GOVERNOR ANNOUNCES INTENT TO DEVELOP OFFSHORE WIND OFF SOUTHERN MAINE

Press Release, Office of the Governor

To solidify Maine’s leadership in floating offshore wind energy and collaborate with Maine’s fisheries on the industry’s development, Governor Janet Mills today announced the State’s plan to create the country’s first floating offshore wind research array in the Gulf of Maine.

With some of the highest sustained wind speeds in the world, the Outer Continental Shelf of the Gulf of Maine has great potential for generating clean energy and economic opportunity for Maine, as offshore wind investment in the U.S. is estimated to top $70 billion through 2030.

Due to its deep waters, generating wind energy in the Gulf of Maine will likely come from floating offshore wind turbines, a technology still under development in the US which requires additional scientific study about its potential effects on fisheries and the marine environment.

Designating a small-scale research array in the Gulf of Maine represents a measured, deliberative approach that allows the State to engage the fishing industry’s expertise to minimize potential harms and maximize the benefits to Maine people from offshore wind.

“I believe Maine can lead the country in floating offshore wind technology,” said Governor Mills. “But it must be done in partnership with Maine’s fishermen, to form a science-based mutual understanding of how best to design and operate floating wind turbines in the precious Gulf of Maine. A research array is a prudent step toward securing our state’s leadership position, working collaboratively with fishermen and scientists, and developing offshore wind to realize the significant energy, economic and climate benefits it stands to offer our state.”

The research array is part of the ongoing Maine Offshore Wind Initiative announced by Governor Mills in 2019. In October, the State received a grant from the U.S. Economic Development Agency for the Initiative to support long-term planning for offshore wind with fishery, business, environmental and science representatives, as well as assessing port and infrastructure needs and evaluating the supply chain, manufacturing, and workforce opportunities.

The state intends to file an application for the research array with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, which oversees renewable energy development in federal waters, which begin more than three miles off the coast.

As envisioned, the research array would be located some 20 to 40 miles off shore.

Press Release, Office of the Governor

Many wind projects, such as the Block Island Wind Farm, are located in near-shore waters. Photo courtesy of Energy Network News.
An end comes to all good things and fortunately, to bad things as well. One would be hard-pressed to call 2020 a good year, after a yearnie that smoldered just below the surface, unrelated to COVID-19. As detailed in previous issues, offshore wind developments have been popping up along the Eastern seaboard fueled by the ambitious goals of individual states to develop new sources of renewable energy. Offshore wind leases have largely occurred in near-shore waters, where wind turbines can be built on fixed foundations. No lease applications had been tendered for the offshore waters of the Gulf of Maine since Stat Oil secured a lease in 2012 and then gave it up due to the policies of the LePage administration. That is set to change: Governor Janet Mills announced on November 20 her administration's intention to secure a wind research lease in the offshore waters off southern Maine.

The project, termed an offshore wind research array, would be located from 20 to 40 miles offshore and would connect to the mainland electric grid in the southern half of the state. The research array would be approximately 16 square miles and is expected to contain up to 12 wind turbines. The administration informed fishing industry leaders of this plan less than two days before the announcement.

Since 2018 the Responsible Offshore Development Alliance (RODA) has been marshalling science and research to support fishermen's concerns about offshore wind energy projects. RODA, comprising fishermen, fishing industry groups and fishing companies, works to improve the fishery data used by developers and federal regulators, and advocates for ensuring fishery interests are fully considered in offshore wind development projects. The presence of the group in the wind power arena is critical. “It’s really all hands on deck now,” said RODA executive director Annie Hawkins.

Meanwhile, the convoluted legal case brought by whale activist Max Strahan against the Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) in 2019 came to a temporary halt last month. Strahan has sued DMR and NMFS using the same argument that he had successfully pursued in Massachusetts — that by permitting the use of vertical lines in the lobster and gill net fisheries, the two agencies were violating the Endangered Species Act by threatening North Atlantic right whales.

In November, Judge Lance Walker of the U.S. District Court in Bangor issued a temporary stay to the case, noting that the issue was due to be resolved by May 31, 2021, when NMFS must implement a final Biological Opinion on the lobster fishery, implement new rules and issue a valid incidental take statement consistent with the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Strahan’s behavior before the Bangor court was noted by Judge Walker in his November decision: “a cynical person might infer that he filed this action for no other reason than to distract, harass, and annoy the Defendants, who are at present defending (or are intervenors in) another action in the District of Columbia that involves the very same concerns raised in this action by Mr. Strahan.”

Strahan has been successful, however, in Massachusetts. In April the court there ordered Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) to apply to NMFS for an Incidental Take Permit (ITP) for the state's lobster fishery within 90 days. To comply with the court order, DMF began work to submit its ITP application, which must include the steps that will be taken to minimize and mitigate impacts lobster fishing could have on right whales. DMF has announced public hearings on a plan to implement those steps, which includes expansion of the state’s Large Whale Seasonal Trap Gear Closure (north and east of Cape Cod), which runs from February 1 to April 30 each year, to all state waters. The state also proposes to require 1,700-pound breaking strength buoy line and that those lines be no greater than 3/8” in diameter.

This month Landings also highlights some upbeat stories from the Maine coast. In Boothbay Harbor, a dedicated group of individuals and businesses have made a bold statement about the importance of a working waterfront to their town. The Boothbay Region Maritime Foundation purchased two properties on the east side of the harbor last year in order to preserve those parcels as working waterfront. Now the nonprofit organization is moving forward with its plan to rebuild the old Sea Pier wharf (now known as Carter’s Wharf) to ensure its continued use by local lobstermen. In addition, a waterfront park will be created, allowing residents and visitors to connect to the harbor’s maritime heritage.

Dwindling lobster bait supply spawned a bright idea by two men down in Kennebunkport. While on a fishing trip, they began considering the fact that lobstermen were having a hard time affording herring. It got them thinking about the many catfish farms in their part of the country. Catfish are homely creatures — their heads comprise 20% of their bodies. And those heads had very little use — until Baron Huber had a bright idea. Huber and his fishing buddy, Maine native Mike Sielicki, tested the catfish heads as bait. Sielicki had a bright idea. Huber and his fishing buddy, Maine native Mike Sielicki, tested the catfish heads as bait at a New Hampshire co-op in 2019. The positive response led them to approach the DMR to become a permitted lobster bait. It took some time and money, but in July, M&B Fish Co., as the duo call their new company, was approved as the newest source of lobster bait in the state.

Finally, it wouldn’t be Christmas without lobster trap trees sprouting up throughout the coast. The trap tree tradition is said to have begun in Gloucester, Massachusetts, where the town’s enormous tree still lights up the season each year. The trees are largely a labor of love in many small coastal towns, a sign that lobstermen and their families can still find something to bring cheer at the darkest time of the year.

Though 2020 has been an uncommonly dark year, the lobster industry continues to rise above it. On behalf of all of us at Landings, we wish you and your families a warm and safe holiday season. May 2021 bring us all fair winds and following seas!
As we approach the end of 2020, a year most of us are glad to see go, it’s a good time to review the results of the Maine lobster marketing program. As background, the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative (MLMC) has a mandate to promote and actively market Maine lobster, identifying marketing areas that will provide the greatest return on investment. A board of directors, nominated by industry and appointed by the Department of Marine Resources Commissioner, oversees the MLMC. The program is funded by license assessments totaling just under $2 million per year.

Over the seven years since the Collaborative was formed, the marketing program has targeted all levels of the supply chain, from wholesale buyers to chefs to consumers. We have focused on the key messages of our lobster’s sweet flavor, Maine origin and new-shell seasonality.

From our measurement metrics, we know that we have generated considerable awareness of Maine lobster, increased understanding of our key messages, and driven potential customers to take actions toward purchasing Maine lobster. As importantly, we also provide one big voice for Maine lobster in an industry made up of thousands of individuals and small businesses. This can be important both in promoting and protecting the reputation of Maine lobster.

At the broadest end of the measurement spectrum, we look at basic market-metrics that show if we’re creating more awareness of Maine lobster. Our marketing program generated over 9 billion media impressions, reaching the same number of people as if we had run 81 Super Bowl ads. Our program actually was more efficient at reaching our target audience, since Super Bowl ads would have cost about $41 million to run.

Measurement tools also evaluate how well our target audience understands Maine lobster and our key marketing messages. To measure this, we look at the 3 million people who visited our website to view recipes, ‘how to’ videos, fact sheets or other industry data. Another good indicator is that 348,000 people visited the “buyer lobster” section of our website to get information on suppliers.

Most importantly, we see whether people took any action towards buying Maine lobster. Since the Collaborative represents over 5,000 individual fishermen, dealers and processors, we aren’t able to link marketing directly to sales, but as you would with a private company. However, we do know that wholesale buyers are 43% more likely to buy Maine lobster after seeing our ads. This number is significant since we have reached 83% of the U.S. wholesale seafood industry with our ad campaign.

Measuring consumer demand, we have found 580,000 customers are more likely to buy Maine lobster after seeing our ad campaign in 2020 alone. We also know that we drove over 100,000 potential customers directly to websites for Maine lobster dealers.

