scotia and New Brunswick before any future changes on carapace size are taken for the 2014 fishing season or beyond,” Ashfield said.

MASSACHUSETTS PASSES TAILS LAW
In July Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick signed the state’s 2014 budget that included an amendment allowing processed and frozen lob- ster tails to be sold and grown in state for the first time. The change comes after similar decisions in Maine and other New England states, which had bans in place but decided to allow for sales of American lobster tails in recent years.
Before deciding to follow suit, the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries completed a study that recommended modernizing the law to allow in-state sales of tails, citing a lobster surplus and growing demand from consumers for a no-fuss lobster product. Tails sold in the state must weigh at least three ounces. The aim, said a Provincetown legislator, is to increase demand for Massachusetts lobstermen and increase the price per pound paid to lobstermen.

NFMS OBSERVER PROGRAM COVERS LOBSTER FISHERY
By Glenn Chamberlain
Northeast Fisheries Science Center
Fisheries Sampling Branch
Everyone is aware that groundfish vessels must carry fisheries observers aboard to collect data on the catch. But did you know that observers are also assigned to lobster boats as well?
The Northeast Fisheries Observer Program, (NFOP), operates out of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, a part of the National Marine Fisheries Service. The program has been in place since 1989 with a mission to collect, process, and manage data collected by observers on commercial fishing vessels. A corps of trained, certified observers cover pot and trap fisher- ies as required by the federal Endan- gered Species Act, Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation Act, and the Marine Mammal Protection Act.
The primary reason for observer coverage of the lobster pot and trap fishery is to sample the lobster catch (kept and discarded) and to survey the catch effort on an annual basis to evaluate potential impacts on fish, birds, bats, marine mammals, and marine animals. This group will also survey the proposed cable route. So where's the fishing industry in all of this? How large will the exclusion area be around the turbines? Where will the cable be located to connect them to the grid? What impacts might the devices and the cable have on lobster and fish? These are impor- tant questions that will be answered through the course of this research program.
Some of the experts involved in this research and I will be meeting with fishermen and others over the coming months. You are also welcome to contact project staff, including me. I can be reached at panderson@ maine.edu and 207-581-1435.

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island residents to get power from the test turbines, with the rest of the electricity transmitted to the mainland.
Options for laying a cable to the mainland are being explored; the decision on the final route will be based on the potential impact on the fishing industry, the cost of installation, and the likelihood of the research goals being met.
The team working on this project includes UMaine’s Advanced Structures and Composites Center and its many partners, including UMaine’s School of Marine Sciences, Maine Sea Grant, Cianbro, Maine Maritime Academy, and more than 20 others. The UMaine environmental research vessel Far Calm is helping to answer all of these questions, to collect data on the environmental conditions at the test site and evaluate potential impacts on fish, birds, marine mammals, and marine animals. Th is group will also survey the proposed cable route.
So where’s the fishing industry in all of this? How large will the exclusion area be around the turbines? Where will the cable be located to connect them to the grid? What impacts might the devices and the cable have on lobster and fish? These are impor- tant questions that will be answered through the course of this research program.
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ditional cost sharing reductions are available for those with incomes less than two-and-a-half times the pov- erty level. For more information on eligibility to get coverage, premium assistance and lower out-of-pocket costs on the Marketplace, visit www.healthcare.gov.
For companies with 50 or fewer em- ployees, the small business market- place will similarly have an array of Qualified Health Plans at the various levels of coverage amounts. Small businesses with fewer than 25 full- time equivalents (FTE) can further benefit through employer health care tax credits if the payroll averages about $50,000 per FTE a year or less. To get more information on the Small Business Health Care Tax Credit, go to www.healthcare.gov.
In sum, the advent of the Market- place in Maine should be a boon to Maine consumers seeking health in- surance coverage in the individual or small-group markets. The competi- tion among and choice of Qualified Health Plans and the availability of subsidies, cost sharing reductions and tax credits are expected to make it more affordable for thousands of Maine individuals and businesses. As we get the green light from our regulators, we at Maine Community Health Options will provide information and decision aids to help people find the coverage that best suits their needs.
He raised a few eyebrows in the audience when he explained that he has received reports that the Canadian industry is currently holding more than 20 million pounds in live inventory, and also has a considerable inventory of frozen product on hand. Keliher attended a conference in Canada in late July to continue discussions with Canadian officials.

