Maine lobstermen will have the opportunity to voice their thoughts about the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s (ASMFC) draft Addendum 27 to the lobster fishery management plan at three public hearings in early March. The draft Addendum proposes measures to increase protection of the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank lobster spawning stock. “Lobstermen should know that this is not ‘take-it-or-leave-it.’ Everything proposed in the document can be mixed and matched,” said Patrick Keliber, Department of Marine Resources (DMR) Commissioner and ASMFC board member. 

The ASMFC’s American Lobster Management Board initiated Addendum 27 in 2017 as a proactive measure to improve the resiliency of the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank lobster fishery. “Lobstermen should know that this is not ‘take-it-or-leave-it.' Everything proposed in the document can be mixed and matched,” said Patrick Keliber, Department of Marine Resources (DMR) Commissioner and ASMFC board member.

The Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA) is proud to announce that Amber-Jean Nickel of Falmouth will be the MLA’s first chief operating officer. “We are really excited to have someone of Amber-Jean’s experience and skills join the MLA staff,” said Kristen Porter, MLA president. “The MLA has done so much with an extremely small staff. Adding her talents will be a great boost to our efforts.”

Nickel comes from a military family and lived in many parts of the country growing up. Her first introduction to lobster was on a trip with her grandmother, who loved to visit the state and introduced her to the coast. Her family eventually moved to Maine, where she completed high school at Mt. Ararat in Topsham. “My first job was at a store in South Harpswell. Lobstermen would start their day there getting coffee and snacks then end it there when they came in for pizza or a wrap,” she recalled.

The origin of the acronym “snafu” comes from the military, a dry synopsis of the typical snarl of conflicting regulations and orders experienced by the troops. The same can be said of the Marine Stewardship Council’s (MSC) sustainability certification process for the lobster fishery, according to individuals in the Maine lobster industry.

The Maine Certificated Sustainable Lobster Association (MCSLA), a collection of large lobster buyers and processors in Maine and other New England states, also known as the “client group,” was first awarded its MSC sustainability certificate in 2016. The MSC certificate often is required by national and international seafood buyers before placing orders. Despite its belief that the Gulf of Maine lobster fishery meets all of the standards for MSC certification, the client group had to withdraw from the MSC process in early February.

“It’s challenging to explain to media and customers why the Maine fishery lost MSC certification despite having no entanglements attributed to the fishery in almost 20 years,” said Marianne Lacroix, executive director of the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative. The Gulf of Maine lobster fishery’s MSC certification was temporarily suspended in 2020 after a federal judge ruled that the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) had violated the Endangered Species Act by permitting the federal lobster fishery. Certification was re-instated in 2021.

MSC certifications must be renewed every five years. The current certification was due to expire in January 2023. To renew its sustain...
They say March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb. Whatever the weather may be, March starts out with a bang at the annual Maine Fishermen’s Forum from March 2 through 4, in-person for the first time since 2020. On March 3, the Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA) holds its 69th annual meeting at the Forum, when members of MLA’s legal team will discuss the association’s ongoing legal battle against the National Marine Fisheries Service and its flawed right whale protection measures. The MLA’s new Chief Operating Officer Amber-Jean Nickel will also be introduced at that time.

Lobstermen will have a chance early in March to comment on the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s draft Addendum 27 to the lobster fishery management plan. The addendum has been several years in the making. It was created in response to numerous annual surveys which show a decline among all ages of Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank lobsters. The draft addendum considers measures to increase protection of the lobster spawning stock, specifically, measures that would change minimum and maximum gauge and vent size if the lobster stock declines below a certain threshold.

Matt Talbot, Marine Patrol Colonel, provides an update this month on the activities of the Bureau. Several new officers have joined Marine Patrol and existing staff have been promoted. A new vessel, a 42-foot Calvin Beal, is under construction with a delivery date in 2024 and plans are being finalized for a larger offshore patrol vessel. Marine Patrol officers will be available to talk to attendees at the Maine Fishermen’s Forum.

Suzie Arnold, senior ocean scientist at the Island Institute in Rockland, writes about the connection between climate change and the behavior of the endangered North Atlantic right whale. She points out that warming waters in the Gulf of Maine and elsewhere have changed the availability of right whale prey, namely a plump copepod called Calanus finmarchicus.

“These climate-driven changes lead to less favorable foraging, reducing the calving rate, and exposing them to greater mortality risks from ship strikes and entanglements as they seek food in areas where precautions are not in place,” Arnold writes.

DMR will be collaborating with Maine lobstermen to test two lobster trap retrieval systems as alternatives to expensive, high tech ropeless gear throughout the next year. The systems offer less-expensive alternatives than acoustic systems, some of which are being tested in the Massachusetts closure this winter.

“We want a range of options on the table to lessen any impacts in the future,” said DMR’s Kevin Staples, who is coordinating the project. The Downeast Institute for Applied Marine Research and Education was once a small shellfish hatchery supplying shellfish seed to communities throughout Maine. Today it is a thriving research institute hosting scientists, students, research fellows and children in a modern facility located on Great Wass Island. The growth of the Institute came about through “stubbornness,” according to its executive director, Dianne Tilton.

During the past two decades and with vital federal, state and private funds, the Institute has built new laboratories, classrooms and even space specifically for aquaculture research development. “We are able to do things now that we thought of and dreamed of doing,” Tilton said.

Also in Landings this month you will find our annual Business Directory, a four-page pullout of the many businesses that support the Maine Lobstermen’s Association. We hope you will patronize these fine companies whose membership support has helped the MLA weather some difficult years recently.

We hope you enjoy this issue and look forward to your thoughts on future editions.
By Col. Matt Talbot, Bureau of Marine Patrol

As we throttle up into 2023, I am optimistic about the year ahead. A few points of good news, for instance, the recent breather to the Right Whale situation, an increase in Menhaden quota, and the return of the Fishermen’s Forum, are all welcome course corrections to our heading the last couple years.

Personally, I find myself notching nine months on the washrail (office desk) as Marine Patrol Colonel since taking the helm from retired Colonel Jay Carroll. Sergeant, Russel Wright, retired from the Bureau after over 20 years of service in Section 5 from MDI to Milbridge. In November 2022, the Section 6 Sergeant in September 2022. Sgt. Turcotte is currently supervising Patrol activities in Section 5 from MDI to Milbridge. In November 2022, the Section 6 Sergeant, Russel Wright, retired from the Bureau after over 20 years of service. Sgt. Mark Murry has since taken supervisory duties in Section 6 from Harrington to Calais.

In addition to our new MPOs there have been a few other recent changes. Colin MacDonald was promoted to Captain in August 2022 and is now assigned to Headquarters in Augusta. Jeffrey Turcotte was promoted to Sergeant in September 2022. Sgt. Turcotte is currently supervising Patrol activities in Section 5 from MDI to Milbridge. In November 2022, the Section 6 Sergeant, Russel Wright, retired from the Bureau after over 20 years of service. Sgt. Mark Murry has since taken supervisory duties in Section 6 from Harrington to Calais.

As many things continue to change, Marine Patrol’s commitment to Maine’s marine resources and commercial fishing industry remains steadfast. The Bureau recently restructured some patrol, section, and division lines in response to changes in recreational and commercial fishing activity levels, officer duty schedule challenges, and to otherwise best position the agency for the foreseeable future. The take-away from this for the average harvester or dealer, specifically if you are east of Rockland, is that the officer assigned to your area may have changed. You can refer to the contact list on the Marine Patrol portion of the DMR website for current assignments at [https://www.maine.gov/dmr/rules-enforcement/marine-patrol/contact](https://www.maine.gov/dmr/rules-enforcement/marine-patrol/contact).

The agency continues to leverage funding opportunities to improve our patrol vessel fleet by replacing aged equipment. Several 23’ aluminum Silver Ship outboard patrol boats have been commissioned in the last two years to replace several 20+ year old Boston Whalers. The 42’ P/V Endeavor was launched in July 2021 and assigned to Boothbay and a second 42’ Calvin Beal is currently in the works with an expected delivery in 2024.

