FISHERMEN, PIER OWNERS WORK TOGETHER ON PORTLAND DREDGING

By Melissa Waterman

It’s no fun seeing your gear stuck in the mud. “On a moon tide the floats [at Union Wharf in Portland] are on the muck. They slope so your gear gets pushed off or washed off,” explained Frank Strout, a Cape Elizabeth lobsterman who has berthed his 36-foot boat at Union Wharf for more than 35 years. “Some of the bigger boats turn up rope or logs at low tide and damage their propellers. It’s just gotten more and more difficult to navigate.”

Wharf owners in Portland have a problem: too much sediment. Over the decades, water depths around their wharves and piers have diminished as sediment steadily accumulated. “Some piers were dredged in past decades,” said Cathy Billings.

Thanks to the support from Maine’s lobster license plate holders, the Lobster Institute and the Maine Aquatic Animal Health Laboratory at the University of Maine have formed a Rapid Response Team (RRT) to look at issues related to lobster health. The RRT’s goal is to promote better recognition within Maine’s lobster industry that early reporting and diagnosis of presumed diseased or deformed lobsters is critical to gauging the population’s susceptibility to new and emerging pathogens.

The intent is to make it fast and easy for lobstersmen to tap into this Team’s expertise in order to more conveniently have possibly-diseased or malformed lobsters quickly assessed. Lobstersmen should remember the directions of the RRT’s A.C.E. card: Assess your lobsters to see if you think they should be reported, Capture a photo of suspicious-looking lobster, and then E-mail the photo to the RRT at lobsterinstitute@maine.edu or call them 207-581-2767. The RRT will then determine if a lobster should...
COASTAL OUTLOOK

Thoughts from MLCA President Patrice McCarron

You see it everywhere this month: lobstermen overhauling their gear, splicing lines, painting buoys, rigging traps, getting ready for the lobster season. A few boats are in the water but many are in boatyards where new engines, ex hausts, or electronic equipment are being installed. The coast may seem quiet but in fact May is a busy time of the year for Maine lobstermen as the stories in this month’s Landings highlight.

In Portland, lobstermen, city officials, environmentalists and wharf and pier owners are wrestling with a complicated problem. Over the decades, the depths around many of the public and private wharves that make Portland a robust working harbor have decreased due to sediment. To keep these facilities available to fishing vessels, lobster boats, ferries, and recreational vessels, those sediments must be removed. The issue is where to put them, given that they are likely contaminated with a host of heavy metals and other toxic elements.

Landings gives an overview of the remarkably collaborative approach taken by stakeholders to arrive at a solution to this issue.

Another issue that is causing concern among fishermen is the rising level of acidity in the Gulf of Maine and other water bodies. As more carbon dioxide enters the ocean from the atmosphere, a chemical conversion leads to an increase in the acidity of seawater. That in turn affects those animals with calcium-based shells, such as crabs, shellfish and lobsters.

Research undertaken by a scientist at Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences in East Boothbay indicates that kelp beds have a localized effect on carbon dioxide levels in seawater. That research may lead the way to improved environmental conditions in near-shore areas of the Gulf.

This year will be the first year that the new lobster Rapid Response Team will be active. The Team, created through The Lobster Institute at the University of Maine, stands ready to evaluate any unusual or diseased lobster spotted by a lobsterman. As Cathy Billings of the Lobster Institute explains in this issue, it’s important that researchers know of any changes taking place in the state’s lobster populations; quickly connecting lobstermen and scientists is part of that proactive approach.

The Maine lobster fishery continues to thrive, as landings and value continue to remain high. Still, it’s important for the next generation of lobstermen to keep their options open because what’s true today may not be true in ten years’ time. In this issue, we focus on the Rockland school district’s successful Fisherman’s Academy, which helps keep young lobstermen on track in school. The program combines hands-on learning with traditional classes in an educational format designed to work with the students’ fishing interests.