Reputation management for the Maine lobster brand is a key part of our program but one that is difficult to measure. Success can be preventing a damaging story from being published or turning a potentially negative storyline into one that is more beneficial to the brand. In 2020, the issue on everyone’s mind is right whales. The Collaborative has produced videos, social media content and fact sheets that educate people on the good work done by the lobster fishery to protect right whales over the years. We also surveyed consumers to see if there are any concerns about purchasing Maine lobster because of the issue. Fortunately, Maine lobster purchases have not been affected even among those who are aware of the issue. We will continue to monitor consumer sentiments and scale our outreach accordingly, providing key messages to the right audience at the right time.

As we plan for 2021, we know we’re facing another year filled with changes and uncertainty. Our Board of Directors is working with advisory councils and industry groups to make sure that the Maine lobster marketing program will support and enhance industry priorities. We will share a full marketing plan for 2021 in the new year, and we are excited about some new opportunities.

In our efforts to drive awareness, understanding and action around Maine lobster, we are looking at creating new products with Maine lobster that can be marketed to food manufacturers, driving demand through grocery store promotions, gaining a better understanding of consumer opportunities through research and playing a larger role in maintaining sustainability certifications that are critical to retail sales worldwide.
By Mary Anne Mason

On November 16, 2020, Judge Lance Walker ordered a temporary stay in the lawsuit led by Max Strahan, aka Man Against Xinction, in September 2019 in U.S. District court in Bangor. Strahan had brought suit against the Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for authorizing the use of vertical lines in Maine’s state and federal lobster and gillnet fisheries. The Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA) was granted intervener status in the case. Man Against Xinction v. Commissioner of Maine Department of Resources and Assistant Administrator of National Marine Fisheries Service in July 2020.

Judge Walker’s order for a temporary stay means that this case has been put on hold pending the final outcome of the court case before Judge Boasberg in U.S. District court in Washington, D.C. (the Ross case). Judge Walker writes, “The Ross case is at the remedy stage, whereas this case has not yet emerged from the pleading stage. Any injunctive relief and/or further administrative action that arises as a result of the Ross litigation will have implications for the Maine lobster fishery, which is operating pursuant to the same set of North Atlantic fisheries rules under review in Ross. It is not apparent to me that anything will be gained through this action in the meantime, given Mr. Strahan’s past approach to the conduct of this case, which has involved filings designed predominantly to ridicule and insult his adversaries while proclaiming his own grandiosity.”

Judge Walker has ordered NMFS and DMR to provide an update to the court summarizing the status reports required in Judge Boasberg’s case on or before May 31, 2021, the deadline established by Judge Boasberg for NMFS to issue a final Biological Opinion, implement new whale rules and issue a valid incidental take statement consistent with the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). Walker writes, “Following review of the status report, the Court will determine the future course of proceedings [in Maine].”

Judge Walker’s stay will allow the Take Reduction Team stakeholder process and public comment on proposed new whale rules to proceed without the threat of inconsistent legal rulings sought by Strahan.

As an intervener in the Maine case, MLA’s aim was to ensure a vigorous legal response to Strahan’s lawsuit, which could have resulted in an adverse decision similar to the outcome of a nearly identical case filed by Strahan in Massachusetts. In April 2020, Judge Indira Talwani of the federal district court of Massachusetts concluded that the use of vertical buoy lines by Massachusetts lobstermen and gillnetters violated the ESA because this gear was likely to continue to harm right whales. The Judge did not shut down the fishery, but instead directed the Massachusetts fishery to obtain an Incidental Take Permit within 90 days for the fishery to continue to operate.

In October 2020, Judge Talwani once again denied Strahan’s request for an injunction that would have shut down lobster and gillnet fishing in Massachusetts until a trial takes place. However, the judge was displeased that Massachusetts had not complied with her order to apply for an ESA Incidental Take Permit, stating “I don’t like having an order out there being disobeyed.” She ordered the parties to suggest a trial date and required the state to report back to her on October 15 regarding its progress in applying for the Incidental Take Permit, with a progress report every 30 days. On November 13, the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries announced two public hearings to solicit feedback on new whale protections in state waters, including a statewide lobster fishery closure from February 1 through April 30, capping the diameter of vertical lines at 3/8” and requiring that all vertical lines break at 1,700 pounds, amongst other measures.

Back in Maine, Judge Walker’s order to stay the case until the end of May 2021 followed an intense flurry of legal skirmishes initiated by Strahan. In his November ruling, Judge Walker writes, “Plaintiff’s approach to this litigation is perplexing. As I wrote in a recent order denying a ‘scattershot’ of unproductive motions filed by Plaintiff, it is Plaintiff’s approach to litigation rather than this Court’s administration of the case that explains why the docket in this matter now contains 135 entries even as Plaintiff continues to announce plans to amend, and now partially dismiss, his pleadings.”

In August, the Judge issued an order denying Strahan’s motion for interim injunctive relief which would have barred the licensing of the Maine lobster and gillnet fisheries until the state obtained an Incidental Take Permit. The “scattershot” motions filed by Strahan in the Maine case included an appeal by Strahan to the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit to reconsider Judge Walker’s denial of Strahan’s request that the court issue a preliminary injunction against permitting vertical buoy lines in Maine lobster and gillnet fisheries. However, Strahan failed to respond to the appellate court’s request for a brief on why the appeal court would have jurisdiction over the case, and the appeal was dismissed on October 29. The last trailing appeal from Strahan’s barrage of filings is now subject to a similar order stating that if he fails to file a brief by December 4, the remaining appeal will likewise be dismissed.

The dust has settled in the Maine case; it will remain on hold until the Boasberg case is resolved at the end of May. However, it appears that the judge in Maine is losing patience with Strahan. In his November ruling, Judge Walker writes of Strahan’s conduct, “a cynical person might infer that he filed this action for no other reason than to distinguish, harass, and annoy the Defendants, who are at present defending (or are intervenors in) another action in the District of Columbia that involves the very same concerns raised in this action by Mr. Strahan.”

WE CAN DELIVER WITH A MINIMUM ORDER.
WE SELL BULK ICE!
Development Alliance (RODA). "In the Gulf of Maine, you are now at the point that the Mills administration is saying 'full steam ahead.'"

On November 20 Governor Janet Mills announced an ambitious plan to develop an offshore wind research array in waters from 20 to 40 miles offshore that would allow connection to the mainland electric grid in the southern half of the state. The research array would be approximately 16 square miles and is expected to contain up to 12 wind turbines. The administration informed fishing industry leaders of this plan less than two days before the announcement.

In the week prior to the announcement, the Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA) wrote to the Governor specifically concerning the possibility that unsolicited offshore wind development proposals might be evolving. The MLA was particularly concerned that the state’s fishing industry had not been informed or consulted.

RODA has quickly become the voice of diverse fishing interests since its founding in 2018. The membership organization, comprising fishermen, fishing industry organizations and companies, focuses on science, research and policy work related to offshore energy development. A major portion of its work involves conversations led to fisheries used by developers and federal regulators, while remaining sensitive to confidentiality and what fishermen are willing to provide.

One effort aims to improve the data contained within the Ocean Data Portal, a digital database unveiled by the Northeast Regional Ocean Council in 2009. The portal has more than 5,000 maps, which show everything from fishing activity and recreational uses to state and federal management boundaries. But today’s portal is less than related to fisheries. For example, the portal shows fishing effort taking place in closed areas. It also misses fishing activity in places where just a few fishermen fish since information specific to individual fishermen can’t be shared due to confidentiality. In addition, it provides little context for interpreting the data in light of regulatory and business conditions that influence fishing behavior.

Another current project is the Fisheries Knowledge Trust, which currently involves the herring and mackerel and surf clam fisheries off New York. In collaboration with Dr. John Manderson of OpenOcean Research, RODA is developing a way to make fishermen’s proprietary data available to decision makers without compromising their original sources. Fishermen can share their knowledge about the oceans in a standardized, accessible repository which will enable all users. "It’s about aggregates and an information that other people can trust,“ one of the first-hand knowledge they need. "Fishermen have information in their heads that can fill data gaps. This is a way to aggregate that information and bring it forward as peer-reviewed data,” Hawkins explained.

Another project, conducted with the National Renewable Energy Laboratories in Colorado, focuses on fishery access in fixed wind turbine arrays. "This is about how to minimize the loss of access for fishermen. There are operational factors in fishing that must be accounted for,” Hawkins said.

In 2019 RODA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the National Marine Fisheries Service and BOEM to collaborate on the science and process of offshore wind energy development. This year RODA organized a four-day online workshop entitled "Synthesis of the Science: Fisheries and Offshore Wind." The well-attended workshop addressed the many social, environmental and economic issues related to offshore wind projects, an approach that is intended to create a digital database unveiled by the Northeast Regional Ocean Council in 2009. The portal has more than 5,000 maps, which show everything from fishing activity and recreational uses to state and federal management boundaries. But today’s portal is less than related to fisheries. For example, the portal shows fishing effort taking place in closed areas. It also misses fishing activity in places where just a few fishermen fish since information specific to individual fishermen can’t be shared due to confidentiality. In addition, it provides little context for interpreting the data in light of regulatory and business conditions that influence fishing behavior.

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MASSACHUSETTS PROPOSES NEW REGULATIONS TO PROTECT RIGHT WHALES IN STATE WATERS

By Melissa Waterman

In January 2020, Max Strahan, a self-described whale activist, filed suit in the U.S. District Court in Massachusetts against the state. He contended that the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) licensing of fixed gear fisheries violated the Endangered Species Act because vertical lines deployed in those fisheries could cause entanglements of endangered right whales and sea turtles.