The Bureau is also finalizing plans for a larger patrol boat capable of conducting inspection of large offshore gear configurations. Each of these new vessels replace an existing platform and support Patrol’s ability to complete our duties safely and efficiently. As so many things continue to change, Marine Patrol’s commitment to Maine’s marine resources and commercial fishing industry remains steadfast. The success of your Marine Patrol has historically relied upon the relationship between an individual officer and the community he or she serves; this fact has not changed. Please utilize Patrol as a resource when you have a fishery question or a concern. Even when it is your turn to get boarded, know that MPOs are working diligently for the betterment of the entire industry.

Best wishes for a safe and prosperous 2023!

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In following the rollercoaster of how new regulations designed to protect the North Atlantic right whale will impact Maine’s lobster fishery and the communities the industry supports, two recent announcements stuck out to me. One is the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) five-year review of the species. The whales are still endangered, which is no surprise and not good news for anyone. The other is Congress’s 2023 appropriation which includes a pause on new federal whale regulations until the end of 2028 and allocates funds for more data and research.

At face value, these may seem juxtaposed. But within the fine print are advances that should allow us to more effectively monitor and protect an endangered species in the face of a rapidly changing environment. The NMFS report acknowledges that climate change is a factor in the decline of the NARW and poses a significant threat to its recovery, and Congress gave us the time and resources to adapt.

...it’s critical to acknowledge and consider the underlying stress from climate change that threatens every single whale, particularly reproductive females.

It is well known that the Gulf of Maine is warming faster than most water bodies on the planet due to arctic warming changing our region’s ocean circulation. The weakening of a major current system called the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation is shifting the warm Gulf Stream northerly while the cold Labrador Current retreats, resulting in warmer water entering the Gulf of Maine through the northeast channel. This phenomenon explains the 2010 “regime shift” when the rapid warming of the Gulf of Maine progressed in earnest; 2021 was the hottest year on record in the Gulf of Maine, and the top five warmest summers all occurred in the last decade.

We know how warming impacts marine species like lobster, but it is also causing disruptions in predator-prey dynamics, particularly due to impacts on species at the base of the marine food web, such as Calanus finmarchicus, the copepod that is the preferred prey source for right whales. The copepods are no longer occurring in dense patches where right whales once fed. These climate-driven changes lead to less favorable foraging, reducing the calving rate, and exposing them to greater mortality risks from ship strikes and entanglements as they seek food in areas where precautions are not in place.

Since 2015, more right whales are foraging in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Long term acoustic monitoring indicates the daily occurrence of right whales in the Gulf of St. Lawrence quadrupled after 2015 in comparison to 2011-2014. Coinciding with this change is an unusually high mortality rate since 2017, in part due to ship strikes and interactions with fishing gear, like snow crab gear with heavier traps and thicker line than used in Maine fisheries.

In the NMFS five-year review, mortalities and serious injuries from ship strikes and entanglements are considered “human caused,” and rightly so. But there is another human cause leading to the decline of not just right whales, but most endangered species on the planet—climate change.

We’ve all played a role in pushing species to the brink. Undoubtedly serious injuries and deaths are attributed to ship strikes and entanglements in fishing gear, but it’s critical to acknowledge and consider the underlying stress from climate change that threatens every single whale, particularly reproductive females. These announcements, for me at least, come with some hope—hope that we can do better. Funds have finally been allocated to fill serious information gaps and enable regulatory and business decision-making based on facts and current data rather than worst case scenarios and data that no longer applies due to rapid ocean climate change. Rather than continuing to document the decline of things we care about, let’s work together to solve the problem.

The challenge shouldn’t fall on hard-working fishermen engaged in one of the most sustainable fisheries in the world to support their families, communities, and the backbone of an entire state’s economy. The North Atlantic right whale is just one acute example. The fact is we are living in a global biodiversity crisis, with a common thread—climate change. All of us can play a role in reversing this trend. Never, more than ever before, there are multiple pathways for action.

NEW REPORT SHOWS 2022 ANOTHER HOT YEAR IN THE GULF OF MAINE

A report released by the Gulf of Maine Research Institute in February ranked 2022 as the second warmest year ever recorded for the Gulf. The report says the Gulf’s average sea surface temperature (SST) in 2022 was 53.66°F, which was 3.7°F above the long-term average and just 0.43°F below the record of 54.1°F set in 2021. The most extreme temperatures in 2022 occurred in November and December, each setting new records for the highest monthly average SST in the Gulf of Maine.

The GMRI report noted that since the early 1980s, the rate of warming in the Gulf of Maine has accelerated. In the past decade, the top five warmest summers occurred in the last decade.

 Nine of the 10 warmest years on record for the Gulf have occurred within the last decade. As for air temperatures, 2022 was the sixth warmest year since global records began in 1880, according to the annual report from the National Centers for Environmental Information, based on data collected by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.
Downeast on the coast of Maine there is a small outpost of energy, a place full of scientists, students and entrepreneurs. The Downeast Institute for Applied Marine Research and Education on Great Wass Island, formerly known as the Beals Island Regional Shellfish Hatchery, has blossomed in the past two decades into the nation’s easternmost marine field station, offering research and education opportunities tied to its mission “[t]o improve the quality of life for the people of downeast and coastal Maine through marine research, marine science education, and innovations in wild and cultured fisheries.”

The Institute’s growth came about from “being stubborn,” according to Dianne Tilton, executive director. “Twenty years ago we asked, ‘what do we want to do in the future? Do we want to remain a clam hatchery or do more?’” The answer was a resounding “more.”

The Beals Island Regional Shellfish Hatchery was the brainchild of Dr. Brian Beal of the University of Maine at Machias and six Washington County towns that were concerned about declining shellfish beds in the region. In 1987, the state’s first public shellfish hatchery opened in a tiny building on Perio Point in Jonesport. The hatchery’s work took off, supplying seed to towns throughout Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts. Students and researchers worked with Beal to develop techniques for growing, overwintering and seeding clam flats. After incorporating as a non-profit in 1996, the Regional Shellfish Hatchery changed its name and mission in 2000.

Changes came fast after that. “The space on Perio Point was too small. We needed to go somewhere else. So we purchased an old lobster pier with 16 acres on Great Wass Island,” Tilton said. In 2003 the Institute moved to a 5,600-square-foot former lobster storage building on Black Duck Cove with more than 2,000 feet of deep-water frontage and two lobster pounds. At that time, the Institute now that we thought of and dreamt of doing,” she said. “We’re helping communities, we’re helping innovative entrepreneurs, we’re working with teachers.” For example, the Institute has aided mussel aquaculturists in making their businesses more successful. “A mussel farmer approached us. Mussel farms use wild set for seed each year. He was concerned because if there is no natural set, he has no harvest the next year. So researchers came up with a method for pre-seeding rope in the hatchery. The farmer just puts the rope out at his site,” Tilton said. Purchasing the pre-seeded rope from the Institute is one way the organization funds itself. “We don’t want to exist just on federal grants,” Tilton laughed.

The Institute also conducts educational programs for Maine teachers. Its Coastal Education Academy helps teachers use scientific methods in their K-12 science curriculum. Teachers attend a four-day workshop at the Institute and participate in a school research project for the following school year. “The aim is to have the greatest impact on education as possible. So we teach the teachers how to do open-ended research. Rural teachers often don’t have a background in science so these programs give them more confidence,” Tilton said. “The kids love [the programs] because there is no wrong answer!”

Tilton exudes a “can do” attitude when speaking about the Institute’s future. The Institute completed purchase in February of three nearby properties with six homes to be used as housing for interns, summer fellows, researchers and employees. A $2 million capital campaign will begin soon to cover the cost of the purchase and pay for building renovations. “We are talking with the World Wildlife Fund now about a possible mussel hatchery. And we’re thinking about raising lobsters in an aquaculture setting,” Tilton said. “We’re also working with the Eastern Maine Skippers Program [a Washington and Hancock Counties program for high school students]. They are going to try to grow Maine shrimp. We thought, ‘why not?’”