We also feature an update on the participants in the Maine Lobster Leadership Institute, a program of the Maine Lobstermen’s Community Alliance. Fourteen young lobstermen and women began their studies of lobster science, management and business in February. Since then they have attended numerous meetings and conferences as a means of better understanding the broader world in which lobstering exists. Some went to the Seafood Expo North America in Boston in March, where seafood vendors from throughout the world vie to promote their products. Some attended a media training sponsored by the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative, and a business training focused on using QuickBooks software.

Finally, we hear from a lobsterman on Mount Desert Island who, he says, have eaten everything in sight. In this issue, we look at what species those seals may be and May is the time when Maine’s lobstermen work on gear and get their boats ready for the upcoming season.

May is the time when Maine’s lobstermen work on gear and get their boats ready for the upcoming season. MLA photo.

Geoff Irvine, executive director of the Lobster Council of Canada, provides an overview of the many lobster marketing efforts underway in the Maritime Provinces. The four provinces collectively land more lobster than Maine, yet have never agreed on a collective marketing strategy for their product. However, last year the federal government introduced the Canadian Brand for agricultural and seafood products. Now Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador have all come out with their own seafood brands. The push to market Canadian lobster as a premium product is on! Finally, we hear from a lobsterman on Mount Desert Island who has had enough of the local seal population. Steve Smith, a seventh-generation fisherman, hauls his traps by hand in Otter Creek Cove. During the past few years he has been joined by not one, not two, but close to forty seals who, he says, have eaten everything in sight. In this issue of Landings we look at what species those seals may be and what recourse fishermen have when beset by the omnivorous critters.

Enjoy this beautiful spring weather, and we look forward to hearing your thoughts and feedback.

Patrice

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MLCA is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization, established in 2010, which achieves its charitable mission through programs in education, research and charity.

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by Col. Jon Cornish

As we leave winter behind, officers in the Maine Marine Patrol are shifting gear from winter fisheries to spring activity — primarily that means elvers from late March through May. Officers find themselves working many nights and often adjusting their sleeping habits to sleep during the day.

With the arrival of good weather, officers will be getting the department’s small vessel fleet active in order to monitor inshore activity such as lobstering and recreational fishing and boating. Marine Patrol also uses the spring months — between elver season and the busy summer lobster season — to accomplish much of the Bureau’s yearly training. This year officers will be learning a new record management system along with many other skills such as lobster scrubbing identification, whale disentanglement, boating-while-under-the-influence refresher class, and advanced drug recognition training.

The Bureau is also planning a spring Advanced Marine Patrol School for new hires. Two new officers will be graduating from the Academy in mid-May. They will be going to the Advanced School for four weeks and then moving directly into the field. The Bureau is currently in the process of hiring two to three additional officers.

Challenges ahead:

Just as the fishing industry continues to meet challenges so too does the Marine Patrol. In my opinion there are three large-scale challenges that face the Bureau that have been and continue to be relevant.

The first is Patrol’s ability to detect lobster violations involving sunken trawls (lobster traps set in an effort to avoid detection generally for the purpose of fishing over the limit). It is very challenging for Patrol to detect trawls that are not marked by buoys. Lobstermen, on the other hand, are able to find them quite easily. Nevertheless, through good information and long investigations, Patrol Officers have had some success in dealing with these violations. It is clear, however, that without strong support from the lobster industry and the Legislature, our officers will not be effective in the long-term in slowing down this illegal trend. Patrol needs the ability to place trackers on vessels when probable cause of a violation exists in order to successfully pursue these types of cases.

The second challenge deals with the Bureau’s aging fleet of vessels. We spend a large portion of our budget maintaining the current fleet. As the vessels age, the cost of upkeep mounts. Lobstermen know that the cost to replace a 40’ to 50’ vessel is exorbitant. Marine Patrol is doing what it can to keep these costs at a minimum by seeking out grant funding as well as looking at alternatives to building new vessels. At the end of the day, however, there are no clear answers.

