LOBSTER PROCESSORS TAKE STOCK OF 2013 SEASON

By Melissa Waterman

Last year, Maine lobstermen landed approximately 123 million pounds of lobster, stunning themselves, lobster dealers and seafood processors alike. In 2011, they landed 104 million pounds. While no one is prepared to predict this year's landings with any certainty, many suspect that the season will be similar to 2011 and 2012. As the state Department of Marine Resources searches for ways to better manage the harvest in order to improve the price paid to lobstermen, Maine's major seafood processors are taking their own steps to cope with what might be another banner year for lobster landings.

John Norton is president of Cozy Harbor Seafood in Portland. The company sells frozen Maine shrimp and lobster, as well as fresh lobster, scallops and a variety of fish. When asked what he expected to see in terms of lobster landings this year, Norton chose his words carefully. "One year is never the same as another year because the weather, or the supply, or the market conditions are different," he said. "It wouldn't be out of whack to think there will be more lobster landed this year, but you really can't depend on it."

Last year, the company was able to handle the great surge of soft-shell lobsters that were landed in the spring, but just barely, Norton said. "We put extra shifts on, added more people. We were ready for it. Our knees were buckling at times but we didn't go down," he explained. Much of the processed lobster was put into cold storage, Norton added, but that also posed problems. "Frozen product can store longer. It's one of the attributes of the frozen sector of the industry to even out the natural peaks and valleys of demand. But it's expensive to hold it," he said. "No one wants to do that for very long because the costs go higher and higher."

John Hathaway, president of Shucks Maine Lobster in Richmond, thinks that the lobster abundance might offer new possibilities for processors. "The record catches present a challenge, but they also offer us a tremendous opportunity to maximize the economic value of the annual catch," he said in an e-mail.

Shucks Maine has made a concerted effort to expand markets for its array of raw, frozen lobster products.

Maine Lobster in Richmond, thinks that the lobster abundance might offer new possibilities for processors. "The record catches present a challenge, but they also offer us a tremendous opportunity to maximize the economic value of the annual catch," he said in an e-mail. Shucks Maine has made a concerted effort to expand markets for its array of raw, frozen lobster products. Continued on page 7+.

LOBSTER FUTURE DEBATED

By Melissa Waterman

During January, Commissioner Keliher and other officials from the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) traveled to sixteen sites along the coast to talk to lobstermen about planning for the future of the industry. The meetings attracted large standing room only crowds. Discussions focused on methods to make entry into and exit from the lobster industry equitable, to remove latent fishing effort and to manage what may be another bumper crop of lobsters this year.

"2012 has been quite a year in the lobster fishery," said DMR Commissioner Patrick Keliher when announcing the meeting schedule. "Record high landings, low boat prices, Canadian processing constraints, and discussions about changing the state's market pricing strategy have created both challenges and opportunities. Our goal at DMR is to engage industry in discussions about all of these issues as well as the topic of the limited entry system."

DMR structured the meetings to address short-term and long-term issues confronting Maine's lobster industry. In the short-term, the value lobstermen are receiving for their catch is dropping as the landings volume is going up. In the long-term, the current licensing system is not flexible enough to react appropriately if lobster landings take a dramatic dip downward. And the industry is not effectively investing in marketing.

At the meetings, Keliher explained that DMR had received many phone calls from dealers last June when they were having difficulty moving the product. These were followed by a barrage of calls from harvesters when the bottom fell out on the boat price. Keliher stated that DMR has "no authority to impact markets and frankly,
The cold days of winter tend to make us focus on all of the doom and gloom in the world. The sun is low, the days are short and there are few opportunities to make money. Yet, there is plenty of reason for optimism.

This feature is called Coastal Outlook for a reason: it gives me the opportunity to bring your attention to what’s happening on the coast of Maine in communities large and small. And much of what’s happening is pretty inspiring.

In Eastport, David Pottle’s enormous indoor lobster pound is in full swing. The 6,000-square-foot Lighthouse Lobster and Rait facility, which opened in December, stores hard shell lobsters in individual “condos” in two huge tanks of very cold, filtered seawater. The lobsters basically hibernate in the cold water until shipped to Inland Seafood, Pottle’s sole buyer. And Lighthouse Lobster is not unique in its approach. Many of Maine’s lobster dealers have been making investments in their lobster holding infrastructure in order to keep pace with lobster landings, and many have added cooking rooms as a way to reduce shrinkage from weak lobsters during times of peak landings.

Maine’s lobster processing sector is on the rise as well, showing tremendous growth during the last few years. In September, Garbo Lobster and East Coast Seafood combined forces to purchase the former Stinson sardine cannery for $900,000 during a foreclosure auction. These two well-established businesses bring a wealth of experience in live trade, processing and global distribution of lobster. The owners are making investments to upgrade the plant, and are seeking additional support through state and federal grants. The plant is expected to be operational for the 2013 lobster season. Also last fall, a Rockland lobster dealer joined forces with a New Brunswick-based processor to purchase and convert a former printing plant in downtown Rockland. Shucks Maine Lobster installed Maine’s first high water pressure process to their Richmond facility in 2006. This innovative process, which they refer to as the “Big Mother Shucker,” loosens the meat from the shells and cold-pasteurizes the product, producing a fresh, raw lobster meat for sale. Cozy Harbor Seafood has been processing high quality lobster products from their state of the art Portland facility since 1980.

And Maine is also growing its value-added sector. Calendar Islands Maine Lobster and Linda Bean have recently joined the ranks of well-known companies such as Hancock Gourmet and Looks Gourmet to offer consumers ready to cook, gourmet lobster meals such as stews, pizzas and pastas.

Through entrepreneurship, innovation and careful investment, these businesses are growing Maine’s processing sector and bringing quality Maine lobster products to customers in the U.S. and around the world.

Progress and innovation in the Maine lobster industry is happening in other avenues as well. In Harpswell, Jim Merrymen recently installed 44 photovoltaic solar panels at the Reversing Falls Lobster Wharf to decrease the cost of electricity. Merrymen, who owns the Potts Harbor Lobster Company, decided that reducing his electricity bills and doing something positive about atmospheric pollution just made good sense. The Reversing Falls wharf is the first solar-powered lobster wharf in the country.

In Landings this month you will read about a new U.S.D.A. grant awarded to Monhegan Island’s power district to make investments in solar and other technologies in order to lower energy costs for islanders. Vinalhaven has taken the lead in renewable energy investment among Maine’s islanders. The island installed three wind turbines in 2009, which produce enough power to meet the electricity needs of the residents of both Vinalhaven and North Haven. And more renewable projects are coming. The federal government awarded $4 million to the University of Maine and Statoil North Atlantic to support the development and installation of deepwater, offshore floating turbines. That’s serious money.

The upcoming legislative session will be marked by initiatives that continue investment in Maine’s coastal communities. The lobster industry has worked with the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) to submit a bill to step up marketing of Maine lobster through a $3 million industry investment to brand and build demand for the product. And during an extremely difficult budget shortfall, the Governor has proposed a slight increase in funding for DMR in the next biennium in recognition of the critical role our fisheries play in sustaining Maine’s economy.

Sure, it’s easy to look at the array of issues facing coastal communities in Maine – high property taxes, low lobster prices, increasing limits on other fisheries – and think that everything is getting worse. Glass half empty? Or glass half full? Take your pick. There’s much going on in this state that is cause for celebration, and certainly, for hope.

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I recently attended the first-in-the-nation Northeast Regional Planning Body meeting in Portland and came away with mixed feelings. With a background as a lobsterman in the small midcoast town of Friendship, I decided a couple of years ago to follow and become involved in those aspects of the National Ocean Policy that affect me as both a fisherman and concerned individual.

I went to the meeting interested to see how this body, made up solely of federal officials, as well as the knowledgeable and experienced state representatives from Indian tribes located in the Northeast, would begin implementation of coastal and marine planning.

The goals of the planning, as set forth by the National Ocean Council, are to find ways to support sustainable ocean uses that contribute to the economy, while at the same time protecting, maintaining and restoring the ocean ecosystems. This would involve creating a regional plan to reduce conflicts among fishing, offshore energy, shipping conservation and recreation.

What I found was that, although I shared a hopeful and positive feeling surrounding the birth of this process, I also felt disheartened and disenfranchised by the federally mandated format itself. My initial vision had entailed a group made up of oceanographers, fishermen, conservation groups, tugboat operators and others with either a tradition of, or aspirations toward, ocean use. This is not the case. Certainly I would also welcome the input and hard work brought to the table by the federal officials, as well as the knowledgeable and experienced state planners and agency heads that all need to be involved. This welcome also extends to the 10 tribal representatives whose expressions of concern about both ocean users and policy are more in tune with governance and the political sciences, that they may come to our aid with suggestions for alternative structures. Somehow there must be a means to invite traditional ocean users to the table, bringing their knowledge and experience.

