WHAT IS A FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PLAN? Part 1

By Melissa Waterman

This summer lobstermen will once again haul in Maine’s signature crustacean by the millions. Boats will roar out to sea each morning and return laden with lobsters, putting money in the hands of lobstermen and the many small coastal communities that depend on them. Also this summer the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) will be working with the Lobster Advisory Council in developing a draft fishery management plan for lobster to put Maine in charge of the future of its most valuable fishery.

The question in the mind of many is why put the effort into doing a management plan for a fishery that seems to be doing so well? Because in a changing world, even a lobster fishery as well-managed as Maine’s could shift dramatically in a matter of years. Perhaps the water warms up too fast. Perhaps shell disease takes its toll on the population. Perhaps the lobsters continue their northerly movement into Canadian waters, leaving Maine in a dire situation similar to that of southern New England.

Currently, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) management plan for lobster dictates that, should landings drop to 35 million pounds, the ASMFC must take action. No one thinks that Maine landings, currently more than 120 million pounds, will drop to that level any time soon. However, the issue before Maine lobstermen is whether they would want to wait until that figure is reached before instituting changes to the fishery. The ASMFC did not take action in southern New England until lobster populations there were almost gone. By creating a state management plan for lobster with the input and knowledge of lobstermen right now, Maine can take charge of its future fishery in a way that no other lobster fishing state has done.

Ensuring a bright future for Maine’s lobster fishery takes planning. MLA photo.

The public trust doctrine

The basis of any fishery management plan is to ensure that the public resource, in this case lobster, is sustained for the good of the general public, a concept drawn from the public trust doctrine.

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FROM LOBSTER ROPE TO OLD GLORY

By Letitia Baldwin


Rope is not scarce in Maine. Brightly colored polypropylene line, piled on wharves and in the back of pickup trucks, is a familiar element in the coastal landscape. In 2008, though, Maine lobstermen were required to replace their floating rope with sink line to prevent the endangered North Atlantic right whales from becoming entangled in the fishing gear. But the old poly-rope is enjoying a second life in the hands of John Crowley and other creative entrepreneurs.

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Summer along the Maine coast is not a time for sitting still. When the days are long, so too are the work hours for lobstermen, wharf owners, bait dealers and all the other men and women involved in the state’s most successful fishery. Still, as you often hear on the docks, “a little hard work never killed anyone.” In the lobster fishery, it defines us.

Landings showcases some of the many activities going on along the coast at the height of summer. We hear from community activist Christina Lemieux about the similarities between Maine’s fishing harbors and an ancient fishing port in France. Matt Jacobson, executive director of the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative, writes about the impact the Internet has had on both consumer behavior and marketing strategies. The Collaborative invites readers to visit its redesigned Web and social media sites.

The chairs of the Joint Committee on Marine Resources, Representative Walter Kumięga and Senator Linda Baker, comment on the committee’s busy session this winter. A number of bills pertaining to lobstering in the state made it to the committee but not to the full Legislature. Several of those related to licensing and entry into the fishery will return in the next session.

Landings also presents a background article on fishery management plans. Because marine resources such as lobster are a public resource, federal and state governments are obligated to manage the fishery for the benefit of the public. That is why a license is required to fish. Fishery management plans are created in order to conserve the marine resource for future generations. It’s hard to focus on the future of future generations when you are driving hard, hauling through your gear at the height of the season. But the Maine Department of Marine Resources is determined to create a management plan for lobsterers now, to ensure that Maine is in charge of its own future before any shadow falls on the state’s robust resource.

Managing lobsters once they come to shore is a different story. Landings has reported on the expansion of land-based holding facilities here and in the Maritime Provinces. In decades past, however, lobsterers were held in lobster pounds, stick enclosures built in natural coves along the shore. Washed by the tides and fed by a poundkeeper, lobsters could remain healthy throughout the fall and into the winter months, when they fetched a much greater price. In decades past, however, lobsters were held in lobster holding facilities here and in the Maritime Provinces. That is why a license is required to fish. Fishery management plans are created in order to conserve the marine resource for future generations. It’s hard to focus on the future of future generations when you are driving hard, hauling through your gear at the height of the season. But the Maine Department of Marine Resources is determined to create a management plan for lobsterers now, to ensure that Maine is in charge of its own future before any shadow falls on the state’s robust resource.

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Meanwhile, the lobster fisheries in Canada are moving forward to attain the Marine Stewardship Council’s (MSC) sustainability certification. Prince Edward Island led the way, receiving the certification in 2014. This spring the Bay of Fundy, Scotian Shelf and southern Gulf of St. Lawrence lobster trap fishery announced that it too had received the MSC seal of approval.

And to help celebrate Independence Day, Landings also offers a story that first appeared in the Ellsworth American earlier this summer. Marine Corps veteran and lobsterman John Crowley turns used polypropylene rope into colorful American flags, as well as other designs. As he says in the article, his flags reflect his devotion to his country. They are not meant to be walked on, but rather are “decorative elements.”

Finally, on July 26 the Maine Maritime Museum in Bath opens its much-anticipated exhibit, Lobstering and the Maine Coast. It opens on a Sunday, to ensure that lobstermen are able to attend! The new exhibit, which has been developed over the past five years, incorporates the many elements that go into the modern practice of lobstering while also illustrating how the fishery has evolved over the centuries. The exhibit is housed in its own 6,200-square-foot building; it includes over 675 artifacts and interactive technology to help visitors explore lobster biology and ecology, boats and engines, and modern traps and processing equipment. In addition, one wall of the building displays buoys donated by lobstermen from throughout the state. Using touch-screen kiosks, visitors will be able to view photos and information correlating to each buoy, including the lobsterman’s name, location, boat name, and in some cases, personal stories gleaned from life on the water. If you are a lobsterman and you haven’t yet donated a buoy, do so today! The exhibit is a tremendous testament to the enduring strength of the lobster industry in this state. Although summer is a hectic season for all of us, I hope you will find the time to visit the new Maine Maritime Museum exhibit soon!
By Matt Jacobson

In 1984, when a small government agency called DARPA was sponsoring development of the Internet, there were about 1,000 devices connected to it. Today there are more than ten billion Internet-connected devices — and that number will explode in the next few years as the “Internet of things” becomes more prevalent. It won’t be long before your refrigerator texts the supermarket and tells them what you just ran out of. The supermarket will send you an email coupon that you’ll accept and then they’ll deliver your groceries via drone. Soon.

There are nearly 6 billion Google searches made every day. At any one time, more than 175 million people are logged in to Facebook. In fact, more than half of all Internet traffic in the United Kingdom is Facebook traffic. Last year more than one out of every six couples married in the United States met online. It is probable too early to make a final judgment, but it looks like this Internet stuff is going to catch on...

So why is this important to someone involved in the lobster industry in Maine? Because the use of the Internet has fundamentally altered the way we get information and make buying decisions.

Not too long ago, newspaper, magazine and TV ads were the only way to reach potential customers. The problem with this style of one-way communication in a digital age is that it does not engage potential customers. People want to be involved in a conversation. If all we do is put out a message, with no mechanism for feedback, we will fail. We will never learn what customers actually like about lobster and how they consume it. We will fail because we won’t know what our customers really want, and so we won’t be able to give it to them.

Traditional media has lost its effectiveness for another fundamental reason. Simply put, brands have been so dishonest for so long that we just don’t believe them anymore.

These days, word-of-mouth is far more effective than traditional advertising. According to Nielsen, 92% of consumers believe word-of-mouth information more than traditional advertising. And that is the whole point behind social media and marketing lobster. To encourage that word-of-mouth discussion between lobster lovers and those we haven’t convinced yet.

The world has shifted; we need to be involved online if we are to be successful at creating more demand for Maine lobster. But it is not enough simply to be there, we have to be smart about where we are, what we say, and to whom we say it.

Content is the key. Brands are all looking for that content that will be shared by more people, the great video or picture that everyone shares with their friends. In 2012, time spent on the picture-sharing social media site Pinterest grew 4,225%! Mobile use on the site grew more than 6,000%! The reasons are simple: web sites with strong images are easier to digest than heavy text.

Another picture-sharing site, Instagram, has 26% of all adults in the U.S. as users. What’s more, more than 50% of people ages 18 to 29 years old are on Instagram. That statistic should be very interesting to you as a lobster industry professional. The 18-to-29-year-olds in this country eat out at restaurants more often than any other demographic. And since about 90% of Maine lobster is consumed in a restaurant, those people matter to us. A lot.