By Melissa Waterman
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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Maine’s lobster industry welcomed 2023 with a sense of optimism. As the industry catches its breath after the turmoil of the last few years, the MLA is preparing to tackle the ever-growing challenges we face, not least of which are the new whale rules in 2028.

It’s worth taking a moment to reflect on what the MLA has accomplished in the last few years with a barebones staff and our volunteer Board of Directors, who refused to back down despite constant skepticism. We raised enough money to put together a team of talented experts, which finally earned the lobster industry the attention and respect it deserves.

We hired the best legal team in the country to sue the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)! We came to court eloquently armed to counter misleading attacks by deep-pocketed non-governmental groups and our own government that sought to shut down the lobster fishery. Not only has the MLA gone toe-to-toe with two Goliaths, we changed the entire media landscape on the right whale issue. These accomplishments belong to the MLA and the MLA alone, and believe me, neither was an easy lift.

The shift in media coverage of the whale issue is particularly important. It’s taken a long time and reflects years of the MLA regularly outmaneuvering the fishery’s excellent track record in right whale conservation practices. Media reports now regularly state the fact that Maine’s lobster industry has never been known to kill a right whale and, in fact, right whales are very rare in the waters we fish. By making our story known, the public now struggles to understand why the federal government would put an industry with no evidence of causing a right whale death out of business.

Then there’s the December miracle from Congress. The action taken by Congress was not random, but rather the result of collaboration and hard work behind the scenes. The MLA, with a lot of help from our legal team, and DMR, with a lot of help from its lobbyist and legal team, worked closely to craft a strategy that had a chance of being successful in Congress. We carefully weighed from many angles the level of relief Congress could provide the lobster industry against the chance of legislative success. Clearly we chose well. In the end, nothing would have happened if not for the incredible leadership and perseverance of Maine’s Congressional delegation and Governor. The six-year pause and $50 million in funding for research and monitoring provide us the time and resources to work toward solving this regulatory over-reach by NMFS.

The MLAs recent successes are tremendous, but if we are going to remain successful in the next phase of this fight, we need to up our game. The MLA team must be big enough and skilled enough to effectively do the work that must be done, whenever it needs to be done.

The MLA is not currently set up to do this. What the MLA has achieved on the shoulders of its small staff and board is its own miracle. Now it is time to strategically build MLAs capacity so the organization does not collapse under the weight of the many complicated issues we face.

This month the MLA is thrilled to welcome its first Chief Operating Officer, Amber-Jean Nickel has been hired to develop a strategic path forward while managing the MLAs operations in order to achieve a stable future for the association. She will be introduced to MLA members at our annual meeting. I am shifting into Policy Director, so I am not going anywhere, just to a slightly smaller office!

The MLA is holding its 69th annual meeting this year. We have a rich history, stellar track record and institutional knowledge that is unmatched in the state. The MLA was started by lobstermen to unite the fishery in order to address serious issues that threaten lobstermen, families, and their communities. Nothing has changed since 1954 except the complexity of what lobstermen are facing. Leslie Dyer, Ossie Beal, Ed Blackmore, David Cousins, Kristian Porter … each man has had to find the best way to lead the MLA forward in the face of regulatory and management actions that could have swamped the industry at any time.

I remember so clearly Arnie Garnage expressing his frustration as the whale issue began to consume so much of the MLAs time. He never balked at the MLAs responsibility to lead the fight but longed for the days when the issues MLA dealt with actually mattered to lobstermen, like not dragging for lobster or protecting oversize lobsters. Now, he said, lobstermen struggle to understand a fraction of what is being discussed. And these are the issues could put them out of business!

Arnie would be shocked at how truly complicated it has become. The incredible maze of the whale rules and the last-developing offshore wind energy projects require relentless attention. And who knows what will be next over the rail? Whatever it is, the MLA must be ready for it.

Change can be hard but, as always, the MLA will adapt in order to make sure it remains rock-solid for Maine lobstermen, both today and in the future.

As always, stay safe on the water.

The MLA does its work for Maine lobsters...

Maine Lobstermen’s Association Update
The board discussed several legal issues related to right whales. Oral arguments in MLA’s appeal of Judge Boasberg’s decision are scheduled for February 24. The board continued discussion on MLA’s role in two research projects. The MLA is supporting DMR’s efforts to test innovative fishing gear as alternatives to expensive acoustic ropeless technology. It is important to identify fishing gear that will work for lobstermen, especially given that NMFS’s last whale proposal included trap reductions, long trawls with only one endline (weak rope), new closures and ultimately, a transition to ropeless gear in 2030. In a separate effort, MLA is working on a pilot project with lobstermen and researchers to use the data lobstermen have collected with their Olex and Time Zero systems to create a data set owned by fishermen. Fishermen will then decide how the data can be used to represent the lobster industry in the management process.

The board voted unanimously to appoint Katie Werner of Cape Elizabeth to replace Craig Stewart as MLA’s representative on the Maine Fishermen’s Forum Board. The next meeting will be the Annual Meeting on March 3 at 9am at the Maine Fishermen’s Forum.

MLA WELCOMES TWO NEW STAFF MEMBERS!

MLA welcomed two new staff members to our team! In late January, Mindy Coath fills MLA’s vacant Office Administrator position, while Amber-Jean Nickel became MLA’s first Chief Operating Officer in late February. Welcome to the team!

WIND UPDATE

MLA has participated in several meetings with BOEM regarding its plan to lease the Gulf of Maine for offshore wind. In addition to attending the BOEM’s public information meetings in January, MLA has participated in several additional meetings with BOEM to explain the lobster industry’s concern over offshore wind development in the Gulf of Maine, and to urge BOEM to adopt the Maine Fisheries Working Group proposal to prohibit offshore wind development inshore of the LMA 1/LMA 3 line. In its draft proposal, BOEM has prohibited offshore wind development within 20 miles of the Maine coast, and excluded development in certain critical habitat areas.

WHALE UPDATES

2023 Right Whale Incidents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Right whale</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Other info</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 12</td>
<td>3343, 20 yrs, Male</td>
<td>VS/M</td>
<td>Found off VA Beach, last seen alive 12/26/2022 off GA. Necropsy conducted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 9</td>
<td>4545, 8 yrs, Female</td>
<td>ENT</td>
<td>Found in offshore waters, south of Mass, last seen gear free July 2022 in Gulf St Lawrence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 27</td>
<td>Argo, 1218, Male</td>
<td>ENT</td>
<td>Found off NC, last seen gear free Mass May 2022. Disentanglement team removed 157 feet of line and 2 wire mesh traps. Gear origin LFA 33 CN lobster gear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 20</td>
<td>Nimsbus, 3812, 15 yrs, male</td>
<td>ENT</td>
<td>Found off GA, last seen gear free Gulf St Lawrence 8/8/2022. Disentanglement team removed 375 feet of rope from mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 18</td>
<td>2021 calf (2 yrs) of 3720</td>
<td>ENT</td>
<td>Found off Mass. First sighted entangled 8/2022 in New Brunswick, CN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 9</td>
<td>Calf (a few wks old), Male</td>
<td>M/Natural Mortality</td>
<td>Found off NC, last seen alive 01/03/2023. Mother was not identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 8</td>
<td>4904, 3 yrs, female</td>
<td>ENT/SI</td>
<td>Found off NC, last sighted gear free in May 2022 in Mass Bay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/endangered-species-conservation/north-atlantic-right-whale-updates

MLA Appeal

Paul Clement will lead MLA’s oral argument before the DC Court of Appeals before a panel of three judges (Judge Ginsburg, Judge Katsas and Judge Rao) on February 24. In addition to arguing that Judge Boasberg’s September 2022 ruling against MLA should be overturned, he will also provide argument opposing the government’s motion to dismiss MLA’s appeal. This was opposed by all parties, including the NGO’s.