Stakeholder advisory groups have been mentioned as a possibility, but any such groups should be used from the beginning, to be a part of establishing a vision and the setting of goals, not just sought out after plans are drawn, to be queried as to, "Can you live with that?" Please don't get me wrong, as an "impacted stakeholder" and almost daily "ocean user" I fully support the National Ocean Policy and most of its many important directives, including the implementation of regional ocean planning. This process seems to offer a better alternative than single agency, case-by-case decision making. It has a regional goal in mind, a vision for the future of our oceans that should be a shared endeavor of fishermen, scientists, planners and business alike.

In that sense, I would just like to look up at the table and see a few faces that I can imagine seeing out on the water some day.
FROM THE DOCK:  P.E.I. looks at boat quotas, market stabilization actions

Ian MacPherson

As the dust settles on the 2012 lobster season, words such as optimism, despair, confusion and angst apply on both sides of the border between Canada and the United States.

On P.E.I, the spring season provided a number of harvesters with a financial return that was much better than in past years. In many areas, costs were covered and some much-needed surpluses were available for repairs, upgrades and other necessities that have been delayed far too long.

The optimism of the spring quickly dissipated during the fall season which saw record catches and low prices north and south of the border.

The baseline prices paid to harvesters were at levels that were lower than in past years and certainly were not close to the prices paid in the spring.

It seems low lobster prices are very much like when a banking institution has a profit loss. Loans go sour and it is the small guy that pays increased service fees to make up the deficit.

Service fees to make up the deficit.

The small guy that pays increased service fees to make up the deficit.

One thing we do know is that if the lobstering fleet should for some reason become non-viable, the price for one-clawed lobsters will be over $7.00.

In the past few months, harvester groups have discussed and voted on such measures as not fishing on Sundays, fishing fewer traps at the start of the season, or taking extra measures to ensure lobster quality in warm climatic conditions.

Should opening week quantities be reduced so that plants can better handle the flow and harvesters receive better prices? What if all one-clawed lobsters were thrown back and not harvested? What if standardized quality protocols were developed and put in place so that high quality product is consistently hitting our wharves? Many of these measures were discussed and voted on in 2012 in parts of Atlantic Canada. Although many were not instituted, the intense conversations and passionate debate did take place.

The key point of these suggested remedies is that they are, by and large, actions that are controlled by the harvesters. As a group, harvesters cannot impact how the global economy performs or influence the monitory exchange rate between Canada, the United States and the rest of the world.

Needless to say, there are a wide variety of views on boat quotas. But what if the discussion centered on “lobster market stabilization”? By this I mean discussing the factors that affect supply.

During the past year, all fishing groups in eastern Canada have stood together to protect the independence of our owner-operator fleets in the face of actions by the federal government to change that provision. Some fishermen feel that even a discussion on supply management puts our fleets at risk of corporatization.

The reality is we are competing with corporate fleets already. Any discussions that involve the economic viability of our fleets must address the good, the bad and the ugly of our industry.

One thing we do know is that if the lobsters hit the wharf can go a long way in reversing the current downward price spiral.

Continued on page 22
GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE AND YOU: The Gulf is heating up

By Melissa Waterman

You and I and the guy down the street type of weather are to be warm. After all, Homo sapiens lack a nice covering of fur or a robust layer of blubber to keep ourselves warm in a cool environment. Warmth is critical for our survival. But this is not so for many of the species in the Gulf of Maine. Creatures from the tiny Pandalids borealis (northern shrimp) to the mighty Embassana glacialis (North Atlantic right whale) prosper in its cold, nutrient-rich waters. Researchers, however, are finding that Gulf of Maine water temperatures are going up, both at the surface and in the deeper waters, and that may mean fundamental shifts in the Gulf’s ecology.

A recent paper titled ‘Rapid Detection of Climate Scale Environmental Variability in the Gulf of Maine’ laid out an unsettling future for the Gulf of Maine. Co-authored by Ru Morrison, Northeastern Regional Association of Coastal and Ocean Observing Systems (NERACOOS); Neil Pettigrew, University of Maine; James O’Donnell, University of Connecticut; and Jeffrey Runge, University of Maine, the paper draws on continuous data compiled during the past decade from the Gulf of Maine Ocean Observing System buoy array, now part of NERACOOS and the Gulf of Maine Research Institute. The seven buoys spread across the Gulf measure many environmental conditions at different depths, including current speed, direction, salinity and density, as well as water temperature, pH, and dissolved oxygen. Most of the buoys record water temperature at one, two, 20 and 50 meters while the Northeast Channel buoy measures at 100, 150 and 180 meters.

The authors found that during the past decade, the water temperature at depth has increased steadily. ‘Analysis of this large time series... shows statistically significant warming trends at all depths for all locations’ according to the paper.

Of course, the Gulf of Maine has warmed up at various times in the past. The most recent was during the decade between 1940 and 1950, when water temperatures rose by approximately 0.25°C per year. Then the Gulf’s temperature took a dip, cooling at a similar rate during the next decade. Overall, however, the Gulf warmed by about 0.01°C per year during the past seventy years. As the authors note, ‘The period of rapid warming recorded by the NERACOOS buoys since 2004, of similar magnitude to the 1940-50 warming trend, may represent another cycle of decadal variability or perhaps indicate a warming trend.’

Whatever the cause, many Gulf of Maine marine species will not thrive in these warming waters. Adapted to a specific range of temperatures, the animals may simply move on to cooler regions. The paper states, ‘...at a sustained bottom temperature increase of >2-3 degrees C, Gulf of Maine cod stocks are anticipated to decline or collapse (Drinkwater 2005, Fogarty et al. 2008). Bottom temperature increases also affect reproductive cycles of Northern shrimp, with the likelihood of hatching dates in winter in advance of the phytoplankton blooms upon which the pelagic shrimp larvae depend (Koeller et al. 2009).’

... during the past decade, the water temperature at depth has increased steadily.

The North Atlantic right whale might not have any place to move to, however. The endangered whales recently were found to overwinter in the Gulf, snacking on their favorite high fat food, Calanus finmarchicus, a small copepod. Others return every summer to the Gulf to graze on huge schools of the copepods, court and mate. But Calanus finmarchicus likes cold water. In a paper published in February, 2011, in the Global Change Biology journal, Gabriel Reygondeau and Gregory Beauangard predicted that, due to warmer waters, the range of Calanus finmarchicus will shrink, particularly on Georges Bank and the Scotian Shelf, while it will be found in greater abundance to the north, especially in the Barents Sea. That’s bad news for just about everything that swims in the Gulf of Maine.

In dry scientific language, the authors note, ‘Since the lipid-rich Calanus is a key prey for forage species such as herring, sand lance, mackerel, as well as for the northern right whale, regional shifts in feeding distributions and abundance of these planktivorous predators may be anticipated.’

Human beings want and need to be warm. Numerous marine species in the Gulf of Maine do not. As their environment continues to warm up, those creatures may become notable not because of their abundance, but because of their absence.
MEET THE NEW MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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Christopher K. Johnson, Chair (D-Lincoln County)

Edward J. Mazzurek (D-Knox County)
Sen. Mazzurek is a retired teacher and coach from Rockland. He served four terms in the Maine House before being elected to the Senate in 2012. He represents Rockland, Owls Head, Appleton, Camden, Criehaven, Cush- ing, Hope, Matinicus Isle Plantation, North Haven, Rockport, South Thom- aston, St. George, Thomaston, Union, Vinalhaven and Warren.

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Walter A. Kimiega III, Chair (D-Deer Isle)
Rep. Kimiega is a carpenter from Deer Isle. He was elected to the House in 2010. He represents Brooklin, Deer Isle, Frenchboro, Isle au Haut, part of Mount Desert Island, North Haven, Stonington, Swan’s Island, Tremont and Vinalhaven.

Chuck Kruger (D-Thomaston)
Rep. Kruger owns and manages Enter- tainment Resources, Inc. He was elected to the Maine House of Representa- tives in November 2008. He represents part of Owls’ Head, South Thomaston, St. George, Thomaston and Matinicus Isle Plantation, plus the unorganized territory of Criehaven.

Ralph Chapman (D-Brooksville)
Rep. Chapman is an educator who established a science teaching lab at University of Maine, Camden. He served in the Maine House before being elected to the Senate in 2012. He represents Rockland, Owls Head, Appleton, Camden, Criehaven, Cush- ing, Hope, Matinicus Isle Plantation, North Haven, Rockport, South Thom- aston, St. George, Thomaston, Union, Vinalhaven and Warren.

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It has staged an international lobster chef “World Series” contest, holding preliminary competitions across the globe before hosting the final cook-off here in Maine last August. At the International Boston Seafood Show and other seafood expos, the company brought chefs to demonstrate creative ways to serve Shack lobster products. "We can create more demand by opening new markets with innovative, convenient value-added Maine lobster products," Hathaway said. "It’s what today’s consumer wants." Because so much of the lobster landed in the state, regardless of the year, is soft-shell lobster which does not ship well, Hathaway argues that more processing and other seafood expos, the company with an opportunity to develop new markets. He’s not sure what will happen if lobster prices go up this year. "The reality is that with oversupply, the price drops and you get new businesses," Jordan said. "But will they stay?"

"You have to have the financial capacity to absorb it, to store it, and wait."