Lastly, it is important to recognize that addiction plays a role in at least some of the high profile conservation violations we have detected. This challenge is not a simple one. Marine Patrol is dealing with addictions that entice people to commit acts that they normally would not. The Bureau will continue to look at options to train officers to recognize drug abuse and at the potential for drug testing within the industry. There are no easy answers when it comes to this crisis.

Lastly, I want to emphasize that each lobsterman should reach out and work with your local Marine Patrol Officer before issues arise. Officers cannot be successful without forming a working relationship with fishermen. It has always been clear to me that officers with trusted working relationships within their areas are by far the most successful when it comes to making solid violation cases.

We need you as much as you need us. We can only be successful by working together.
By Geoff Irvine

In this era of “branding” virtually everything, the Canadian lobster sector has at its disposal a wide array of branding options that exporters and marketers can tailor to individual customers and markets.

In 2010, the Lobster Council of Canada commissioned a comprehensive study, “The Long-Term Value Strategy for Canadian Lobster”, that we thought would culminate in a marketing plan for Canadian lobster. What we learned was that before we could effectively implement a marketing strategy there were significant steps to take to improve the “marketability” of Canadian lobster.

During the intervening years and based on consumer demand, boardroom pressures, politics and the perceived need to differentiate lobster almost to the individual port, we have seen the development of a dizzying array of “brands” involving country of origin, linkage to harvester groups, sustainability, food safety, traceability, and soon, social license.

Year after year, Canada is recognized as having one of the top “country” brands in the world. In the most recent rankings we finished second to Switzerland, with a worldwide reputation for strength in categories like respect for our environment, business trustworthiness and regulatory structure. Armed with this powerful opportunity, the federal government has developed a Canada Brand program for the agri-food sector that provides a suite of tools including graphic images, photographs and language to help marketers tell the story of Canadian fish and seafood. It focuses on our reputation for cold, clean oceans and safe and reliable products.

The Canadian Lobster Brand Program provides a clear set of core values focused solely on lobster and is based on attributes (chefs and chain/retail buyers) or consumers (e-commerce in Asia, consumers the world’s highest-quality and most flavorful live and processed lobster, every single day.

Most companies spend every hour of every day carefully cultivating and developing their own corporate brand. Recent examples from the airline and soft-drink sectors show us how this can be done effectively or very poorly. Many lobster exporters and marketers have developed well-known industry and consumer brands and they use them to their advantage in key markets. If you put these programs all together it is clear that Canadian lobster marketers have a wide array of branding options at their disposal. They can customize language to specific geographic markets (Chicago or Shangh hai), to trade audiences (chefs and chain/retail buyers) or consumers (e-commerce in Asia, consumers in Belgium or Vancouver). They can point to the place where Canadian lobster is harvested, the people who make it happen, the rich history, sustainability, food safety and the fact that we produce hundreds of high quality lobster products.

When we embarked on the process to define the core values of the Canadian lobster brand one of the first things I learned was that brands do not live and die on what you say, they thrive and endure based on what you do. It is our process (sustainability, traceability, food safety). A clean new graphic image can be used by exporters to show their customers that the lobster in the box, whether processed or live, fulfills the brand promise of “the world’s highest quality and most flavorful live and processed lobster.”

Provinces and lobstermen’s organizations have developed new seafood brands. Nova Scotia is focused on the pure ocean providing high quality fish and seafood. Quebec’s agri-food branding program, “Aliments du Quebec,” focuses on 22,000 certified products from 1,200 firms. The Prince Edward Island Fishermen’s Association “Master Lobster” brand is based on fair trade; the Newfoundland and Labrador Fish, Food and Allied Workers’ brand is focused on traceability. Harvesters from Forchu, Cape Breton, have developed a brand in collaboration with their major customer in New York City that highlights the pristine waters and individual owner/operators who catch the product.