With the help of our partner, Weber Shandwick, the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative has completely reinvented all our social media platforms. You can find us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest. We have a consistent look and feel across all the platforms and have specific target markets and actions in mind with all our posts. We are monitoring all the sites around the clock and can respond in real time if we need to. In fact, in the short time we’ve been up and running, we’ve had online conversations with the food editor of the New York Times and with a major Fox News anchor. We are getting our message out. On June 15, we re-launched the www.LobsterFromMaine.com Web site. Please visit! On the site we focus on the things that make Maine lobster special – the stories about the men and women who lobster, about the clear, cold water, about new-shed lobster and how you can only get it from a Maine lobsterman. It is loaded with visual content that we will use across all the platforms. The site is a...

Continued on page 22
HOLDING LOBSTERS THE OLD-FASHIONED WAY

By Melissa Waterman

Hodgkins entered Maine Maritime Academy in 1953, graduating with a degree in marine engineering. He spent the next three years as an engineer aboard the U.S.S. Independence, a passenger liner operating from New York to the Mediterranean. In 1959 he returned to Maine for a two-week vacation and to help out at the family’s lobster pound. At that point he decided that he had enough of the Merchant Marine.

So Hodgkins worked with his father and brother at the pound until 1982, when he sold his share of the business and built a larger pound, capable of holding 100,000 pounds of lobster, in nearby Lamoine. He operated that pound until he sold it in 1994. He also established and was president of the Maine Pound Owners’ Association in 1984.

The first lobster pound in Maine was established on Vinalhaven in 1875. By 1898, there were substantial lobster pounds operating in Dyer Bay, Deer Isle, South Bristol, Pemaquid Beach, Southport Island and Friendship Long Island. These were not little puddles filled with a few lobsters. The Friendship Long Island pound, for example, could hold between 175,000 and 225,000 pounds of lobster. Between 1895 and 1903, the number of lobster pounds in Maine increased from four to 26, driven by the decline of the Maine canning industry and an increased demand for live lobsters. There were approximately 70 pounds operating in the state until the 1990s, when pounding began to decline.

It was hard work keeping the lobsters disease-free and shipable. “You would stock from the first of September until November,” Hodgkins said. “You had to feed them to keep them healthy for the winter market.”

Once in the pound, the lobsters settled on the bottom which made it hard to see how they were doing. “You would pick up the dead ones around the shore and run a sample drag to see if many were dead [on the bottom],” Hodgkin explained. Once the water began to ice over, the pound-keeper stopped feeding the lobsters, whose metabolism would slow down as the water became colder.

Demand was high during the Christmas holiday season. Men would break through the ice then set drags to haul the lobsters ashore where they were packed in seaweed and ice and shipped, by train in the old days and later by truck. “Sometimes orders would come in and it was pretty hard to get the lobsters out through the ice,” Hodgkins recalled. Yet it was a good way to make money: pound owners bought the lobsters when they were cheap and plentiful, then sold them when the market was tighter during the winter months.

Things changed in the 1980s and 1990s. Wharf owners and buying stations began to store lobsters themselves in lobster cars submerged off the dock. They then sold to seafood buyers directly, skirting the pound owners. In addition, lobstermen began to fish longer seasons. With bigger boats, larger engines, and a decrease in other fishing opportunities, lobstermen stayed loyal to other fisheries as they had in the past. That meant a larger supply of lobsters lasting well into the winter season, decreasing the traditional rise in price.

And then there was disease.

Hodgkins faced that problem head on in the mid-1970s. His lobsters suffered from gaffemia, also known as red tail disease. His shrink-
In Honfleur, fresh seafood is also sold throughout the state. Courage small-scale seafood markets if Maine could be doing more to entable model and made me wonder wives. It is an excellent ocean-to-line up with their baskets to buy that daily catch and residents of the town are set up on the docks to display the catch daily at docks lining the harbor of Honfleur I was able to witness a Norman Rockwell painting. While lobster festivals often make visitors feel like they’ve stepped straight into a Festival of Sailors”), which is celebrated over Pentecost weekend every year. Maine fishing villages are fantastic at hosting festive events in the summer. Party time Maine fishing villages are fantastic at hosting festive events in the summer. Our Fourth of July celebrations and lobster festivals often make visitors feel like they've stepped straight into a Norman Rockwell painting. While Honfleur is used as a launching point for sailors heading to the New World. A group of these sailors helped settle Mount Desert Island. It’s touching to realize how close fishing villages on opposite sides of the Atlantic Ocean can be.
Maine Lobstermen’s Association

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

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Board of Directors’ Meeting Schedule
All meetings take place at Darby’s Restaurant, Belfast.

July 1, 5 p.m.
No meeting in August

STEAMING AHEAD

2016 could prove to be a big year for Maine’s lobster fishery, with the potential for Maine to put its first Lobster Fishery Management Plan in place and for the Legislature to reform Maine’s lobster licensing and entry program. Both of these topics could bring significant change to our lobster fishery, so it is very important for lobstermen to pay attention and get involved!

First, lobstermen must understand that while these topics are related, they are taking place as two distinct actions. The idea of developing a Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for lobster has been underway for a few years, ever since the Legislature passed a 2013 law providing the DMR with guidance on how to develop FMPs for the state’s marine species. The Legislature prescribed what should be in the plan and tasked the DMR to develop it with advice and input from the advisory council for the specific species. So, for lobster, DMR must work with the Lobster Advisory Council (LAC).

Commissioner Kilhiber hit the road for a series of meetings in early 2014 to discuss the notion of developing a lobster management plan for Maine that would complement the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) plan. He expressed concern that the reference point that would trigger management action by the ASMFC would happen when annual lobster landings hit 35 million pounds. Maine lobstermen can act themselves, Kilhiber argued, to keep the fishery strong well before the ASMFC possibly could. A lobster FMP would provide a vision for the lobster fishery’s future, not a written prescription for its future. Any action recommended as a result of the plan would require going through the legislative or regulatory process.

So, the time is now. In May, the DMR presented the LAC with a timeline for the development of the lobster FMP and provided draft goals and objectives for discussion. They are separated into three categories — biological and ecological, social, and economic — with different goals and objectives for each. The goals are intended as those things that the fishery wants to achieve over the long-term, and the objectives are the mechanisms to achieve the goals. Maine DMR has been making the rounds to get additional feedback from the industry via the zone councils.

According to the timeline, the rubber will hit the road in November and December. The aim will be to come up with a description of the possible elements that would trigger management actions for the lobster fishery and what those management actions might be. If you want to be part of defining the destiny of the lobster fishery, stay involved in this one.

On a separate but parallel track will be the discussions of "if" and potentially "how" to reform the lobster licensing and entry system. This issue has been simmering for about ten years, with many failed attempts within the Legislature to make changes. Over the years the bills have sought to allow various forms of license transfer or create exemptions to the lobster limited entry program. Many, including the MLA, have pleaded with the Legislature not to create loopholes for entry, but rather to take a comprehensive approach that considers our current system, pressure on the resource and fairness. The result was a review of the lobster limited entry system conducted by the Gulf of Maine Research Institute (GMRI) in 2012.

The GMRI report focused on the issue of the long zone waiting lists and how long it takes to obtain a commercial lobster license after completing the Apprentice Program. The Legislature has continued to grapple with the issue of latent effort and long waiting lists, but has not passed any significant reforms. The Legislature did give the zones authority to base exit ratios on the number of licenses or tags leaving that zone, rather than using just tags as a control. In response, zones A and B have changed their exit ratios from tags to licenses and Zone E is considering a similar change. The result, at least in Zone A, has been many people moving off the waiting list.

The current Marine Resources Committee has already stated that in its opinion there is no "if" lobster licensing should be reformed; they are interested in discussing "how" best to do it. The Commissioner, with the support of the Governor, has committed to submitting legislation on the "how" in the next session.

The DMR will rely on feedback obtained from the lobster industry to provide guidance on how best to reform the lobster licensing system. A tiered license system which would also deal with latent effort was presented by DMR during the 14 meetings Commissioner Kilhiber held during the winter of 2013. Lobstermen provided additional feedback at the Commissioner’s 11 further meetings in 2014. Given the level of concern about this issue, the Commissioner will hold ten more meetings with lobstermen in September. During these meetings, DMR will present some hypothetical ideas for changes that participants can respond to. Keep in mind that DMR’s purpose in these meetings is not to dictate what should be in the bill they must send to the Marine Resources Committee but to learn from lobstermen what they believe will work.

This combined feedback will be used as the basis for the lobster licensing reform legislation submitted for consideration by the Marine Resources Committee when they reconvene in 2016. The Marine Resources Committee has stated that they are committed to taking action on this. Change never comes easy in the lobster industry, and creating an FMP for Maine lobster and reforming the lobster limited entry system has the potential to create long-term impacts for lobstermen today and in the future.