Jordan, who lobsters himself, suspects that this year is likely to be as prolific a season as last year and the year before. Finding new ways to cope with that abundance is just part of the company’s business model. "We are leaning more and more on the value-added products," he explained. "There’s a more consistent value attached to those products than to live lobsters. Pricing live lobsters is so erratic." Like Cozy Harbor, Calendar Islands can store frozen product, such as lobster tails, when the market is oversaturated. "The cost of storage also is an issue. ‘So you don’t want to hang on to it,’ Jordan said. ‘But it’s good to have for our value-added products and ingredients.’ The effect of an early lobster shed and oversupply will vary depending on whether a business is working in the live market or with processed lobster, Norton continued. Those companies who market live lobsters generally buy from Canadian lobstermen in the spring, when most Maine lobstermen are not fishing. Last year, thosedealers had contracts set up with Canadian brokers and were taken by surprise by the early landings in Maine. "This year they will be trying to line up Maine lobster to sell to their clients," Norton predicted.

Processors, on the other hand, are in something of a bind if lobster landings surge early in the year with a concomitant drop in prices. "Buyers stop buying when the price drops, like in the stock market. They won’t buy on the way down, not until they think the market has stabilized," Norton said. So if a huge amount of lobster comes onto the docks and the price goes down, processors are going to have to be ready to hold on to it. And being ready means having money. "You have to have the financial capacity to absorb it, to store it and wait," Norton said. Those dealing in live lobsters, by contrast, often must sell lobsters quickly in order to make back their money and buy again, he added.

Despite lamentations about the price, all those millions of pounds of lobster harvested last year did eventually end up somewhere. "This past year the industry created a lot of new customers. The market absorbed a lot more pounds of lobster than in the past. Either people are eating lobster more often or new people became lobster users. I think both things happened," Norton said. "There’s a bigger market available to us in 2013 than before.”

Hathaway also is cautiously optimistic. "We want to add innovation and value to Maine lobster right here in Maine and help the Maine lobster industry be economically sustainable to the same degree that it is environmentally sustainable," he said.

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By April Gilmore

Ryder Noyes is a busy guy. Splitting his time between lobstering and college is a tricky balance, but somehow he manages to pull it off. “I lobster through the fall while I’m at school and come home every weekend,” he explained. Ryder tries to schedule his classes early on Friday so he can make the three-hour drive back from the University of Maine at Orono and arrive home in Kennebunk by midday. “Come home, set up, lobster Saturday and Sunday and then, on Sunday night shoot back up to school,” he said about his schedule.

Ryder, 22, has been lobstering in Zone G since he was ten years old. He started tending his first five traps in a 13-foot wooden skiff. He has spent every summer since working on the water. With his father’s help Ryder found a job as a sternman working for a family friend. “Getting 20 bucks a day felt like a lot of money,” he said about his first paycheck.

Ryder also spent time working for Allen Daggett at the Cape Porpoise Lobster Company. “I’d man the chute and roll barrels even though they would toss me around!” he acknowledged about handling bait. Daggett also allowed Ryder to tie his boat at the dock for a few summers. “All the guys in Cape Porpoise have helped me out. They knew I was just coming up as a young kid so it was new territory to me. If I’ve had boat problems, they’ve come and given me a hand,” he said. “But it’s not like they are giving up any hot spots down here though!”

Although Ryder can fish 800 traps, he currently has only 400 in the water. This summer he hopes to add another 100 to his gang. He bought his 30-foot Repco, the Miss Konduct, a few years ago from a friend. The boat’s name comes from his love for ice hockey; misconduct is a big part of that rough sport. “I’ve played since I was little kid and it’s been a lot of fun,” he said. He now plays on a club team at the University of Maine.

When asked what he likes to do in his time off Ryder said with a grin, “Time off, what’s that?” Free time is something he doesn’t have too much of, but when he does, he likes to hit the slopes skiing on those weekends he doesn’t have a hockey game. During the summer he also likes to go tuna fishing. “I enjoy going out. It’s a nice day on the water even if you don’t catch anything,” he said.

After graduation next year Ryder plans to pursue a doctorate in physical therapy. With all the injuries he has sustained through hauling traps and playing hockey, it’s no wonder he was drawn to the profession. He recognizes that many fishermen go without doctor’s visits due to the cost of medical care. He hopes that when he finishes school he will be able keep lobstering and also work as a physical therapist.

‘I’d like to do both. If that’s possible,” he said about splitting his time between the two careers. ”Lobstering has made it possible for me to afford to go to school in Orono,” he said. “My big thing is to come out of school and go into a job where I’m not being told what to do 24-7. Lobstering has always been that for me.”

Ryder Noyes of Kennebunk aboard his 30-foot Repco Miss Konduct. Photo by April Gilmore.
Maine Lobstermen’s Association

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MAINE LOBSTERMEN’S ASSOCIATION UPDATE

MAINE LOBSTERMEN’S ASSOCIATION UPDATE

STEAMING AHEAD

The recent round of meetings held by DMR was different— in a good way. Different because Pat Keliher is Com-
misoner and he is proving to have a real knack when it comes
to talking to the industry. Different because DMR did
not show up to sell a plan or defend their ideas. Different
because DMR instead came to listen and to challenge
lobstermen to join in a discussion on how to address
some of the difficult challenges we face.

It was refreshing to hear a Commissioner talk about
just how important lobster is to Maine and our economy.
Lob-
sters is the economic driver of the Maine coast and
with industry profitability down, lobster should be at the
top of the DMR agenda. Not because we need to change
for change’s sake, but because we have a responsibility to
prepare for our future. The Commissioner gets this. He chal-
 lenged the industry to think about taking control of our
destiny, something that he believes is possible given the
size and value of our fishery. And I believe he is motivated
by a genuine desire to leave the industry better than he
found it.

The meetings produced an open and sincere conversation,
about the future of the lobster industry. From my perspec-
tive, one of the best things about the meetings was the
broad and diverse group of lobstermen who attended and
actually spoke up during the discussions. The issues
ranged from how far government authority should go to
discussed ideas on how to address our challenges. It
was encouraging to see the pride and passion that so many
lobstermen have for our industry. I know that I learned a
lot over the course of these meetings.

DMR presented information honestly — there were no
ingredients of the sinking groundline

Whales - In November, 2012, several conservation groups (The Humane Society of the United States, Defend-
ers of Wildlife, Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society) filed a 60-day Notice of Intent to Sue (NOIS) with
the National Marine Fisheries Ser-
vice for alleged violations of the En-
dangered Species Act (ESA), Marine
Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and Administrative Procedures Act (APA). These groups allege that the
American lobster fishery jeopardizes the existence of critically endangered North Atlantic right whale, hump-
back, fin and sei whales.

The NOIS is based on NMFS’ Biologi-
cal Opinion on the American Lobster fishery, issued in August, 2012, which concluded that the effects of the con-
tinued operation of the American Lobster FMP (fisheries management plan) over the next ten years “is likely
to adversely affect, but not jeopardize the continued existence of these species.” NMFS examined the impacts of the
American lobster fishery on right, humpback, fin, and sei whales as well as loggerhead and leatherback sea
turtles. NMFS cites the recent imple-
mentation of the sinking groundline rules and the pending vertical line

In terms of ways to solve a future glut of lobster on the
market, the Commissioner was clear in stating his belief
that government should not have authority to interfere
with the market. Yet he was willing to bring the Lobster
Advisory Council’s recommendation for days out of the
fishery to ensure a broad industry discussion about the
issue of low boat price due to over-abundance. He was
far from clear that the goal of any strategy to avoid a glut
would be to prevent further erosion of the boat price, not to avoid
a low boat price. He took a controversial idea out to the
industry and got lots of constructive feedback. The dis-
tussions revealed strong differences of opinion among
different areas of the state. Yet it was refreshing to see
lobstermen articulate why a proposal wouldn’t work for
them rather than just coming out in anger to say “no.”

The Commissioner did not tiptoe around his stand on
trap reductions. He made it clear that there is no resource
problem and therefore no need to cut traps. His logic is
that, due to the strong health of the resource, trap reduc-
tions relate more to the individual profitability of busi-
nesses. And he was clear that keeping individual busi-
nesses profitable is not the government’s job. He did not
mime words in stating that the industry itself should be
talking about how to become more profitable — and that
should include fishermen. Different because Pat Keliher
is Commissioner and he is proving to have a real knack when it
comes to talking to the industry. Different because DMR
has developed a new way of doing business. They understand that management changes affect peo-
ple’s lives and livelihoods, and they want input and buy-in
from the industry. Finding the right leader for the right
time is critical. The MLA strongly backed Pat Keliher’s
nomination to serve as DMR Commissioner – and I feel
confident that we got that one right!

As always, stay safe on the water.

POLICY UPDATES

Whales - In November, 2012, several conservation groups (The Humane Society of the United States, Defend-
ers of Wildlife, Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society) filed a 60-day Notice of Intent to Sue (NOIS) with
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vice for alleged violations of the En-
dangered Species Act (ESA), Marine
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American lobster fishery jeopardizes the existence of critically endangered North Atlantic right whale, hump-
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American lobster fishery on right, humpback, fin, and sei whales as well as loggerhead and leatherback sea
turtles. NMFS cites the recent imple-
mentation of the sinking groundline rules and the pending vertical line

rules as reasons why the American lobster fishery does not jeopardize the existence of right whales.