The court was petitioned by Strahan to halt the further deployment of vertical buoy lines and to require the state to apply for an Endangered Species Act Incidental Take Permit (ITP). In April 2020, the Court ordered DMF to apply to NOAA Fisheries for an ITP within 90 days.

In October, Strahan asked the court for a preliminary injunction to stop fixed gear fisheries, since the 90-day period had passed. The judge denied Strahan’s request without prejudice, meaning he could request an injunction again, and gave the state additional time to get the necessary permit. The judge did, however, order Strahan and the state to file suggested schedules for a trial by October 15 and directed the state to file reports with the court every 30 days on its progress beginning October 15.

To comply with this court order, DMF has begun the work to submit an ITP application. An ITP application must include a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) which details the steps taken to minimize and mitigate impacts the activity is having on an endangered species. DMF is holding two virtual public hearings on its proposed regulations related to fixed gear fisheries, at 6 p.m. on December 8 and December 9.

If approved, these regulations would constitute the foundation of the state’s HCP for right whales.

Proposed Massachusetts whale protection regulations

**Fixed Gear Closures**

**Commercial Trap Gear Closure**

DMF is proposing to extend the existing February 1 – April 30 Large Whale Seasonal Trap Gear Closure (north and east of Cape Cod) to all waters under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth.

**Gillnet Closure in Cape Cod Bay**

DMF is proposing to extend the existing January 1 – May 15 gillnet closure in Cape Cod Bay to include those waters shoreward of 70°30’ W longitude between 42°00’ N latitude (Gurnet Point) and 42°12’ N latitude (Scituate Harbor).

**Fixed Gear Closure Extensions**

DMF intends to retain the regulatory authority to extend the above described fixed gear closures (#1 and #2), or portions thereof, based on the Director’s assessment of the documented presence of right whales in Massachusetts waters and if reasonably necessary to prevent the entanglement of right whales in commercial trap gear.

**Recreational Lobster and Crab Trap Gear Haul-Out Season**

DMF is proposing to implement a new closed season for buoyed recreational lobster and crab trap gear. The closed season would run from the Tuesday following Columbus Day through the Friday preceding Memorial Day.

**Conch Pot Haul-Out Period**

As the above described commercial trap gear closure (#1) applies to all trap gear, including conch pot gear, DMF is proposing to extend the existing December 15 – April 14 conch pot haul-out period through April 30.

**Trap Gear Configuration Modifications and Restrictions**

**1,700-lb Breaking Strength Contrivance**

DMF is proposing that all vertical buoy lines break when exposed to 1,700 pounds of pressure. This may be accommodated by fishing buoy lines with a 1,700-pound breaking strength or by rigging the buoy line with a contrivance or multiple contrivances that allows for it to break at that pressure.

**Vertical Buoy Line Maximum Diameter for Commercial Trap Gear**

DMF is proposing that all vertical buoy lines affixed to commercial trap gear have a diameter not greater than 3/8”.

**Vertical Buoy Line Maximum Diameter for Recreational Trap Gear**

DMF is proposing that all vertical buoy lines affixed to recreational lobster and crab trap gear have a diameter not greater than 5/16”.

**Prohibition on Single Lobster Traps for Vessels of a Certain Size**

DMF is proposing to prohibit the fishing of single lobster traps onboard vessels with an overall length of 29’ or greater. These vessels will be required to configure their traps as multi-trap trawls. Vessels with an overall length of less than 29’ may continue to fish single lobster traps where authorized; the setting of single lobster traps by any vessel of any size will remain prohibited north of Cape Cod seaward of the three nautical mile line and the Billingsgate exempted area. DMF is proposing that this regulation go into effect on January 1, 2022.

**Permitting**

**Cap on Issuance of Seasonal Lobster Permits**

DMF is proposing to cap the annual issuance of seasonal lobster permits for students at 150 permits.

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- **Five Blade Hi-Tang Michigan**
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**Federal Flexible Couplings**

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Steaming Ahead

It is no secret that Governor Mills has had an unwavering commitment to aggressively address climate change through an emphasis on renewable energy. She was clear about it throughout her election campaign.

After her election, Governor Mills wasted no time in taking action to position Maine to be a player in offshore wind development. She quickly reversed former Governor LePage’s moratorium on wind energy construction in the state. She then turned her attention to the Legislature, working with the Maine House and Senate to pass the Maine Climate Council Act, set aggressive greenhouse gas emission goals, and commit Maine to achieve 80% renewable energy by 2030 and 100% by 2050.

She signed into law a requirement that the Public Utilities Commission approve a power contract agreement with New England Aqua Ventus, reversing another LePage-era policy. She established the Maine Offshore Wind Initiative to identify data on wind resources for offshore wind development in the Gulf of Maine. She committed Maine, with New Hampshire and Massachusetts, to become part of a Gulf of Maine Intergovernmental Regional Task Force on offshore wind organized by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM), in order to identify potential opportunities for renewable energy leasing and development in the Gulf. The Governor made it crystal clear that Maine would pursue offshore wind development but in a manner compatible with existing uses, such as Maine’s commercial fishing industry.

As these efforts to revive offshore wind as a pillar of Maine’s renewable energy future unfolded last year, the MLA joined the Responsible Offshore Development Alliance (RODA) – a coalition of industry associations and businesses that work together to ensure that any new offshore development is compatible with existing fisheries. The MLA recognized that the issue of wind development is too big and complex for individual fisheries and industry associations to tackle on their own. Offshore wind developers have very deep pockets along with significant government support and incentives aimed at promoting their success. No single fishery association could provide the scientific or policy analysis, much less attend all the meetings, required to ensure that the concerns of the fishing industry are properly addressed as wind developments are put forward.

Early in 2019 RODA proactively sent a letter to BOEM and the governors of Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts asking for a six-month pause in the offshore wind development process due to the challenges of engaging the fishing industry during the pandemic. The letter asked BOEM to convene a fisheries-driven Gulf of Maine regional working group and requested the governors to come together to urge BOEM not to consider any unsolicited bids for offshore wind development leases. The letter further called for greater transparency in offshore wind procurement goals and clarification of their context within an overall energy strategy. Governor Mills’ response to RODA’s letter reiterated her strong support for “renewable energy as part of the solution to combating climate change and growing Maine’s economy,” but also “that we must go at a pace that recognizes the strain being experienced within the fishing industry.”

In October, no information had come from the Governor’s office on how the fishing industry would be engaged in the Offshore Wind Initiative. In an effort to keep lobstermen informed, Landings interviewed the deputy director of the Governor’s Office of Policy Innovation & the Future (GOPIF), Anthony Ronzio, to clarify, specifically, what actions it would be taking. Landings was not informed of any specific meetings or plans in the pipeline. Instead, we were told that the state would continue its participation with the BOEM Task Force, was developing an organizational framework for the Initiative to include a fisheries working group, and that the state was working for a federal grant to be “used to build a comprehensive plan to advance the use of offshore wind for Maine that is collaborative and has a substantial focus on stakeholder engagement, including fisheries.”

When asked specifically how the state would work with the fishing industry, Ronzio responded, “We hope to gather input from the fishing industry so that it can inform the state’s participation in the federal leasing process and ensure that the input from Maine’s fishing industry is considered by BOEM.”

In November, Landings reported on the Governor’s Energy Office’s (GEO) plan to spend a new federal grant award of $2.166 million to develop a roadmap for offshore wind energy development. “The award is an opportunity for the state and stakeholders to develop a holistic, comprehensive, road map and plan for advancing offshore wind in the state in compatibility with the ocean,” stated Celina Cunningham, deputy director of GEO and coordinator of the offshore wind development planning project.

According to Cunningham, the offshore wind development road map will be determined by those who are involved in the project. This will be a stakeholder-driven process. The structure also will serve us through the duration of the state’s wind development, which we expect to be over a number of years.” Meanwhile, rumors circulated within the fishing industry that the state had plans for an offshore wind development off southern Maine. Concerned by these rumors, the MLA sent a letter to Governor Mills on November 11 emphasizing the need for “clear and transparent communications, a robust stakeholder process, and a commitment to address the lack of transparency with which projects will mean for marine ecosystems and the many fishing communities along our coast.” The MLA again stressed the need to consult the fishing industry before decisions were made and reiterated that the absence of transparent communications would foster a deep distrust among fishing industry stakeholders which ultimately would hinder the state’s efforts.

The MLA also has consistently raised concerns over how offshore wind will figure into Maine’s ambitious renewable energy portfolio through its position on the Maine Climate Council. The MLA was successful in including language in the Council’s report stating that the fishing industry will be consulted before the state puts forward any proposals to site wind development in the Gulf of Maine.

Just a week after sending its letter to the Governor, the MLA was invited to join Mills administration officials and fishing industry leaders to discuss the state’s vision for offshore wind development. We quickly learned, however, that we were brought together simply to receive notice of the Governor’s plan to announce (in the next day or two) her intention to apply for an offshore wind research lease with BOEM in early 2021. The lease would be located 20 to 40 miles off southern Maine, be less than 16 square miles in size and deploy up to 12 turbines connected to the mainland power grid. The state already had conducted preliminary siting analyses based on existing data sets but they did not share with us the results of that work.

This is a far cry from the promise that the Maine Offshore Wind Initiative would create a fisheries working group as a forum in which to share information and advance ideas or address concerns the fishing industry may have.” Instead, we were told that the state had crafted a plan for how to advance offshore wind in the Gulf of Maine. End of story. Checking a box to indicate that a conversation took place with fishing industry representatives is in no way a transparent and meaningful stakeholder process.