So, stay engaged and get involved. It looks like 2016 could be a year of big changes!

As always, stay safe on the water.
MAINE LOBSTERMEN’S ASSOCIATION UPDATE

MLA DIRECTORS MEETING

The MLA Directors met on June 3 in Belfast. The MLA has a Committee looking into vessel insurance options to ensure the association is offering the best program to its members. The Committee updated the board on its work to date, and will continue to explore options and discuss at the July meeting.

Amy Lent, Director of Maine Maritime Museum, updated the MLA Board on the new lobster exhibit which opens in July. They are still looking for buoys and stories from lobstermen, especially from York County. The exhibit opens to the public on Sunday, July 26.

The Board reviewed the draft goals and objectives for the Lobster Fishery Management Plan (FMP) developed by DMR. The Lobster Advisory Council has reviewed them, and DMR is in the process of getting feedback from the zone councils. The MLA Directors had no initial concerns with the Goals and Objectives of the plan, but will take some time to look them over more carefully. Overall, they are reflective of the fishery and do not over-reach. The MLA Directors believe the real work will happen this fall when the DMR explores potential management changes in response to triggers.

The Board was more concerned with the potential outcome of discussions to reform lobster licensing and entry. The Commissioner will hold meetings in September to get feedback from the industry; DMR has committed to submit a bill for consideration by the Legislature. The Marine Resources Committee has also committed to tackling this issue next session. The Board acknowledged that waiting lists are long, and there is no way to predict how long it will take to get into the fishery. However, the overarching sentiment was that radical reform is not needed; instead, we should look at working with the tools we already have in place to move the waiting lists along. MLA plans to weigh in on the DMR’s proposals once they are available for comment.

DMR is also seeking feedback from the industry on whether to make double tagging of lobster traps fished outside a home zone statewide requirement; and whether to explore the notion of creating an offshore lobster zone. The MLA Board will continue to monitor these discussions.

The MLA discussed the Army Corps application to Maine DEP to receive a state water quality permit for the federal dredging project. MLA Directors noted that the association has not taken a formal position on any of the recent dredges including Portland and the Royal River, or the recent applications such as Beals/ Pig Island Gut or York. MLA will continue to monitor the process to ensure that the state and Army Corps are responsive and accountable to concerns expressed by lobstermen on this issue.

MLA Directors were reminded that vertical line rules (minimum trawling up requirements) and new gear marking (three 12” marks) took effect on June 1. A summary is available on the MLA website. DMR is working on getting coordinates translated to lorans and will get that out to the industry. A special gear marking area around Jeffreys (red and green) and Jordan Basin (red and purple), put in place to avoid a seasonal fishing closure, are effective September 1.

The MLA discussed the need for reforming lobster licensing and entry. MLA is fully committed to tackling this issue next session. The Board acknowledged by lobstermen on this issue.

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) is accepting public comment on the Draft Jonah Crab FMP until July 24. The draft plan sets goals and objectives, and proposed measures for permits including options for a lobster/crab permit and a crab only permit, spawning stock biomass protections such as minimum size, trap limits, and data collection elements. The board noted that the last set of control date may be treated differently. The ASMFC has already set a control date for the fishery; those who enter the fishery after the control date may be treated differently.

Jonah crab has long been considered a bycatch of the lobster industry, but in recent years there has been increasing targeted fishing pressure and growing market demand for crab. The majority of crab are harvested by lobster fishermen using lobster traps. Since the early 2000s, landings have increased 6.48 fold. The increases in demand for crab, mixed crustacean fishery has emerged that can target both lobster or crab or both at different times of year based on slight legal modifications to the gear and small shifts in the areas in which traps are fished. The mixed nature of the fishery makes it difficult to manage a Jonah crab fishery completely separate from the American lobster fishery without impacting the number of vertical lines and traps capable of catching lobster in state and federal waters.

The Jonah Crab fishery landed approximately 17 million pounds in 2014 with 76% of landings from Massachusetts, 24% from Rhode Island, 4.5% from New Hampshire and Maine and 1.5% from Connecticut, New Jersey, and Maryland.

The ASMFC’s Atlantic Herring Section has withdrawn Draft Amendment 3 to the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan from public consideration in order to further develop the proposed spawning protection measures. Draft Amendment 3 addresses three major issues: changes to the current spawning measures, fixed gear set-aside provisions, and requirements to empty fish holds. Section members expressed concern about the highly technical nature of the proposed measures and the potential impacts of these measures to the fishing industry. The Draft Amendment will be held until August to gather more information to clearly define the goal of spawning protections, describe proposed methodologies and measures in a way that is understandable to the fishing industry and stakeholders, and detail the benefits and impacts of spawning closures to the resource. It is anticipated that the draft Amendment will be approved in November, and released for public comment, with final plan approval scheduled for February 2016.

The ASMFC Shrimp Section met in June in Portland, ME to review the public information document (PID) and draft amendment to the shrimp plan. The Section discussed the PID issue by issue and gave direction to the Plan Development Team (PDT) for various options to include in Draft Amendment III for public comment, starting with the goals and objectives of the current Fishery Management Plan.

Section members identified the need to include an objective that directly addresses the management of participation to promote long term fishery sustainability. Some Section members expressed considerable concern regarding a limited entry program because of the high number of license holders in the fishery, and state regulatory procedures that would make it difficult to implement a limited entry program. Other Section members expressed a state-legislature should not influence the Sections decision making, and limited entry should still be considered as a viable management option. The Section tasked the PDT to develop limited entry and state-by-state allocation management options in Draft Amendment III for public comment. The Section was explicit about including license capping and fixed percentage share program options and time frames be consistent across all options. The PDT will also develop license transferability options, a license capping option using attrition as means of reducing licenses, TAC overage options that would not penalize those states that fished within their allocation, and a projecting season closure program. The PDT, in collaboration with the Technical Committee (TC), will develop language for how to set the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) under Draft Amendment III in the absence of biological reference points. Additionally, the PDT will develop and include multi-year specification options that allow the section to set various regulations (e.g., TAC, trip and trap limits, season dates, and RSA) for multiple years as opposed to one year at a time. Other management options

Continued on page 8
to be included in the draft amendment are defined season options reflecting egg hatch timing, gear-specific seasons, state-specific seasons, and area-divid-
ed management units (i.e., dividing the coast into area-specific management units). Also, mandatory use of size sorting grates options will be developed since the AP, TC, Section, and public all tend to agree protecting egg bearing shrimp is vital to the existence of a viable fishery.

FEDERAL OBSERVER PROGRAM

The New England lobster fishery is required to carry federal observers this year under the Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology (SBRM) program. Maine lobstermen who hold both a federal lobster permit and a multispecies permit are required to host an observer. The vessel must have a Coast Guard safety decal to carry an observer. The observer will conduct a safety inspection in addition to biologically sampling onboard. Approximately 80 boats in Maine fall into this category, and will share the 200 observer trips planned for this year.

There are concerns about the redundancy of this federal program with the ex-
isting state sea sampling program. MLA is working with other lobster industry
groups to better understand this issue, and urge the federal agency to work
with state sampling programs.

LOBSTER ZONE COUNCIL SUMMARY

The lobster zone councils met in May and June (Zones F and G after the dead-
line for this publication). At each meeting members heard from Department
of Marine Resources (DMR) representatives on the the whale regulations that
went into effect on June 1, the results of the Legislative session, options con-
cerning double tagging of traps, and other matters. In addition, in each zone
members discussed the concept of setting up an offshore lobster zone outside
the 12 nautical mile line. The subject that garnered the most discussion at all
meetings, however, was development by the department of a fisheries manage-
ment plan for lobster.

Zone E council members voted to hold a referendum on changes the entry/exit
requirement: from trap tags retired to licenses retired. The change would result
in a 3:1 ratio for licenses rather than the current 5:1 ratio for tags.

Zone C council members tabled a decision on whether to close the zone to new
lobstermen. Instead, members agreed to send out a nonbinding questionnaire
asking lobstermen whether or not they wanted to see the zone closed. The pur-
pose of the questionnaire is to provide direct feedback to council members
prior to the next meeting in the fall.

Zones A and B as well as C discussed the confusion concerning the Hancock
county trawling up requirements under the federal whale rules. In that area,
the state says that triples are the maximum length of a trawl; federal rules say
that triples are the minimum length for a trawl. Zone B council members called
for clarification of this matter.

In Zone D council members voted to send a letter to DMR expressing concern
about adverse impacts that may arise from the proposed dredging project in
 Searsport harbor.

Members in all the zone councils expressed confusion about the two initiatives
underway at DMR: the first is development of a fishery management plan for
lobster and the second is creation of a bill that addresses the issues of licenses
and long waiting lists to enter the fishery. DMR will be holding meetings with
lobstermen in September to discuss more thoroughly options for the proposed
legislation.