The conservation community is also closely monitoring the status of the ship strike rules. In June, 2012, these
conservation groups filed a petition requesting that NMFS use its authori-
ty under the ESA and MMPA to extend the ship speed limit rule beyond the expiration date of December, 2013.
Specifically, the conservation groups are seeking to extend the current speed limits, designate additional sea-
sonal management areas and make compliance mandatory.

MLA Meets with Legislative Leaders - In January, MLA leadership met with Senate President Justin Alfond, House
Speaker Mark Eves and Senate Chair of Marine Resources Committee Chris Jones to discuss issues facing the
lobster industry. The primary focus of these meetings was to introduce the MLA to leadership and raise aware-
ness of industry priorities.

MLA staff described the current prof-
itability crisis and its far-reaching fac-
effects, including record landings,
rising business costs and changing
environmental conditions in the Gulf of Maine. The MLA explained the relationship, both cooperative
and competitive, between the Maine and Canadian lobster fisheries. MLA representatives voiced support for
proposed legislation to create a new marketing entity funded through $3 million in industry funds contribut-
eds from harvesters, dealers and pro-
cessors and also voiced support for
developing a state Fishery Management Plan for Maine lobster.

MLA spoke to the leadership about the recent Gulf of Maine Research In-
stitute report on lobstering licensing and its recommendations concern-
ing limited entry. While no legislative proposals have been submitted, MLA
staff urged leadership to be prepared for discussions about a tiered license system and seasonal management measures.
The MLA expressed a will-
ingness to engage in these discus-
sions, but will not take a formal posi-
tion until these concepts are further
developed.

The MLA voiced support for any ef-
tope to improve alewife passage on the St. Croix River, but expressed
depth concern over proposals which
would allow landing lobster caught by
draggers as bycatch in Maine.

MLA instead urged leadership to
consider the full suite of business
issues facing the groundfish indus-
try rather than focus on lobster by-
catch. Finally, the MLA urged cau-

February 2013 | LANDINGS | Page 9
Maine Legislature - The MLA closely monitors legislation which may affect the lobster industry. The deadline for legislators to submit bills was January 18 and the list of bills was made public on January 28 organized by subject and sponsor (www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/bills_126th/billtexts/). Maine DMR has submitted several bills reviewing and printing these bills — this budget maintains minimal of funding needed for these important agencies to operate. "The Governor's proposed budget for the Department of Marine Resources for the 2013-2014 biennium is $19.6 million, a 9.55% increase over the last biennium.

"The biennial budget initiatives in the four natural resource agencies demonstrate Governor LePage's continued commitment to Maine's rural economy and natural resource heritage. Despite a slow economic recovery nationally that has led to reductions in federal funding to states, reduced revenue received by state government, and funding challenges due to entitlement spending, the FY14/15 Biennial Budget maintains funding for the natural resource sector. Continued expansion in entitlement spending on welfare programs make this outcome a real challenge, but this budget sets priorities and assures that Maine's natural resource agencies continue to provide service and meet core functions. Even with all these challenges, Governor LePage has made sure that fishing, farming, forestry and outdoor recreation remain top priorities in the State of Maine." The briefing packet goes on to provide highlights of the DMR's budget:

DMR anticipates further federal reductions of 10-20% for FY2014, impacting DMR in FY2015, if not before.

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John Bay Boat Company
Kip's Seafood Co.

Notice is hereby given that the Annual Meeting of the members of the MLA Board and staff met with Gulf of Maine Research Institute researchers to discuss the development of catch-at-length matrices and model configuration and parameterization.

 MLA continued on page 23
PRESENTING THE WINNERS OF THE FOURTH ANNUAL MAINE LOBSTERMEN’S ASSOCIATION PHOTO CONTEST!

FIRST PRIZE: SHIPPING AND HANDLING
Portrait with oversized lobster || Blake Alley, Steuben

SECOND PRIZE: SCENIC
Sea Smoke || Shannon Gordon, Portland

SECOND PRIZE: GEAR
Wyatt & Rubye Alley on their father’s boat, Under Pressure || Cari Alley, Islesford

SECOND PRIZE: PEOPLE & LOBSTER
Young Fishermen, Isle Au Haut Thoroughfare || Patricia Bakir

SECOND PRIZE: SHIPPING & HANDLING
Linda Bean’s bait dock || Jeffrey Peterson, Vinalhaven

SECOND PRIZE: BOAT
Circle of Boats || John DeRaps Sr. He passed away July 24th after a long battle with cancer. He was a life long, well respected fisherman. His boat was the red boat Laurie Lisa pictured in the middle.”

“The picture was taken in Frenchman’s Bay, Sorrento. The circle of boats was a dedication to my dad John DeRaps Sr. He passed away July 24th after a long battle with cancer. He was a life long, well respected fisherman. His boat was the red boat Laurie Lisa pictured in the middle.”

Second Prize: Boat
Circle of Boats || John DeRaps, Franklin

“...”
PRESENTING THE WINNERS OF THE FOURTH ANNUAL MAINE LOBSTERMEN’S ASSOCIATION PHOTO CONTEST!

We are pleased to present the winners of the Fourth Annual Maine Lobstermen’s Association Photo Contest. Special thanks to everyone who submitted photos, and to Peter Ralston of the Ralston Gallery in Rockport, Maine and Gretchen Piston Ogden of *Maine Boats, Homes and Harbors* magazine for judging the entrants.

We’d love to see more of your photos during the year so please, post them to the MLA or MLCA Facebook pages, or email them to melissa@mainelobstermen.org.

GRAND PRIZE
Bob Dennis, Cape Porpoise

FIRST PRIZE: GEAR
Island Bait Bags || Kate Hotchkiss Taylor, North Haven

FIRST PRIZE: BOATS
Criehaven || Tootie Stone, Owls Head

FIRST PRIZE: SCENIC
Boat in Cape Porpoise || Bob Dennis, Cape Porpoise

FIRST PRIZE: PEOPLE & LOBSTER
Isabella out to haul || Molly Hensom, Ellsworth
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Rob Benson calls himself an organizer. The 44-year-old Maine Sea Coast Mission pastor spends much of his time planning the travel routes of the organization’s 75-foot-long ship, the Sunbeam, among Maine’s smallest year-round islands. Yet Benson has become a familiar sight on Frenchboro, Isle au Haut, the Cranberry Islands, Matinicus and Monhegan since he began his position with the 108-year-old Mission in 2002.

Benson’s job description is straightforward, at least on paper: minister to island residents, perform weddings, make hospital visits, conduct religious services. But, like the island residents themselves, Benson does much more than that. “Rob’s amazing, he really cares about people,” said Brenda Clark, Isle au Haut librarian. “There’s something genuine about him. He listens to you and he’s not overbearing.”

Benson found his job in Maine almost by accident. “I came to Isle au Haut on my honeymoon,” he recalled. “We met Ted Hoskins [then the Mission’s long-time pastor] and had lemonade with him on his porch.” Benson later began receiving the Mission’s newsletter and one day noticed that the organization was seeking someone for Hoskins’ position. He and his wife Christy, a high school science teacher, were living in Washington, D.C., where Benson worked as a hospice pastor and for a nonprofit organization on Capitol Hill. “My wife was eight months pregnant at the time,” Benson said of the dogsledding weekend. “It’s about being a team,” Benson said of the dogsledding weekend. Lyndsey Lysnogle, a teacher on Islesford, has high praise for the middle school retreats and Benson’s other interactions with island students. “He is a huge advocate for our school,” she said. “The middle school retreats are about how to make friends and to take positive risks, to try things that you might really love,” Benson explained. Last year the children visited the Belfast Curling Club to learn to curl. This year they went dogsledding. “It’s about being a team,” Benson said of the dogsledding weekend.
The Department of Marine Resources has a multi-faceted process to develop changes in management. Each of these individuals has specific tasks or fisheries that they are responsible for, but they also participate in a multi-faceted process to develop changes in the management of a fishery. Since taking office in July 2011, Commissioner Patrick Keliher has made it a priority to reach out to stakeholders and seek their input, either through meetings or by a standing open-door policy. By bringing interested parties together in a forum outside of the legislative or regulatory process, the Commissioner believes he will be able to develop better proposals before submitting a bill to the Legislature or beginning rule-making. He also believes that two-way communication is key to helping everyone understand and appreciate the various perspectives involved in any of Maine’s fisheries – from the state to the harvesters, dealers, scientists, and interested members of the public.