So now we officially have right whale rules and offshore wind to deal with. What a way to close out 2020?

Here’s to a new year, a better year. The MLA promises to work to make 2021 a year in which the concerns of the fishing industry are actually heard, a year in which we will de-
As of November 25, there is still no guidance on when the proposed new whale rules will be made public. NMFS’ Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) submitted the draft rule to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) on July 8; the proposed rule remains under review. OMB is part of the Executive Office of the President in Washington, D.C. and is separate from NMFS.

The deadline of May 31, 2021 for adoption of the Final Rule, established by Judge Boassberg of the Washington, D.C. District court, remains in place. Given the delay in publication of the proposed rule, it is likely that the public comment period will be limited to 45 days. NMFS is providing the court an update on its progress; its next court update is due in early December.

Once the Proposed Rule is published, it is expected that NMFS will conduct up to six regional public presentations via webinar, followed by a similar number of webinars for the public to provide comment. A presentation of the draft Biological Opinion remains on the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) schedule for late January and for the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) in early February. It is anticipated that the draft Biological Opinion will be released on a similar timeframe with the Proposed Rule and Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

The recent Presidential election and change in administration adds to the uncertainty of timing for the Draft Rule’s release. Historically, there has been a freeze on regulatory actions as the government transitions from one administration to another (from December through the end of January). Additionally, there could be another delay in the publication of the rule due to a backlog. For now, we continue to wait. The MLA will be ready to provide comments whenever this Proposed Rule and draft Biological Opinion are made public.

UPDATE ON RIGHT WHALE POPULATION

In late October, the North Atlantic Right Whale Consortium (NARWC) held a virtual version of its annual meeting. Every year, hundreds of researchers, managers, conservationists, students, and educators from the United States and Canada meet to discuss the population status, regulatory efforts and conservation strategies. This year’s meeting, as always, began with the release of the annual “report card,” which outlined the status of this critically endangered species.

The report card includes a best estimate of the number of whales alive and a summary of births, deaths, and research and management efforts in the last year. The best estimate for the population at the end of 2019 is 356 whales. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, the number of whales appeared to be recouping, reaching a high of nearly 500 whales in 2010, but the last decade has been dire for the species.

So far in 2020, scientists have observed only one right whale death, though the number is likely higher as COVID-19 restrictions affected the length of field observing season for both U.S. and Canadian teams. From 2017 to 2020, there have been 31 documented right whale deaths. During that same time period, only 22 right whale calves were born. Mortalities outpace births by 3 to 2.

The single observed 2020 right whale death was the new calf of #3560. Just a few months old, the calf had evidence of at least two separate ship strikes, the last of which was likely the cause of death. Human-caused factors, including ship strikes and entanglement in fishing gear, have been implicated in 18 of the last three years. Female right whales become pregnant. Three to four years is considered a normal interval between right whale calving events. But now, on average, females are having calves every 6 to 10 years. In the last three calving seasons (2017-2019) there were only 22 births, which is about one-third of the average annual birth rate.

OFFSHORE WIND FARM PROPOSED OFF SOUTHERN MAINE

On November 20, Governor Mills announced an ambitious plan to develop an offshore wind research array in waters from 20 to 40 miles offshore that would allow connection to the mainland electric grid in the southern half of the state. The research array would be approximately 16 square miles and is expected to contain up to 12 wind turbines. The administration informed fishing industry leaders of this plan less than two days before the announcement.

The week prior this announcement, the MLA had written to Governor Mills expressing our strong concern over the potential for offshore wind development and its impacts on fishermen. MLA was particularly concerned that there were rumors that the state had plans for offshore wind but the industry had yet to be informed or consulted.

The MLA released a statement in response to the state’s offshore wind announcement stating that this news was not welcomed by the MLA. We reiterat ed the MLA’s deep concern that the project was abruptly announced without adequate consultation from the fishing industry and that we have many, many concerns with the state’s plan.

MLA JOINS COALITION TO OPPOSE MASSIVE FISHERIES CLOSURES IN FEDERAL WATERS

The MLA joined a coalition of more than 800 members of the U.S. seafood industry in signing a letter opposing a bill introduced into Congress that would undermine the management of U.S. fisheries. The Ocean-Based Climate Solutions Act, introduced into the U.S. House of Representatives in October, proposes to prohibit commercial fishing across at least 30% of U.S. federal waters as part of a system of Marine Protected Areas by 2030. The letter states, ’in contrast with many international contexts where MPAs are established to remedy a profoundly broken fisheries management system
MAINE LOBSTERMEN’S ASSOCIATION UPDATE

and a degraded marine environment — U.S. fisheries are overwhelmingly sus-
tainable and successfully managed to maximum sustainable yield.” The letter empha-
sizes that the proposed legislation is counter to the current manage-
ment process which is based on sound science. The letter notes that “The co-
alition signers want to know: when will proponents of this idea address the
concerns of the more than 700,000 men and women who depend on domestic
commercial harvesting to provide for their families?”

HERRING MANAGEMENT AREA 1A

The Area 1A directed Atlantic herring fishery closed on November 9, 2020, until further notice, as regu-

ators projected that 92% of the Area 1A quota had been landed. Directed herring vessels traveling

through Area 1A must have all fishing gear stowed. During a closure, some vessels may continue to par-
ticipate in the fishery:
• Vessels participating in the herring Research

Set-Aside (RSA) Program may land, subject to
state landing restrictions, greater than 2,000
pounds of Atlantic herring provided they are on
a declared herring RSA trip.
• Vessels participating in other fisheries may re-
tain and land an incidental catch of herring that
do not exceed 2,000 pounds per trip or calen-
dar day.
• The fixed gear set-aside of 30 metric tons will continue to be available to
fixed gear fishermen operating in Area 1A west of Cutler. Maine through

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (ASMFC) manages fishing

effort associated with harvesting the Area 1A herring quota. The Area 1A sub-
annual catch limit (ACL) is 2,957 metric tons (mt) after adjusting for the re-
search set-aside, the 30 mt fixed gear set-aside, and the fact that Area 1A closes
at 92% of the sub-ACL. The Board allocated 72.8% of the sub-ACL for Area 1A to
Season 1 (2,152 mt). The Season 2 quota was incr-

ased by 1,000 mt on October

22 due to low landings in the New Brunswick weir fishery.

DMR UPDATE ON CARES ACT FUNDS

Maine was allocated $20 million CARES Act relief for seafood industry mem-
bers financially affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic as part of a
$300 million nationwide seafood relief program.

DMR accepted applications for CARES Act relief for the commercial fishing,
aquaculture, for-hire and seafood dealer/processor sectors from October 19
through November 9. Now that the application period has closed, DMR is re-
viewing the application data that was collected to ensure that the agency does
not have applications from individuals who were not eligible to apply, dupli-
cate applications, or any other irregularities in the data. Once the data have
been thoroughly audited, DMR will provide the information to the Atlantic
States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC), who will issue the relief checks.
Checks will be mailed to applicants to the address they provided in their ap-
plication.

DMR is working toward a goal of mailing checks before the end of the year but
will send updates on the exact timing of the mailing to all applicants by email.

The exact size of the relief checks is not yet determined, as it will be calculated
by dividing the available funds by the final number of eligible applicants. Due to
the volume of applications, DMR is not able to address individual requests for
updates on payment amounts or timing, but will send emails to all applicants
notifying them of progress, and will also post updates on the DMR website.

PAYCHECK PROTECTION PROGRAM LOAN PAYBACK

The US Small Business Administration (SBA) is offering a simplified loan for-
giveness application for Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans of $50,000
or less. The PPP Loan Forgiveness Application Form 3508S is available online at

SEAFOOD TRADE RELIEF PROGRAM APPLICATION DEADLINE DECEMBER 14

The application deadline for the Seafood Trade Relief Program (STRP) is
December 14. Commercial lobstermen are eligible to apply for funds in the
amount of 50 cents per pound for 2019 lobster landings. You must hold a valid
state or federal commercial lobster license and your catch must be sold through
a legally permitted or licensed seafood dealer. This is not a grant or a loan so it
does not need to be paid back. The benefit is taxable income, however.