Some council members were puzzled that the department was trying to plan
for possible additional controls on lobster fishing in the future when it was
also exploring ways to get more people off the waiting lists and into the fishery.
Despite the confusion, members generated good suggestions to DMR repre-
sentatives concerning development of the FMP.
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can shut down an ASMFC-managed fishery in state waters upon a finding by ASMFC, and Secretarial concurrence, of non-compliance with a required measure.

There are also specific thresholds built into the plan requiring the ASMFC to take action. These are called reference points. In 2010, the Commission revised the reference points for the Gulf of Maine, Georges Bank and southern New England lobster stocks. Based on those reference points, ASMFC determined that the Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank stocks were in “favorable” condition but that the southern New England stock was in poor condition and depleted. As a consequence, rebuilding provisions were instituted in the southern New England states of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut and New York. Lobstermen in those states have had to reduce the number of traps they fish, cease fishing altogether in the fall, and take other steps to boost the number of egg-bearing females in the population.

Situation in Maine

Although Maine has always been the leading producer of lobsters, its share of total U.S. landings has fluctuated over time. Throughout the 1970s Maine accounted for between 52% and 61% of total lobsters landed from Maine to New Jersey. Expansion of lobster landings during the 1980s, particularly in Massachusetts, reduced the Maine share of lobster to less than 50% from 1983 through 1992. However, since 1993 the contribution of the Maine lobster fishery to total landings increased steadily. The growing proportion of Maine landings was due to a combination of increased landings in Maine and declining landings in just about every other state.

The trend took a sharp jump upward around 2008, when Maine lobstermen landed slightly less than 70 million pounds. In 2012 and 2013, Maine lobstermen landed more than 127 million pounds in each year. In 2014, Maine landed nearly 124 million pounds of lobster. The majority of growth in landings has been predominately in the Downeast area of Maine, although all counties of the coast have seen an increase.

The jump in landings has come during a time when water temperatures throughout New England also have increased. Fisheries biologists attribute part of the decline in lobster abundance in southern New England to the number of days each year in which water temperatures hit 68°F or higher, stressing the cold-water-loving crustaceans. Ironically, the warmer water temperatures may be good for the greater number of legal-sized lobsters harvested in Downeast Maine during the past six years.

However, there is another side to the coin. Warmer water may be good for the population now but, if the water continues to increase in temperature, it may have a negative effect on lobster in future years. The sheer abundance and shift in the landings pulse in Maine, from the mid-coast to the eastern counties, combined with a commensurate increase in landings in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, makes one wonder when this resource will hit its peak, and if lobster abundance along the Maine coast could someday take a sharp dip.

A Maine state fisheries management plan for lobster

If the Gulf of Maine lobster stock hits one of several reference points set forth in the ASMFC plan, then the ASFMC is required to do something. The reference point now in place, 35 million pounds, was set after the last stock assessment, which reviewed landings for the past twenty years. An updated stock assessment of lobster will be completed this year and that reference point may be revised. Whatever the final figure, the ASFMC would only take measures to reduce effort in the lobster fishery after that figure is reached. Maine is developing a lobster management plan to think about when management changes should be implemented prior to reaching the ASMFC reference point of 35 million pounds in order to preserve our communities and the long-term well-being of the fishery. Being proactive would both forestall ASFMC action and perhaps limit the negative economic effect such a decline would produce.

Next month: what will be in the Maine lobster FMP?

HISTORIC PHOTOS FEATURED AT PENOBSCOT MARINE MUSEUM

Penobscot Marine Museum in Searsport features four major historic photography exhibitions of historic photography under the umbrella title Exploring the Magic of Photography: Painting with Light. The four exhibits are Through Her Lens: Women Photographers of Mid-Coast Maine, 1890-1920; Twenty Best: Evolution of the Photographic Snapshot; 1888-2015; and The Carters and the Lukes – Selections from the Red Boultier Collection.

Through Her Lens: Women Photographers of Mid-Coast Maine, 1890-1920 explores the work of five women photographers, Ruth Montgomery and Joanna Colcord grew up sailing around the world with their sea captain fathers. While on board ship they taught themselves the craft of photography and documented life at sea. Evie Barbour’s photographer husband had a business producing photographic postcards. When he died in 1907, she was able to take over the business to support herself and her children. Ida Crie photographed her native city of Rockland, creating an important portrait of Rockland at the turn of the century. Harriet Hitchborn grew up in Stockton Springs and developed her own successful postcard business.

Twenty Best, an exhibit of the twenty most fascinating photographs in the Penobscot Marine Museum collection, includes a photograph of the Great Bangor Fire of 1911, which destroyed much of the city, and the earliest known photograph of Searsport. Evolution of the Photographic Snapshot: 1888-2015 explores the transition from the snapshot to the camera, with a special focus on American culture. The Carters and the Lukes – Selections from the Red Boultier Collection is an intimate portrait of two families of boat builders, one who built traditional wooden lobster boats for local fishermen and the other an innovator in the custom yacht business. These photographs celebrate the distinct ways of life of the Lake family in East Boothbay and the Carter family in Waldoboro. The exhibits run to October 18.
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-Jeff Hazell, President, Bar Harbor Lobster

2015 MAINE LOBSTER BOAT RACING

SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20 JUNE</td>
<td>Boothbay Harbor</td>
<td>M. Farnham (207) 380-5892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 JUNE</td>
<td>Rockland</td>
<td>Dave Black (207) 975-9699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 JUNE</td>
<td>Bass Harbor</td>
<td>Wayne Buel (207) 244-9623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 JULY</td>
<td>Moosebech Reach, Beals Island/ Jonesport</td>
<td>Adrian Buneshouse (207) 598-6387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 JULY</td>
<td>Searsport</td>
<td>Keith/Travis Otes (207) 548-6362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 JULY</td>
<td>Stonington</td>
<td>Nick Wiberg (207) 348-2373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 JULY</td>
<td>Friendship</td>
<td>Wes Luell (207) 832-7807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 JULY</td>
<td>Port’s Harbor, Harpswell</td>
<td>Albert Rose (207) 844-0346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 JULY</td>
<td>Winter Harbor</td>
<td>Scott Young (207) 963-7272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 JULY</td>
<td>Long Island Lobster Boat Races</td>
<td>Lisa Kimball (207) 332-3916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 AUGUST</td>
<td>Merritt Bracket, Pemaquid</td>
<td>Don Drisko (207) 677-2432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 AUGUST</td>
<td>MS Lobster Boat Race, Portland</td>
<td>Jon Johansen (207) 223-8846</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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NEW LEADERS IN MAINE’S LOBSTER FISHERY: Herman Coombs, Searsport

By Nancy Griffin

Herman Coombs has been fishing for most of his 39 years. While he caught the bug from a family member, it wasn’t his father. “It was my cousin—but we called him uncle—Alden Leeman,” said Coombs. He began fishing with Leeman as a boy: dragging, swordfishing, purse-seining for pogies, and eventually lobstering. When he was older, Leeman had a heart condition and wore a defibrillator he called his “Dick Cheney.”

“I got it from him,” Coombs said, referring to his sense of humor and his love of fishing.

A native of Orrs Island, Coombs lives in the house he grew up in with his wife, Monique, son Riley, 6, and daughter Jocelyne, 10. “We bought it from my mom and dad three years ago’ when his dad developed lung cancer. His dad, who had owned a construction company, passed away a year later.

Coombs fishes year-round—Zone F inshore and Area 1 offshore—from his boat, Jocelyne K, a 45-foot Young Brothers boat, built in Corea in 1982 of solid fiberglass. “I love the boat,” said Coombs. He bought it ten years ago from a fisherman in Point Judith, Rhode Island, and has since become good friends with the son of the original owner.

“I took a bunch of pictures of theiced-over windows of the boat and posted them on Facebook,” explained Coombs. “He saw them and got in touch.” The families got together in Maine last summer. The son, who owns and operates a 65-foot offshore lobster boat out of Point Judith, brought along an album of pictures of the boat being built.

Last year, Coombs was one of the young lobstermen who attended the Lobster Leadership Institute organized by the Maine Lobstermen’s Community Alliance, the sister organization of the Maine Lobstermen’s Association. Before traveling to Prince Edward Island to meet with lobstermen there, the Institute’s participants began with two days of presentations on lobster science, management, and economics. “We learned a lot about the science part of what goes on from Carl Wilson [director of the Department of Marine Resources’ Bureau of Marine Science],” Coombs said. “We know we go catch them, but we don’t know what happens to them afterward. I really enjoyed it.”