In response to consumer and boardroom demand, a wide variety of branding opportunities have focused on sustainability, food safety and traceability. With 98 % of Canadian lobster in the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) sustainability program, Canadian exporters actively promote the positive images of eco-certification. Many processing plants have third party food safety certification through the British Retail Consortium (BRC), covering 17,000 plants in 90 countries. Both of these programs demand complete traceability of raw materials and final product, from the harvesters to the consumer.

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Geoff Irvine is the executive director of the Lobster Council of Canada. LCC photo.

GUEST COLUMN: Multiple lobster marketing efforts underway in Canada
The first of March marked the opening of the 2017 federal scallop fishing season and already the shells are flying, 2016 had the best scallop landings in over 20 years in the Gulf of Maine. If you combine state and federal landings, almost a million pounds came out of an area that only 11 years ago, produced less than 100,000 pounds. This is an extraordinary turn around considering the value of scallops, something that Maine must embrace, steward, and protect.

Instead of fostering growth, loopholes in federal management are on the brink of undercutting any future this fishery has for Mainer's. The state of Maine has a management plan that is proactive in protecting and growing the scallop stock for the future by incorporating area-based management, rotating closures, and paying close attention to the landings within state waters. The federal waters fishery is another story. That fishery is in jeopardy of being lost to Maine's fishermen for another decade unless something can be done to quickly stem the over-exploitation of a stock that is just starting to return to our federal waters.

Management of the federal scallop fishery is complex. In April of 2008, NOAA Fisheries published the Final Rule for Amendment 11 to the federal scallop fishery management plan. This plan established three categories of permits for the federal scallop fishery and set the standard for scallop management throughout New England and the Mid-Atlantic regions. The three categories of permits established are: Limited Access (LA) representing 95% of the allowable catch and managed through days-at-sea; General Category (GC) which has a 5% allocation of the catch and is managed through allocation and trip limits; and the Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) which is managed through a total allowable catch in the NGOM area with a 200 pound trip limit. LA and GC boats were put into a permit class based upon an individual’s landings over a series of years. Unfortunately for Gulf of Maine fishermen, the years picked to establish the baseline were at a time of very low abundance of scallops in the Gulf. The result is that there were no landings for many Maine permit holders and Maine was in the position to lose almost all access to the federal scallop fishery. The Department of Marine Resources threw a ‘Hail Mary’ at the New England Fishery Management Council and was successful in creating this third permit class for the Northern Gulf of Maine. This new class was to ensure at least a minimal level of access for Maine’s boats.

A line was drawn in the ocean, just north of Cape Cod and to the east about 60 miles, and the NGOM permitted boats were given a small fishery. It was the assumption of many that there was not much to catch in this area and that there wouldn’t be for the foreseeable future. As is typical, much of the focus in Amendment 11 was on the more profitable components of the fishery. The NGOM was an afterthought. But now that the fishery is returning, the management plan is being stressed to the point of breaking.

The cracks started to appear last year when a large bed of scallops was found off Stellwagen Bank in the southern-most extent of the NGOM and LA boats began harvesting within the inshore grounds. The result was that in 2016, a year when the allowable catch for the NGOM was set at 70,000 pounds, 300,000 pounds were plucked from this area.

How did this happen? Well, despite the NGOM being established as its own area, with a discrete stock assessment, boats with LA permits are allowed in the NGOM area under their own, separate, management plan. This occurs even though the stock assessment process that determines the number of days available to fish for the LA boats ignores these fishing grounds to focus on the more heavily populated Georges Bank. The allowable catch for the NGOM doesn’t apply to the LA fleet. But, because of how the regulations are written, the entire area is still shut down when the TAC is hit by the small boats fishing in the area. In the six weeks it took NGOM and GC boats to catch 70,000 pounds in 2016, the LA boats raced to catch as many pounds as they could before moving on to other fishing grounds. The LA boats are not to blame, they are fishermen and legally allowed to do this. But the lack of a comprehensive management plan for the NGOM has led to a derby fishery where everyone is trying to catch as many scallops as quickly as possible. This issue was brought to the New England Fisheries Management Council last year and nothing was done to address the problem.

