The sea provides many things: food, a means of transportation, a way to make a living. And not least of all, it provides artistic inspiration, and has since people first looked out over the waves.

The men and women of Maine’s lobstering community are not immune to the inspiration the sea provides and the lure of the written word, and that inspiration has given rise to a small but growing cadre of home-grown fishermen poets. For the past two years, Maine Maritime Museum has been pleased to give those seagoing writers a forum to present their work to the public.

In March, the museum, along with DiMillo’s On the Water restaurant on the Portland waterfront, hosted the second annual Voices of the Sea: The Poetry and Song of Maine’s Fishermen. For the past two years, Maine Maritime Museum has been pleased to give those seagoing writers a forum to present their work to the public.

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Stonington lobsterman Frank Gotwals performs at the 2013 Voices of the Sea event. Photo courtesy of the Maine Maritime Museum.

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This column first appeared in April as an editorial in the Portland Press Herald.

Maine’s lobster industry is one of the few truly sustainable fisheries in the world. Currently the Maine Legislature is considering a bill (L.D.1097) to dismantle one of the pillars of lobster conservation by allowing lobsters caught in trawl gear to be landed at the Portland Fish Exchange. This bill would weaken Maine’s longstanding lobster conservation plan and undermine the industry’s efforts to expand the marketing and branding of Maine lobster by associating it with a lower quality, less sustainable product. Furthermore, the Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA) strongly believes that it will not save Maine’s groundfish industry or the Portland Fish Exchange.

The lobster industry’s stewardship practices reflect the sacrifices and tough decisions made by previous generations of lobstermen. These lobstermen had the foresight to put strict conservation practices in place to ensure a robust fishery for future generations. Maine lobstermen are required to fish only with traps and to protect baby lobsters, breeding females and oversized lobsters by returning them to the sea unharmed. The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) awarded Maine the lobster fishery its prestigious sustainability certification in recognition of these practices. It is difficult to comprehend why the state Legislature would entertain changing harvesting methods to ones that are known to be less sustainable than the current standard.

The MLA strongly believes that lobster should only be caught with traps, and has always opposed the existing federal allowance that permits trawlers to take 100 lobsters per day or 500 lobsters per week. This so-called bycatch allowance is abused by some draggers who set their trawls directly on lobsters in order to land their full allowance. By contrast, Maine lobstermen are not permitted to land any groundfish incidentally caught in their traps. Lobster traps are a passive gear that allow lobsters to move freely in and out, and retain only a small percentage of those which enter. Egg-bearing and reproductive females are less likely to enter traps. By contrast, a trawl towed by a dragger is active gear that catches any lobster in its path. Each time lobsters are caught in a trawl, their claws or shells can become broken or damaged. Pregnant female lobsters may lose their eggs. Longer-term impacts resulting from the stress of being snagged and mauled in trawl nets are not known.

The current bill is also troubling because it targets offshore lobsters. These lobsters are largely left alone by Maine lobstermen due to their inability to intensively fish such a broad area with traps. Female lobsters produce increasing numbers of eggs each year of life; harvesting large lobsters and breeding females could have a negative impact on lobster reproduction over time.

Maine needs a strong, vibrant groundfish fleet to help sustain our coastal economy and preserve our fishing heritage. But the future of the groundfish industry hangs on much more than its ability to land lobster. In 2004 the Governor’s Groundfish Task Force made more than 30 recommendations to stabilize and improve the state’s fleet. None suggested repealing the law forbidding draggers to land lobsters in Maine ports.

State and industry leaders should be looking to give the groundfishing fleet a boost with solutions that don’t require dismantling a cornerstone of lobster conservation.

There are many other questions yet to be answered. Given the status of the groundfish industry, how many additional pounds of groundfish would actually come to the Portland Fish Exchange if the proper incentives were in place? And why aren’t some of the 126 million pounds of trap-caught lobster currently landed in the state sold through the Exchange now? If one of the overarching goals of this bill is to save the Portland Fish Exchange, it seems Maine’s existing lobster fishery has a lot to offer. Trading lobster in a public auction in fact could help the lobster industry by fostering competition and adding transparency to lobster pricing.

The MLA supports President of the Legislature Alfond’s proposal to use state funds to purchase federal groundfish permits and thus provide Maine’s groundfishing fleet access to more fish. This measure could benefit all of Maine’s groundfish vessels, both those inshore and the larger offshore boats. This action is just one example of a constructive, rather than destructive, approach to improving the health of the fleet. Past measures, such as the sales tax exemption on diesel fuel and state programs to maintain working waterfront infrastructure, have also garnered support from the MLA. Such incentives help keep Maine in the business of fishing.

We need strong leadership to create a business-friendly environment for Maine’s groundfish fleet and implement a suite of incentives attractive to these businesses. Short-term economic gains for one sector of Maine’s fishing industry do not justify sacrificing the long-term sustainability of another.

Patrice McCarron
It was three years ago that Sharp, a legendary schooner captain and owner of the Rockland Sail, Power and Steam Museum, teamed up with his old friend, folksinger Gordon Bok to create a poetry gathering at the museum on Penobscot Bay, “Jim put together a terrific event,” Nelson said, but we thought it would be worth doing something along those lines in the Portland area as well. So we worked with Jim and Gordon to create Voices of the Sea. There’s certainly room on the Coast of Maine for both. And so far they have both proven popular and have been building momentum over the few years we’ve been doing it.

After deciding to hold the event in Portland, the next question became, where in Portland? “My first thought was to have it right in the Portland Fish Exchange,” Nelson said. “I thought, what a perfect venue! But when we talked to the people at the Exchange they pointed out that the building has to be kept at around forty five degrees, so that put an end to that idea.”

Instead, the museum approached DiMillo’s restaurant, which was already a business partner, and DiMillo’s in turn agreed to host the event on the upper deck for a discounted rate.

Jason Morin, the museum’s director of public programs, was particularly enthusiastic about the choice. “When you look out the windows, there’s the fishing fleet and the working waterfront, and here’s DiMillo’s, which is the end user, the place where the catch reaches the consumer.” Plus, to top it off, DiMillo’s upper deck features a cash bar.

The first Voices of the Sea, in 2012, was hosted by Gordon Bok. This year’s emcee duties were taken up by Maine storyteller and writer John McDonald. As one might expect in a state where a majority of fishermen harvest lobster, a majority of the fishermen poets are lobstermen as well. This year’s line-up included Jack Merrill, who lobsters out of Little Cranberry Island. An active member of the Maine Lobstermen’s Association since the early 1980’s including over 20 years as vice president, Jack has represented Maine fisherman poets on the West Coast, having been invited to read his work at the FisherPoets Gathering in Astoria several times.

Also writing poetry and lobstering out of Little Cranberry Island is Stefanie Alley. “There is something about sharing words that have meaning in what I see and experience,” Stefanie said, concerning her poetry. “Getting words written down, and working with them takes time and concentration. Working on the water and lobstering, I get inspiration for writing, I also get inspired by the men and women who go lobstering and how they have an ingrained sense of stewardship for the resource.”

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Though Voices of the Sea is billed as a poetry event, it actually features performers from a variety of genres. Frank Gotvalls, who lobsters out of Stonington, delighted the audience with his powerful folksongs that illuminate his life on the water and as part of a Maine fishing community. Storytellers such as John McDonald and former Coast Guardsman Kendall Morse also took to the stage to share their work.