As of November 20, Maine's FSA offices have received 2,512 applications total-
ing more than $41.2 million. Call your local FSA office for more information on
the application process. FSA can mail you the forms or send an email so you
can fill them out electronically. Forms are also available on the MLA website.

| Source: Maine Farm Service Agency |
| TOTAL | 2,512 | $41,219,810 |
| Maine | 2,512 | $41,219,810 |
| Washington | 643 | $9,859,588 |
| Penobscot | 341 | $7,280,097 |
| Oxford | <5 | $41,778 |
| Lincoln | 168 | $1,980,545 |
| Cumberland | 336 | $4,715,118 |
| Androscoggin | 7 | $110,065 |
| Augusta | 1 | $17,842 |
| Saco | 1 | $17,200 |
| South Portland | 1 | $18,506 |
| Portland | 7 | $128,170 |
| Westbrook | 32 | $5,920,151 |
| South Portland | 5 | $94,948 |
| Biddeford | 2 | $33,822 |
| Kittery | 2 | $40,640 |
| York | 120 | $1,469,282 |
| TOTAL | 2,512 | $41,219,810 |
| Source: Maine Farm Service Agency |

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| Bell Power Systems | Journey’s End Marina | Polysafe US |
| Bowdoin College Dining Services | Kip’s Seafood | Port Clyde Fishermen’s Cooperative |
| Chase Leavitt | Lomnie’s Hyrdraulic Inc. | Power Product Systems |
| Coastal Documentation II | M&B Fish Co. | Riverdale Mills |
| Conary Cove Lobster Co. | Machias Savings Bank | Rope Razor |
| Downeast Boat Co. | Maine Center for Coastal Fisheries | South Bristol Fishermen’s Cooperative |
| F.A. Peabody Insurance | Maine Financial Group | Superior Marine Products |
| Farrin’s Boatshop | Maine Lobstermen’s Community Alliance | Tenants Harbor |
| Fineskied Scenic Cruises | Maine Sea Grant | Fisheries Cooperator |
| First National Bank | Marine Hydraulic Engineering Co. Inc. | Twin City Financial Group |
| F. W. Thurston Co. Inc. | McMillan Offshore Survival Training | Vinalhaven Fishermen’s Cooperative |
| Georgetown Fisher-
men’s Cooperative | Middcoast Marine Supply | William Coffin & Sons |
| Gulf of Maine Lobster Foundation | Navroc Marine Electronics | Winter Harbor Fishermen’s Cooperative |
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- Senior Harvester (over 65) $125
- Retired Harvester (no longer a captain) $50

* Family memberships are for spouses and children under 23 living at home

Individual Membership Levels:
- Sternman $50
- Lobster Friend $100
- Lobster Lover (t-shirt size:_______) $250

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Thank you!

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It’s not too late to Join or Renew.

Thank you!
Save Maine’s Lobster Industry

The MLA is raising $500,000 for the Legal Defense Fund. We’re close! Please help us reach our goal.

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Thank you for helping to save Maine’s Lobster Industry

2020 Donors - as of 11/16/20

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- Thomas McMullan—for Jay Perrotta’s High Flight
- James R McManus Jr
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- McGee Books—from sales of “How to Catch a Lobster”
- Alice McWilliams
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- H. Parsons
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- Nicolas Pelischka
- Antonina Pelletier
- Jay Perrotta—for Travis Osli’s shore curvy kicks
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- Clayton Phippsbrook
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- Port Clyde Fresh Catch
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- Courtland Tolman

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- Brian Billings
- David F Black
- Gordon Bok
- Steve Budrow
- Dwight Darver
- China Hill Restaurant & Bar
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- Herman Coombs
- David Cousens
- Laurie Crane
- CSC, Inc.
- John Daggett
- George Dow
- Travis Dougherty
- John Drouin
- Robert L Donnell
- James Elsworth
- Bruce W Fernald
- Green Flash Fisheries
- Edward D Grant
- Chris Gifford
- Earl Hamilton
- Eugene Harrington
- Erick Harulja
- Joshua Hatch
- Andrew Hawke
- Nicholas Hawke
- Shawn Howard
- Richard Howland
- David Hunt & Jane Richardson
- Bobby Ingalls
- Charles Ingalls
- Alan Inzerillo
- Island Fishermens’ Wives
- Michael Jennings
- Stuart Jones
- Mary Jones
- Clayton Joyce
- Kennedy Marine, Inc
- J Edward Knight Insurance Agy
- Michael Kram
- Keith Lane
- Craig Lazar
- Joseph C Locurto
- Travis Lunt
- Douglas McMullan
- Johnny McCarthy
- Joshua Miller
- Midcoast Diesel Performance
- Midcoast Marine Supply
- Moody’s Gifts (tee shirts)
- New Harbor Lobster Co-op
- Northeast Marine Survey
- Cindy Nunan
- Charles Nunan
- Ladd Olsen
- Tara Perez
- Luke Phipbrook
- Mica Phipbrook
- Mike Phipbrook
- Woodbury A Post
- Prier Fish & Lobster
- Michael S Prior
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- William Putnam
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- Sam Rozan
- Ruggero, Inc.
- Emma S. Beach, Inc.
- Matt Samuels
- Ryan & Laurie Schoppe
- John Siegers
- Joseph Staples
- Spruce Head Marine
- David A Sullivan
- David Tart
- Tranzon Auction House

**$1,000 - $4,999 cont’d**
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- John J Tripp
- Michael Trip
- Jim Tripp
- True North Fisheries
- Vinalhaven Fishermen Co-Op
- Richard Wall
- Harlan Warren
- Wards Motor Sales, Inc.
- Chris Welch
- W.A. Fasteners
- Dale Weeks
- William Whitman
- Peter Wilcox
- Eben Wilson
- Winter Harbor Fishermen’s Coop
- Bernd Wolf
- Donald Young
- Jack Young
- Leonard Young
- Linda Zuke

Gifts $1,000 - $4,999
- Jeremy S Alley
- Jeremy Alley
- Alwood Lobster Co
- Bangor Savings Bank
- Rachel Bishop
- Billings Marine Service
- Branham’s Lobster Wharf
- Jordi Bisset
- Bring It Inc.
- Carter’s Lobsters
- Larry Cooks
- Bruce Croxley
- Dustin Delano
- Danelo Seafood Shack
- Wayne Danelo
- Jeffrey A Donnell
- Zachary R Donnell
- Philip Doucette
- Dysarts
- Eric Emmons
- Elizabeth Fenwick
- First National Bank
- Fisherman’s Heritage Lobster Co-Op
- Michael Flanagan
- Edward Foye
-Stephen Gatcombe
- Rudi Graf
- Gillespie Marine LLC
- Benjamin Heansager
- Michael Hunt
- Sam Hyle
- Journey’s End Marina
- Stephen Lasche
- Lee Marine
- Nicholas Lemieux
- Jeff Libby
- Ian Lussier
- Maine Coast Fisherman’s Assoc.
- Jack Merrill II
- Jim Merriman
- Midcoast Marine Supply
- Tad Miller
- Mary Olsen- Moody’s Gifts
- Navco Marine Electronics
- NE Marine & Industrial Inc
- NH Commercial Fishermen’s Asso.
- Peter & Susan Nitz
- Matthew Nowell
- Alf Osgood
- John & Judy Williams
- Bob Williams
- Gregg Whitten
- Justin J Wright
- Julian Zuke

Gifts $5,000 - $9,999
- Alec Pippen
- Abraham Phipbrook
- Balsi-Jonesport Co-op Inc
- Corea Lobster Co-op
- Hamilton Marine (tee shirts)
- Rockland Lobster Boat Races
- Spruce Rd Fishermen’s Co-op
- Swans Isl. Fishermen’s Co-op
- Western Sea Inc
- York Lobsterman’s Assoc.

Gifts $10,000 - $49,999
- Bar Harbor Bank & Trust
- Brooks Trap Mill
- Colby & Gale
- Machias Savings Bank

Gifts $50,000 & above
- Donald Susman

The Harbor Challenge:
- Cape Porpoise Lobstermen: $3,500
- Frenchboro Lobstermen: $18,050
- York Harbor Lobstermen: $44,650

Gifts In Memoriam
- In Memory of Arnie Gamage
- Gail Gage
- In honor of David Provancher
- Doris Ewing
- Dale Weeks
- In memory of Hugh Watts: Sheldon Goldthwait Jr
- In loving memory of Sherri Cook: Robby Amorella
- Antonina Pelletier
- Susan Salamon
- Jeanne Rapone
- In loving memory of Evans A Spear
- Wills Speare
- Christine Speare
- Jedidiah Speare
- Obie Spear
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Back River Tax Accounting 56 Main St. Brunswick, ME 04011 207-677-7118 nick@backrivertaxaccounting.com www.backrivertaxaccounting.com Free initial consultation, review of previous tax returns.

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EDUCATIONAL & TRADE SHOWS
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INDUSTRY ORGANIZATIONS
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RINNES & LANDINGS Show your support for these businesses!
FISHING TRIP LEADS TO NEW BAIT SOURCE FOR MAINE LOBSTERMEN

By Antonina Pelletier

Eighteen months ago, two guys were on a bass fishing trip in Kentucky, when they heard the problems Asian carp were causing for the bass fishery. Then they heard about a new opportunity for harvesting and selling Asian carp and how that benefited southern lakes and rivers. They heard that Atlantic herring, the fish most commonly used by Maine lobstermen had experienced a huge drop in quota and that Asian carp, the scourge of southern waterways was now providing an alternate bait source for those lobstermen. Upon his return to his home state of Alabama, Baron Huber kept thinking about the Asian carp and bait and opportunity. It was on a trip to a local catfish farm owned by a close family friend that everything clicked.

Across Alabama, Mississippi and Arkansas and Louisiana, catfish farms occupy the land once used by plantations. Ponds 10 to 20 acres in size are built in clay rich soil and filled with freshwater to a depth of four to six feet. Producing over 473 million pounds per year, catfish farms provide a product that enters the market as fresh or frozen usually within 24 hours. "Catfish by-products are used in fish oil and bone meal but 98% of the by-products ends up as animal or pet food. "Catfish heads are 20% of the fish" says Baron. "It is more regulated than poultry or beef." It also has a large by-product business.

Catfish by-products are used in fish oil and bone meal but 98% of the by-product ends up as animal or pet food. "Catfish heads are 20% of the fish" says Baron, a fact that galvanized him to think about catfish heads as lobster bait. Joining up with his friend Mike Sielicki, a Maine native and bass fishing buddy, Huber and Sielicki hope to do their part in bringing awareness of the benefits of catfish here in Maine. Catfish heads anyone?