This year, a new stock assessment was completed which suggested over 400,000 pounds could safely be taken out of the NGOM. The return of a fishery to an area that had lost scallops decades ago should have been celebrated. Instead, the assessment team struggled to determine how to set a TAC that would also constrain the LA boats. NGOM fishermen also feared that the management loopholes would lead to a quick end to the rebuilding of this fishery so the allowable catch was again set at a little over 70,000 pounds. The hope was that effort would be similar to last year, small boats would hit their marks, LA boat would catch 300,000 pounds, and the Council would have time to better address the issue.

What no one could have known at the time though, was that the effort from LA boats was poised to increase dramatically, far more than it was ever expected. Based upon preliminary data, NOAA believes that over 1 million pounds of scallops are going to be taken out of this area before the TAC is hit. This is more than double the amount scientists recommended be caught in this rebuilding area. This leaves Maine’s small boat fleet and New Hampshire and Massachusetts fishermen in a state of limbo. The NEFMC has stated its intent to address this issue over the next year but the options available are limited. A quick fix must be put in place to stop the bleeding and protect whatever remains of the stock to ensure this does not happen again next year. We must also recognize that user conflict between permit types was unavoidable once the biomass returned, and instead of putting a band-aid on this issue, we need a council process to fully address, protect, and plan for the long-term future of this fishery.
It’s been a crazy spring and the busiest few months I have experienced in my 17 years with the MLA. The volume and seriousness of the issues that our lobster industry faces seem unending. Things really took off after the forum in March. The MLA conducted a lobster quality tour, took a bus of industry members to the International Seafood Expo in Boston, attended New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) herring meetings, attended a conference in Oregon on reducing whale entanglements in the Dangerous crab fishery and attended Marine Resources Committee public hearings and work sessions.

And in April, we kept going. This time the MLA attended Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) herring meetings, spoke about Maine lobstermen’s efforts to protect right whales at the Marine Mammal Commission’s annual meeting, presented testimony on allowing lobstermen to continue to fish in proposed coral zones at the Council’s Habitat Committee and full Council meetings, represented Maine lobstermen at the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team meeting in Rhode Island and attended more Marine Resources Committee public hearings and work sessions.

Once again, the MLA is leading the lobster industry on a vast array of important issues. In fact, the MLA was the only lobster organization present at many of these meetings. We were the only Maine lobster organization attending the critical Council herring and coral meetings and the ASMFC herring meetings. It takes a lot of time, resources and knowledge to keep the interests of our industry front and center. For MLA, it has been time well spent. Managers on the NEFMC and ASMFC are well aware of the lobster industry’s need for reliable and affordable sources of bait. And the Council is well aware of the economic devastation it would cause to Downeast lobstermen if it closed the two proposed coral zones to lobstering.

As a result, the Council voted for a “preferred alternative” that will allow the lobster fishery to continue to operate; this alternative will go out for public comment in May.

Yet, of all the work the MLA has been involved in this spring, I am most proud of what we’ve done to improve the enforcement of Maine’s lobster laws. The MLA brought forward our own bill, LD 575, to revamp the penalty structure for existing laws and establish adequate minimum and maximum penalties, such as multi-year license suspensions, to deter crimes. The bill grew out of extensive discussions by the MLA Board and feedback from hundreds of lobstermen through MLA surveys.

The DMR also brought forward an enforcement bill, LD 1379, to allow covert trackers to be used on vessels to give Marine Patrol the tools it needs to enforce existing laws. The DMR’s bill has been controversial. There were questions about the scope of the bill and the possibility of moving too much power to the DMR. However, the intent of the bill was plain: to give DMR the tools it needs to enforce existing lobster laws. The DMR has been very clear that this bill has never been about a power grab; it is about putting tools in place to help Marine Patrol do its job.

Improving enforcement of our lobster laws is the MLA’s top priority for 2017. The system is beginning to break down with violations becoming too common, and too many bad players making a lot of money by cheating. The MLA testified in support of LD 1379 because we have heard loud and clear from the industry that the enforcement crisis has reached a critical point and must be fixed.