Coombs spent the summer working on the boat, TRG, and other projects. “It gave me the right idea about what goes on to get lobster to the people who want to buy them,” said Coombs. “China is coming into the mix now. They want lots of lobster. We always say the dealers make a lot of money, but you don’t have anyone to sell them on Facebook, “ explained Coombs. “He saw them and got in touch. “Th e dealer has to make a certain amount or you don’t have anyone to sell to. “ He sells his lobsters to an individual dealer on Orrs Island. “If you have an open, honest relationship with the person you sell to, you get the price you want, “ he noted.

In the year since he attended the Lobster Leadership Institute, Coombs hasn’t changed much in the way he goes lobstering. “But it gave me a different perspective,” he said. “I might take an extra day off instead of going out and spending fuel money to pick up only a few lobsters. I’ll let the traps soak a bit longer and save on bait and fuel. I’ll be a little more mindful. As I get a little older, I don’t want to work that hard.”

When Coombs attended the Leadership Institute, he wasn’t a member of the Maine Lobstermen’s Association. But he is now. “I wanted to join for multiple years, because I always forget [when the annual membership form arrives]. I went to the [Fishermen’s] Forum just to pay my MLA membership. Now I’m signed up for three years!”

Coombs is featured on the Maine Office of Tourism website, as a “Maine Insider,” where he shares his love of Maine and lobstering with the rest of the world. Lobstering gives Coombs the independence to take a day off for the kids when he needs to. “I know you’re never technically in control, because of nature and other factors. But it’s good to know you can work hard and benefit more.”

Is he planning to do anything differently in the coming year? “Probably I won’t complain as much,” he laughed. More seriously, he is thinking about the best possible ways to increase his potential to make a profit this season.

While he doesn’t take long vacations, Coombs does enter fishing tournaments. “Really, I call it ‘wishing.’ You couldn’t call it fishing,” he said. He entered a couple of tournaments last year, in Casco Bay and Bailey Island, and he’ll do it again this year. “We fire the boat up some Sunday afternoons, take the two kids out,” he added. “It’s still boat time, but it’s different time.”
THE CLAM SHACK BESTS THE COMPETITION, AGAIN

Press release

Once again, the Clam Shack of Kennebunkport has taken home the prize at the annual Tasting Table Lobster Rumble, held on June 4 in New York City. The Rumble featured more than 25 lobster rolls prepared by restaurants from across the country. The all-you-can-eat event, the proceeds of which went to the Share Our Strength organization, allowed diners to taste and vote on their favorite lobster roll.

Those rolls came in multiple variations, ranging from spicy habanero or made with curry mayonnaise to savory butter-poached tails.

For the third year running, the diners’ favorite was Steve Kingston’s lobster roll. The Clam Shack started as as a simple take-out stand in 1968. Kingston took over in 2000, and the business has expanded greatly since then, incorporating a seafood market, online store, and catering business. According to Kingston, his secret comes from the cold clean water in which his lobsters are harvested.

The all-you-can-eat contest, “All of these chefs are putting fancy stuff in it.” His advice? “Just go back to the basics.”

ADDITIONAL CANADIAN LOBSTER FISHERIES GAIN MSC CERTIFICATION

by MLA staff

The Bay of Fundy, Scotian Shelf and southern Gulf of St. Lawrence lobster trap fishery received certification by the Marine Stewardship Council in May. Following an independent assessment conducted by SAI Global, lobsters from the region are now eligible to bear the blue MSC eco-label, which demonstrates they come from a well-managed, environmentally sustainable source.

The lobster fishery joins 259 other MSC-certified fisheries across the globe. Approximately 67% of all Canadian fisheries now operate with the MSC certification.

In 2014, the landed value of all lobster fisheries in Canada was $853 million (Canadian), the highest of any fishery in the country. Of that, $671 million, or 79%, was generated by harvesters in the Bay of Fundy, Scotian Shelf and southern Gulf of St. Lawrence lobster trap fishery. The main commercial market for the lobster is the United States, followed by Europe—primarily Belgium, France and the United Kingdom—and Asia, primarily China, Japan and South Korea. Lobster from Canada is sold in significant quantities both in live and processed (frozen lobster tails, whole frozen and lobster meat) formats to all these markets.

The Prince Edward Island lobster fishery was certified as sustainable by the MSC in November, 2014. That lobster fishery generates more than $200 million (Canadian) each year; P.E.I. lobstermen landed more than 28 million pounds of lobster in 2014, an all-time high.

The Clam Shack started as a simple take-out stand in 1968. Kingston took over in 2000, and the business has expanded greatly since then, incorporating a seafood market, online store, and catering business. According to Kingston, his secret comes from the cold clean water in which his lobsters are harvested.

Once on land, the just-caught crustacean is steamed in ocean water before the meat is hand-picked. At the Lobster Rumble, the restaurant served the meat from a one-pound lobster piled on a grilled bun from a Maine bakery, with just a touch of mayonnaise and a drizzle of melted butter. Noted Kingston at the close of the contest, “All of these chefs are putting fancy stuff in it.” His advice? “Just go back to the basics.”

Photo courtesy of the Clam Shack.

Photo courtesy of Pittston Seafood.
WHAT TO DO NOW THAT YOU HAVE HEALTH INSURANCE

by April Gilmore McNutt

One of the biggest challenges of enrolling in a health insurance plan through the Health Insurance Marketplace is estimating your income in the upcoming year. Your income estimate and family size determine how much, if any, Advanced Premium Tax Credit (APTC) you will receive to offset the monthly cost of your health insurance premium. The moment of truth happens when you file your taxes – if you earned more than you predicted, you will likely have to pay back some or all of the tax credit you received toward your health insurance premium.

Advanced Premium Tax Credits are only offered through the Health Insurance Marketplace located at healthcare.gov and are paid by the federal government directly to the insurance company. If you’re eligible for these tax credits, you can choose how much of the credit you would like to apply to your health insurance premium each month.

You can choose to use all, some or none of the tax credits. If you choose “some” of the tax credit, a set portion will be applied to the premium each month and you will receive the balance as a refund when you file your taxes. If you choose “none” of the tax credit each month, you will pay the full insurance premium each month but receive the tax credit at the end of the year when you file your taxes, as long as you accurately estimated your income for the year. Most families choose to apply all or some of the tax credits during the year to keep their premiums more affordable.

Since fishing income can fluctuate significantly from year to year, fishermen might want to consider receiving only a portion of the tax credit each month as a way to hedge against the unknown and avoid having to pay it back if you have a really good year. However you choose to receive your tax credit, you are not locked in for the year.

If you are having a really good year and are concerned that you under-estimated your income when you purchased your health insurance, you can update your income estimate at any time to better match what you think you’ll earn for the year. This will likely lower the amount of tax credit you are eligible to receive.

If you are using your full tax credit to offset the cost of your monthly premium, you may also consider lowering the amount of tax credit applied to your premium each month. You will pay more for your health insurance each month, but avoid having to pay it back at the end of year when you file your taxes.

If you want to adjust the amount of your health insurance tax credit (APTC) on your healthcare.gov application follow these steps:

1. Log into your account at https://www.healthcare.gov/, go to your existing application and choose "Report a Life Change" on the right hand side of the screen. Under "What kind of change do you want to make?", select "Change application information" and hit the "Continue" button.
2. Select "Yes" on the next screen that asks, "Do you want to make any of the life changes below?".
3. Click through the application without making any changes unless necessary, until you get to the eligibility determination screen.
4. Once you review your eligibility results, you will be directed to the "Enroll To-Do List" page where the "Set premium tax credit usage" option will be unlocked.
5. Select "Set" then you can adjust the amount of APTC to apply to your premium. Once the new APTC amount is set, the "Enroll To-Do List" task of "Review and Confirm" will open.
6. Make sure you proceed to the "Review and Confirm" step to complete the action so that the insurance company will receive updated enrollment information that includes the changed APTC amount.

If the amount of your tax credit is changed between the 1st and the 15th of the month, the new tax credit amount will be effective on the first day of the following month. If changes are made between the 16th and the end of the month, the new tax credit amount will be effective the month after the following month.

If you need any help with updating your account or making changes, or you have questions regarding enrollment or using your current health insurance coverage, please give us a call at the MLA. We’re here to help!

Open Enrollment for 2016 health insurance coverage begins November 15th, 2015.

NEED INSURANCE NOW?

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- Have or adopt a child
- Lose other insurance (MaineCare, employer plan, parent’s plan)
- Move to new part of state (ex. From Portland to Bangor)
- Become a US citizen
- Become a member of a recognized Indian tribe
- Leave jail

If your income changes significantly while you currently have coverage, you may qualify for new coverage.