Working with catfish processors down south, the duo, newly incorporated as M&B Fish Co., have a passion and plan. "Our goal is to not only grow our product but grow American products. Too much catfish bought in the US comes from Asia right now" says Huber. "We've been trying to find answers and help people all the way around" added Sielicki. Because catfish is a year-round, farmed product, the intention is to bring a consistently sized, consistently priced product to Maine where more and more lobstermen are fishing year-round. And since farmed fish are fed a consistent grain-based diet and must be located outside of flood areas, just part of the restrictions governing that fishery, Maine lobstermen can expect a quality bait to hit the market in the coming months.

As southern catfish farmers work to keep their product front and center for American markets, combating the import of a similar whitefish from Vietnam, Huber and Sielicki hope to do their part in bringing awareness of the benefits of catfish here in Maine. Catfish heads anyone?

MLA Seeks Nominations for Board of Directors

MLA Members -- Don’t miss your opportunity to influence the future of your organization and your industry!

Annual Meeting be announced

Did you know?
• MLA Directors are elected for a 3-year term
• MLA Directors meet monthly (except August)

Overview of MLA Board
• Maximum # of Board members: 21
• Current Board: 20 members
• Number of Directors with Terms expiring: 7
• Average age of MLA Board: 49
• Youngest MLA Board member: 27
• Oldest MLA Board member: 72

MLA Board representation

Zone A 4 (2 expiring)
Zone B 3
Zone C 3 (2 expiring)
Zone D 3 (1 expiring)
Zone E 2
Zone F 2 (2 expiring)
Zone G 3
Islands represented 4

2021 Board Priorities
• Dedicated lobstermen who care about the future of the industry
• Lobstermen who can talk about the industry’s needs and priorities
• Balanced industry representation across the state
• Young lobstermen

MLA Director Nomination Form (detach and return)

Nomination Requirements
• To make a nomination, you must be an MLA member in good standing.
• All nominees must hold a Maine lobster license & be an MLA member in good standing.
• Deadline for nominations: February 5, 2021.
• Feel free to nominate yourself, or someone else.

Thank you for helping to keep the MLA strong!

Mail your nomination to the MLA office: MLA, 2 Storer St, Ste 203, Kennebunk, ME 04043
Or feel free to call in your nomination to 967-4555 or email: patrice@mainelobstermen.org.
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<td>Automotive</td>
<td>Back River Tax Accounting</td>
<td>Brunswick, ME – Free initial consultation and review of previous tax returns. 207-607-7118</td>
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<td>Back River Financial Group</td>
<td>Farmingdale, ME – Free initial consultation and review of previous tax returns. 207-622-3772</td>
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<td>Bait</td>
<td>Atlantic Bug Bait</td>
<td>Machias, ME -- $1 off bucket of hog hide. $40 off a pallet. 207-255-5955</td>
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<td>Old School Pig Hide Bait</td>
<td>Cutler, ME -- $1 off per bucket (must show current MLA card). 207-812-5211</td>
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<td>Boat Builders/Repairs</td>
<td>SW Boatworks</td>
<td>Lamottie, ME -- $1000 discount for haul or top. on a 38' CB or 44' CB. 207-667-7427</td>
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<td>Navtronics, LLC</td>
<td>York, ME -- 5% off of purchases. 207-363-1150</td>
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<td>Atlantic Edge Lobster</td>
<td>Boothbay Harbor, ME -- Fuel discount for MLA members. 207-633-2300</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fuel</td>
<td>Hamilton Marine</td>
<td>Jonesport, Kittery, Portland, Rockland, Searsport, Southwest Harbor, ME -- Discounts available to commercial fishermen.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hampton Inn</td>
<td>Ellsworth – (Ellsworth, ME)</td>
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<td>Hampton Inn, Rockland/Thomasaston</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Residence Inn by Marriott</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liferaft Services, LLC</td>
<td>Deer Isle, ME -- Discounted annual subscription rate for $18.75 with MLA membership noted on check. 800-989-5253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Fishermen, North Hollywood, CA</td>
<td>-- Special annual subscription rate for $12 for 12 issues. 800-939-5073</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>McMillan Offshore Survival Training</td>
<td>Belfast, ME -- 25% discount on USCG Drill Conductor training. 207-338-1603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trap Builders, Stock &amp; Supplies</td>
<td>Winter Harbor Fishermen's Coop - 10% off picked lobster meat. 207-963-5857</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Maine Camp Outfitters</td>
<td>Sunset, ME -- 10% off all apparel and promotional product orders. 800-560-6990</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Maine Lobstermen's Association</td>
<td>Kennebunk, ME -- 10% off all apparel. 207-967-4555</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Searsport, ME -- Free admission for MLA members.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maine Maritime Museum</td>
<td>Bath, ME -- Free admission to MLA members.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mount Desert Oceanarium</td>
<td>Bar Harbor, ME -- Free admission to commercial fishermen and their families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cross Insurance Arena</td>
<td>Special discounts to shows at the Cross Arena in Portland! Use promo code GFRIEND at checkout. Order by phone, online, or in person at the box office. Info at <a href="http://www.mainelobstermen.org">www.mainelobstermen.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Navtronics, LLC</td>
<td>York, ME -- 5% off of purchases. 207-363-1150</td>
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<td>Deckhand Electronic Logbook</td>
<td>Bellingham WA -- Discounts &amp; Specials for MLA members. Call for more info. 888-210-3117</td>
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<td>Electronic Equipment</td>
<td>Navtronics, LLC</td>
<td>York, ME -- 5% off of purchases. 207-363-1150</td>
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<td>Atlantic Edge Lobster</td>
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<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>Applied Refrigeration Services</td>
<td>Windham, ME -- $250 off new installations. 207-693-0145</td>
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<td>McMillan Offshore Survival Training</td>
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<td>Gifts</td>
<td>Maine Camp Outfitters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hydraulics</td>
<td>Coastal Hydraulics</td>
<td>Searsbro, NH -- 10% discount on all in stock items for MLA members. 603-474-1914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hews Company, LLC</td>
<td>South Portland, ME -- 10% off hydraulic components &amp; Cable Craft cables. 207-767-2136</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It may seem that the world is a little grim these days. But in Boothbay Harbor, fishermen and town residents are seeing a bright spot on their horizon. The Boothbay Region Maritime Foundation is closing in on the required permits to revamp the east side of the harbor into a complex designed to preserve the town’s working waterfront and reconnect its citizens to their maritime history.

In 2018 a group of local fishermen, businessmen, and teachers formed the non-profit Foundation in the face of increasing development pressures. The group felt it was important to ensure that viable, commercial properties on the harbor were preserved, not converted to restaurants, hotels and other non-marine uses.

In 2019, the Foundation signed an agreement to purchase Doug Carter’s Sea Pier, one of four lobster buying stations on the east side of the harbor. Businessman Paul Coulombe already had purchased numerous properties in town, including the former Rocktide Restaurant and Inn on the east side, which he turned into the Boothbay Harbor Oceanside Country Club. Coulombe had purchased The Lobster Dock in 2018 and planned to buy another east side property in 2019.

Ultimately, the Foundation was able to buy the Sea Pier in November 2019. Carter, who had owned the property since 1996, wanted to keep it in marine use, in support of the 30 lobstermen who used his wharf. Boothbay Harbor residents Susan and George Craig donated first $1 million to purchase the adjacent Cap’n Fish’s property, also used by commercial fishermen. Contributions totaled $3.22 million, including $500,000 set aside for future maintenance. The Sea Pier, now called Carter’s Wharf, was soon leased by Luke’s Lobster, which continued operating the lobster buying station in 2020.

Carter’s Wharf is in need of extensive renovation as is the adjacent dock, leased from the Catholic Church. The Foundation has plans to rebuild the wharf and ancillary buildings, as well as construct a park along the waterfront for public access. The design calls for housing, a grocery market and an expanded marina with free short-term docking.

The Boothbay harbor planning board reviewed the Foundation’s plans for a new building, pier and series of floats on November 12, noting that it was the most complete application they had seen in a long time. The project has obtained permits from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, a letter of no objection from the Maine Historic Preservation Commission and approval from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for flood zone changes. The plan will raise the height of the pier and building to match flood plain requirements by FEMA. Renovations are scheduled to begin in 2022.