However, this must be done in a way that protects lobstermen. The MLA has advocated that the Legislature require an authority outside the DMR, such as the Attorney General’s office, to sign off before any covert surveillance can be conducted. While the MLA believes that the DMR and its Marine Patrol do an excellent job, today’s leaders will not always be there. It is important that any changes put in place serve the lobster industry over the long haul.

I am so grateful to the more than 30 lobstermen from all areas of the coast who came to the public hearing in April to support this bill. These lobstermen spoke about the seriousness of the enforcement problem, and asked the Committee to make the necessary changes to tighten up the bill’s language and move it forward. Commissioner Keliher did an outstanding job explaining the DMRs intent and the process it would use to implement covert surveillance in order to make its cases. He was clear that any surveillance would take the form of a GPS tracker with no audio or video. And he made clear that no covert surveillance would take place unless there was probable cause.

Those who spoke against the bill seemed to agree that there is an enforcement problem. However, rather than constructively offer improvements to the bill or note the elements that they could support, instead they offered much drama and grandstanding at the hearing. From claims that the DMR would be videotaping lobstermen on their boats to alleging that the DMR could take their lobster license for an overdue library book, they sought to distract the conversation from the important enforcement issues. The opposition was comprised of only five lobstermen, three lawyers and one elected official.

As of this moment, the bill has yet to go through the work session and be voted on. Regardless of how this turns out, I was proud to be on the MLA team in support of this bill. It really demonstrated the difference between the MLAs proactive, thoughtful and constructive approach and the more divisive, grandstanding tactics used by others aimed solely at halting progress.

As you ready your gear for what I hope will be another amazing lobster season, you can feel good knowing that the MLA is listening to you, our members. We have your back and we are working hard to move this industry forward in a positive direction. Thank you for your support.

As always, stay safe on the water.
The MLA Board met on April 4 at Darby’s in Belfast. The board welcomed a team from Emera working on the Atlantic Link Cable project. Nick Welz, a consultant with Tetra Tech, Gerald Weseen, from Emera, and Gil Paquette, a permitting specialist, discussed early plans for this cable transmission project which would run offshore in the Gulf of Maine from Coleson Cove, New Brunswick, to Plymouth, Massachusetts. The Atlantic Link is one of two projects that could pass through Maine waters to deliver clean electricity to Massachusetts. The state sent out a request for proposals earlier this year. Bids are due in July, with a service date of summer, 2022.

The Atlantic Link team has been meeting with fishing industry members and other stakeholders to get feedback on potential routes for the cable. For the Maine coast, the cable would pass Grand Manan Island and then run through offshore waters. MLA Directors provided feedback on the initial route. There is still a lot of planning and survey work to be done for this project.

The board also welcomed Massachusetts fisherman Billy Chaparelas who shared his concerns about the development of the New England Fishery Management Council’s (NEFMC) herring plan. He is particularly concerned about the impact of midwater trawlers on schools of herring, tuna stocks, and interactions with other nearshore gear.

The MLA has been closely monitoring the development of the NEFMC’s herring plan. There are two major components of this plan (Amendment 8). The first is to develop a new process to set the Allowable Biological Catch (ABC) which determines how much fish will be available for the commercial herring fishery. To do this, Amendment 8 will consider the role of herring in the ecosystem, such as their role as a prey species for tuna and sea birds. This involves a lot of modelling work; management options are still under development.

The second component is to address localized depletion of herring in inshore waters. The Council is looking at the impact of midwater vessels on the stock. It has developed a range of management options for consideration including a status quo scenario for midwater vessels, or a series of restrictions on midwater boats fishing near shore, ranging from a year-round ban in Area 1A to prohibiting midwater vessels within 50 miles from shore. The Council will review preferred alternatives this fall and then public hearings will be scheduled. The Council is also working on measures to address haddock bycatch by herring vessels in offshore waters and development of an industry-funded monitoring program.