After two years, all involved agree that Voices of the Sea is an event that should keep going, and one that they hope will continue to grow. “In Astoria they’ve been doing this for sixteen years,” Jack Merrill pointed out. “It started small and just kept building every year.”

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www.smithwick-ins.com
By Eliot Cutler

There’s a great story about two young fish swimming along in a stream. They happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way. “Mornin’, boys,” goes the older fellas. “How’s the water?” The two young fish nod back and move on for a bit. Eventually, one of them looks over and asks his pal, “What the heck is water?”

For much too long that’s been our state’s attitude about the world marketplace in which Maine lobster and seafood exporters swim and compete. What’s the world market? What’s branding?

We’d better learn . . . fast. Maine’s economy and our kids’ futures will be driven by how well we develop a Maine brand and build export markets for Maine products (including the Maine tourist experience, which is our biggest export product of all).

After I lost my campaign for governor in 2010, I joined with friends and partners and formed two firms—Maine Seafood Ventures and MaineAsia—to export Maine coast products. We’ve introduced Chinese buyers to raw frozen whole Maine lobsters and to yachts built by Maine craftsmen at the Sabre, Back Cove, Hinckley, Hodgdon and Morris yards.

We’ve been successful: Chinese consumers are learning about Maine lobster from online video, and Maine lobster producers are beginning to displace more expensive product from Australia that doesn’t taste as sweet and – horrors – has no claws. Affluent Chinese are reading about Maine-built boats in top Chinese and Asian magazines; Chinese tourism to Maine is growing; and more Chinese parents are paying top dollar to send their kids to Maine schools and colleges.

I know from this firsthand experience that if we work together and do it right, we can make Maine an economic powerhouse.

First, the State of Maine must develop and build an overarching, umbrella brand for Maine that motivates people around the world to place a higher value on everything we make and sell and on the experience of visiting Maine. For decades we’ve been asleep at the switch; we’ve allowed a strong, even mythic brand to languish. Too many people in too many places have no idea who we are and what’s so great about what Mainers harvest, grow and make.

Over the years, Maine has changed our slogans – central to a branding strategy – faster than our weather changes. We need to get serious. If “Virginia is for lovers,” if we all “C’mon NY,” and if pork can be “the new white meat,” then we ought to be able to figure out a brand for Maine that will help persuade people to buy our export products. For a state whose coastal economic cluster – seafood, boatingbuilding, tourism – should be a jobs engine, there aren’t many more important investments in our kids’ futures that we can make.

Second, we need to be focused and smart about our competitive advantages and our marketing efforts. There are a million of the year and certain markets and uses where Maine lobster should have a competitive advantage over the Canadian competition in Chinese and Asian markets. But what stands in the way of our greater success are the facts that 99.5% of China’s 1.3 billion people have no idea where or what Maine is; and if they see a lobster with claws, they call it Boston or Canadian lobster.

If we build the umbrella Maine brand and craft a set of marketing strategies and messages for Maine lobster and other seafood products that leverages our competitive advantages, we will build demand for our exports, greater demand from more markets will absorb our supplies, and our boat and wharf prices will rise.

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By Sarah Paquette

Andrew Hallinan, 17, and his sternman Matt Burnham, 15, are both looking forward to the end of the school year. Andrew, a junior at Boothbay Region High School and Matt, a freshman, both come from fishing families and thoroughly enjoy their time on the water. "We go out even in bad weather sometimes," Andrew said with a grin. "There was one day when we were the only people on the water because it was so bad out." Andrew just got his license this January, after fishing under a student license since he was ten. He lobsters from his 26-foot General Marine. It's a Gamble. That's the name the boat came with when he bought it from his cousin in 2011, when he replaced his old boat.

Matt, in turn, bought Andrew’s old boat and has slowly been saving up for newer and better gear. "Most of the stuff I use now isn’t that great," he admitted, but he hopes to add some new gear soon and possibly learn to build his own traps. "I think it would be cool to build my own traps, And it will save money," he explained. Andrew, on the other hand, prefers to have his traps made by a local man. "I usually have the supplies for him, so I can get them pretty cheap," he said. Andrew and Matt said they were accepted into the Boothbay Harbor lobstering community quickly and without any trouble. "Our grandfathers were good friends with everyone down here so that made it easy for us," Matt explained. Andrew grew up on the water, learning to fish from his father and other community members. He began lobstering in a Boston whaler with his dad and two older brothers, and then graduated to a skiff when he got his student license. He has now worked his way up to a bigger boat and 300 traps. "Not many people my age can say they own a boat and a truck," he said proudly. Next school year, as a senior, Andrew plans to participate in the high school's work-study program to continue lobstering through the school year. "I fish some during the school year now, but it will be nice to be able to go out more next year," Andrew said. He said he would rather be on the water than in school and plans to lobster full-time once he graduates. "My brothers stopped lobstering after high school and went on to college. I don't want to do that. It's hard to get back in once you leave lobstering and I like working and making money," Matt, on the other hand, would like to attend college after he graduates from Boothbay Region High School. "I think it's good to have a back-up plan," he said. Both agree, though, that making money by doing something they love is a good deal. "Some kids in school treat us differently because we miss school to go lobstering," Matt said. "But not many of them are making the money we do and have paid for their own vehicles." This winter Andrew and Matt helped their basketball team win Western State Basketball Class C and compete for the title of state champions. "I don't think we (Boothbay Region High School) have won the state championship game since 2001. But we did win the semi-finals last year, too," Andrew said. When the weather warms up and they aren't on the water, Andrew enjoys playing golf with friends. "We just play for fun. Some-
GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE AND YOU: Warmer water and shell disease

by Melissa Waterman

For the sake of argument, let’s just agree that the Gulf of Maine is becoming warmer. It’s not about to boil away into steam, but the traditionally colder water temperatures of the Gulf have risen, most notably at depth. That change will affect Homarus americanus, both for good and for ill. As stated in previous articles in this publication, warm water allows juvenile lobsters a leg up in terms of growth and frequency of molt. Keep raising the temperature, however, and certain negative consequences will follow.

Those negative consequences have been felt most keenly during the past two decades by lobstermen in southern New England. A series of environmental and human factors have led to a marked decline in southern New England lobster stocks, a decline so steep that the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission declared the population overfished in 2010. Like frogs or iguanas, lobsters are poikilotherms, animals that are unable to regulate their internal body temperature. As a result, the inside of a lobster is basically the same temperature as the water around it. Water temperatures thus affect the lobster’s metabolism. Make the temperature too cold, and the animal’s processes, such as growth and egg production, slow down. Raise the temperatures too high and the animal becomes susceptible to diseases that it would otherwise be able to fight off.

One of those diseases is called epizootic shell disease (found in wild-caught lobsters, epizootic simply means a disease that affects many animals at the same time). Shell disease in lobsters was first noticed by fisheries biologists in New England in the mid-1980s. By the mid-1990s, the disease had become widespread among southern New England lobsters.

The disease attacks the very thin layer of waxy outer shell, which is eroded by pores in the shell. At first there are just unsightly lesions on the shell surface. Then that topmost layer of shell is eroded away. After that, the surface bacteria multiply and penetrate down into the pores. The lesions spread, undermining the calcium-based exocuticle, stripping out the calcium and leaving the shell weak and papery. These lesions can be so severe that they fully penetrate the shell, causing it to fuse to the membranes beneath it.