Peer Review of Decision Support Tool

NMFS held a peer review of the Decision Support Tool (DST), which is the model the agency uses to measure how much risk is decreased based on proposed conservation measures. The six-member review panel included a diversity of scientists and modelers from around the country. The Peer Review team will provide a final report to NMFS addressing whether the DST: 1) incorporates the commercial fishery data sets necessary to determine fishing effort and distribution, 2) incorporates relevant estimates of right whale distribution and densities, 3) uses appropriate entanglement risk coefficients by gear type, 4) incorporates appropriate approaches to applying these coefficients to estimate relative risk (and risk uncertainty) of large whales encountering gear, and 5) provides appropriate estimates of risk reduction of large whales encountering gear, using the fishing effort and right whale density data reviewed under 1 and 2. For more information, visit https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/event/peer-review-right-whale-decision-support-tool-

Lobster Institute Town Meeting

The Lobster Town Meeting took place in Portland, Maine on February 3 and 4. The meeting brought stakeholders together from the US and Canada to talk about the right whale issue. MLA executive director, Patrice McCarron, presented an update of US efforts to protect right whales and MLA president, Kristan Porter, presented on the types of whale safe gear being used and tested in the U.S. Mass. Lobstermen’s Association Sues Over Wedge Closure

The Massachusetts Lobstermen’s Association file a lawsuit against National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) that the emergency “2023 wedge closure” was not allowed based on the language in the federal Omnibus bill that provided the lobster industry a six year delay before new whale rules are put in place. The association seeks a temporary restraining order to prevent the closure of this area, NMFS issued its first emergency closure of the wedge area in March 2022, closing it again in February 2023.
According to NMFS, female right whales become sexually mature at about age 10. They give birth to a single calf after a year-long pregnancy. Three years is considered a normal or healthy interval between right whale births. More information on the 2023 right whale calving season can be found at https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/new-england-mid-atlantic/commercial-fishing/commercial-fishing-business-cost-survey.

LOBSTER GAUGE CHANGE BACK ON THE TABLE

The ASMFC’s American Lobster Board met on January 31 and approved an updated draft Addendum 27 for public comment. The draft addendum considers implementing gauge and escape vent size changes to ensure that lobster settlement and recruitment indices all show a downward trend which is an indicator of future landings.

In January 2022, the board approved a draft addendum which would have triggered gauge changes if survey data indicated a 17% decline. The updated draft addendum would not trigger gauge changes until survey data indicate at least a 32% decline. There are multiple options presented of when and how much the gauge would change. For Area 1, the increase would range from 3 1/2' to 3 3/8’ (status quo 3 3/4’), which the decrease in the maximum gauge for Area 3 would range from 6 ½” to 6” (status quo 6 ¾”).

Three public hearings are scheduled for Maine (March 7 in Freeport, March 8 via webinar, March in Ellsworth). Written comments are due March 31, 2023, and to Caitlin Starks at comments@asmfc.org (Subject line: Lobster Draft Addendum XXVII). The document is available at http://www.asmfc.org/about-us/public-input.

MENHADEN FISHING SEASON REGULATIONS PROPOSED

DMR has proposed the following regulations for the 2023 menhaden season.

State allocation fishery: The fishery will begin on the third Monday in June. Landings will be allowed on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays each week. Harvesters cannot take or possess more than 18,000 pounds or 51 barrels per harvester vessel per week, and are limited to one landing per calendar day. DMR proposes to authorize the Commissioner to prohibit menhaden fishing for up to 14 days during the State Allocation fishery, if necessary to slow the rate at which the quota is caught.

Episodic event fishery: The episodic fishery may be authorized by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission following the closure of the state allocation fishery. If the fishery is opened, landings will be allowed on Mondays and Fridays and harvesters will be limited to 6,000 pounds or 17 barrels per harvester vessel per day. Only one landing is allowed per calendar day.

Small scale fishery: This fishery opens only after the full utilization of the state allocation and episodic event fisheries. Landings will be allowed Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Harvesters will be limited to 6,000 pounds or 17 barrels per harvester vessel per day. Only one landing is allowed per calendar day. Gear is limited to bait gillnets (up to 500 ft long), cast nets, pots, hand seines, hook and line, pound nets, fish weirs, fyke nets and floating fish traps.

NMFs FISHING BUSINESS COST SURVEY

NOAAs Social Sciences Branch invites active, federally-permitted commercial fishing vessel owners in the Northeast’s region, to participate in a voluntary survey to collect information about calendar year 2022 commercial fishing expenses. NOAA will start sending out surveys in March 2023. Currently, this survey is the only way NOAA Fisheries collects this kind of information in our region.

NOAA uses the data collected to achieve the following goals develop economic analyses that inform commercial fishing regulation and policies, better understand the effects of regulations on commercial fishing businesses and communities, track trends in business costs over time, evaluate the economic performance of fishing fleets, better understand profitability of fishing fleets, expand the new cost survey data visualization tool which vessel owners can use for business planning. Additional information is available online at https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/new-england-mid-atlantic/commercial-fishing/commercial-fishing-business-cost-survey.

MAINE LEGISLATURE

The Maine 131st Legislature is back in session. There are many new faces on the Marine Resources Committee. The Marine Resources Committee is comprised of 13 members and is chaired by Sen. Cameron Reny of Lincoln and Rep. Allison Hepler of Woolwich.

The 131st Legislature will be returning to in-person committee meetings, however online options will still be offered. Committee meetings are livestreamed using the Legislature’s streaming service. To access the livestream (or archive) go to the date of the committee meeting on the Legislature’s Calendar (https://legislature.maine.gov/Calendar/). To receive weekly scheduling updates, contact Linda LaCroix at: MAR@legislature.gov or 207-287-1337, or sign up online at: https://lists.legislature.maine.gov/sympa/info/mar-ip.

The following bills will be considered by the Legislature this session.

- LD 370 An Act to Protect Marine Resources in Maine, sponsored by Sen. Reny of Lincoln. This is a concept draft that proposes to protect marine resources in the State.
- LD 710 An Act to Fund the Lobster Legal Defense Fund, sponsored by Rep. Faulkingham of Winter Harbor. This bill proposes to provide a one-time appropriation to support the State’s lobster industry by reimbursing a statewide lobster fishing associations and labor unions for legal costs incurred and paid in legal proceedings involving the federal whale regulations implementing the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan.
- LD 574 An Act to Amend the Laws Governing Working Waterfront Covenants, sponsored by Rep. Rielly of Westbrook. Referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. This bill proposes to allow certain non-profit corporations or charitable trusts that are purchased to hold conservation easements to also be allowed to hold working waterfront covenants.
- LD 16 An Act to Make Technical Changes to Maine’s Marine Resources Laws (DMR Bill), sponsored by Representative Hepler of Woolwich. The bill amends the definition of “scallops” to include bay scallops, and amends the definition of “shellfish” to include scallops and “whole scallop” to exclude the adductor muscle on the shell.
- Clarifies that a license-holding member of named tribes is not required to prooved state implementation plans for Addendum I.

HERRING QUOTA SET THROUGH 2025

The ASMFC Herring Committee met on January 31 adopted the 2023-2025 specifications package as recommended by the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC), contingent on the final rule being published by NOAA Fisheries. NOAA Fisheries is planning to publish an interim final rule in February 2023 to implement the 2023-2025 specifications package.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended Herring Specifications 2023-2025 (in metric tons)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Catch Level (ACL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 1A Sub-ACL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 1B Sub-ACL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 2 Sub-ACL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 3 Sub-ACL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Border Transfer = 0; Fixed Gear Set-Aside = 30mt; Research Set-Aside = 0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

•   Clarifies that a license-holding member of named tribes is not required to

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complete the lobster fishery apprentice program if the license applicant has completed an apprentice program that satisfies the tribe, nation or band.

- Replaces a license exemption for commercial halibut fishing license, adds a violation for fishing for halibut without a commercial halibut fishing license.

- Allows enhanced retail certificate license holders to purchase shellfish from the holder of an aquaculture license and corrects cross-references in the administrative suspension process for licenses and certificates issued under marine resources laws.