As an example, the Commissioner recently went on a “road show,” holding 16 meetings around the state to solicit feedback from the lobster industry on three topics: short-term solutions to prevent another glut of lobster like the one we saw last summer; a tiered licensing proposal; and a marketing bill being considered this session by the Marine Resources Committee in the Legislature. DMR received a tremendous amount of very constructive feedback from these well-attended meetings and will be compiling a summary, as well as using it to evaluate if and how the Department will move forward on these three topics. Meetings like these are just the beginning of the Office of Policy and Management’s work. DMR submits agency bills to the Legislature that advance the purposes of the Department, which are to conserve and develop marine and estuarine resources and to promote and develop Maine coastal fishing industries. The Marine Resources Committee holds public hearings on all the bills that address issues within its jurisdiction, giving interested parties another chance to have their voice heard on issues of importance to them. Currently there are seven DMR-sponsored bills before the Legislature, including a bill to provide additional funding for marketing and promotion of Maine lobster.

Rulemaking is the process by which DMR, or any state department, adds detail to broad mandates outlined in legislation. At DMR, rule development involves input from science, public health, enforcement and policy experts within DMR as well as interested parties together in a forum. The rule-making process is again an opportunity for public input during hearings and via comments sent to the agency contact person listed on public notices published in the newspaper and on the DMR website. As mentioned above, DMR receives information and guidance regarding administration, legislation, and regulation from various advisory councils. They include the Commercial Fishing Advisory Council, the DMR Advisory Council, advisory councils for lobster, scallops, and shellfish, and zone councils for sea urchins and lobsters all of which provide policy direction for specific geographic regions of the coast. The councils’ compositions vary, but most are composed of harvesters, dealers, processors and interested members of the public, and provide valuable perspectives to the Commissioner and staff on the many issues impacting Maine’s commercial fishing industries.

DMR also represents the state on two regional fishery management boards. The first is the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC)
OCEAN ACIDIFICATION LEAD SESSION AT MAINE FISHERMEN’S FORUM

By Melissa Waterman

Each year the Maine Fishermen’s Forum highlights the issues that are paramount among fishermen throughout New England. Groundfish quotas, scallop management, lobster population dynamics—these are just some of the topics that have been featured during the three-day event. Among the many subjects to be discussed this year at the Forum, perhaps none is as ominous as ocean acidification.

The world’s oceans have acted like sponges for the increasing amounts of CO₂ created by industrial and agricultural activities during the past two centuries. At first glance, this is good: because oceans have absorbed CO₂, a greenhouse gas, less remains in the atmosphere to further increase the world’s average temperature. But that benefit has a cost. The ever-increasing amounts of CO₂ in the oceans have in fact changed the acidity of seawater, increasing it by approximately 29 percent since the mid-1800s.

“Facing Ocean Acidification in Maine: Identifying Our Stakes, Questions, and Tools to Adapt and Protect Fisheries” will be the opening session of the 2013 Forum on Thursday, February 28. The session was organized by Maine native and Port Townsend, Washington-based commercial fisherman Amy Grondin and Brad Warren, founder of the Global Ocean Health Program. It is a joint initiative of the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership, the National Fisheries Conservation Center, and the Island Institute, a nonprofit organization based in Rockland.

The first part of the three-hour session will feature fishermen, aquaculturists, clammers, and scientists speaking about what they are seeing in the Gulf of Maine. Presenters will talk about the effects of changing seawater chemistry on Maine’s fisheries. The second part will focus on available tools that can detect and manage the impacts of acidification.

While Maine has not experienced the same economic effects of acidic ocean water borne by shellfish aquaculturists in Washington and Oregon in recent years, scientists and fishermen in Maine are worried. As Mark Green, professor of environmental sciences at St. Joseph College in Standish, said in a video produced by the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership in 2011, “There is no debate about ocean acidification. It is real and happening very, very quickly.”

More acidic ocean water makes life tough for marine species that depend on calcium carbonate to build their shells, creatures like lobsters, scallops and clams. At the Forum session, Tim Bowden, University of Maine assistant professor of aquaculture, will present the results of studies by a graduate student on the impact acidic water has on lobster larvae. “[Port Clyde lobsterman] Josh Hall’s findings on the potential impact of ocean acidification on lobster larvae begin to show how the slow acidification of the Gulf of Maine could have fundamental consequences for the lobster fishery,” Bowden said.

Continued on page 22

MAINE LOBSTER PROMOTION COUNCIL MARKETING UPDATE

Marketing in the Midwest

The MLPC ran a test market promotional campaign in two Midwest retail chains in December. The campaign promoted Maine lobster claws and tails with flyer advertising and in-store promotional items such as banners, recipe cards and posters. The campaign also included a consumer contest and a seafood manager incentive. The promotional materials focused on the celebratory nature of Maine lobster. The promotional campaign achieved strong participation at the store level from both consumers and staff. The 39 participating retail stores sold over 16,400 pounds of lobster tails and claws during the one-week promotion.

MLPC at the Fishermen’s Forum

MLPC will be offering a seminar to share the Council’s current marketing and branding strategy while gathering industry input on the marketing process. MLPC staff will speak about strategies to better anticipate and address specific challenges facing the fishery.

We would also like to encourage everyone to stop by the MLPC informational table at the Forum. MLPC staff will be on hand to hear your thoughts, answer questions, and share information and marketing materials.

International Boston Seafood Show

MLPC is once again hosting a Maine Lobster Pavilion and Maine Lobster Reception at the International Boston Seafood Show, March 10-12. The Pavilion will feature a chef demonstration and tasting stage to showcase the versatility, flavor and quality of Maine lobster. The Pavilion will also include meeting spaces, co-exhibitor kiosks for Maine lobster dealers and a product showcase.

The Maine Lobster Reception is being held Sunday, March 10 from 5:30-7:30 p.m., at the nearby Exchange Conference Center. The reception will provide an opportunity for Maine lobster dealers and international and U.S. buyers to meet in a relaxed environment.

For complimentary tickets to the International Boston Seafood Show or the Maine Lobster Reception, contact the MLPC at 207-541-9310 or info@lobsterfrommaine.com.

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EQUIPMENT FOR THE Toughest Conditions
Residents of Monhegan Plantation Power District (MPPD) hope to see lower costs for electricity in the near future as the result of a $420,154 U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) grant. The USDA Rural Utilities Service administers a High Energy Cost Grant Program for remote rural communities where the cost of electricity exceeds 275 percent of the national average.

Monhegan Island, located about 12 miles from the mainland, ranks among the top 20 communities in the U.S. with the highest cost for electricity. The 70 residents who live there year-round have paid an average of 70 cents per kilowatt-hour for electricity since 2008. Most mainland residents pay about 15 cents per kilowatt-hour.

According to the website Monheganpower.com, Monhegan is one of two Maine islands not connected to the mainland by an underwater cable. Electricity currently comes from a three-generator, 300-kilowatt (kW) diesel power station located at the top of Lighthouse Hill. Chris Smith, operations manager for the power district (and one of several lobstermen who comprise the operations staff), explained that Maine Coast Petroleum brings diesel to Monhegan in a 42-foot tanker truck via the ferry from Rockland. He said that once the tanker arrives, MPPD brings its truck to the wharf. That truck is filled from the tanker. Then the MPPD truck carries the diesel up the steep hill to the power station where it’s transferred to a large bulk tank.

Smith said that since the generators were installed in 2000, MPPD slowly has been upgrading the distribution system which now supplies power to at least 80 properties (some of which are businesses). The USDA grant funds will be used to replace the district’s switchgear, which will enable the power station to draw from different sources of energy, including solar and wind power. A new 40-kilowatt generator and a 13-kilowatt solar array for the power station’s roof will be purchased with the remaining funds.

Monhegan resident and island lobsterwoman Chris Cash said the upgrade will allow MPPD to address the huge disparity between winter and summer usage on the island. During the summer months the population swells as summer residents and visitors swarm the island. “The current system was designed to meet peak summer loads, and it certainly does that adequately,” she said. It is not well designed to deal with low winter usage. An average February day can see electricity usage at less than a tenth of the load of a typical August evening, when every home, hotel, guesthouse and restaurant on the island is at full capacity. “This grant will fund an improvement to the system that addresses that disparity for the foreseeable future, and it will do so with a significant renewable-energy component,” Cash added.

Smith said they anticipate the improvement work will begin this coming fall after the tourist season has ended and the electricity demand has dropped off. “The first step will involve engineering and project permitting because Monhegan is a plantation under the Land Use Regulation Commission (LURC) jurisdiction for any development,” said Smith. “The next step, once bids are awarded and components brought on site, is to bypass the plant for up to 30 days, while running the island with a portable, rental genset [an electricity-producing generator],” said Smith. "At this point, the existing switchgear will be removed, and a smaller genset will be added to our existing fleet of three. Installation of the new switchgear comes next, then commissioning and load testing. The last step would be the install of 13 kW of photovoltaic panels on the plant roof. We also see this as a great opportunity to

Continued on page 22

**MONHEGAN ISLAND GETS A LITTLE SLICE OF THE SUN**

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**A federal grant will allow the Monhegan Plantation Power District to switch among different sources of energy for electricity production, including solar and wind power. MLA photo.**

**Continued on page 22**
Finally Free Yourself From Back And Leg Pain

Now, in midcoast Maine, Maine Spine & Nerve Institute has what may be the most important breakthrough in non-surgical back pain treatments. Before and after MRI studies have shown disc bulges shrink in size even with the most painful cases. If you’ve had disc problems for years, recently injured your back, or you’re suffering with sciatica, you must hear about these new studies.