Research biologists have found in laboratory samples that lobsters with shell disease have markedly high levels in their blood of the hormone that causes a lobster to molt. Typically female lobsters do not molt during the many months they are carrying their eggs on the abdomen. However, shell disease lobsters, male or female, appear to molt more frequently, “an effective strategy to get rid of shells affected by the disease before the cuticle is severely compromised,” according to a paper on the New England Lobster Research Initiative published last year in the Journal of Shellfish Research. Ditching the eggs before they are viable is not normal for a female lobster and it certainly does poorly for a resurgence of the southern New England stock.

But what connection do warmer water temperatures have to the prevalence of shell disease? The Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (MDMF) has been concentrating on that question for many years now. Buzzards Bay, for example, has seen a sharp reduction in its lobster populations, with those animals that remain now hiding in the deeper colder waters near the mouth of the Bay and Vineyard Sound, according to a paper presented by Tracy Pugh of the MDMF at the U.S.-Canadian Science Symposium held in Portland last November. Much of the upper part of Buzzards Bay now experiences extremely warm water temperatures during the summer, often in excess of 20° C for many days at a time.

The trend of increased shell disease prevalence in southern New England coincides very well with an increase in the number of days water temperatures were at or above 20° C (68° F), which is a physiologically stressful temperature threshold for lobsters,” explained Pugh in a recent email. “The mechanism that actually causes disease is not clear, whether it be something related to the lobster (depressed immune system, for example) or to the bacteria (maybe increased bacterial activity), but the stressed condition of the lobster seems to be a pre-condition for disease. There are likely several factors that influence whether a lobster will get shell disease, one of which is stressful warm water temperatures.”

So what’s happening along the Maine coast? Have increasing water temperatures led to more instances of shell disease? The Department of Marine Resources (DMR) has been monitoring sea surface temperatures in Boothbay Harbor since 1905. A study conducted by Diane Cowan of The Lobster Conservancy in Friendship indicated that between 1993 and 2010 the annual sea surface temperature there increased by nearly 3° C. (8.5° to 11.3° C).

Continued on page 17
By Shelley Wigglesworth

Monique Coombs can sum up her work in the Maine fishing industry in six words: “Eat local seafood. Support commercial fishermen.” The 32-year-old energetic Orr’s Island resident is a lobsterman’s wife, mother of two, proud community member and fisherman’s activist. Coombs founded Lobsters on the Fly in 2008, an organization working along the coast of Maine to promote local seafood in innovative, grassroots ways.

“Lobsters on the Fly aims to enhance the relationships between fishermen, fishing communities and consumers,” Coombs explained. “We achieve our objectives by teaching cooking classes, participating in local food system conversations, and on-line media, conducting speaking engagements and other projects.” Its Web site (www.lobstersonthefly.org) features Coombs’ commentary on a variety of topics related to seafood, local foods, and her life on Orrs Island.

Coombs is also the co-coordinator of the Eat Local Foods Coalition in Maine and chair of the Maine Seafood Marketing Network, a collaboration of individuals and organizations in the fishing industry working to support the marketing of Maine’s seafood. “It’s been pretty successful. We [the members] have all come to the conclusion that it is most helpful when we keep it simple so we meet once every other month to update each other on our projects and those who want to can collaborate. It’s been a really great way to get to know people in the industry,” said Coombs.

Coombs is in an unusual position when it comes to promoting her causes because she has the benefit of seeing things through the eyes of fishermen and I’m very passionate about local food,” Coombs explained. Her involvement began with a simple seafood cookbook that she produced, published and sold. She then donated the cookbook’s proceeds to the Maine Lobstermen’s Association.

After that initial endeavor, Coombs wanted to do more. “A farmer friend of mine and I had coffee one day and I told her I wanted seafood to be more prominent in the local food movement. She said something like, ‘So do it,’” Coombs said with a laugh.

After starting Lobsters on the Fly, Coombs turned to creating the Maine Seafood Marketing Network, a collaboration of individuals and organizations in the fishing industry that are hurtful to fishermen to consumers.”

Coombs attended high school at North Yarmouth Academy then went on to Saint Michael’s College in Vermont. She became interested in promoting Maine’s fishing industry for several reasons. “I think there are some very serious myths in the media and our society about the fishing industry that are hurtful to fishermen and I’m very passionate about local food,” Coombs explained.

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Coombs is in an unusual position when it comes to promoting her causes because she has the benefit of seeing things through the eyes of a consumer, a coastal resident and an insider directly involved through her own fishing family. “Every time I make a decision or think about what I try to come at it from the perspective of ‘how is this going to affect my community?’”

I am going to say or do I try to come at it from the perspective of ‘how is this going to affect my community?’ I know firsthand what it’s like when someone talks about losing traps, not being able to go out fishing, high prices for fish and fuel because this is what we talk about at the dinner table, not how we can change it but how it’s going to affect how we can pay our bills,” she explained.

Sam Grimly, project manager in the Sustainable Seafood Program at GMRI, thinks highly of Coombs’ efforts. “Monique possesses a strong
UNDERWATER VIDEO GIVES NEW VIEW OF SINKING GROUNDLINE

By Kate McClellan

Since the sinking groundline rule took effect in the Gulf of Maine, the Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA) has regularly heard from lobstermen about frequent chafing observed between the first and second trap in a trawl. Based on feedback from the industry, the Consortium for Wildlife Bycatch Reduction and the MLA decided to investigate the problem by placing cameras in lobster traps to collect video of interactions among the groundline, trap, and sea bottom.

With the help of engineers from the University of New Hampshire and Blue Water Concepts in Eliot, Maine, we took a typical lobster trap and inserted three GoPro cameras to record rope movements. One camera was positioned at the front of the trap to look out on the groundline, the second looked out the side of the trap to capture any wrapping, and the third camera was placed looking up. The sinking groundline used in the trials was marked with duct tape every foot in a unique pattern so we could determine where the rope interacted with the sea floor or trap.

In the fall of 2012, Heather Tetreault from the MLA contracted with lobstermen from southern, midcoast, and downeast Maine to conduct field trials under real fishing conditions.

We chose to record videos in three distinct locations in the Gulf of Maine so we could observe a variety of different sea bottoms, tidal and current conditions, and water depths. The three lobstermen also fished different gear configurations, setting between two and ten traps and using different brands of rope, buoys and weights. Heather and each lobsterman went out on three consecutive days and deployed the gear two hours prior to the tide change. The three days of video from downeast Maine during the first three days of field work. In this picture, you can clearly see where the groundline hits the sea floor, which is about six feet from where it is attached to the four-point bridle and vertical line. The vertical line is composed of sinking line on top and floating groundline on the bottom, which provides the buoyancy that is lifting the first few feet of the sinking groundline. The video that this image came from shows the groundline moving slowly back and forth in the water column due to the influence of tide and current. The line also moves up and down, due to the surface water tugging on the vertical line.

The Consortia and the MLA have continued these trials, the groundline never touched the sea floor; sometimes it was even observed over the trap. On one of the days, the current was running so strongly that the line is seen taut, with very little movement (see photo above). The cameras also recorded some other interesting events, including lobsters moving around the trap and ropes, fish, and a pair of ghost ropes floating past the active gear.