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

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

LD 427 An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Invest in Research, Development and Commercialization in Maine’s Marine Technology and Aquaculture Sector, sponsored by Rep. Rielly of Westbrook. Referred to the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs. This bill proposes a bond in the amount of $25,000,000, to be awarded through a competitive process to Maine-based public and private entities and leveraging other funds in a one-to-one ratio, will be used to invest in research, development and commercialization in the State’s marine technology and aquaculture sector to be used for infrastructure, equipment and technology upgrades to enable organizations to gain and hold market share and to expand employment or preserve jobs.

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

Bill Titles, not printed


In 2006 Nickeland her career niche at Hancock Gourmet Lobster Co., based in Topsham. The business, which produces value-added lobster items, was founded by Cal Hancock in 2000. The company’s lobster products quickly won attention from customers and awards from the Specialty Food Association. Nickel was the Director of Operations and Marketing just as the company was starting its rapid growth. Through the years she became involved in many of the planning aspects of that growth, and was responsible for customer service, marketing and web presence for the company.

After ten years, Nickel left to explore other opportunities that helped her develop new skills focused in communications, financial management and community partnerships. She returned to Hancock Gourmet Lobster Co. in 2018 when she served as the company’s General Manager for two years before becoming Chief Executive Officer in 2020. Cal Hancock sold the company to Ready Seafood in 2019.

When asked what skills she brought to her new position at the MLA, Nickel is quick to answer: “I am very organized and I am good at setting plans and goals and then working out the details to make them happen.” Such skills will be put to good use as the MLA continues its ongoing efforts to end National Marine Fisheries Service’s regulatory over-reach of the lobster fishery and prevent the implementation of a flawed plan that would extinguish the Maine fishery while doing little to protect endangered North Atlantic right whales.

“There’s always a moment in any organization or business when you have to pause and assess so that when you take your next step, you are ready for it. I’m excited to help the MLA take that step so it can continue to successfully lead Maine’s lobster industry through these extremely challenging times,” Nickel said.
Thank you to our 2023 Donors.

Thank you to those whose donations to #SaveMaineLobstermen Campaign total $100,000 or more

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W Kennedy Boonet
Tricia Ann Carver
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Stephanie Ewen
Alice Ingraham

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City: ___________ State: _____ Zip: ______

Phone: _________________________________________

Email: _________________________________________

Sweatshirt Size: _________________________________

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### Harvester Membership Levels:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Harvester</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harvester Family*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Junior Harvester (under 18)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior Harvester (over 65)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Retired Harvester</td>
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*Family memberships are for spouses and children under 23 living at home.

### Individual Membership Levels:

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<tr>
<td>Lobster Lover</td>
<td>$2.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Donate to Legal Defense Fund

| Amount $__________|

---

### Form for Membership

Name: ____________________________________________ DOB:__________

Address: __________________________________________ Phone:__________

City/State/Zip: ____________________________________________

Phone: ___________ Cell: ___________ D.O.B: ___________

Email: ____________________________________________

(please include to receive weekly e-news updates)

Boat Name: __________________________  Zone & District: __________

Lobster License #: __________________________

*Family Members: __________________________

**Yes, I want to add my sternman for $50!**

Name: __________________________ DOB:__________

E-mail: __________________________ Phone:__________

Address: __________________________________________

City/State/Zip: ____________________________________________

Lobster license # (if applicable): __________________________

Payment info:  [ ] Visa  [ ] MasterCard  [ ] Check: #__________  **Total amount $__________**

Credit Card #:________________________ Exp. date:__________  CV code:__________

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---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Cat Marine Engines</strong></th>
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<th><strong>Power Output (HP)</strong></th>
<th><strong>Duty (kW)</strong></th>
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<td><strong>C9.3 Tier 3 Commercial Ratings:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>C18 Tier 3 Commercial Ratings:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>C32 Tier 3 Commercial Ratings:</strong></td>
<td>800</td>
<td>590</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

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- **Bedford Marine Services**
- **Burlington Yacht Service**
- **Camden Marine Corporation**
- **DePaul Diesel Services, Inc.**
- **Fairhaven Marine Company, Inc.**
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### Experimental Lease Applications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Town/Location</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Resource Type</th>
<th>Lease Term</th>
<th>Application Date</th>
<th>Site Review Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>New Meadows River, Phippsburg</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
<td>5/26/21</td>
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<td>Summit Point LLC</td>
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<td>Shellfish</td>
<td>20 yrs</td>
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<td>Suppi, Brent</td>
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<td>DeMeuro, Levi</td>
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<td>5/26/21</td>
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<td>Dirigo Marine Resources</td>
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<td>Ryan, Stuart</td>
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<td>5/26/21</td>
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<td>20 yrs</td>
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### Standard Lease Applications

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<th>Resource Type</th>
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<th>Site Review Date</th>
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<td>Acacia Farms LLC</td>
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<td>Coffin, Matthew &amp; Jack</td>
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<td>Goose Island Oysters LLC</td>
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<td>3 yrs</td>
<td>3/26/21</td>
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</tbody>
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**Experimental Lease: up to 3 years, 4 acres and is non-renewable; Standard Lease: term up to 20 years, size is up to 100 acres and is renewable.**
TO YOUR HEALTH: Consider your cholesterol

By Melissa Waterman

Each year most of us trudge into our primary care provider and have a once-over, known as an annual exam. It’s not fun but it’s necessary to tell us how our body, the only body that we will ever have, is doing as the years go by.

Your cholesterol levels are one of the key chemicals checked every year. Cholesterol is monitored via a blood sample. Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance made in the liver. It is found within every cell in your body and also in your blood. It is a vital element in the body, necessary for construction of cell walls, tissues, hormones and vitamin D, among other things.

So why are we all terrified about our cholesterol levels?
The human body makes all the cholesterol it needs on its own. We don’t need to add it into our bodies via our diets. Add too much cholesterol and you run the risk of heart disease and multiple other ailments.

Cholesterol is found in animal foods, such as meat, poultry, eggs and dairy products. It comes in two forms: LDL cholesterol (low-density lipoprotein) and HDL (high-density lipoprotein). LDL cholesterol is considered the “bad” cholesterol because it contributes to fatty build up in arteries. HDL, on the other hand, is a “good” cholesterol because it carries LDL cholesterol away from the arteries and back to the liver, where the LDL is broken down and passed from the body. More HDL and low LDL is a good place to be when it comes to cholesterol.

There’s another chemical that your body can’t make on its own. It’s a type of fat found in the blood. When you eat, your body converts any calories it doesn’t need immediately into triglycerides. Triglycerides are stored in your fat cells and will release needed energy between meals. If you regularly eat more calories than you burn, particularly from high-carbohydrate foods, you end up with a high triglyceride level.

A high triglyceride level combined with high LDL cholesterol or low HDL cholesterol is linked with fatty build up within arteries walls. Cholesterol combines with other substances to form a thick, hard deposit on the inside of the arteries. This can narrow the arteries and make them less flexible — a condition known as atherosclerosis. If a blood clot forms and blocks one of these narrowed arteries, a heart attack or stroke can result.

The American Heart Association recommends all adults 20 and older have their cholesterol checked every four to six years. As you get older, however, triglyceride and cholesterol levels increase. Increased weight as you grow older also kicks up the cholesterol level. For older individuals, it’s important to have these levels checked every year.

So how do you keep your cholesterol under control and how to you boost your LDL levels? Some simple steps can produce surprising results.

- Exercise regularly. Aim for at least 30 minutes of physical activity on most or all days of the week. Regular exercise can lower triglycerides and boost “good” cholesterol. Try to incorporate more physical activity into your daily tasks — for example, climb the stairs at work or take a walk during breaks.
- Avoid sugar and refined carbohydrates. Simple carbohydrates, such as sugar and foods made with white flour or fructose, can increase triglycerides.
- Lose weight. To reduce triglycerides, focus on cutting calories. Extra calories are converted to triglycerides and stored as fat. Reducing your calories will reduce triglycerides.
- Choose healthier fats. Trade saturated fat found in meats for healthier fat found in plants, such as olive and canola oils. Instead of red meat, try fish high in omega-3 fatty acids — such as mackerel or salmon. Avoid trans fats or foods with hydrogenated oils or fats.
- Limit how much alcohol you drink. Alcohol is high in calories and sugar and has a particularly potent effect on triglycerides. If you have severe hypertriglyceridemia, avoid drinking any alcohol.