A happy tale from a small Maine harbor!
### Experimental Lease Applications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Applicant/Company</th>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tr>
<td>Downeast Institute</td>
<td>Joel's Pound, Black Duck Cove, Eastern bay</td>
<td>Beals</td>
<td>0.84 acres</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>3 yrs</td>
<td>Appl. submitted, comments due 9/11/20</td>
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<td>Downeast Institute</td>
<td>Eimer's Pound, Black Duck Cove, Eastern bay</td>
<td>Beals</td>
<td>1.14 acres</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>3 yrs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ferda Farms LLC</td>
<td>E Lower Coombs Isl. New Meadows River</td>
<td>Brunswick</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>3 yrs</td>
<td>Site Review Complete 9/9/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sea Run Fisheries &amp; Habitat</td>
<td>E of Western Head &amp; Lt Rvr Isl, Cutler Hebr</td>
<td>Cutler</td>
<td>4 acres</td>
<td>Finfish</td>
<td>3 yrs</td>
<td>Site Review Complete 3/20/2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coffin, Chad</td>
<td>W of Moore Pt, NE of Pound of Tea, Harraseeket River</td>
<td>Freeport</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>3 yrs</td>
<td>appl submitted</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doyle, Victor</td>
<td>E of Barlet Isl, Blue Hill Bay</td>
<td>Mount Desert</td>
<td>1 acre</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>3 yrs</td>
<td>Public Hearing Postponed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musseel Bound Inc.</td>
<td>Barlett Narrows, Blue Hill Bay</td>
<td>Mount Desert</td>
<td>3.55 acres</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>3 yrs</td>
<td>Public Hearing Postponed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dirigo Marine Resources, LLC</td>
<td>E of Wolfe's neck, Recompence Bay</td>
<td>So Freeport</td>
<td>3.85 acres</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>appl. rec'd, comment period closes 8/2/20</td>
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### Standard Lease Applications

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<th>Name of Applicant/Company</th>
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<th>Product</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pemaquid Mussel Farms LLC</td>
<td>Mt Desert narrows, E of Groogins Ledge</td>
<td>Bar Harbor</td>
<td>32 acres</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Scoping Session sched 11/19/20 5 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Western Bay Oyster Co.</td>
<td>off Old House Cove, Western Bay, Spruce Pt</td>
<td>Bar Harbor</td>
<td>3.36 acres</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Public hearing scheduled 10/13/20 2 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tightrope Farms</td>
<td>south of Carlton Island, Salt Pond</td>
<td>Blue Hill</td>
<td>7.25</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Site Review complete 6/23/20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pleasant Oyster Farm, LLC</td>
<td>Pleasant Oyster Damarciscotta River</td>
<td>Boothbay</td>
<td>6.26 acres</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Application submitted 11/19/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Shellfish Co., LLC</td>
<td>W of Oak Isl N of Hog Isl Medomak River</td>
<td>Bremen</td>
<td>4.19 acres</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Lease granted 10/19/20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nice Oyster Company, LLC</td>
<td>E of Woodward Pt, New Meadows River</td>
<td>Brunswick</td>
<td>4.49 acres</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>10 yrs</td>
<td>Scoping Session sched 10/19/20 7 pm</td>
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<td>Shearwater Ventures LLC</td>
<td>E of Lt Chicheague, Casco Bay; Long Island</td>
<td>Chicheague Isl</td>
<td>3.79 acres</td>
<td>Marine Algae</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Site Review complete 4/29/20</td>
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<td>Summit Point LLC</td>
<td>N of Lower Basket Ledge</td>
<td>Chicheague Isl</td>
<td>53.38 acres</td>
<td>Marine Algae</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Scoping Session 11/12 6 pm</td>
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<td>Schoodic Seafarm LLC</td>
<td>off Long Mill Cove, Gouldboro Bay</td>
<td>Corea</td>
<td>2.2 acres</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>App rec'd 9/24/20, site review scheduled</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summit Point LLC</td>
<td>NE of Clapboard Isl, Casco Bay, Falmouth &amp;</td>
<td>Cumberland</td>
<td>100 acres</td>
<td>Marine Algae</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Site Review pending as of 12/21/9</td>
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<td>Summit Point LLC</td>
<td>S Lower Basket Ledge</td>
<td>Cumberland</td>
<td>see above</td>
<td>two locations, one application</td>
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<td>Dickenson, Christopher</td>
<td>800 ft SW Hog Island, Damarciscotta River</td>
<td>Damarciscotta</td>
<td>1 acre</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Site Review complete as of June 18, 2020</td>
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<td>Spinnney Creek Shellfish Inc.</td>
<td>NW of Rt 95 Bridge, Spinnney Creek</td>
<td>Eliot</td>
<td>2.75 acres</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Site Review complete 3/18/20</td>
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<td>Harraseeket Oyster Co.</td>
<td>S of Bowman Isl &amp; Stockbridge Pt, Casco Bay</td>
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<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Site Review complete 9/4/20</td>
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<td>Love Point Oyster, LLC</td>
<td>SE of Winn Park, Casco Bay</td>
<td>Freeport</td>
<td>4.78 acres</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
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<td>Love Point Oysters, LLC</td>
<td>S of Crab island, Casco Bay</td>
<td>Freeport</td>
<td>4.15 acres</td>
<td>Oysters</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Site review Pending as of 2/20/20</td>
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<td>Gillden Point Oyster Co.</td>
<td>West shore, S of Jacks Pt, Damarciscotta River</td>
<td>Newcastle</td>
<td>5.5 acres</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>10 yrs</td>
<td>Public Hearing 10/27/20</td>
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<td>Maine Fresh Sea Farms LLC</td>
<td>Clark Cove, Damarciscotta River</td>
<td>So Bristol</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Marine Algae</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Scoping Session 11/9/20 6 pm</td>
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<td>Frenchman Bay Oyster Co.</td>
<td>W &amp; S of Inglis Isd. Sullivan Harbor</td>
<td>Sorento</td>
<td>5.85 acres</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dewey's Shellfish, LLC</td>
<td>NW of Peters Island Damarciscotta River</td>
<td>South Bristol</td>
<td>0.45</td>
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<td>Mook Sea Farms Inc.</td>
<td>S of Wiley Pt &amp; N of Fitch Pt, Damarisc. River</td>
<td>South Bristol</td>
<td>3 acres</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
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<td>Harvey, Brian</td>
<td>W of Haynes Pt, Goose Cove, Western Bay</td>
<td>Trenton</td>
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<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Site Review Pending as of 3/27/2020</td>
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<td>Butterfield, Keith</td>
<td>SE of Little Musker Island</td>
<td>Yarmouth</td>
<td>2.72 acres</td>
<td>Shellfish/algae</td>
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<td>Henninger, Thomas</td>
<td>Broad Cove, Casco Bay</td>
<td>Yarmouth</td>
<td>5.9 acres</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
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<td>Application submitted 7/8/20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maine Source Seafood</td>
<td>E of Lane's Isl, Casco Bay</td>
<td>Yarmouth</td>
<td>3.48 acres</td>
<td>Oysters</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Site Review Complete as of 4/2/20</td>
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<td>Mooset, Amanda</td>
<td>S of Lanes Isl, Inner Casco Bay</td>
<td>Yarmouth</td>
<td>9 acres</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>Site Review complete 3/8/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolfe Neck Oyster Co. LLC</td>
<td>SE of Lanes Island, Casco Bay</td>
<td>Yarmouth</td>
<td>8 acres</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>10 yrs</td>
<td>Site Review complete 3/22/20</td>
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MLA STATEMENT ON GOV. MILLS’ OFFSHORE WIND ANNOUNCEMENT

November 20, 2020

Governor Mills’ announcement that her administration plans to move forward with an offshore wind research array off southern Maine was not welcome news for the Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA). The MLA recently wrote to Governor Mills expressing the Association’s concerns about the growing interest in offshore wind development in the Gulf of Maine and its potential to negatively impact Maine’s fishing industry.

In its letter, the MLA wrote, “Prior to any plan for siting offshore wind development or lease solicitation in the Gulf of Maine, it is imperative that the state take action to ensure clear and transparent communications, a robust stakeholder process, and a commitment to address the lack of data on what these projects will mean for marine ecosystems and the many fishing communities along our coast.” Friday’s abrupt announcement of a plan to apply to Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) for a permit for this research array reflects negatively on the Governor’s intentions concerning transparent communication and a truly open stakeholder process.

Further, the MLA has raised concerns over the submission of bids for offshore wind development in the Gulf of Maine that have not been solicited by BOEM, with input from the Gulf of Maine states through the BOEM’s Gulf of Maine Ocean Energy Task Force. The GOM Task Force was formed precisely to allow the states to plan for offshore wind development in the Gulf of Maine. The Governor’s announcement bypasses directly in the face of the Task Force’s purpose.

Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts have not yet developed a shared vision and collaborative plan for offshore wind development in the Gulf of Maine. Instead of taking a holistic approach to plan how and where offshore wind projects in the GOM would best be sited, the Governor’s precipitous action will likely initiate a piecemeal approach among the states, one that will have much greater cumulative impacts on the region’s fishing industry.

Governor Mills’ approach circumvents meaningful engagement with stakeholders, especially the very fishermen whose livelihoods will be directly impacted.

“If the state of Maine can apply for a research lease, what is to prevent other states and developers from applying for larger commercial-scale lease sites in the Gulf of Maine?” asked Patrice McCarron, MLA’s executive director. “In a tightly spaced region such as the Gulf of Maine, it only makes sense to take a regional approach to offshore wind, rather than race to be the first to plant a flag in the water. This precipitous action could effectively cut the fishing industry out of the early planning and siting process and leave many fishermen at risk of losing their livelihoods.”

While there remain many unknowns about this project, the MLA has three pressing concerns with the state’s offshore wind research array proposal.

- Research Funding. As far as is known at the moment, the state has not allocated any research funding or outlined a research plan for the proposed offshore wind “research array.”
- Timing. The state has said that it intends to file its application for the research array lease site with BOEM in early 2021. As fishermen are independent business owners who spend much time at sea, an inclusive stakeholder process that leverages their expertise is challenging in the best of times. A rushed process initiated at the start of the holiday season and during a pandemic will be exponentially more difficult given the complexity of the issue and the lack of science to understand its impacts.
- Siting. The state has not yet released its assessment of potential sites based on its preliminary analysis. There are many significant fishing grounds located from 20 to 40 miles in the southern half of the state. The lobster fishery is highly territorial and also state regulations strictly limit the extent to which lobstermen can shift gear away from their home lobster zone. Losing a 16 square mile footprint could cause significant economic hardship to many in the Maine fishing industry.