Keliher told lobstermen that increasing Maine's processing capacity is a major priority for this administration. While the processing sector continues to face challenges in terms of workforce development and energy costs, the state is still receiving inquiries from companies interested in entering this sector.

Linda Bean, who attended the Rockland meeting, stated that securing reliable workers is difficult in the midcoast region. Her company would like to add a second shift, but is unable to obtain the necessary workforce.

The common complaint voiced by lobstermen at all of the meetings was their profound frustration over poor lobster prices. Many lobstermen expressed confusion that despite slower landings this year, the price is worse than what they were paid last year when the market was over supplied. Lobstermen at the Machias, Ellsworth and Scarborough meetings argued that dealers are working together to keep prices low, and no one is holding them accountable for their actions. At the Ellsworth meeting, lobstermen questioned whether the loss of smaller, independent dealers, which has concentrated buying power with just one or two major dealers, might be keeping prices low.

The Commissioner explained that the Attorney General's office investigated such allegations in 2009, but were not able to make a case. Keliher told lobstermen that these sorts of cases are difficult to prove, but lobstermen should contact the Attorney General's office if they have evidence of illegal activity.

The Commissioner stressed to lobstermen at each meeting that supply continues to outpace demand, citing the doubling of lobster landings over the last ten years. The new marketing initiative is designed to address this imbalance. Lobster prices along the coast are troubling, Keliher said, and require attention. Maine is in close contact with Canada, which has assembled a panel to look at how lobster prices are determined.

The Commissioner explained how the transition to the new marketing collaborative will take place. In October, the Maine Lobster Promotion Council will go out of business and the new Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative will take over. Keliher urged lobstermen to think of whom they want representing them in the new marketing collaborative. The harvester sector has four representatives who will be nominated through the zone councils.

Many lobstermen expressed hope that this marketing collaborative will change things for the better; others remain cynically convinced that this is just another useless effort to take money out of their pockets. The Commissioner assured lobstermen that if the new marketing collaborative is not successful, it will sunset in five years.

Keliher asked if lobstermen had seen a rise in the prevalence of shell disease. Less than 1 percent of Maine lobsters are found to have this disease. He said that in southern New England, as much as one-third of the lobster catch has some sign of shell disease. Some research suggests that warm water stresses lobster and makes them susceptible to the bacteria that are already present on the shell. A few lobstermen commented that they had been seeing lobsters with shell disease, but the concern was not widespread among meeting attendees. Lobstermen in the western part of the state reported seeing greater numbers of these lobsters.

The commissioner queried lobstermen about the status of green crabs in local areas, stating that “Casco Bay is lousy with them.” Warmer water temperatures in the Gulf of Maine have lead to a green crab population boom. The concern is that the green crabs are decimating the populations of clams and crowding lobster traps. Lobstermen from most areas of the coast reported seeing increases of green crabs in deeper waters, but it was not a widespread concern.

Overall, only a few lobstermen offered suggestions on how to change things for the better. A lobsterman at the Scarborough meeting suggested that the Commissioner consider short closed seasons in the spring to allow lobsters a chance to harden up before they are landed. Lobstermen would then start up with a phase-in of traps to keep the marketing from being flooded. Others supported the Commissioner’s efforts to work with Canada and his commitment to meeting with the lobster industry. Through these meetings, lobstermen vented their frustration over a broad range of issues from lobster prices, gauge size, marketing fees and sinking rope to a lack of processing infrastructure. Although the meetings were fairly well-attended, the Commissioner promised that the DMR will continue to hold meetings with the industry to find ways to move forward.
In March, when lobster trapped in our state was certified worldwide for fishery sustainability, the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) provided a way to guarantee traceability to our buyers, a way to stop misleading promotions of so-called "Maine" lobsters that are not really from Maine, or even the USA.

The MSC license to use its blue ecolabel is available to those willing to document their product’s Maine chain of custody from trap to table.

The blue ecolabel is the world’s assurance that customers are buying big claw specie homarus americanus from Maine waters. From no other state or nation.

And no other state or nation has achieved MSC lobster certification. Congratulations Maine day boats for your consistent sustainability practices!

My company is proud to bear the license of the MSC blue ecolabel. It’s what the world wants to see to prove sustainability and traceability. Customers have our assurance: If Linda Bean's Maine Lobster is on the label, quality is on the table."