### Cholesterol Levels

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Normal</th>
<th>Borderline high</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>Less than 150 mg/dL or less than 1.7 millennials per liter (mmol/L)</td>
<td>LDL is a good place to be when it comes to cholesterol.</td>
<td>LDL is broken down and passed from the body. More HDL and low LDL is a good place to be when it comes to cholesterol.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Borderline high</td>
<td>150 to 199 mg/dL (1.8 to 2.2 mmol/L)</td>
<td>There’s another chemical that your body can’t make on its own. It’s a type of fat found in the blood.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>200 to 499 mg/dL (2.3 to 5.6 mmol/L)</td>
<td>There’s another chemical that your body can’t make on its own. It’s a type of fat found in the blood.</td>
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Source: Mayo Clinic

### HEALTH CARE BARRIERS STEEP FOR DOWNEAST FISHERMEN

Summarized from The Maine Monitor, February 2023

A pilot study from the University of Maine at Machias found that Down East clammers and lobstermen face steep barriers to health care access, despite greater risks of job-related injuries and other health issues [see the October 2022 issue of Landings]. Tora Johnson, the study’s lead author and an associate professor at UMaine Machias, said “It’s pretty clear from the results here that harvesters are struggling to treat pain, and they experience a lot of it, and they get minimal help from the health care sector in treating that pain appropriately.”

In 2021, there were around 2,000 fishermen in Washington County and 1,700 in Hancock County, according to state data. The vast majority fish for lobster, with softshell clams a distant second. Most harvesters the team surveyed reported sustaining an injury while fishing in the preceding year. Especially common were back, neck, shoulder, arm and hand injuries, which could include frostbite, cuts and abrasions, or problems from falls or repetitive motions.

Fewer than a third of harvesters surveyed said they visited a medical practitioner or received a prescription to treat on-the-job injuries. Seventy percent of the harvesters reported actively avoiding going to a doctor, primarily due to high costs or a lack of free time.

Certain kinds of injuries depended on the fishery. Johnson said, Lobstermen appeared more at risk of falls and injuries from heavy gear on their vessels or could get hurt by rope or spiny bait. Clammers tended to suffer from frostbite or neuropathy, which causes pain and tingling in the extremities.

Johnson plans to get industry feedback on her research at the Maine Fishermen’s Forum in early March at Rockport. She hopes to work with state officials and advocacy groups on potential injury prevention programs, insurance reforms and other new resources.

#SaveMaine Lobstermen
mainelobstermen.org

HY-LINER ROPE COMPANY

Highest quality ropes made in Maine
SuperSink • SteelLiner • EasyPull • Float Ropes
HY-LINER ROPE COMPANY
ST. GEORGE, MAINE
A study led by the University of Maine captured how entire rockweed beds recover from harvest, and the practice has a smaller impact than previously thought. The study was published in the Journal of Experimental Marine Biology and Ecology.

Rockweed wields immense influence over its intertidal habitat. Its tangled branches form the backbone of a rich ecosystem that shelters and feeds an abundance of marine life. Everywhere rockweed grows, invertebrates, fish and fowl follow. The Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR) reports that commercial harvest has more than tripled over the past 20 years. Rockweed grows back following harvest, with biomass recovering faster than height. This change, combined with climbing harvest pressure, has led to concern regarding the practice.

UMaine ecologist Amanda Klemmer and her collaborators trampled Maine's tidal waters to examine the impact of rockweed harvest over the whole bed—a first for the species. Previous studies in the United States and Canada examined harvest impact at smaller scales or without control sites. The team chose to study harvest recovery over the whole bed, which mirrors the scale that both commercial harvesters and mobile animals, like birds and fishes, interact with rockweed.

The research team documented the biomass and height of rockweed in 100-meter-long swaths before and one year following commercial harvest. The study included 38 different sites from Harpswell to Cobscook Bay. The study found that harvest patterns were uneven, creating a mosaic of habitats across the bed. This indicates that harvest has less impact than found in previous studies with a smaller scale of focus. On average in the study, rockweed biomass fully recovered one year after harvest but the height remained lower where harvest occurred. They also found that sites with more intensive harvest were less likely to fully recover biomass and height in that time.

"These results suggest to me two bottom lines, first that harvesters exploit beds patchily, like individuals walking haphazardly with weed wackers. This dilutes the effects of harvest for the overall rockweed bed. Second, recovery of algal biomass post-harvest is faster than it is for algal height. This result has been shown before, but the speed of biomass recovery here is quite remarkable," says Chris Petersen, Emily and Mitchell Rales Chair in Ecology at the College of the Atlantic. "The harvest impacts on this foundational species appear less than I believe many would have predicted."

Klemmer and her team drew from the broad knowledge base of the harvest industry, conservation groups, state and federal agencies, and public interest groups to inform the study’s design. She hosted a stakeholder advisory panel in Belfast in 2018 and continued to engage with groups for the duration of the project. Altogether, they worked with more than 80 landowners and eight harvesters to gain access to and select sites for the study.

"Having everyone in that room to see what everyone’s priorities were and where we could find common ground was really meaningful. And to put a face to some names was also good from both perspectives. A lot of connections came out of those meetings, overall it was a great experience,” says Alison Feibel, senior resource biologist at Acadian Seaplants Limited.

UMaine researchers found that harvesting rockweed in a patchy manner allows the entire bed to recover well. UMaine photo.
Georges Bank lobster stock in response to a declining trend in lobster settlement since 2012. The Board’s goal was to avoid the economic devastation experienced by lobstermen in Southern New England (SNE) due to a decline in the SNE lobster stock. The Board approved its first draft of Addendum 27 in 2021 which included gauges changes which could be triggered by a 17% decline in lobster stock indices, and well as measures to standardize management measures across lobster management areas.

Work on the Addendum was paused when National Marine Fisheries Service announced that the Northeast Lobster fishery would be required to achieve a 90% risk reduction by 2024 to protect right whales. "Federal regulations proposed to protect right whales, such as trap reductions and large closed areas, would benefit the lobster stocks so it made sense to delay [Addendum 27] until the benefits of those measures could be assessed," Keliher said.

The landscape changed again in December of 2022 when Congress enacted a six-year delay in any new whale rules for the lobster industry while providing funding to better understand the threats facing right whales. "With the six-year pause in any new whale regulations coupled with the 23% decline in juvenile lobster indices, the lobster board agreed that it could not further delay taking some kind of action," Keliher said. Under the original Addendum 27, a 23% could have already triggered a change in the gauge size.

The Lobster Board voted to send a revised draft Addendum 27 out for public comment during its February meeting. The revised draft is less aggressive than the original proposal and considers a mechanism that would initiate management measures, specifically gauge and vent size changes, which could be triggered by a 32% decline in lobster stock indices. Proposed changes to the Area 1 minimum gauge range from 3 5/16” to 3”, while changes to the Area 3 maximum gauge range from 6 1/2” to 6” (status quo 6 ¾”). Trap reductions are not included as a management tool. It would establish minimum standards for regulations across all Lobster Management Areas (LMAs).

Maine lobstermen have experienced an unprecedented growth in landings during the past two decades, largely prompted by an increase in Gulf of Maine water temperature offering more areas suitable as lobster nurseries. Maine landings have increased three-fold, from 57 million pounds in 2000 to a record high of 132.6 million pounds in 2021. However, a decline in numbers across all lobster surveys, ventless trap and spring and fall trawl survey indices in particular, hints at a continued decline in lobster stock indices, the lobster board agreed.

The draft addendum also seeks to standardize management measures across all LMAs, such as maximum gauge size and definition of a V-notch. "Part of that is considering a maximum gauge size for outer Cape Cod. They don’t have one now," said Keliher.

A trigger that would cause new management measures to be implemented would be based on specific ongoing surveys of the lobster resource, namely, the combined Maine/New Hampshire and Massachusetts spring and fall trawl survey indices and the computer model-based ventless trap survey index. "The range [of decline] is now between 32% and 45,“ explained Keliher. That percentage is relative to the reference abundance level which is equal to the average of the survey values from 2016-2018, compared to the most recent year of survey data.