The gear was set down on different types of substrate described by the lobstermen as hard mix, gravel, rocky, mud, and sand. The weather ranged from calm and sunny to rain with high seas and wind. The gear was set at depths ranging from 55 feet to 108 feet. A total of 68 hours and 28 minutes of video was collected over the 10 days in the field.

One of the best images of sinking groundline chafing came from southern Maine during the first three days of fieldwork. In this picture, you can clearly see where the groundline hits the sea floor, which is about six feet from where it is attached to the four-point bridle and vertical line. The vertical line is composed of sinking line on top and floating groundline on the bottom, which provides the buoyancy that is lifting the first few feet of the sinking groundline. The video that this image came from shows the groundline moving slowly back and forth in the water column due to the influence of tide and current. The line also moves up and down, due to the surface water tugging on the vertical line.

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Each trap was set two hours before tide change and hauled two hours after.

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sustainable competitive advantages and most compelling messages. Recognizing this need, MLPC issued a request for proposals last fall from firms specializing in the creation of marketing strategies. After reviewing proposals and hearing presentations, MLPC hired FutureShift to develop a brand strategy. FutureShift’s approach is centered around customer engagement, focusing on the needs, frustrations and perceptions of our customers. Developing a brand strategy that marries customers’ needs with our industry’s capabilities gives us the best possibility of a strong return on investment.

FutureShift’s process involved conducting both an internal assessment of the industry (Maine lobster fishermen, dealers, processors) and an external assessment (chefs, foodservice operators, retail buyers, media). A market assessment will provide information on market channels, geographic regions and competitive advantages. The final product will be an action plan that includes a comprehensive approach to the way we market Maine lobster. It will provide the basis for determining the tactical elements (advertising, events, public relations, promotions, etc.) that will help to increase demand for Maine lobster.

The brand strategy should be completed by July. The Council applied for and received a grant from the Lobster Research, Education and Development Board to fund the majority of the brand strategy project.

Enhanced Media Relations
Everyone has noticed increased media coverage about the Maine lobster industry as the season approaches – speculation on the price of Maine lobster, and landings for the upcoming season as well as pros and cons of various proposed bills that could affect the industry. The MLPC is working on a focused media relations effort to help build mass media buzz, awareness and excitement for Maine lobster. We will be targeting national and key regional and metro media outlets with both business and food stories.

Charitable Event
To help start the lobster season off with a bang, the MLPC is planning a charitable event in New York City at the end of June to benefit those who are still dealing with the impact of Superstorm Sandy. The goal is to get 5,000 pounds of lobster donated from the fishermen in Maine. Maine seafood companies will donate the processing of the lobsters into lobster meat. The lobster meat will be used for a huge fundraiser in conjunction with Luke’s Lobster of New York City. The lobster rolls will be sold at a compelling discounted price from Luke’s Lobster food trucks or restaurant. The proceeds will be given to charities that benefit the victims of Superstorm Sandy.

New York and New Jersey consumers and businesses are traditionally good customers of Maine lobster, and they were hit hard by Sandy. This is a great opportunity for Maine’s lobstering communities to thank the people of New York and New Jersey who have purchased so much of our lobster in the past, and to support them in their efforts to rebuild their homes and communities.

I’ve met with many lobstermen at recent lobster zone council meetings and have been struck by their enthusiasm for this plan. It is just another example of the extraordinary character of Maine lobstermen and the communities they so ably support.

Coombs continued from page 7
knowledge of all things seafood, ranging from supply chain nuances to fishing practices and policies. Her work is driven out of her genuine care for Maine’s coastal communities and fisheries.” Togue Brawn, owner and president of Maine Dayboat Scallops, agreed. “Coombs seeks out problems in order to solve them, and often turns those problems into opportunities. She believes anything can be accomplished with enough drive and passion, and she shows that to be the case,” Brawn said. “She is always trying to promote something that will be good for the whole fishing industry and the whole local food growers too. She has the best of intentions and works hard,” said Bailey Island lobsterman Glenn Rogers.

Coombs has even more projects that she is contemplating for the future. “My husband and I are interested in oyster farming,” she explained. “I’d like to get to a place where seafood is just part of the [food] system and keep working in local foods. Plus I’d like to do more harvesting work either on the water or in the garden,” she said. Coombs feels that in time these future aspirations will become a reality and for now she is content. “I’m doing what I love right now, where I love to be, with lots of people that I love. I think I might be doing my long-term goal right now,” she said.
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MAINE LOBSTERMEN'S ASSOCIATION UPDATE

This editorial by Patrice McCarron first appeared in the Bangor Daily News on April 3

The Maine Lobstermen's Association has been proudly and effectively representing Maine lobstermen for nearly 50 years. The MLA was organized in 1954 by lobstermen who had the foresight to understand that they would be better off working together than on their own.

Over the years, the MLA has established a track record of being effective on the issues. With a constituency who rarely agrees, MLA has built trust with the industry by working honestly and with integrity. During the month of March alone, the MLA has given Maine's lobstermen a voice on issues ranging from mosquito spraying rules and North Atlantic right whale stock assessments, to opening the St. Croix River for alewife passage, marketing the lobster industry and improving lobster quality. In addition we held our annual meeting and attended the Boston Seafood Show and the U.S.-Canada Lobsterman's Town Meeting. We know the issues, and we know the lobster industry.

Now, there's a new group coming to town, and unfortunately for Maine lobstermen, it doesn't seem to share our ethics. Seeing lobstermen get organized to improve their future is a good thing. The more lobstermen involved, the better. But the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, or IAM, is attempting to organize Maine lobstermen with false promises. It has gone so far as to take credit for stopping proposed legislation to establish a new marketing organization from being written. The truth of the matter is that the legislation was never intended to be passed as written. It was a starting point for the Legislature to work from to re-STEAMING AHEAD

build the lobster industry’s marketing organization to effectively serve lobstermen in the 21st century. The Bangor Daily News quotes IAM as saying, “We sat there and watched them [MLA] say they were representing you in this bill, while they said ‘75-25’” The MLA testified at the public hearing and has been at all of the meetings concerning this marketing proposal for more than a year. But nowhere in the MLA’s testimony did they directly support the funding formula for lobstermen to foot 75 percent of the cost. MLA's testimony stated, "As we look to transition from the existing Maine Lobster Promotion Council to a new marketing entity, there are several elements of critical importance to the lobster industry that you should consider: The purpose of the organization must be to maximize the boat prices for Maine lobster; funding must be implemented at $3 million per year beginning in year 3; the organization must be accountable to its constituents who are paying the bill; the organization must be transparent in its work and regarding spending on behalf of the lobster industry; and the organization must prove its merit through an independent review of its effectiveness."

I suppose we’ll have to look to the media to find out IAM’s position on the marketing bill because no one from IAM even testified at the hearing. According to press reports, the union has said that it is lobbying state lawmakers for a 70-30 split, with harvesters paying the smaller share. If lobstermen want to trust their business to a bunch of paid lobbyists in Augusta, then maybe the IAM is for them.

That’s not the MLA’s way. MLA is a grassroots organization, and we achieve our policy goals without paid lobbyists. MLA's director and board members travel to Augusta to give our industry a voice. We know the issues; we know the industry; and we can make those critical decisions for our lobsters when it matters most. MLA is truly by the fishermen for the fishermen.