Scientific Studies tell us that spinal discs are responsible for a lot of the severe pain people suffer from. Discs act like a cushion between our backbones and allow for a space at each level so the nerves can exit the spinal column. When these discs get injured they begin to degenerate and cause pain. Bulging and herniations begin to form, pressing on the nerve roots. If the herniations occur in the lumbar spine, they can severely compromise the large sciatic nerve, causing muscle weakness, tingling, and severe pain. The most common invasive treatment for disc herniations is surgery. This costs quite a bit of money. Even with health insurance the patient is left with their own portion of the bill that may be in excess of $5,000-$10,000, and sometimes more. The recovery time and missed work can be anywhere from 3 to 6 months, not to mention the obvious severe risks associated with all surgery. But here’s the biggest problem, there is a high failure rate of back surgery. One medical study found that on average, 53% of L5-S1 back surgeries fail to produce relief of symptoms (International Orthoped 1987).

Feel The Improvement
See and feel your life change for the better. Start your body on the way to pain-free, normal living. Feel tight joints rest, relax, free up. Feel muscles tied in knots become more supple. Feel strength in your muscles increase. You are able to live life like a normal person again, without back pain, able to play with your kids, enjoy time with friends, and get a good night’s rest.

The Single Most Important Solution To Your Sciatica and Back Pain
It’s time for you to find out if spinal decompression will be your sciatic and back pain solution. For 10 days only, I’m running a special offer where you can find out if you are a candidate for spinal decompression.

What does this offer include?
~ An in-depth consultation about your health and well-being where I will listen to the details of your case.
~ A complete neuromuscular examination.
~ Diagnostic testing to determine if a spinal problem is contributing to your pain or symptoms.
~ A thorough analysis of your exam and diagnostic testing findings so we can start mapping out your plan to being pain free.
You can get everything listed here for $19. The normal price for this type of evaluation including diagnostic testing is $218. You will get to see everything first hand and find out if this amazing treatment will be your pain solution, as it has been for so many other patients.

Before You Opt For Spinal Surgery, consider a less invasive approach called spinal decompression.
Non-surgical spinal decompression is a new technology that has been proven to reverse disc herniations. It creates a vacuum effect on the disc, which pulls the disc back into its normal position and brings in a fresh blood supply to promote healing. Spinal decompression treatments are gentle, patients even sleep during sessions. Most patients feel better with just a few treatments, and best of all there will be no dangerous drugs, no invasive procedures, and no painful exercises.

The Research Behind This Treatment
One clinical study has shown non-surgical spinal decompression to be extremely successful in 86% of patients with herniated discs and degenerative disc disease. Another study presented at the American Academy of Pain Management in 2007 showed, “Patients reported a mean 86.9% improvement in back pain and better function. No patients required any invasive therapies (e.g. epidural injections, surgery).”
As you can see, spinal decompression has a high success rate with helping disc herniations, sciatica, and back pain.

Feeling better is my goal! I would love to hear your success stories. Please share your experiences with me.

I was enjoying retirement until I began having intense left hip pain. I could not sleep, walk any distance, and had tingling in both of my legs. My doctor discovered I had a L-4 disc herniation. My daughter-in-law insisted I go to Maine Spine & Nerve Institute to consider Non-Surgical Decompression. Today I am pain free, able to sleep again after just a few decompression treatments. It is great to be without pain and to be able to enjoy all my activities!!

Richard Scofield, Jefferson, Maine

I had been to Dr. VanderPloeg before so I went to him right away. An MRI revealed a herniated L-5 disc that was putting pressure on the nerve. I could not stand straight, walk any distance, sit, bend, or twist. I soon noticed pain reduction and within weeks my pain was much better and today I have no pain and am working just as in the past that requires bending, lifting, twisting and doing a lot of driving. Non-Surgical Decompression works great!!

Eric Teele, Bremen, Maine

After completing a series of three epidural spinal injections that offered temporary relief, my doctor informed me my only option, at that point, was spine surgery. I brought my MRI’s to Dr. VanderPloeg to discuss other options. It was one of the best decisions I’ve made and worth every penny. Four years later I remain pain free and active at both work and play. It’s a shame that my insurance company would rather foot the bill for surgery at five times the cost.

Dave Willbur, Damariscotta, Maine

Challenge the pain! Get a second opinion!

I just got home after a day lobstering when I saw the latest edition of the Maine Lobstermen’s Association newsletter. In it I found an ad about Dr. VanderPloeg and the medical equipment he has to help people with herniated discs. I had been diagnosed with a massive herniation many years before and had accepted that pain pills would be in my life forever! I decided to make the trip to Maine Spine and Nerve Institute to see if there was a chance of relief for me. Dr. VanderPloeg informed me I would have an 85% chance of pain relief with decompression therapy. I will admit I was skeptical at first, but that soon was replaced with satisfaction and gratitude! After twelve years of pain, I can honestly say this is the best my back has felt, and my family and I are very grateful for the help that was given to me!

Brad Billings, Deer Isle, Maine

Maine Spine & Nerve Institute
Leaders in Non-Surgical Spinal Decompression
207-563-8500
www.msnidrx.com
17 Back Meadow Road
Dr. Douglas VanderPloeg D.C.
Lobster meetings continued from page 1

the department should not have the authority to impact markets." However, he explained, the state has a public trust responsibility which includes "maximizing the value of the resource." He warned as the industry considers options it should recognize that avoiding a glut does not mean that you will avoid a low boat price. "The goal would be to prevent further erosion of the boat price."

The Lobster Advisory Council (LAC), a public body appointed to advise DMR on lobster management issues, conducted its own public meetings this summer to discuss possible measures to address the value of the catch and to develop a plan to build demand for Maine lobster. It pondered a wide range of management approaches suggested by lobstermen such as days out of the fishery, seasonal gauging changes, trap reductions and closures. The LAC ultimately voted to ask DMR to present a bill to the Legislature that would limit fishing to 3-days per week during periods when the lobster market is saturated. The Commissioner explained that in order for this approach to work, a trigger mechanism is needed so measures are put in place for a finite period of time. This idea did not meet with much approval across the 16 meetings but rather raised a long list of questions regarding what it would accomplish and how it might be implemented. The Commissioner stressed the need for continued dialogue on this issue.

The question of fairness regarding lobster licenses was also discussed vigorously at the meetings. A report by the Gulf of Maine Research Institute in Portland, requested by the Maine Legislature and released last fall, identified several deficiencies in the current lobster industry structure and recommended a tiered licensing system to make licensing more flexible and remove latent effort in the fishery.

Key deficiencies identified in the GMRI report were latent effort, the inadequacy of the current system to respond to a resource downturn and extremely long waiting lists. The report also identified several long-term structural issues which require attention. The lobster industry has missed a generation of fishermen, with very few license holders between the ages of 23 to 40. Of those on the waiting list, over 50% fall in this age bracket. And surprisingly, only 5% of student license holders go on to obtain commercial lobster license, though the conversion rate is higher on the islands and in Downeast Maine.

DMR presented a concept for a tiered license system with the goal of creating a licensing system capable of responding efficiently to a change in the resource and that is simple and fair. The Commissioner stated, "The only thing lobstermen across all these meetings agree on is that at some point in time we will see a source decline." He stressed the need to be prepared for that and to learn from past mistakes such as the trap limit in the 90's which took traps away from top fishermen only to have them put back in the water by others. DMR's tiered license concept attempts to be inclusive of those already in the fishery. DMR stressed that there is no resource problem, so the solution is not a trap reduction. It attempts to avoid affecting the ability to make a living from lobstering, "We know this is far from perfect and we want you to shoot holes in it. But, we want to put it out there to see if this sort of approach could work," explained the Commissioner.

The concept for a three-tier system creates a 50-, 400- or 800-trap lobster license. The initial qualification would be based on lobster landings over the last five years – those with zero landings would get a 50-trap license. The 400- and 800-trap licenses would be allocated according to landings on a zone basis. Lobstermen's landings will be ranked – those who are in the top 75% landings receive an 800-trap license, and those whose landings fall in the bottom 25% receive a 400-trap license. The threshold would vary significantly by zone. For example, to receive an 800-trap license in Zone C, a lobsterman must land more than 8,090 pounds, while in Zone G, a lobsterman must land more than 2,105 pounds. This concept would remove those latent tags not being fished from the system, reducing the potential fishing power of the fishery.

Lobstermen could move from one tier to another under specified provisions. Those who want to move from the 400-trap into the 800-trap tier must wait until someone in the 800-tier retires. Apprentices could enter the 400-trap tier after a predetermined time on the waiting list, such as five years, giving new lobstermen a predictable route into the fishery. Other provisions would allow lobstermen to move up from the 50- to 400-trap tier. There was some cautious support for the concept throughout the meetings, though many questions were raised regarding the details. Lobstermen from Downeast Maine and the islands stressed the importance of allowing students full access to the fishery, lobstermen from western Maine cautioned that unrestricted access to the 400-tier could increase effort in the fishery, while others urged DMR to consider capping all new entrants at 600 traps. Some worried about changing the current system before it achieved its goals. Many lobstermen warned that latent effort isn't hurting the industry and any attempt to change it will result in more traps in the water.