The other option is to create a date-specific trigger. "It would be status quo until 2026 and then the trigger goes into effect. After that it would take at least a year to implement," Keliher said.

Should the stock reach the trigger level, changes to gauge and vent sizes would be put in place to protect the spawning stock. Those changes might be made all at once — a single change in gauge and vent sizes — or be implemented gradually over time.

"I don’t support anything [in the draft addendum] until I have feedback from the public comment process," Keliher emphasized. "I want to reassure fishermen that the sky is not falling, but we are seeing some negative trends that are worrisome. We have a fishery that has always been based on conservation — size limits, V-notch ing, returning eggers. This is an extension of that."
The U.S.-Canada Lobster Town Meeting returned to Portland, Maine on February 3 and 4 after a two year hiatus due to the Covid pandemic. Hosted by the University of Maine’s Lobster Institute, the sold-out town meeting was held in Portland’s historic Mariner’s Church, recently purchased by the Portland Regency Hotel. The theme of this year’s meeting was the U.S. – Canadian lobster fishery and the North Atlantic right whale.

The Town Meeting welcomed more than 200 people from eight states and five Canadian provinces, its largest attendance ever. Attendees included harvesters, researchers, fisheries managers, lobster dealers, processors, political delegates, gear manufacturers, and non-profit representatives.

Four sessions were held over two days on topics including fishery regulations to future technology and gear innovations. Each session featured a panel of Canadian and U.S. representatives who were asked to share their perspectives.

The first panel addressed the status of regulations and new US federal funding. Brett Gilcrest, Director of Canada’s Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) and Melanie Giffin, Marine Biologist and program planner for the Prince Edward Island Fishermen’s Association provided Canada’s perspective, while Patrice McCarron, Executive Director of the Maine Lobstermen’s Association and Molly Ryan, a legislative assistant focused on environmental issues in Senator Collins’ office provided the U.S. perspective. A lively discussion among the panelists and meeting attendees covered protection measures taken by Canada and the U.S. fisheries to reduce whale entanglement risk, and as well as how the federal funds included in the 2022 Omnibus bill will be distributed in the U.S.

Another panel discussed market impacts of the lobster-whale controversy. Panel members included Marianne LaCroix, Executive Director of the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative; Curt Brown, marine biologist at Ready Seafood; Christina Ferranti-Clift, Director of Marketing at East Coast Seafood Group; Geoff Irvine, Executive Director of The Lobster Council of Canada; Owen Kenney, Vice President of Sales at Downeast Specialty Products; and Adam Morris, General Manager of the lobster division at Clearwater Seafoods.

Panelists discussed testing new gear types and expressed concern over the prohibitive pricing of certain proposed whale safe gears such as acoustic ropeless fishing. Conversation turned to safety considerations surrounding new ropes and weak links, as well as differences between Canadian and U.S. management efforts. The session concluded with a discussion on the current gear testing efforts taking place on both sides of the border.

The meeting successfully achieved its goal of fostering communication between stakeholders in both the U.S. and Canada on the present and future of the lobster industry. Next year, the U.S. Canada Town Meeting will take place in Canada, following the tradition of alternating meeting locations between the two countries.

The second day of the meeting, a session focused on future technology and gear innovations for the industry. Panelists were Kristan Porter, President of Maine Lobstermen’s Association; Noah Oppenheim of Homarus Strategies LLC; Jeremy Willey, lobsterman and CEO of Maine Fish Tech; Luc LeBlanc, a fisheries advisor for the Maritime Fishermen’s Union; Kenneth LeClair, Vice President of the Prince Edward Island Fishermen’s Association; and Bernie Berry, President of the Coldwater Lobster Association.

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The conversation covered the impact of warming waters on the primary prey of right whales (copepods) and the resulting changes in right whale distribution. Researchers are using data on oceanographic indicators, in particular change in the relative influence of the Gulf Stream and Labrador Current and the abundance of Calanus finmarchicus, to develop better models for predicting new right whale habitats. Warmer waters also seem to be exceeding the ideal conditions for lobster in the southern part of its range with more favorable conditions in the north, leading to a net northward shift in abundance, with noteworthy increases in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

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The meeting successfully achieved its goal of fostering communication between stakeholders in both the U.S. and Canada on the present and future of the lobster industry. Next year, the U.S. Canada Town Meeting will take place in Canada, following the tradition of alternating meeting locations between the two countries.

The conversation covered the impact of warming waters on the primary prey of right whales (copepods) and the resulting changes in right whale distribution. Researchers are using data on oceanographic indicators, in particular change in the relative influence of the Gulf Stream and Labrador Current and the abundance of Calanus finmarchicus, to develop better models for predicting new right whale habitats. Warmer waters also seem to be exceeding the ideal conditions for lobster in the southern part of its range with more favorable conditions in the north, leading to a net northward shift in abundance, with noteworthy increases in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.
ability certification, the Maine Certified Sustainable Lobster Association hired MRAG Americas to conduct a costly full audit of the Gulf of Maine lobster fishery. The audit was completed in June 2022 and determined that the fishery met all of the MSC’s criteria for certification. However, a group of environmental organizations, which participated in the assessment, objected to the audit’s findings. Under MSC protocols, an objection is sent to an independent adjudicator for review.

“The independent auditor concluded that the Maine lobster fishery met the requirements for re-certification,” said Lacroix. “Despite participating in the assessment process, environmental groups lodged an objection to the certification and were granted an arbitration process, even though their data were already taken into consideration in the auditor’s recommendation. The process since that time has highlighted the shortcomings of the MSC process.”

But it didn’t end there. Following a July 2022 federal court ruling that NMFS’s 2021 Biological Opinion was invalid, the MSC announced suspension of the Gulf of Maine lobster fishery because it was no longer in compliance with all relevant laws. It was noted, however, that the June 2022 independent assessment found no evidence that the Maine lobster fishery is responsible for entanglements or interactions with right whales. Nevertheless, the suspension took effect December 15, 2022.

There was a ray of hope that MSC would reinstate its certification of the lobster fishery in December 2022, when President Biden signed the Omnibus Spending bill through which the United States Congress declared that the Gulf of Maine lobster fishery was in full compliance with all relevant laws. It was noted, however, that the June 2022 independent assessment found no evidence that the Maine lobster fishery is responsible for entanglements or interactions with right whales. Nevertheless, the suspension took effect December 15, 2022.

“We didn’t want to go through the objection process,” said the individual, whose company is part of the client group. “The only way to avoid that is to withdraw and then start the certification process from scratch again. We just paid for a full independent audit last year and now we have to pay for it all over again. The MSC is a farce, a joke. It is an embarrassment for sustainable fishers world-wide.”

As a result of the withdrawal, the independent adjudicator stated that “as there is no ongoing assessment, the objections process is no longer applicable, and we consider the matter closed.”

“It does a disservice to customers and consumers who rely on the MSC label to require the fishery to go through the time and expense of a new assessment process in order to regain MSC certification,” added Lacroix.
In mid-February, a 20-year-old, 43-foot male right whale, was found washed ashore on Virginia Beach. A necropsy team determined the whale died from a "catastrophic" blunt force traumatic injury from a vessel, which damaged a large portion of the vertebral column. There was no evidence of recent entanglement. In January a right whale called Argo, a 42-year-old male, was seen entangled in line with trailing traps off the North Carolina.

Disentanglement teams from the mid- and southeast Atlantic region successfully removed the gear from the whale. An investigation by U.S. officials and Canada's Dept of Fisheries and Oceans determined the fishing gear was from lobster gear from LFA 33 in southern Nova Scotia. It has not yet been determined if this whale was seriously injured by the entanglement.