Under the proposed IAM dues structure, 60 percent of lobstermen's dues would leave Maine and go straight to union headquarters in Maryland, according to an IAM business representative. That does not sound like a good deal for Maine lobstermen. IAM organizers claim their researchers and lawyers have found a loophole in the Sherman Antitrust Act, namely, the federal Fishermen's Collective Marketing Act, which would allow lobstermen to negotiate boat prices.

I hate to break it to IAM's powerful researchers and lawyers, but that is the federal law that allows lobstermen to organize into co-ops. This is not news for Maine’s lobster industry; we've had co-ops in place for nearly 40 years. Maine lobstermen should beware of handing over $625 of their hard-earned money each year to an organization with such dishonest tactics.

Maine’s lobster industry is comprised of nearly 5,000 independent harvesters. We are not lobbyists. We are hardworking men and women who are proud of our heritage who often don't agree on the issues and are generally averse to change. Maine lobstermen already have the opportunity to participate in a highly effective and trusted trade association, the MLA, if they want a voice and some honesty in shaping their future.

As always, stay safe on the water.

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This month, the MLA Board of Directors met on April 2 in Belfast, Maine. The Board reviewed a list of bills under consideration by the Marine Resources Committee. The directors discussed the marketing bill, LD 486, which seeks to raise $3 million to improve the marketing and branding of Maine lobster. To date, the Committee had held a public hearing and three work sessions. A fourth work session was scheduled for late April. The Board reiterated its strong support for the bill and the need to maintain the $3 million budget. MLA directors supported the Committee’s negotiations to find the most equitable funding formula amongst harvesters, dealers and processors, but maintained their strong preference for the majority voting rights and funding to come from the harvester sector. The Board then discussed the lobster dragger bill, LD 1097, at length. The directors thoroughly considered all of the pros and cons of the bill and voted unanimously to oppose An Act to Allow the Sale of Incidentally Caught Lobster. The directors developed their strategy for the public hearing, which included mailing post cards to all MLA members, written and spoken testimony and a sign-in sheet for lobstermen who attend the public hearing but do not wish to speak publicly. MLA will also submit an editorial to the Portland Press Herald.

After discussion the directors voted to support LD 482 An Act to Improve the Quality of the Data Used in the Management of Maine’s Fisheries, although the MLA wants to ensure that lobstermen can continue to pay sternmen through a share of the catch. The MLA also voted to support LD 778 An Act to Develop Principles to Guide Fisheries Management Decisions and LD 939 An Act to Restore Maine’s Groundfish Industry. The MLA voted to support LD 1171 An Act to Extend the Lobster Trap Tag System for Certain Zones, LD 1097 An Act to Allow the Sale of Incidentally Caught Lobster and LD 1171 Resolve to Allow Certain Holders of Lobster and Crab Fishing Licenses to Harvest River Herring as Bait. The MLA directors did not take a position on LD 899 An Act to Cre-
MAINE LOBSTERMEN'S ASSOCIATION UPDATE

ATE A NON-COMMERCIAL, NON-DOMESTIC RESIDENTAL LOBSTER AND CRAB FISHING LICENSE, because they viewed it as a bill to create an exemption for a constituent, or LD 1020 An Act Regarding the Swans Island Lobster Zone because the MLA does not weigh in on local or zone level issues unless they have statewide impact.

MLA directors discussed concerns that have been raised regarding the fledgling lobstermen's union being formed by the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM). Their overarching concern is that union representatives are stating that the union will represent lobstermen on a variety of issues, but they are not offering any details of how this would differ from what is already being done. The MLA will work with other lobstermen who have raised questions about the intentions of the union and help to provide resources to guide lobstermen in their decisions.

Following up on the recommendations from the MLA directors' retreat held in February and discussions at the Maine Fishermen's Forum in March, the MLA will launch a lobster quality and handling program this summer with the Maine Lobstermen's Community Alliance (MLCA). The program is in its early stages, but is likely to include meetings with harvesters and dealers, a quality and handling workshop, newsletter articles, and outreach with lobstermen and dock workers to discuss current practices to haul, handle, store and transport lobster. MLA staff will meet with lobstermen and those buying stations that have been identified by their peers as having implemented 'best practices.' MLA will develop recommendations for Best Management Practices for Maine lobstermen and for buying stations. The outcome of this project will be used to develop a Lobster Quality Certification program to be implemented in the lobster industry in 2014.

There was confusion at the Annual Meeting regarding the election of officers. The Directors unanimously affirmed their vote for David Cousins, President, Jim Dow, 1st Vice-President, Kristian Porter, 2nd Vice-President, and Arnie Gamage, Secretary/Treasurer. The MLA continues to advertise its commercial space for rent in Nobleboro. The directors recommended Sonny Beal, Bob Williams and Adam Campbell to the Maine Office of Tourism for their insipid presentations. John Williams announced that Joey Tardiff of Stonington has designed aerators to improve oxygen levels in live tanks for sale to lobstermen. He has reached at 406-6239. The MLA will meet again on May 7 at 5 p.m. in Belfast.

MLA TALKS WITH RUSSIAN DELEGATION

MLA education coordinator Annie Tselikis gave a presentation about the Maine lobster industry to a group of fisheries managers, researchers and seafood marketers from Russia on April 16 in Portland. Participants were touring Maine as part of the International Visitors Leadership Program, an exchange program sponsored by the United States Department of State. Participants were particularly interested in the way that Maine's lobster management is designed to protect rural fishing communities and prevent consolidation of lobster licenses. One of the participants was interested in seeking ways to distribute Maine lobster to Russia and to his clients throughout Europe.

MLA LEADERSHIP MEET WITH MEINA DELEGATION, GOVERNOR LEPAGE

David Cousens and Patrice McCarron met with Governor LePage to discuss concerns over the Governor's support for legalizing the landing of lobster bycatch in Maine. The MLA urged the Governor to consider more comprehensively the array of issues facing Maine's groundfish industry, stating its position that landing lobster bycatch in Maine is not going to save the fleet.

MLA President David Cousens met with representatives from Maine's Congressional delegation in April to voice MLA's strong opposition over the bill before the Maine legislature that would allow Maine's groundfishing vessels to land dragger-caught lobster in Maine. He expressed the industry's concern that this so-called bycatch provision is being abused by vessels which are in fact directing their nets on lobster. Cousens urged the delegation to eliminate the 100/50 lobster bycatch provision completely.

David Cousens and Island Institute staff informed the delegation on the significant changes that lobstermen are observing in the oceans and the impacts those are having on Maine's lobster fishery. The group emphasized the need for the Maine delegation to support DMR's appropriations request and the importance of the GOOMS buoys for monitoring ocean changes. The group also raised the issue of the upcoming rules to regulate the risk of vertical lines on whales, which are due in draft later this summer.