Keliher also discussed a proposal to establish a new Maine lobster marketing program, whose $3 million proposed budget would be funded by surcharges on lobstermen's, dealers' and processors' licenses. A new entity would replace the Maine Lobster Promotion Council and provide more accountability to the industry. "If you're landing 123 million pounds of lobster, you want 140 million pounds of demand," stated the Commissioner. The surcharge amount would vary based on lobster license category and would increase each year for three years. That figure would range from $240 for Category I licenses to more than $700 for Category III licenses. Dealer surcharges could be up to nearly $2,000 a year while processor surcharges could range up to $2,600. Lobstermen would contribute 76 percent of the program's cost; processors and dealers would contribute 24 percent. After five years, an independent third party would review the marketing program to determine its effectiveness. The program would sunset unless the Legislature reauthorized it.

"The DMR has started an excellent conversation with industry to get a handle on what will and won't work for lobstermen in different parts of the state. The Commissioner has kept his promise to hear the industry's concerns before moving any proposals forward," said Patrice McCarron, director of the MLA. "Change does not come easy in the lobster industry, but the MLA looks forward to working with DMR to build a stronger, more stable lobster industry."
Invasive species are nothing new in the Gulf of Maine. Tunicates, also known as sea squirts or ascidians, are one group of invasive species that have been in the Gulf of Maine for many years. In recent years, however, some tunicate populations have exploded. Brian Tarbox, assistant professor of marine science at Southern Maine Community College and a Casco Bay lobsterman, said he has seen tunicates take over pilings near the campus in South Portland that once hosted a diverse marine community. “Students use a remotely operated vehicle (ROV) to look at the pilings nearby. Normally we see mussels and other small boats,” said Tarbox.

Tunicates, named for their leather-like exterior and tunic-like bodies, are small, filter-feeding animals, distantly related to humans. They have a heart that pumps in two directions, gills, and two siphons – one that brings water in across the gills and one that pumps water back out. “When they close their siphons, it’s like a mouth full of water,” explained Larry Harris, professor of marine biology at the University of New Hampshire.

No one knows exactly when or how these animals arrived in the Gulf of Maine, but there are some educated guesses. “They were probably introduced through aquaculture, ballast water, and ship’s hulls,” speculated Harris. “They all start out tiny so they are hard to see.” Harris said it is likely tunicates have been around longer than we think, since the first part of their life is spent as tiny tadpole-like larvae in the water column. Tarbox said that Ciona intestinalis, a solitary tunicate that first appeared in the Gulf of Maine in the 1940s, has a short planktonic period when they float freely in ocean currents. “They spend seven to eight days as plankton, then settle on hard bottom and eventually mud bottoms,” said Tarbox. “They displace native species already ready making a home on the bottom.”

Taking over habitat normally occupied by other animals and plants is the biggest threat tunicates pose in the Gulf of Maine. In 2004, while Harris was working on anurchin project in Casco Bay, he mentioned a new kind of tunicate to the late EastPort fisherman Bruce McInnis. McInnis took Harris out to Georges Bank where this new tunicate, Didemnum sp., had been reported. McInnis recognized it as the same tunicate covering part of Half Moon Bay in Cobscook. It “looks like someone dumped pancake batter on the ocean floor. But then when it grows on traps, it has long, finger-like tendrils,” is how Will Hopkins, executive director at Casco Bay Resource Center, described Didemnum. He said the biggest concern in Eastport was how Didemnum would affect the scallop industry. “We don’t have as many lobsters here as the rest of the state. Scallops are our primary resource,” Hopkins explained. Fortunately, the scallop industry hasn’t been greatly affected by tunicates. “Scallops are able to move around enough to stay clean, unlike mussels and other stationary animals,” Hopkins said.

“Don’t think anyone has looked at how tunicates may affect lobster habitat,” Tarbox said. “They are just a pain to deal with. You can get up to 30 pounds of tunicates on your traps if you don’t pressure wash them regularly.”

Tarbox said he’s experimented with different solutions to clean his traps. A brine dip in cold water doesn’t work and neither does a vinegar-and-salt solution. “Low salinity might affect them, but pressure washing is really the easiest way to get them off gear,” he said. Some research, however, suggests that fragments of Didemnum, once returned to the water, are able to re-attach and grow into successfully reproducing tunicates. Harris, Tarbox, and Hopkins all agree that there isn’t much that can be done to get rid of the tunicates already here. “We will have to learn to live with them and hope something will learn to prey upon them,” Tarbox said. Because they are filter feeders, tunicates have flourished as nutrient sinks in the Gulf of Maine, but there are some educated guesses. “They were probably introduced through aquaculture, ballast water, and ship’s hulls,” speculated Harris. “They all start out tiny so they are hard to see.” Harris said it is likely tunicates have been around longer than we think, since the first part of their life is spent as tiny tadpole-like larvae in the water column. Tarbox said that Ciona intestinalis, a solitary tunicate that first appeared in the Gulf of Maine in the 1940s, has a short planktonic period when they float freely in ocean currents. “They spend seven to eight days as plankton, then settle on hard bottom and eventually mud bottoms,” said Tarbox. “They displace native species already ready making a home on the bottom.”

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Safety regulations delayed

The U.S. Coast Guard Reauthorization Act of 2010 provision requiring all commercial fishing vessels operating more than three miles from the coast to have dockside inspections was changed in the 2012 Reauthorization Act. Dockside inspections now must be completed by October 15, 2015, rather than by 2012. The reauthorized law also extends the amount of time required between inspections from two years to five. Prior to the 2010 Act, fishing vessel safety inspections were voluntary. Only about 30 percent, or 700 out of 2,100 licensed fishing boats, had completed their inspections by the October, 2012, deadline, said Kevin Powerman, Coast Guard inspector for southern Maine and part of New Hampshire.

DMR plants salmon eggs in Maine rivers

Maine Department of Marine Resources biologists have been seeding Maine rivers this winter with fertilized salmon eggs as part of a multi-year NOAA salmon restoration grant. The eggs, fertilized last fall at Green Lake National Fish Hatchery in Ellsworth, were planted in man-made redds in the Sheepscot and Sandy Rivers. If all goes well, the salmon will hatch by the end of May. After living in freshwater for two years, they’ll swim downstream to the Atlantic Ocean before returning to the rivers to spawn.

The department is in its second year of a five-year NOAA grant, which funds the Atlantic salmon restoration efforts. More than 3,000 salmon returned to Maine rivers to spawn in 2011. But in 2012 only around 700 salmon (624 in the Penobscot River alone) returned from sea.

MSC certification road reaching an end

A multi-year effort to obtain Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) sustainability certification for Maine’s lobster fishery is nearing completion. Intertek Moody Marine of Canada completed its assessment report on the fishery in December, 2012. The London-based Marine Stewardship Council is expected to make a final determination prior to the end of the year.

Consumers across the globe want to buy seafood that has been certified sustainable. The effort to have Maine’s lobster fishery MSC-certified began in 2008 and has cost between $250,000 and $800,000 thus far, which has been paid for through private donations.

Hard times hit Gulf of Maine cod fishermen

The New England Fishery Management Council announced in mid-January that New England cod stocks remain depleted. Two separate stock assessments conducted in December, 2012, indicated that Gulf of Maine cod and Georges Bank cod stocks continue to be in poor condition. The information in the report about Georges Bank cod was similarly negative. Landings of informal Gulf of Maine cod, already cut by 22 percent for the 2012 fishing year that ends April 30, could be further reduced by between 76.8 percent and 82.6 percent for each of the next three years, according to the Council.

Monhegan began from page 18

give some of the systems in the plant a thorough overhaul. It’s a fine time while everything is shut down.” According to Smith, it’s not clear exactly how much cost savings Monhegan residents will see in their electric bills or exactly when the engineers have to take place. However, he’s confident that those very high electric bills will eventually come down. “MPPD cautiously won’t commit to a guaranteed average savings at this time,” said Smith. “Some of this will work itself out through the engineering process, and some after the project is completed and has been running for some time. We also see this as an insulator for rising diesel prices. Our supplier, Maine Coast Petroleum, works hard to keep their prices competitive. However, on islands, everything costs more to get here—period. This hybrid project is the first step in making MPPD greener but we don’t want folks thinking next month’s power bill is going to be $250,000 and $800,000 thus far, which has been paid for through private donations.

We’re talking lobster!

On Thursday, January 24 Annie Tselikis joined fellow members of the Maine Seafood Marketing Network, Sam Grimley from the Gulf of Maine Research Institute and Dana Morse of Maine Sea Grant on “Maine Calling” a 45-minute long call in show on MPBN Radio to discuss sustainable Maine seafood. Annie advocated for increased investment in the marketing and promotion of Maine lobster and the need to reinvest in the Maine lobster brand.