The MLA recognizes the problem of climate change and the need to pursue aggressive solutions. However, offshore wind development is not the panacea for our collective dependence on fossil fuel. In fact, it may very well be a Pandora’s box of ills for the fishing industry.

“There is a lot of talk about potential for offshore wind to strengthen Maine’s economy,” noted McCarron. “I certainly hope no one believes that jobs in the renewable energy sector can replace the livelihoods of fishermen in quantity or character. Keep in mind that Maine’s fishing industry has successfully supported thousands of quality jobs, produced healthy food for our nation, and sustained Maine’s coastal communities, large and small, for hundreds of years.”

The MLA stands ready to work with the Mills administration. But first there must be a robust stakeholder process that involves fishermen well before decisions such as this one are made that allows their concerns to be both heard and addressed. This rush to “develop” the Gulf of Maine is preemptory and will not succeed without the input and support of the state’s fishermen.
EU TRADE DEAL ON LOBSTER NEARS IMPLEMENTATION

A key European Parliament committee voted overwhelmingly in November to advance a focused trade deal that would eliminate import duties to Europe on Maine lobster products. The deal, which was agreed to in principle in August, would erase lobster import duties in exchange for the United States halving its tariffs on imported European crystal glassware, propellant powder and cigarette lighters. The deal would be retroactive to August 1 and would place U.S. lobster on equal footing with that of Canada, with which the EU has had a trade agreement since 2017. The vote by the Parliament’s trade committee was 40-2 in favor of accepting the trade deal.

MI’KMAW FIRST NATIONS GAIN OWNERSHIP OF CLEARWATER SEAFOODS

In November international seafood giant Clearwater Seafoods, based in Halifax, Nova Scotia, agreed to sell itself to a partnership between Premium Brands of British Columbia and a coalition of Mi’kmaq First Nations. It is “the single largest investment in the seafood industry by any Indigenous group in Canada,” said a news release jointly issued by the coalition and Clearwater. The coalition will be led by the Membertou band in Cape Breton and Miawpukek in Newfoundland and Labrador. Clearwater is North America’s largest producer of shellfish and holds Canadian harvest licenses for a variety of species including lobster, scallop, crab and clams. It also has harvesting operations in the United Kingdom and South America and a worldwide sales operation.

PLANKTON SURVEY RETURNS

Scientists this winter will revive a long-running survey of plankton in the Gulf of Maine. Plankton, specifically the copepod Calanus finmarchicus, are food for endangered North Atlantic right whales. The Gulf of Maine plankton survey was originally performed from 1961–2017, when it was cancelled by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA). It is returning under a new agreement between the NOAA’s Northeast Fisheries Science Center, the Marine Biological Association in Plymouth, England, and Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. “Many marine species are shifting their distributions as ocean waters warm,” said Chris Melrose, a research oceanographer at the Northeast Fisheries Science Center’s laboratory in Narragansett, R.I. “Because plankton are an important food source for many species, including the endangered North Atlantic right whale, knowing about changes in the plankton helps us to understand other changes we see in the ecosystem.”

NORDIC AQUAFARMS CLEARS STATE PERMITTING

Nordic Aquafarms Inc., the company planning a large salmon recirculating aquaculture system in Belfast, has been granted state-level permits by the Maine Board of Environmental Protection (BEP). Aquafarms has gained unanimous approval for four permits: a discharge permit, a site law permit, a natural resources permit, and an air emissions permit, clearing a significant hurdle for the company’s effort to build the facility. The acquisition of state permits is the result of nearly two years of work on the permitting process, which was marked by strong local opposition. Local opponents filed multiple objections to the permitting process before the permits were found to be complete in June 2019. Nordic Aquafarms must still secure local and federal permits before it can commence construction. “Nordic Aquafarms has always been willing to listen to opposing arguments and has gone to great length to address any issue that has come up. During this process though, there have been several attempts on discrediting both the science behind the application and the company,” stated Nordic Aquafarms executive vice president commercial Marianne Naess. “Nordic is encouraged that science prevails in this process.”
LOBSTER RESEARCH COLLABORATION COMES TO A CLOSE

By Jessica Waller, DMR

The Department of Marine Resources (DMR) Lobster Research Collaborative (LRC) convened virtually for its final meeting on November 9, 2020. The LRC began in 2018 when DMR awarded $340,000 from the Lobster Research, Education, and Development Fund to support six research projects that take a collaborative approach toward improved science for the lobster fishery. The research projects focused on lobster distribution, shifts in lobster habitat and the changing environment. With revenues from the sale of Maine lobster license plates, the Research Education and Development Board provides funding for projects that support Maine’s lobster industry. Since 2018, the LRC has met quarterly to share research updates and discuss relevant issues of the day. Each meeting attracted over 50 researchers, students, fishery managers, and industry members.

The final meeting featured two-year research project updates, a summary of the 2020 Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission stock assessment report, and a session dedicated to discussing and ranking future lobster research priorities. In preparation for this priority-ranking exercise, meeting participants were asked to submit research topics to represent the most pressing lobster research questions and data gaps. During the meeting, participants were then given the chance to rank (low to high priority) all submitted topics and review the results as a group.

The topics that received the highest priority ranking from the LRC were “Foster and provide funding mechanisms for lobstermen-scientists research projects” and “Develop collaborations with industry to design information products, future priorities, and strategies for the fishery.” Many of the LRC research projects are still ongoing. The DMR will provide a summary of the project’s findings and the full results of the priority ranking exercise in early 2021.

Research projects funded

University of Maine professor Yong Chen received $190,000 for three projects that built computer simulations to project climate-driven changes in lobster distribution and habitat, evaluate the effectiveness of DMR monitoring programs and predict the effectiveness of conservation measures such as V-notchning in warming Gulf of Maine waters. Gulf of Maine Research Institute scientists Kathy Mills and Andrew Pershing received $80,000 to compile and develop indicators that show how the Gulf of Maine is changing over time and examine how these indicators affect the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank lobster stock. Lobster Institute director Rick Wahle received $40,000 to develop computer simulations that will be used to examine the relationship between lobster larvae and their likely zooplankton prey across the Gulf of Maine. University of Maine scientist Robert Steneck received $10,000 to supplement his work on changes in lobster settlement, keel bed distribution and density of legal and sub-legal lobsters along the coast of Maine over the last few decades.

In addition, the board awarded $5,000 each to Dr. Nick Record, senior research scientist at Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences; Dr. Jeff Runge, research scientist at GMRI and UMaine; Dr. Eric Amnis, biology professor at Hood College; and Damian Brady, assistant research professor at UMaine. These scientists will contribute their expertise on a broad range of topics and provide data to supplement LRC-funded projects.

LOBSTER STOCK ASSESSMENT GRIM FOR SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND

By MLA staff

The 2020 American Lobster Benchmark Stock Assessment was released in November by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. The study, undertaken every five years, presents contrasting results for the two American lobster stock units, with record high abundance and recruitment in the Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank (GOM/GBK) and record low abundance and recruitment in the Southern New England stock (SNE) in recent years. The SNE stock is significantly depleted with poor prospects of recovery.

Stock status was assessed using the University of Maine Stock Assessment Model for American Lobster, a statistical catch-at-length model that tracks the population of lobster by sex, size and season over time. Southern New England lobster stocks, once robust, have declined to record lows in recent years according to scientists and regulators. The assessment found that lobster populations in southern New England have reached their lowest levels on record.

While past assessments have shown a decline in southern New England lobster stocks since the late 1990s, the 2020 report is particularly dire, predicting that the fishery is unlikely to recover as abundances in southern New England have reached their lowest levels on record. Th e 2020 report is particularly dire, predicting that the fishery is unlikely to recover as abundances in southern New England have reached their lowest levels on record.

Extensive research has highlighted the influence of the environment on American lobster life history and population dynamics. Among the critical environmental variables, temperature stands out as the primary influence. Further, its range is experiencing changing environmental conditions at some of the fastest rates in the world. Therefore, considering these environmental influences is vital when assessing the lobster stocks and was a focal point of this stock assessment, “the ASFMC said in a statement. American fishermen caught more than 126 million pounds of lobster last year. More than 100 million of those pounds came to the docks in Maine. The annual southern New England catch in 2018 was only 2.7 million pounds — about 2% of total U.S. lobster landings.
LOBSTER TRAP TREES BRIGHTEN THE SEASON

Among New England coastal towns lobster trap trees are a sign that Christmas is on the horizon. The tradition of a Christmas tree built of lobster traps is reported to have begun in 2001 in the town of Gloucester, Massachusetts. The salty town by the sea still builds a 35-foot tree in its downtown each season to honor its lobstermen and the fishery.

In Rockland, the 40-foot tree is erected in a park overlooking the harbor. The 150 traps are donated by Brooks Trap Mill in Thomaston and later raffled off to raise money for Rockland Main Street.

The Beals Island lobster trap tree towers on Piero Point. In 2011 lobstermen contributed more than a thousand traps to build a tree 60 feet tall.

Fox’s Lobster House builds its 15-foot tree from wooden lobster traps. The lobster trap tree’s lights shine brightly against the backdrop of nearby Nubble Light.

The Beachmere Inn in Ogunquit uses wooden traps to build its vivid lobster trap tree overlooking the sea.

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