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) is also moving forward with proposed changes to its herring plan to provide the Commission with more tools and flexibility to manage the amount and timing of herring landings from Area 1A. The MLA supports this effort and has submitted comments. The Department of Marine Resources (DMR) is also working with the Legislature to gain additional tools to manage the herring fishery at the state level. Specifically, DMR is seeking to set a control date of January 2017, to establish a tiered landings programs. Those who landed herring in Maine prior to the control date would be in the top tier for landings allowance, and those who came in after that would be in the second landings tier. The DMR is also seeking to restrict issuing the state pelagic licenses to non-residents, unless other states offer access to a reciprocal license for Maine residents. The Legislature has not yet voted on these bills.

The Marine Resources Committee has been holding public hearings and work sessions on these lobster bills. To date, only LD 14 An Act to Extend the Legal Hours for Harvesting Lobster has been passed to be enacted. This will allow lobstermen to begin hauling gear at 4 a.m. during the month of October. Three bills -- LD 392 An Act Regarding Haul Times outside the 3 mile Line; LD 129 An Act to Provide Additional Management for Limited-entry Lobster Zones and LD 616 An Act to Ensure Consistent Access to Limited Entry Lobster Zones -- have been killed in committee.

The rest of the bills are still under consideration by the Marine Resources Committee. Committee members have discussed at length proposed bills to improve enforcement of lobster laws and to add tools to manage herring and menhaden landings in Maine. The majority of this work will be completed in May. The Legislature must finish its work by the third Wednesday in June.

The MLA has been very busy telling Maine’s story about lobstermen’s efforts to protect endangered whales. In March, MLAs executive director presented at a whale conference in Oregon as west coast crab fishermen grapple with an emerging entanglement issue. Dungeness crab fishermen from California, Oregon and Washington are seeing a drastic increase in humpback and gray whales entanglements. It is thought that it has been caused by the domoic acid outbreak of the last few years which has delayed the opening of the fishery, greatly increasing the interaction between whales and crab gear. This fishery is not yet under a Take Reduction Plan, as is New England; fishermen and managers are working proactively to address the problem so that official regulatory action can be avoided. Fishermen at the conference were extremely appreciative of Maine’s extensive experience in the whale management process, testing gear modifications and implementing a variety of strategies to reduce entanglement risk.

Dungeness crab fishermen on the West Coast are seeing more whale entanglements which may be due to a delayed start to the fishery because of domoic acid outbreaks. P. McCarron photo.
MAINE LOBSTERMEN’S ASSOCIATION UPDATE

MLA’s executive director also spoke at the Marine Mammal Commission’s annual meeting on Maine’s efforts to protect whales. Much attention has been focused on the recent decline in right whale births and the deteriorating health and changing behaviors and distributions of right whales. Many in the science and environmental community blame the fishing industry for the changes. They are pressuring managers to consider a rope-less fishing strategy, while others are pushing to implement weak rope for the lobster fishery. The MLA has been educating these stakeholders on all of the work undertaken by Maine lobstermen, the lack of a whale management plan for Canadian fishermen and the need to understand how whales are getting entangled before any new management measures are considered.

The MLA will take part in the Take Reduction Team meeting, April 25 to 27, in Providence, Rhode Island, where it will continue to challenge allegations by the science community that fishermen are responsible for the declining health status of right whales, and advocate for better understanding of how entanglements occur.

UPDATE ON CORAL AMENDMENT

MLA staff have attended New England Fishery Management Council meetings on its proposed Omnibus Coral Amendment which proposes to close an area around Mount Desert Rock and Outer Schoodic Ridge to lobstering. The MLA continued from page 7

tested on the lobster industry’s grave concerns over the economic impacts of these proposals at the recent Council Habitat Committee and Council meetings. And the managers have listened. In April the Council agreed that the two coral zones proposed for downeast Maine should remain open to lobster fishing if created. The Council’s “preferred alternative” is to ban only mobile bottom tending gear from these areas. However, the process is not yet over. The Council will hold public hearings on this proposal in May, and the final plan will be voted on in June. It is extremely important that Maine lobstermen attend these public hearings to voice concern over any possible closing of these areas to lobstering.