For more information visit www.healthcare.gov

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co-chairs, Joint Committee on  
Marine Resources  

The first session of the 127th Legislature has been relatively uneventful in the Marine Resources Committee. The committee has passed technical bills on such things as spat collection, elver exporting and elver quota transfer for medical reasons, as well as LD 98, which increased trap limits in the Swans Island Conservation Zone to 600. We enacted a measure that increases the penalty for “scrubbing” removing the eggs from a female lobster, to a permanent license revocation. It was the unanimous vote of the committee to increase the penalty, which indicated an understanding of the severity of this offense and its effect on the sustainability of the fishery. Of note is what we didn’t do. We did not enact any reforms to our licensing system, but that is a priority for our next session. Commissioner Keliher, Governor LePage and the entire committee are committed to a thoughtful, comprehensive review of access to our resources. The Commissioner is planning extensive outreach to the industry later this year that will likely result in a department bill being submitted for the 2nd session that begins in January 2016.

**RECAP OF MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES**

**Lobster-related bills before the Marine Resources Committee (as of June 25)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LD 481</td>
<td>Senate language appointed to ASAMC. He will serve as the Legislative appointee, one of Maine’s three ASAMC Commissioners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LD 730</td>
<td>An Act To Make Technical Changes to Maine’s Marine Resources Laws (Sen Baker for DMR). Clarifications to law include: 1) student lobster license holder may have up to 3 sponsors; 2) deletes Kittery lobster travel limit; 3) student lobster license holder must declare a lobster management zone; and 4) consolidates for the Swans Island Lobster Conservation Area presented in latitude and longitude format.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LD 1038</td>
<td>An Act To Amend the Emergency Rule-making Authority of the Department of Marine Resources (Sen Langley for DMR). Allows DMR Commissioner to enact emergency rules to remain in compliance with federal and interstate fisheries management actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LD 1227</td>
<td>An Act To Provide for Improved Reporting of Marine Resources Landings (Rep Kruger for DMR). Provisions include facilitating the expansion of the transaction card system for electronic dealer reporting used in Maine’s elver fishery. Individuals who hold a dealer’s license may be required to obtain equipment specified by the DMR in order to engage in licensed activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LD 1223</td>
<td>An Act To Improve Enforcement of Maine’s Marine Resources Laws (Sen Burns for DMR). Provisions include: 1) changing the penalty for scrubbing egg lobsters from a one-year suspension to license revocation; 2) notice of penalties and hearings are deemed received 5 days after they are mailed; 3) imposes a time limit of up to 60 days for an administrative hearing or a license suspension to be held.</td>
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**CARRIED OVER TO SECOND SESSION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LD 427</td>
<td>An Act To Address and Mitigate the Effects of Marine Debris. Proposes to address and mitigate plastic debris in marine environment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>LD 493</td>
<td>An Act To Create the Ocean Acidification Council</td>
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**DEAD**

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<tr>
<td>LD 415</td>
<td>An Act To Prohibit False Labeling of Marine Organisms (Rep Drapanos)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LD 490</td>
<td>An Act To Extend the Legal Hours To Harvest Lobsters (Rep Kumiega)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LD 491</td>
<td>An Act To Lower from 65 to 65 the Age at Which a Person May Obtain a Reduced-fee Lobster and Crab Fishing License (Rep Gilway)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LD 492</td>
<td>An Act To Establish an Apprenticeship Program for Certain Ventures to the Lobster and Crab Fishing License Apprenticeship Program (Rep Kumiega)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LD 583</td>
<td>An Act Regarding the Purchase of Trap Tags in the Lobster Fishery (Rep Kumiega)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LD 680</td>
<td>An Act To Prevent Passage of Allewives through the Grand Falls Dam on the St. Croix River (Rep Turner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LD 906</td>
<td>An Act To Improve Lobster Licensing (Rep Alfey)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LD 1056</td>
<td>An Act To Allow Retired Marine Patrol Officers To Obtain Up to 2 Marine Fisheries Licenses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LD 1058</td>
<td>An Act To Make the Email Addresses of Department of Marine Resources License Holders Confidential (DMR to Judiciary Committee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LD 176</td>
<td>An Act To Establish a Limited Lobster and Crab Commercial License (Rep Kumiega)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LD 775</td>
<td>An Act To Increase Entry into the Lobster Fishery (Rep Kumiega)</td>
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**Marine Bonds - still pending**

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<th>Number</th>
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<tr>
<td>LD 254</td>
<td>An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Support Waterfront Development (Sen Haskell)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LD 258</td>
<td>An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Collect Data on and To Monitor Ocean Acidification (Rep Parsons)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**YOU HAVE A FRIEND AT THE IRS**

by Deborah Weaver  
Maine Local Taxpayer Advocate  

The Taxpayer Advocate Service (TAS) offers free assistance to eligible individuals or businesses seeking assistance in resolving federal tax problems. TAS is an independent organization within the IRS that helps taxpayers whose problems with the IRS are causing financial difficulties; who have tried but have not been able to resolve their problems with the IRS through normal channels; and those who believe an IRS system or procedure is not working as it should. Here are some things every taxpayer should know about TAS:

- **The Taxpayer Advocate Service** is your voice at the IRS. Our service is free and tailored to meet your needs. You may be eligible for our help if you have tried to resolve your tax problem through normal IRS channels and if:
  - You (or your business) are experiencing economic harm or significant cost as a result of a tax problem
  - You face (or your business is facing) an immediate threat of adverse action
  - You have experienced a delay of more than 30 days beyond normal processing time to resolve your tax issue

- **You have not received a response or resolution to the problem by the date promised by the IRS.**

The worst thing you can do is nothing at all! Most people are a little nervous, confused or scared when they have an IRS problem. One thing is for sure—avoiding the problem will only make it worse. If you qualify for our assistance, we’ll do everything we can to get your problem resolved. You will be assigned to one advocate who will be with you throughout the process.

We have an office at 68 Sewall St. Rm 313, in Augusta. You can call the Augusta office at 207-622-8528 (or toll free 855-339-6627). Our fax is 207-622-8458 (or toll free fax is 866-896-6148). As a taxpayer, you have rights the IRS must respect in its dealings with you. Our job is to ensure that every taxpayer is treated fairly and that you know and understand your rights under the Taxpayer Bill of Rights. The Taxpayer Bill of Rights describes ten basic rights that all taxpayers have when dealing with the IRS. Our “taxpayer rights page” (located on our site at www.irs.gov/Advocate) can help you understand what these rights mean to you and how they apply.

Continued on page 20
The council that oversees the region’s fishing industry voted [in June] to reopen vast swaths of Georges Bank to fishing, a decision decreed by environmentalists as a blow to conservation efforts, but lauded by fishermen as a boon to their business. The vote by the New England Fisheries Management Council could lead to the opening of more than 5,000 square miles of some of the world’s richest fishing grounds, and mean tens of millions of dollars in additional catch for fishermen.

The council’s decision, which has to be approved by federal regulators at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, would open more than 70 percent of areas previously closed on Georges Bank. Most of those areas were closed 21 years ago to protect what scientists have described as critical habitat for cod and other species, the populations of which have plummeted.

The council determined that the closures were no longer needed for cod, yellowtail flounder, and other fish that dwell on the bottom of the ocean to thrive. “We think this should have a positive impact on the future of the fishing industry, protecting valuable habitat while allowing for reasonable fishing opportunities,” said Terry Stockwell, chairman of the council, who didn’t vote.

The vote, part of a decade-long evaluation of whether the closures were in the proper places and whether they were still needed, pitted lobstermen against scallopers and ground fishermen. Lobstermen are concerned that large female lobsters that help sustain the population in the region could be threatened by dredges and trawls that sweep up fish from the ocean floor.

Dave Preble, a council member who represents Rhode Island, sought to block the vote and urged his fellow councilors not to take action. He said recent studies have shown that the large females, called brood stock lobsters, would be vulnerable if the closed areas are reopened. “This council has purposely ignored the science and produced an amendment that is indefensible,” Preble said after the vote. “If you want to have big fish, you have to feed and protect the small fish.”

Others on the council said they voted for the measure because it reflected the best compromise between fishing and conservation interests. “The science of this is complex,” said Mike Sissenwine, a council member and a scholar at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. “This represented a difficult compromise between the needs of many segments of the fishing industry and the need to protect habitat.” He and others noted that the council also voted to ban commercial ground fishing in parts of Massachusetts Bay for three months in the winter and two weeks in the spring to protect spawning areas of cod, flounder, and other ground fish.