DMR License Renewal Reminder

DMR reminds lobstermen that lobster license renewal applications will NOT be sent via regular mail this year. Lobstermen can renew online at www.maine.gov/marinelicenses with a Visa or MasterCard. A $2 processing fee will be charged for each application after January 1, 2013. Licenses can be obtained in person from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, from DMR. If a lobsterman doesn’t have Internet access, local libraries or the Marine Patrol offices in Hallowell, Boothbay and Lamoine can provide that access.

Offshore wind power project wins PUC approval

In late January in a 2-to-1 vote the state’s Public Utilities Commission approved the terms of an offshore wind power project proposal by the Norwegian energy company Statoil. In approving the Hywind Maine project, the commission set conditions that it hopes will hold Statoil accountable for the commitments it’s making to Maine.

Statoil has promised to use local suppliers in planning and building the wind project located in the waters off Boothbay Harbor “to the greatest extent possible”. Statoil estimated that those companies would likely employ 150 people full time during peak construction. The company also pledged to locate its project operations center in Maine. It already has established a collaborative research and development relationship with the University of Maine’s Advanced Structures and Composites Center for materials testing. Statoil also pledged good-faith efforts to award contracts representing at least 10 percent of capital spending, or $100 million, to qualified Maine-based suppliers and contractors.

The rate that Statoil will charge Central Maine Power Company (CMP) for electricity generated by the turbines will be $27 cents per kilowatt hour. That figure is above current electricity market rates and would total more than $180 million over the 20-year contract. It’s unlikely, however, that CMP customers will feel that cost acutely. For an average household which uses 550 kilowatt hours a month, it would add roughly 5 cents to an $82.50 monthly bill.
of a computer-based profit simulator, based on the data collected through a survey of 1,000 active lobstermen in 2011. The simulator will provide analysis on the profitability of the lobster industry as a whole rather than looking at the total value of the fishery. The simulator can also assess the profitability of individual lobster fishing operations. Lobstermen can enter information specific to their business and see what to expect in terms of profits or changes to their business plans. GMRI will present a brief summary of this work during the MLA annual meeting on Friday, March 1, and will be available to sit down privately with individual lobstermen to assess the profitability of their business. Interested lobstermen should bring financial information from the 2012 fishing season including total landings, bait and fuel bills.

MLA Board to discuss industry future - The Maine lobster industry is facing the most challenging crisis it’s seen in many, many years. The MLA Board has had many discussions about the problems lobstermen are facing. Yet as an organization, we have no clear vision on how to move forward. There are plenty of ideas on what could be done to improve things, but there is certainly no consensus.

Thus on February 11 and 12, the MLA Board of Directors will hold a two-day retreat to discuss how to improve the overall health of the fishery. The Board will consider the MLA’s role in providing leadership and direction for the industry with the goal of developing a series of recommendations. The meeting will include guest speakers who will present facts on the current economic, biological and regulatory status of the industry. A facilitator from Maine Sea Grant will work with the Board to reach consensus on the recommendations that the MLA wants to move forward. A summary of the meeting and recommendations will be presented during the MLA annual meeting on March 1 at the Maine Fishermen’s Forum.

N.X. firm to make tags for Maine lobster traps - The DMR awarded a one-year contract to supply lobster trap tags to Cambridge Security Seals of Pomona, N.Y., after competitive bidding. Stoffel Seals, which had supplied the tags for nearly 20 years, Abac North America and Advertising Specialists also submitted bids. No bids were received from Maine companies. The contract, awarded in November, will pay Cambridge Security Seals 6 cents per tag. Last year, a manufacturing problem at Stoffel delayed production of license tags for lobster traps. 2013 tags must be on traps by June 1, no exceptions. Allow up to 4-6 weeks for delivery.

TAA UPDATE

We’re getting there! After almost three years since participants signed up for the TAA program, we are now in the process of wrapping up the project. The contract must be completely closed out by September 23, 2013. As a result there are a few deadlines to meet before that date in order to ensure that participants who wish to complete their TAA programs still have plenty of time to do so.

Of the total 2600 participants in Maine, there are still roughly 600 people who have not started any part of their 12 hours required training time. The MLA and Maine Sea Grant are running a series of workshops in Machias, Ellsworth, Rockland and Portland from now until the end of May with a total of ten workshops in each location. Additionally, participants can take courses online at their convenience on www.taafarmers.org. Please do your best to keep track of which courses you have attended; you can only receive credit for attending a class one time. If you need assistance, call the MLA office at 967-4555.

TAA Deadlines: July 23, 2013: Complete at least 12 hours of training and submit your Initial Business Plan and communicate your desire to be assigned a business planning consultant. We cannot guarantee a consultant will be available after this date.

August 23, 2013: Have an APPROVED Long Term Business Plan submitted. We recommend that you complete your plan earlier than this, so you have time to make changes in case it is not approved by the reviewers. If you have any additional questions, please contact Annie Tselikis annie@mainelobstermen.org or 479-9778.
Soon after Luke’s Lobster opened its doors in 2009, Luke Holden and Ben Conniff, president and vice president of Luke’s Lobster, respectively, approached the Maine Lobstermen’s Community Alliance (MLCA) to talk about how they could give back to the industry. MLCA’s Claws for a Cause program was a perfect fit. Holden, a Cape Elizabeth native, grew up lobstering along the shores of his home town. Luke’s Lobster started small in 2009 with a ten-person team at their restaurant in Manhattan. Four years later, Luke’s has four restaurants in New York City (their fifth location in the Financial District is temporarily closed due to Hurricane Sandy), three in the Washington, D.C. metro area, and a food truck, Nauti. They employ 130 – 150 people, depending on the time of year.

Everyone who works in the company – from senior management to counter staff at the restaurants – knows the story of the Maine lobster industry’s sustainable fishing practices. “Leading up to our opening, sustainability was the key message we wanted to convey to New York’s food lovers to under- stand. They welcomed it with open arms. Our write-ups in The New York Times, New York Magazine, Conde Nast’s Traveler, and major food Web sites and blogs all focused on our connection to a sustainable seafood source,” explained Conniff. The message of sustainability has been a huge component of the company’s image. While his company’s growth has been rapid, Holden certainly has not forgotten his Maine roots, nor have he and Conniff forgotten that the sustainable status of their products begins back on the boat in Maine. Luke’s Lobster was the first business to invest in Claws for a Cause, recognizing the importance of giving back to the industry. “Our most important connection to the Maine lobster indus- try is our relationship with the Maine Lobstermen’s Community Alliance. We donate a portion of our proceeds to the MLCA, because it is their con- tinued efforts that keep the fishery and the industry healthy and allow us to do what we do 500 miles south,” Conniff continued.

Since then, Claws for a Cause has attracted the attention of another out- of-state company, Bern Unlimited. Bern produces outdoor gear for the ski, snowboard, bike and skate industries. They partner with athletes in each of those sports, including Maine native and two-time Olympic snowboard gold medalist Seth Wescott.

Bern Unlimited released a Wescott Pro Model Baker helmet in 2012; 5 percent of the proceeds from sales of this style are contributed to the Claws for a Cause program. Bern’s brand manager Josh Walker notes that Wescott’s commitment to the Maine brand and his desire to sup- port the lobster industry at a difficult time motivated the company’s par- ticipation in Claws for a Cause. Wescott points to the quality of Maine’s lobsters. “Maine lobsters are known around the world as the best. I truly take pride in that being the world standard,” he said. “We as Mainers need to do whatever we can to help support this industry and all those hardcore fishermen and wom- en who take to our waters to bring home the finest exports our state has.”

“I love this program because it allows us to really get the message to affili- ate businesses, and from there, to the general public,” said Annie Tselikis. MLCA has produced posters and ta- ble top tent cards designed for use in restaurant or retail locations that articulate the culture, tradition and sustainability of the Maine lobster industry. “We plan to expand the pro- gram in 2013, reaching out to Maine restaurant and tourism operations with ties to or an affinity for the lob- ster industry,” Tselikis explained. “We want to support the businesses that support us by providing marketing materials and resources to help them illustrate their commitment to the Maine lobster industry.”

Maine lobster from trap to table. All the time. Guaranteed.

By Annie Tselikis

Maine Lobster from trap to table. All the time. Guaranteed.

My goal is to get people in the USA to eat more Maine lobster.

Which means presenting it affordably, freezing lots of extra to taste as good as fresh, and communicating the importance of buyer commitment to YOU, Maine’s unique small boat fishery.

Only so many people will eat a whole lobster in the shell. Taking it out of the shell multiplies the consumption. Which is why we specialize in:

✓ Maine Lobster Rolls
✓ Maine Lobster Bisque
✓ Maine Lobster Ravioli
✓ Maine Lobster Mac & Cheese
✓ Maine Lobstermeat Packaged to Order
✓ Maine Lobster E-M Shuck™ Tails of Joy
✓ Maine Lobster Cocktail Claw Cuddlers®
✓ Delicious Maine Shrimp and Jonah Crab!

Lobster for the 21st Century™. Easy to buy, easy to eat.

Thank you to our customers, our Maine fishermen, and over 200 Maine workers at our docks, Rockland grading/processing plants, professional kitchens and restaurants.