CLIMATE CHANGE ROUNDTABLE

MLA's president, David Cousens, participated in a distinguished panel held in April in Washington, DC to discuss the impacts of climate change on fishing communities and ocean resources. The panel participants included Senator Angus King, Dr. Robert Steneck and Philip Conkling. Cousens discussed the significant changes that lobstermen are observing on the water, such as warm ocean waters causing lobster to shed early and the appearance of warm water species such as tropical fish and blue crabs in the Gulf of Maine. Dr. Steneck provided a primer on the science of ocean acidification and warned that the ocean is getting more acidic and the ecosystem is changing. Senator King spoke about the need for Congress to monitor and address this issue, and Philip Conkling welcomed the audience in a discussion of how to raise awareness about the impacts of these changes and get more people involved in finding solutions.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The 127th Legislature has been a busy one, with many bills under consideration that could have a major impact on the lobster industry. Two bills of particular importance have been considered by the Marine Resources Committee. LD 1097 An Act to Allow the Sale of Incidentally Caught Lobsters proposed to allow Maine-based draggers to land lobster bycatch harvested in Lobster Management Area 3 at the Portland Fish Exchange. LD 486 An Act to Provide for the Effective Marketing and Promotion of Maine Lobster would create a new lobster marketing body with a $3 million annual budget phased in over three years.

The public hearing on LD 1097, the dragger-caught lobster bill, drew a relatively small crowd. Nearly 20 people testified in support of the bill while approximately 35 people from the lobster industry strongly opposed the landing of dragger caught lobster. The MLA lead the charge to get this bill killed, calling on its members to hit the phones to let elected officials know that this bill must be killed. The Marine Resources Committee held a public hearing and four work sessions. In April, the Committee voted unanimously to support LD 486, recommending a funding formula to share the budget equally among har- vesters and dealers. The budget will be phased in over three years and a complete review of the program will be conducted after five years by an independent third party with the option to sunset the program if it does not perform. The harvester fees will be a flat surcharge on top of existing license fees. At a 50/50 harverster/dealer split, the harvester surcharge will reach $243 for a Class I license, $487 for a Class II license and $732 for a Class III license in years three through five. To ensure the most equitable cost sharing amongst small and larger dealers, the Committee is exploring options that include a base harvesters license fee, and additional fees for supplemental licenses, number of trucks and truck weights. This is still under development and will be brought back to the Committee for final approval.

LOBSTER UNION CONCERNS

The MLA has received calls from many lobstermen, both members and non-members, who have asked questions about the impact that a proposed lobster union might have on the industry. The MLA is not able to speak for the union, so the association has partnered with concerned lobstermen to create a Web site to guide those with questions about the union. A FAQ section on the site reiterates several questions raised by lobstermen that are as yet unanswered by the union about what unionization would mean for lobstermen. The Web site is designed to
serve as a resource for Maine’s 5,000 licensed lobstermen and a central location for comments and discussion. Visit the site at www.LobsterUnionConcerns.com.

LOBSTER ZONE COUNCIL MEETINGS

Zones R.C, D, E, and G met in March and the first weeks of April. At each of the zone council meetings, staff from DMR provided members an update on lobster-related bills before the legislature and a summary of the sixteen public meetings held by DMR during January. Marianne Lacroix, acting director of the Maine Lobster Promotion Council also addressed each zone council on the MLPC’s efforts to improve demand for Maine lobster. Zone C met on March 25. The members discussed limited entry standards for that zone. Some members thought closing the zone to new entrants would be wise, others said that the situation as it was working satisfactorily. The council members agreed in the end that there was no reason to close Zone C at this time. A motion was made to not support any dredging for tankers servicing the proposed LNG facility in Searsport; unanimous in support. The members also talked about a possible new representative to the Lobster Advisory Council. They will vote on a new person at their next meeting.

Zone D met on March 28. Rep. Chuck Kruger attended. Steve Miller addressed the members about the Searsport LNG project. He cautioned that even if the actual project goes away (Searsport Planning Board eventually denied the application), the wish to dredge will probably come back. Council members unanimously agreed to vote a letter opposing the project.

Zone G met on April 4. Rep. Wayne Perry attended. Council members had heard Marine Patrol to review the exact meaning of V-notch with them. So a Marine Patrol Officer (MPO) went over the provisions of zero tolerance, measurements, etc. Council members also asked DMR staff if it would be possible to allow an agent of the local town, like the harbormaster or police chief, to sign trap tag replacement affidavits rather than a MPO. DMR staff will investigate. Steve Taylor told the council members that New Hampshire lobstermen had recently held a meeting about branding and marketing that state’s lobster. Patrice McCarren gave the council an update of the progress of right whale entanglement regulations and reduction in vertical lines. Finally, members were asked to say in general if they were in favor or against of a tiered system of licenses; all members said they were not in favor.

Zone E met on April 9. Rep. Chris Johnson attended. Larry Knapp and Laura Taylor-Singer, representing Norwegian energy company StatOil, attended the meeting. They asked members to provide feedback to them about where, within the 22-square-mile zone set aside by the state south of Boothbay Harbor for a wind power project, would be the best spot to place the actual 4-square-mile wind farm. That area would be off limits to all fishermen. No recommendations were offered. Members then discussed ways to fund the marketing proposal before the legislature. They favored a fee on trap tags, not on licenses.

Zone B met on April 8. Eric Jones spoke to the members about gear modifications. He suggested that lobstermen use bigger, biodegradable escape panels in order to let oversized lobsters go free. The council voted unanimously in favor of a motion to use 4x4 mesh panels phased in over three years. The Frenchman Bay Partners addressed the council and asked for a member to serve on its board. Members discussed for some time the issues of double tagging and entanglements in a nutshell, there was unhappiness that Zone B was controlling effort but that neighboring Zone C was not. The fact that Zone C lobstermen may fish up to half their traps in Zone B remains a problem. The council members decided to pursue the question of having a referendum on changing the exit/entry ratio at the next meeting. Each zone council voiced its approval of the lobster marketing bill before the legislature, although some expressed concern that the bill might push small lobster dealers out of the business. The bill to increase the number of traps fished within the Swan Island Lobster Conservation Zone brought unanimous support from Zone B, no vote from Zones C and D; Zones E and G said it was a local issue and they had no opinion.

All Zone Councils except for Zone D were unanimously opposed to the bill supporting the landing of drag-caught lobster in Maine. In Zone D, three members were in favor, four were opposed, and four abstained from voting. MLPC acting director Marianne LaCroix spoke to each zone council about how to respond to questions from the media. She emphasized that lobstermen should choose carefully how they describe their lobsters. Calling shedders “junk” is not a good idea. She suggested that if asked, lobstermen sound positive. She also spoke about the MLPC’s plan to do a fundraiser for victims of Superstorm Sandy. The idea is to get 5,000 pounds of lobster, have it processed here in Maine, and then donate it to Luke’s Lobster for a lobster roll fundraiser, with the funds going to charities helping Sandy victims. All the council members in each zone were enthusiastically supportive of this idea. Lobster zones A and F met in late April after press time.

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Worcestors Lobster Bait

Many thanks to these fine businesses, the MLA’s Keeper members!
Marine Patrol Officer Mike Pinkham has received the Northeast Conservation Law Enforcement Chief’s Award, which honors a law enforcement official for professional excellence. The award was presented April 8 at the Northeast Fish and Wildlife Conference, in Saratoga Springs, New York. “During my career a couple of people truly stand out as motivated conservation officers, and Mike is one of them,” said Marine Patrol Sergeant Troy Dow, who nominated Officer Pinkham. “After 30-plus years, he still has the drive and self-motivation to apprehend intentional marine resource violators. During his 34-year career, he has witnessed many changes within the DMR world. One of the biggest changes has been the introduction of onboard computers and almost all documentation becoming electronic. Throughout these changes, Mike has adapted very well,” Sergeant Dow said.