The vote to open much of Georges Bank followed previous council votes this year for similar openings and closures elsewhere in the Gulf of Maine and along the Nantucket Shoals. The vote comes as federal officials take drastic action to try to bolster cod. Over the past year, they have instituted an effective moratorium on fishing for cod, reducing quotas to the point that fishermen can only try to bolster cod. Over the past year, they have instituted an effective moratorium on fishing for cod, reducing quotas to the point that fishermen can only try to bolster cod while trawling for other fish.

Federal assessments have found that cod have dwindled sharply in recent years, with estimates showing that there is as little as 3% of the number of cod that would sustain a healthy population. Environmental advocates have said the council’s vote will make it harder to rebuild cod stocks. “The council put short-term profits ahead of the needs of depleted ground fish,” said Gib Brogan, fisheries campaign manager for Oceana, an international marine conservation group based in Washington, D.C. Peter Shelley, interim president of Boston-based Conservation Law Foundation, called the vote a “devastating” loss. “The council wrote off the future of critical fish habitat areas that needed additional, not fewer, protections,” he said.

Representatives of the fishing industry applauded the council’s vote, which they said could earn scallopers in the region more than $30 million a year. Vito Giacalone, policy director for the Northeast Seafood Coalition, which represents ground fishermen throughout New England, said the vote would be good for his members. “It potentially opens areas that used to be very productive fishing grounds,” he said.

The vote will come down to a decision by John Bullard, the regional administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. He said his staff will be reviewing the science and would probably decide next year whether to approve the council’s decision. “There are fundamental conflicts here, and that is the prime habitat is also the area most valuable to the scallop industry,” he said.
TAGS ADD TO KNOWLEDGE OF FEARED SHARK

By Sarah Paquette

When great white sharks are mentioned, it usually conjures an image of a fierce man-eating beast, thanks to the classic 1975 movie Jaws. But, 40 years later, scientists are slowly changing that fearsome image.

Due to efforts of non-profit organizations such as Ocearch and the Atlantic White Shark Conservancy, scientists have been able to tag great white sharks and track their locations. Dr. Greg Skomal, a Massachusetts state marine fisheries biologist, is one of those scientists tagging white sharks. "We've been tagging sharks off Cape Cod for the past six years to see their movement patterns," he said. The study will help determine the population size of white sharks. "We've tagged 56 sharks in the past six years. That's a high number for white sharks," he continued. "The sharks aren't easy to tag. And they are elusive. So 56 is a good number."

Skomal is on the water for most of the summer tagging white sharks. "We work with a spotter pilot to find and tag the sharks," he explained. White sharks are hard to spot since they tend to travel alone and are spread out over large areas. "We've seen sharks we tagged move all the way down to Florida and Mexico and out to the mid-Atlantic," Skomal said. "We don't know why they move around so much, but I'd guess it's related to feeding and reproduction habits." There is still much to learn about the behavior of great white sharks and their life cycles. "People tend to be afraid of the unknown, so I understand why people are scared of white sharks. They are mysterious," said Skomal. White sharks have been rumored to reach great lengths, but Skomal suspects they don't get much bigger than 19 to 20 feet long. "That's still a huge animal," he said.

Despite their size, white sharks are not the voracious killers they are made out to be. Sharks grab people's attention, as the Discovery channel's hit series "Shark Week" shows; stories of shark attacks sell newspapers. Yet great white sharks aren't chomping on local swimmers. "There is an extremely low number of attacks on humans in New England," Skomal said. The last fatal attack in Massachusetts happened in 1936 and he wasn't aware of any occurring in Maine.

So far, the data Skomal and the Massachusetts Shark Research Program team have collected shows a slight increase in the white shark population on the East Coast. "In 1997 the Federal Government issued a prohibition on killing white sharks to protect them and that seems to have helped [the population] rebound," said Skomal. The increase in white shark sightings is in response to the rebounding grey seal population, he added. "White sharks eat grey seals, so they go where the seals are, which happens to be farther inshore," he said. There seems to be no indication that sea water temperature has a role in the shark population increase or their movement farther inshore.

The increase in white shark sightings is in response to the rebounding grey seal population.

Skomal said he wouldn't be surprised if lobstermen in the Gulf of Maine see a white shark this summer. "It's not common, but they are out there. White sharks are historically well documented in the Gulf of Maine."

In fact, great white sharks have even found their way into the social media world. Mary Lee, a 3,500-pound great white shark tracked by Ocearch, has her own Twitter account. The account, began this spring by an anonymous shark fan, posts the shark's location along the East Coast as she makes her way north and features humorous comments from its author. By mid-June @ MaryLeeShark had 60,000 followers.

TAS also works to resolve large-scale problems that affect many taxpayers. If you know of one of these broad issues, please report it to us at www.irs.gov/TASNTA; www.facebook.com/YourVoiceAtIRS; www.twitter.com/TASNTA; www.youtube.com/TASNTA; www.improveirs.org.

Taxpayers have an opportunity to provide direct input to the IRS through the Taxpayer Advocacy Panel (TAP). TAP is an independent panel of citizen volunteers who listen to taxpayers, identify taxpayers' issues, and make suggestions for improving IRS service and customer satisfaction. Contact TAP at www.improveirs.org.

For more information about TAS, visit us on YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter at: www.youtube.com/TASNTA; www.facebook.com/YourVoiceAtIRS; www.twitter.com/YourVoiceAtIRS.

Tax advocate continued from page 18

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age rate, the number of lobsters that died while in the pound, skyrocketed. So Hodgkins capacity continued from page 4

Hodgkins linked up with Dr. Bob Bayer, director of the Lobster Institute at the University of Maine, to find an answer.

Bayer had a trial vaccine for the disease that needed to be tested in a real lobster pound. Hodgkins had that pound. So Bayer, his students, and Hodgkins hand-injected 23,000 of his lobsters with the vaccine. Although the vaccine was effective, it proved expensive and inconvenient to administer. Researchers instead worked on a medicated lobster feed to stem gaffkemia if it showed up in a pound. Hodgkins ran all the necessary trials at his pound; the feed ultimately won FDA approval. Zeigler Brothers, Inc. in Pennsylvania began to sell that feed and when Hodgkins sold his Lamoine pound, he became sole distributor in the area of both medicated and non-medicated feed for Zeigler.

Gaffkemia was in check but that did not prevent other illnesses from striking. Vibrio, a common bacteria, also affected those lobsters held in pounds. Bacterial infections led to high shrinkage rates among the pounds beginning in the 1990s. Information from a 2006 Maine Lobstermen’s Association survey indicated a sharp uptick in mortality during the previous winter, to between 14 and 27 percent.

Hodgkins and Bayer turned their attention to the problem. "For twenty years now I’ve been trying to figure out what caused the bacteria to get into the lobsters. I think it’s the high-speed haulers," Hodgkins said. He believes that when soft-shell lobsters are hauled rapidly from depth, ruptures occur inside the body, releasing bacteria that flood the animals’ systems, eventually killing them. "The haulers used to run off the boat’s engine and their sheaves were 10 to 12 inches. Now you’ve got 17-inch sheaves. Before, the trap would come up maybe four feet per second. Now they are coming up at 12 feet per second, particularly for those singles or doubles inshore," Hodgkin said. Fourteen percent of the soft-shell lobsters Hodgkins tracked last year for the Lobster Institute died after being hauled rapidly and stored in crates.

Lobster pounds are no longer the dominant method of storing lobsters in Maine, as recent stories in Landings have shown. The Maine Lobster Pound Owners Association has disbanded. Lobster dealers keep the ever-increasing supply of lobsters dormant in land-based systems, storing them in special tube systems or lobster “condos,” drawing water in from the sea but treating that water to maintain maximum quality in the lobsters. Mother Nature is out of the equation. Today live lobster is shipped overnight to nearly all parts of the country. By 2011, only 21 pounds operated in Maine, many of them part of larger seafood businesses.

But Hodgkins remains hopeful. He thinks that if through better handling and slower hauling lobsters can be protected from the Vibrio bacteria, lobster pounds might make a resurgence. In the meantime, he continues to study all aspects of the creatures he has dealt with all his life. "I enjoy figuring out these mysteries. If my father saw what I was doing he’d be dumbfounded."
MONHEGAN BUOY SUFFERS DAMAGE

Everyone knows that it was a tough winter, even for automated ocean buoys. As a result of heavy snow and high winds, the Northeastern Regional Association of Coastal and Ocean Observing Systems (NERACOOS) buoy E located southwest of Monhegan Island was severely damaged this winter. The cause of damage to Buoy E is unknown, but significant damage to the tower caused it to partially break off. The University of Maine's Physical Oceanology Group has recovered the damaged buoy and deployed another.