NEW DOWNEAST MARINE PATROL OFFICER

Ben Wiant of Romulus, New York joined the Maine Marine Patrol as its newest Officer. He will serve in the communities of Harrington, Jonesport, Beals and Ben Wiant. From 2019-2020 Wiant served as a Public Safety Ranger for the New York State Police. He conducted incident investigation, safety promotion, and traffic control. From 2019-2021 Officer Wiant also served as a Security Guard in the Carrier Dome, home to Syracuse University's football, basketball, and lacrosse teams. Officer Wiant received a B.S. in Forestry Resource Management from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry in 2021. "Officer Wiant's patrol includes some of the busiest commercial fishing communities in our state," said Marine Patrol Major Rob Beal. "We're pleased to have someone with Officer Wiant's initiative join this patrol so we can carry on our strong Marine Patrol presence Downeast."

VENTLESS TRAP PARTICIPANTS SOUGHT

The Department of Marine Resources, in cooperation with the Gulf of Maine Lobster Foundation, seeks four industry participants for the Regional Ventless Trap Program. This program is conducted every year from June to August as a collaborative research effort between industry and scientists in which juvenile lobster data are collected using ventless traps for use in the lobster stock assessment. This is an opportunity to participate in a cooperative research project between industry and scientists.

If you are interested in participating in the program, the application materials and additional information can be found at [https://www.maine.gov/dmr/about-us/rfps](https://www.maine.gov/dmr/about-us/rfps). Questions regarding the Ventless Trap Survey Program or the application process should be directed to Kathleen.Reardon@maine.gov.

OPTIMISM FUELS UPTICK IN N.S. FISHERY LOAN APPLICATIONS

More young people are entering the Nova Scotia fishing industry, based on figures from the Nova Scotia Fisheries and Aquaculture Loan Board. The province exported $2.5 billion in seafood in 2021, an increase of 21% from five years ago.

In the 2021-22 fiscal year, 38% of the loan applications approved by the Board were for new entrants. The Board made $70.1 million in new loans and had outstanding loans totalling $263.8 million in 2021-22. Lending was up 18% over the previous year. Fishermen are investing in newer and bigger boats and new fishing gear, purchases that often involve the loan board. Applications for new entrants are trending even higher than in 2021-22. As of December, new entrants for 2022-23 made up 42.4% of approved applications by the loan board.

MASSACHUSETTS LOBSTERMEN SUE OVER WHALE CLOSURE

The Massachusetts Lobstermen’s Association sued the National Marine Fisheries Service in February over an emergency closure of fishing grounds that is designed to protect the North Atlantic right whale. The closure, which was first implemented in 2021, was once again enacted on February 1, closing about 200 square miles of Massachusetts Bay from lobster fishing until the end of April. The Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association lawsuit contends the closure is illegal and will cause economic harm to the industry. The Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries has said the closures are important "to protect seasonal aggregations of right whales from potential entanglements in buoy lines."

ELECTRIC BOAT TRAINING COURSE LOOKS TO THE FUTURE

The Island Institute has partnered with Maine Electric Boat, the Maine community college system, and the Mid-Coast School of Technology to develop a three-part training course that will create stable, sustainable career opportunities for Maine residents while boosting the confidence of would-be electric boat buyers. The first course is a free, 90-minute online video training that offers an overview of electric boats, their likely growth in Maine, and the career opportunities available in the field. At the conclusion of the course, participants complete a quiz to earn a digital badge from Kennebec Valley Community College. In the month since the first course was released in December, more than 100 people have signed up and 25 have earned their digital badges. Two additional courses are expected to launch this spring and summer.
March 2-4

March 3
Maine Lobstermen’s Association 69th annual meeting, 9 a.m., Samoset Resort, Rockport.

March 7
Public hearing on draft Amendment 27, 4-6 p.m., Freeport High School café.

March 8
Public hearing webinar on draft Amendment 27, 4-6 p.m. Register at https://register.gotowebinar.com/r/4667615366094581691.

March 9
Public hearing on draft Amendment 27, 4-6 p.m., Ellsworth High School cafeteria.

March 10
Save Maine Lobstermen Fundraiser, Robinson’s Wharf, 5 p.m., Southport. FMI: keving@mainelobstermen.org

DMM 2023 Menhaden Rules, comments due. Email: dmm.rulenmaking@maine.gov.

March 12-14

March 13
MLA Bus to Seafood Expo North America. FMI: email and@mainelobstermen.org.

March 21
Aquaculture public hearing, Maine Fresh Sea Farms, 4 p.m., South Bristol Town Hall, Walpole.

March 23-26
Massachusetts Lobstermen’s Association Annual Weekend & Industry Trade Show, Hyannis Resort and Conference Center, Hyannis, MA 02601. FMI: https://lobstermen.com/annual-weekend.

March 25
Save Maine Lobstermen Fundraiser, 1pm to 6pm, Phippsburg Sportsmans Club. FYI: keving@mainelobstermen.org.

March 27
Shellfish Advisory Council meeting, 2:30-5:30, DMR office building, room 118.

March 31
ASMFC Addendum 27 comments due. Email to comments@asmfc.org, subject line: Lobster Draft Addendum XXVII.

More details on all of these events can be found online at www.mainelobstermen.org

**SUPPORT FOR SAVEMAINELOBSTERMEN IS LIGHTING UP!**

By Kevin Kelley

You could say that the future of the #SaveMaineLobstermen campaign looks a lot brighter these days thanks to a new partnership with Durabrite. In February, the New Jersey-based commercial advanced lighting solutions manufacturer unveiled a new line of #SaveMaineLobstermen-branded lights and pledged to donate 20% of the proceeds from this special collection to the #SaveMaineLobstermen campaign.

On its website Durabrite writes, “Over the past 10 years, every time without fail, it was the support of Maine fishermen that solidified our presence in the marine industry. Because of this connection to the Maine fishing community, we have gotten to know our customers on a name-by-name basis. They’ve told us their stories, we’ve developed our products to better serve them, and many of them have become our friends, and so our investment in Maine lobsters is a personal one. Durabrite would not be the Durabrite you know today without Maine lobsters. We want to reinvest in the community that invested in us. We are all in it together!”

Demonstrating just how close-knit the fishing community is, the company says the first lights from the SML collection were sold to an Alaskan crab fisherman. The SML collection consists of a pro, mini, and nano size light and can be seen and purchased directly from Durabrite’s website https://durabritelightshop.com/collections/savemainelobstermen.

In other SML news, Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA) board president Kristan Porter was the featured speaker at a “Hot Stove” talk hosted by the Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce on Saturday, February 11. Porter outlined for the group the challenges that continue to face Maine’s lobster industry with regard to federal rules intended to protect the endangered North Atlantic right whale. Betsy Vickery, vice president of sales and marketing at W.S. Emerson, a promotional marketing company in Brewer, attended Porter’s talk and unveiled a new line of promotional products designed to help #SaveMaineLobstermen, including t-shirts, sweatshirts, hats, and other items. These products can be seen at https://supportmainelobster.terminator.com/shop/home.

Finally, several fundraising events are scheduled as we head into spring. “All Hands on Deck” Community Fundraising events will take place in Kittery on February 26 and in Phippsburg on March 25. Robinson’s Wharf in Southport will host an event on Friday, March 10, featuring music by Maine-based band 12/OC. Tickets for this event went fast and it is sold out! Finally, the MLA has been working with the City of Auburn, which recently announced that it will host its first “Lobster Festival” on Saturday, May 6. The event will feature live music, Maine craft brews, food trucks and, of course, lobster! The MLA will proudly participate as we help spread “lobster love” up the Androscoggin River.
WE HELP CREATE A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR LOBSTERMEN

We’ve served Maine lobstermen for over 10 years, and you’ve become central to the DuraBrite Lights story.

We’re reinvesting in the community with our SaveMaineLobstermen product line. 20% of proceeds—not just profits—go directly to the Maine Lobster Association.

SCAN THE QR CODE TO SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

Complete and Committed.

THE SCANIA MARINE SOLUTION.

Out there, confidence in performance, reliability and operating economy are the only things that count. With this in mind, we created the Scania marine solution: An array of flexible options including ratings, equipment, instrumentation and transmissions. Whatever your specification, we will provide you with the optimal Scania marine solution.

Power at work, every inch of the way.