The rotating closed areas during this past scallop season presented a particular enforcement challenge for Pinkham, who is based in Gouldsboro. “Mike worked these closed areas relentlessly,” said Dow. “He spent many cold, dark nights watching over these closed areas. His persistence paid off when he and other officers caught a boat dragging in a closed area.”

Pinkham was also applauded for working around the clock during last year’s elver season, when skyrocketing prices prompted increased poaching. “He worked the elver harvesting season both night and day for more than two months,” Dow said.

The Maine Lobstermen’s Community Alliance (MLCA) is fortunate to be led by a board made up of individuals drawn from varied fields, including academics, marine management, and fisheries. Among the MLCA’s board members is Maine Maritime Academy President Bill Brennan. Brennan brings a wealth of knowledge about fisheries management at the state, national and international levels. “I understand the key role that lobstoring plays in Maine’s many coastal communities. Keeping those communities strong and vital benefits the state as a whole,” Brennan said in reference to the MLCA’s mission.

Brennan, a native of Castine, began his career at sea in the Merchant Marine, working both on deck and in the engine room. He started his marine policy and management career in 1977 at the National Marine Fisheries Service Northeast Fisheries Center in Woods Hole where he focused on cooperative international fisheries research. In 1983, after receiving his Master’s degree from the Marine Affairs program of the University of Rhode Island, he worked as a staff member for the House of Representatives’ Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee. Returning to Maine, Brennan was appointed Commissioner of the Department of Marine Resources in 1987. After stepping down from that position, he opened a private consulting firm providing marine and environmental policy guidance to businesses and governments.

In 2002, Brennan was appointed by President Bush to be the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Affairs, where he was involved in negotiation of international agreements and coordinating U.S. policy on international oceanic and atmospheric matters. He began serving as acting director of the U.S. Climate Change Science
There are more than 10,000 species of algae on Earth. Out of those, only 300 produce toxins that can be deadly to fish and mammals. "We’re not sure why some are toxic and others are not," said Dr. Cynthia Heil, a senior research scientist at Bigelow Laboratory in East Boothbay. "It may be a quirk in their biology or maybe a defense mechanism."

The most common toxic algae in the Gulf of Maine are the dinoflagellate *Alexandrium*. These single-celled green algae cause red tide which is more accurately known as a harmful algal bloom or HAB. HABs typically occur in the Gulf of Maine between April and October when conditions are right for *Alexandrium* to hatch. During this time, the toxin that naturally occurs in *Alexandrium* becomes a threat as the dinoflagellate reaches high densities and shellfish are more likely to consume the toxic cells. Excessive blooms last occurred in 2005 and 2008, when large areas of the Gulf of Maine were closed to shellfish harvesting.

While the toxin in *Alexandrium* (called saxitoxin) isn't harmful to the shellfish that ingest it, it is toxic to human beings that then consume infected shellfish. Because they are filter feeders, shellfish such as oysters, mussels, and clams take in phytoplankton. When the toxin attacks the nervous system. Consequently, when red tide occurs Maines' lucrative shellfish beds must be closed to all harvesting.

A report released in late March by the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) predicts that the Gulf of Maine will see a moderate red tide this year. That forecast is due to the fact that *Alexandrium* changes into a small cyst each year that settles on the ocean floor waiting for the right temperature and amount of sunlight in order to hatch. "We are able to map cyst beds on the ocean floor to predict the severity of the bloom," Heil said. "There is a large bed in Casco Bay that usually blooms in June."

"More blooms occur when there are more nutrients in the water," she continued. "Nutrients enter the water through run-off [containing fertilizer, pesticides] and bait from lobster traps. Blooms are bad because they block out light and oxygen that fish and plants need to survive and grow." Heil said that during the past twenty years HABs have occurred more and more frequently. "It's unclear why. Are the waters changing? Is there more nutrient pollution? It's something we are looking into," she said.

There are other toxic phytoplankton drifting about in the Gulf of Maine but, as of yet, none of them have posed as great a problem as *Alexandrium*. Fortunately, both state and federal agencies keep a close eye on *Alexandrium* and other potentially harmful algae throughout the year. WHOI regularly monitors several red tide species. Real-time bloom forecasts are updated on a weekly basis and additional information is provided on the "Current Status" page of the Northeast PSP Web site (www.whoi.edu/northeastpsp). NOAAs National Weather Service also provides hydrological and meteorological outlooks that aid in tracking the locations and potential effects of HABs on coastal shellfish beds.

The Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR), the University of Maine, and the Maine Sea Grant Extension Program run a volunteer sampling program called the Marine Phytoplankton Monitoring Program. More than 75 volunteers monitor the water at forty locations throughout the Maine coast, alerting the DMR when the density of certain toxic algae reach high levels. DMR also has its own sampling program targeted specifically at *Alexandrium*.
been collecting ideas for practical solutions to mitigate chafing based on what we have learned from lobstermen and from these videos. "I think this project is another good example of the collaborative possibilities that exist between the MLA and groups like the Consortium and other research organizations to find ways to adapt and survive changes in our industry," said Patrice McCarron, executive director of the MLA. "We heard that lobstermen wanted to know more about sinking groundline and found a partner to help us get that information. And these videos are fascinating."

A short video about this project is available at https://vimeo.com/60764466.

Kate McClellan works for the Consortium for Wildlife Bycatch Reduction, New England Aquarium.

Climate change continued from page 6

The ocean buoys located in the eastern and western Gulf of Maine waters operated by NERACOOS give a good picture of what’s happening well below the ocean surface. Both buoys hit record or near-record temperatures last year for the period between 2001 to 2012. In 2012 those buoys registered 3°C, above normal. Thus far in 2013, the water temperatures are approximately 1 to 2°C above average. Water temperatures in early April remained at levels typically found only in late May or later. It’s not surprising, therefore, that DMR has seen a slight increase in the number of lobsters showing signs of shell disease. But that number is small, compared to those found south of Cape Cod. According to Kathleen Reardon, who supervises DMR’s sea sampling program, placing samplers on commercial lobster boats throughout the coast, the data indicate a slight increase, from less than 0.5 lobsters per 1,000 sampled in 2003, to more than 3 per 1,000 in 2012. With shell disease rates remaining less than 1% among sampled lobsters, the Gulf’s waters appear to continue to support a healthy Maine lobster population.

Partly by higher licensing fees for lobstermen. "We think a good marketing plan would be a better use of our money than sending it out of state to a big labor union," said Kurielc.

The Web site will serve as a resource for Maine’s 5,000 licensed lobstermen and a central location for comments and discussion and will be updated regularly.

Contact: Genevieve Kurielc
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(207) 348-1054 h

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It’s a success that those involved in Maine hope can be replicated here. After all, if New England has the best fishermen in the world, why not the best fisherman poets?

David Garrison is the director of marketing and communications at the Maine Maritime Museum in Bath.
NEW ELVER BILL GOES INTO FORCE

The Maine Marine Patrol issued a summons on Tuesday, April 9 to Dale A. Boyington, 35, of Rockland for illegal possession of 11 pounds of elvers worth $22,100. Marine Patrol Sergeant Robert Beal was conducting surveillance at the York toll booth when he observed Boyington traveling north on Interstate 95. Boyington was stopped near the Kennebunk exit on I-95 and cited for possession of elvers without a Maine license.