DMR LICENSING SYSTEM TO CHANGE

The Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR) is transitioning to a new online licensing system. The department urges all current license holders planning to renew their license online to do so before July 16, when the shift from the old to a new, more efficient system begins. After July 16, license holders will need to use paper applications or wait until September to apply through the new online system. Known as LEEDS (Licensing, Enforcement and Environmental Data System) the new system will provide easy-to-use online tools for license application, renewal, and landings reporting. Available 24-hours-a-day, the system will automatically integrate new information so license holder data will always be up to date. License renewals and new applications will be available through the new LEEDS system after DMR conducts internal testing this summer. DMR will communicate directly with license holders when the system launch date is confirmed, and will include links on its Web site to the new online LEEDS system.

FEDERAL TRAP TRANSFER PROGRAM ANNOUNCED

NOAA regulators are moving ahead with a lobster trap transfer program that they say will give permit holders more flexibility and enable permit holders from other areas to “buy in” to the area by purchasing traps. The program applies in the Outer Cape Area and Area 3, the offshore fishery extending from Maine to North Carolina. NOAA had deferred the start of the program until a centralized trap transfer database was ready; according to NOAA officials, “significant progress” has been made on the database. NOAA will accept trap transfer applications between August 1 and September 30. Approved trap allocations will be effective for the start of the 2016 fishing year on May 1, 2016.

CHURCH LOBSTER SUPPERS COME TO AN END

St. Ann’s Parish in the village of Hope River on Prince Edward Island has been running its lobster suppers since 1964. But this year will be its last. The suppers were run by church parishioners to help raise money for church building maintenance and for events and programs within the parish and the community. A lucky diner could expect to eat a cup of seafood chowder, plate of steamed mussels, Caesar salad, lobster with coleslaw and potato salad, with lemon pie for dessert. Paula Gauthier, the chair of Council 2922 of the Union of United Fishermen and Fishmongers, said the lobster suppers have been losing money for the last three years. “The bottom line is getting more difficult to maintain,” said Gauthier. “Food has gone up and our numbers were dropping.” Location was part of the problem too. “We are sort of off the beaten track if you will.”

HERRING PLAN AMENDMENT WITHDRAWN FOR NOW

This winter the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) issued draft amendment 3 to its herring management plan for public comment. The draft amendment addressed issues such as spawning protection measures, fixed gear set-aside provisions and the requirement to empty fish holds. In June, ASMFC Atlantic Herring Section members expressed concern about the highly technical nature of the proposed measures and their potential impacts on the fishing industry. In response to those concerns, the amendment has been withdrawn from public review. Terry Stockwell, Section chair, will provide guidance to ASMFC staff about changes to the spawning protection measures at its next meeting in August. These changes will clearly define the goal of spawning protection measures, describe proposed methodologies and measures in a way that is understandable to the fishing industry, and detail the benefits and impacts of spawning closures to herring. The proposed spawning protection measures will then be refined for consideration in November. American fishermen caught more than 200 million pounds of Atlantic herring in 2013. The biggest catches were in Maine, Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

LOBSTERMAN’S INVENTION EASES PAIN OF HAULING

David Hiltz Jr., a lobsterman out of Deer Isle, had a bad shoulder. The doctor told him he might need a shoulder replacement if something didn’t change. The damage came from the way he hauled his traps in, grabbing the trap as it comes out of the water and sliding it aft on the gunnel while at the same time, snapping the gangion of the approaching second trap out of the block. Hiltz decided to do something different. He modified a block used in Canada to allow lobstermen to haul safely and with less damage to their bodies. Called the EZ Block, it is lighter and more affordable than the Canadian model.

Hiltz and Rock Wilson at Fuller Machine in Appleton, N.H., tested various designs to find one that they thought worked best. With a regular block a lobsterman must stop the hauler, hold on to the trap with one hand and use the other hand to pull the rope up and out of the block. But EZ-Block has a wheel with teeth that flips the rope out of the block as it is hauled in.

The EZ-Block weighs 30 pounds, is made of 316 stainless steel and high quality aluminum, and has a snap hook for mounting.

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great reflection of the Maine industry and will help us drive that word-of-mouth conversation. It will help us continue to learn about what our customers like and how we can give it to them. We are going to continue to learn, to find our customers and learn some more. As we go forward. I’m reminded of a quote by American author Eric Hoff er. “In times of change learners inherit the earth; while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists.”

In the NEWS
A University of Maine undergraduate student has developed a noninvasive procedure to determine the livelihood of lobsters. This test will help determine how healthy and shippable a lobster is. The procedure was developed by Matthew Hodgkin, a fourth-year animal and veterinary sciences student from Colebrook, Conn., with help from UMaine's Lobster Institute executive director Bob Bayer, mechanical engineering professor Michael Peterson, and Thomas McKay, a fourth-year mechanical engineering technology student.

"I would say this is one of the bigger projects I have worked on with the Institute and has had the most success," Hodgkin said. "Working with lobsters is fascinating because there is some research about them, but not as in depth as one may think. There are so many opportunities to be had studying and learning more about them that there are really no limits to the research experience that can be gained."

The current procedure, developed in the 1980s by Bayer and graduate student Dale Leavitt, involves drawing lobster blood, known as hemolymph, and measuring the protein content using a refractometer. This protein correlates to the lobster’s muscle mass, which determines how healthy, and therefore shippable, the animal is. Hodgkin’s test involves having the lobster squeeze down on a rectangular device that measures the pressure exerted by the claw. More muscle mass produces a higher measurement, and higher results mean a healthier lobster. Hodgkin compared his test with the current one, and the two results matched closely, confirming the validity of the new procedure.

"It is a good way to judge vitality of lobsters for shipment because it measures muscle mass without being invasive," Hodgkin said. "Maine can benefit from this by utilizing it in their shipping of lobster. Using this method not only is less invasive to the lobster but it also can determine whether a lobster would be better to ship or not, thus minimizing the loss."

Hodgkin co-owns Lobster Unlimited, formerly LobsteRx, a Bangor-based company founded in November 2014, dedicated to developing products from lobster industry-related waste, such as lobster shells. Bayer, Lobster Institute associate director Cathy Billings, and business partner Stewart Hardison are co-owners.

“The project’s funding came from the Center for Undergraduate Research and the Lobster Institute. Hodgkin has been a member of the Lobster Institute since his freshman year, when he first met Bayer and became a lab assistant at the Institute. After graduation this year, Hodgkin plans on building Lobster Unlimited and gaining more experience within the food industry. He then hopes to apply to UMaine’s graduate school for Food Science and Human Nutrition.”

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Events Calendar

July 1
MLA Directors’ meeting, 5 p.m., Darby’s Restaurant, Belfast. FMI: 967-4555.

July 4
Moosabec Reach lobster boat races

July 6
ASMFC public hearing on draft Jonah crab fisheries management plan, 6 p.m., Casco Bay Lines, Portland.

July 11
Searsport lobster boat races

July 12
Stonington lobster boat races

July 14
Le Hermione, a historic replica of the French frigate that brought Marquis de Lafayette to America, arrives in Castine. FMI: 326-4118.

July 17

July 19
Friendship lobster boat races

July 20
DMR Rockweed Working Group meeting, 9 a.m., DOT building, Bangor.

July 22
NEFMC herring committee meeting, 9:30 a.m., Wakefield, MA.

July 23
"History of the Maine Lobster Fishery” lecture, 6:30 p.m., Maine Maritime Museum, Bath. FMI: 443-1316

July 26
Grand opening of Lobstering and the Maine Coast, 10 a.m., Maine Maritime Museum, Bath. FMI: 443-1316.

Harpswell lobster boat races

July 29
“American Catch,” talk by author Paul Greenberg, 6:30 p.m., College of the Atlantic, Bar Harbor.

July 29-August 2

August 3
Penobscot East Resource Center Annual Lobster Buoy Auction, 5:30 p.m., Stonington. FMI: 367-2708.

August 4-6
ASMFC summer meeting, Alexandria, VA.

August 13
"Science, Lobstering and Lobstermen," lecture by Robin Alden, 6:30 p.m., at Maine Maritime Museum, Bath.

Umaine Student Finds New Way to Test Health of Lobsters

By Kyle Hadyniak
Published in The Maine Campus. Reprinted with permission.
It's the middle of another Maine summer and that means it's time for the annual Maine Lobster Festival! This year is the 68th festival, held on the water in Rockland. The five-day event attracts more than 10,000 people to hear music, watch the annual Miss Sea Goddess contest, take part in the lobster crate races and of course, eat seafood in all forms. The 20,000 to 25,000 pounds of lobster consumed are steamed in what festival promoters call “The World’s Largest Lobster Cooker.” This year the Festival takes place from July 29 to August 2. All photos courtesy of the Maine Lobster Festival.