Illegal possession of elvers in Maine is now classified as a civil crime with a fine of up to $2,000. A new law LD 632, passed by the House and Senate, will criminalize all elver fishery violations. The bill requires an elver harvester to provide, upon request of a law enforcement officer or elver dealer, a government-issued identification with the harvester’s photograph and birth date. The bill restricts the form of payment for the sale of elvers to a check. It also converts many elver fishing violations that are currently civil violations to Class D crimes, with the potential for jail time, and requires courts to impose the maximum $2,000 fine for those Class D crimes.

2013 SHRIMP SEASON A DUD

It wasn’t much of a shrimp season for Maine fishermen this year. The preliminary data released by the Department of Marine Resources indicates fewer than 600,000 pounds landed in the state during the season, which closed on April 12. One hundred and twenty-three shrimp trawlers brought in 529,260 pounds t of Pandalus borealis; shrimp trawlers brought in 529,260 pounds when the fishery was shut down earlier in the year. Garbo, based in Stonington, Conn., is the largest buyer of live lobster in Maine and has a live lobster storage and distribution facility in Hancock. East Coast Seafood, based in Lynn, Mass., and Canadian and lobster and owns and operates the Paturel lobster processing facility on Deer Island, just across the Canadian border in New Brunswick. Maine Fair Trade Lobster is applying for a $500,000 federal grant to help renovate and equip the plant. The company then must demonstrate it can match the sought-after Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) dollar for dollar. In this case, the project is tentatively estimated to cost a minimum of $2.6 million for the current phase with the potential for the company providing at least $1.6 million of its own funding.

MAINE FAIR TRADE LOBSTER OPENING THIS SUMMER

Maine Fair Trade Lobster, a joint venture between Garbo Lobster and East Coast Seafood, is ramping up to begin operations this summer in Prospect Harbor. The plant is projected to start out processing 50,000 pounds of lobster a day, six days a week for up to nine months a year, which would put it on pace to process more than 10 million pounds each year. Garbo, based in Stonington, Conn., is the largest buyer of live lobster in Maine and has a live lobster storage and processing facility in Hancock. East Coast Seafood, based in Lynn, Mass., and Canadian and operates the Paturel lobster processing facility on Deer Island, just across the Canadian border in New Brunswick. Maine Fair Trade Lobster is applying for a $500,000 federal grant to help renovate and equip the plant. The company then must demonstrate it can match the sought-after Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) dollar for dollar. In this case, the project is tentatively estimated to cost a minimum of $2.6 million for the current phase with the company providing at least $1.6 million of its own funding.

THE PRODIGAL BUOY returns

After traveling 186 miles over 48 days, buoy M has been recovered. The rescue mission took place aboard the OSV Scarlett Isabella, thanks to the University of Maine, and Boston Harbor Cruises, and Offshore Logistics, Northeast Regional Association of Coastal and Ocean Observing Systems (NERACOOS) buoy M is owned and operated by the University of Maine’s Physical Oceanography Group and is routinely moored in Jordan Basin, approximately 60 miles southeast of Mount Desert Island. During winter storm Nemo in early February 2013, it broke loose from its mooring. During that storm buoys in the Gulf of Maine measured wave heights over 30 feet and wind gusts exceeding 55 mph. Scientists at the University of Maine monitored the buoy daily as it drifted in the Gulf of Maine and worked diligently to coordinate the recovery, which required adequate weather and ship time. The recovery took place March 30 on the southern edge of George’s Bank where a crew gathered and recovered buoy M along with many of its instruments aboard the OSV Scarlett Isabella. The buoy and instruments have been returned to the University of Maine for inspection and repairs. A refurbished buoy will be deployed in Jordan Basin this spring.

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Pinkham continued from page 15

"Officer Pinkham continues to show the enthusiasm of a first-year officer," said DMR Commissioner Patrick Keliher. "I had the honor of working directly with him this spring on overnight patrols. His professionalism, understanding of all fisheries and the respect he holds among his fellow officers and within the communities he patrols are why he is so deserving of this award."
May 1
TAA Product Quality and Handling Workshop, 5-8 p.m., Rockland Lighthouse Museum, Rockland.

May 2
TAA Product Quality and Handling Workshop, 5-8 p.m., Gulf of Maine Research Institute, Portland.

May 6
TAA Product Quality and Handling Workshop, 5-8 a.m.-noon; TAA Energy Consumption and Fishing Efficiency for Lobstermen Workshop, 1:30-4:30 p.m., Maine Maritime Museum, Bath.

May 7
MLA Director’s meeting, 5 p.m., Darby’s restaurant, Belfast. FMI: 967-4555.
TAA Alternative Enterprises Workshop, 9 a.m.-noon, TAA Developing your Business Plan Workshop, 1:30-4:30 p.m., Maine Maritime Museum, Bath.

May 7-9
Managing Our Nation’s Fisheries 3, Washington, D.C.

May 8
TAA Alternative Enterprises Workshop, 5-8 p.m., Machias Savings Bank, Machias.
TAA Product Quality and Handling Workshop, 9 a.m.-noon; TAA Alternative Enterprises Workshop, 1:30-4:30 p.m., Ellsworth City Hall.

May 9
TAA Lobster Market Overview Workshop, 9 a.m.-noon; TAA Developing your Business Plan Workshop, 1:30-4:30 p.m., TAA Lobster Marketing and Branding Workshop, 5-8 p.m., Ellsworth City Hall.


May 15
TAA Alternative Enterprises Workshop, 9 a.m.-noon, TAA Developing Business Plan Workshop, 1:30-4:30 p.m., Rockland Lighthouse Museum, Rockland.

May 16
Sea Urchin Zone Council meeting, 6 PM, B Maine DOT Conference Building, Bangor. FMI: 624-6554.

May 22
TAA Lobster Marketing and Branding Workshop, 5-8 p.m., Gulf of Maine Research Institute, Portland

May 23
TAA Product Quality and Handling Workshop, 5-8 p.m., Ellsworth City Hall, Ellsworth.

Upcoming
June 15
Margaretta Days Festival, Machias.
June 18-20
NEFMC meeting, Holiday Inn by the Bay, Portland.
June 25-26
Annual Boothbay Windjammer Days Festival, Boothbay Harbor.
June 25-27
ASMFC American Lobster Stock Assessment Modeling Workshop, location to be announced.

Brennan continued from page 15
Program in 2006, managing an inter-agency scientific program on changes in the earth’s climate and related systems. In June, 2008, Brennan became the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and Deputy Administrator of NOAA. There he was responsible for NOAA’s science and operational programs. He ended his time with the agency as the acting Administrator and head of NOAA.

In 2009, Brennan again returned to Maine, this time to take the reigns as president of the Maine Maritime Academy in Castine. The college offers three programs and 17 undergraduate and graduate majors, focused on marine engineering, transportation, science and policy. “Bill brings a wealth of knowledge about fisheries management combined with a strong dedication to Maine’s fishing communities,” said Patrice McCarron, MLCA president. “We are very happy to have him on board.”
In March, when lobster trapped in our state was certified worldwide for fishery sustainability, the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) provided a way to guarantee traceability to our buyers, a way to stop misleading promotions of so-called “Maine” lobsters that are not really from Maine, or even the USA.

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

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

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

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

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