DISCUSSIONS CONTINUE ON HERRING PLAN

The MLA has attended all of the Council and ASMFC meetings to weigh in on proposed changes to their respective herring management plans. At the Council, the MLA has been advocating that managers put forward alternatives for new Allowable Biological Catch (ABC) control rules that ensure a stable and adequate bait supply for the lobster industry. At the ASMFC, the MLA has been advocating that the Commission adopt additional management tools to allow greater flexibility in managing the timing and volume of landings from the Area 1A herring fishery to ensure a steady supply for fresh herring during peak lobstering months. The MLA has also testified at the Maine Legislature on proposals that would give the DMR more flexibility in managing the volume of herring landings, how those landings are allocated among vessels, and the ability of out-of-state vessels to obtain Maine pelagic fishing licenses.

Summary of Lobster Bills (as of April 26)

To be enacted in law.
LD 14 An Act to Extend the Legal Hours for Harvesting Lobster (Kumiega)
This Act changes time of day fishing restrictions for lobstermen by moving the start time for hauling in October to 4 a.m.

Still in Progress
LD 252 An Act To Improve Safety in the Disposal of Expired Marine Flares (McCreight); OTP-A (12-1); divided report
"The State Fire Marshal shall establish a program to collect, store and dispose of expired marine flares, and develop a public education program, within existing resources."

LD 575 An Act to Improve the Enforcement of Maine’s Lobster Laws (Langley); PH 3/6/17
"This bill develops a strategy to better enforce existing laws such as establishing minimum penalties for lobster violations, paying restitution when convicted, and limitations on reentering the fishery after conviction."

LD 704 An Act to Give the Department of Marine Resources Flexibility with Licensing in the Herring Fishery (Parry); tabled 4/5/17
"This bill would allow the Commissioner allow the Commissioner of Marine Resources to establish different landings limits for herring fishermen who recorded landings of Atlantic herring in Maine prior to January 1, 2017."

LD 706 An Act to Prevent Marine Debris (Devin, DMR bill); OTP (7-5); divided report, not reported out
"This prohibits possession of materials used to package lobster or crab bait, including the plastic wrapping and cardboard cartons, on a lobster vessel, and the discarding or abandoning of these materials into the ocean. Violation of this provision is a civil violation, with a fine of $250."

LD 1207 An Act to Make Technical Changes to Maine’s Marine Resources Laws (Tuell); PH 4/12/17
"This clarifies that you can permanently lose your license for scrubbing egged lobsters, makes it illegal to sell offal for use as lobster bait, creates a residency requirement for a commercial pelagic and anadromous fishing license, and exempts the holder of a marine harvesting demonstration license from the prohibition on hauling on Sundays in the summer."

LD 1359 An Act Regarding Enforcement of Marine Resources Laws and Suspensions of Marine Resources Licenses (Kumiega); PH 4/24/17
"This bill would allow marine patrol to place covert surveillance equipment on a lobster vessel if there is probably cause of a violation. It also allows for suspension of marine licenses when theft, arson, property destruction, violations against public officials and criminal offenses against marine patrol officers."

LD 922 An Act Directing the Commissioner of Marine Resources to Investigate Conditions of Sheepscot Pond Related to a Management Plan for Anadromous Fish Species (Pierce); tabled 4/12/17

LD 373 An Act to Create Pathways to Enter Alternative Marine Industries (Alley); ONTP 4/23/17

LD 703 An Act to Address Marine Debris Resulting for Commercial Activities (Devin); PH 3/22/17

LD 113 An Act to Stabilize Lobster Bait Prices (Alley); ONTP (12-1), not reported out

LD 201 An Act to Provide Flexibility in the Purchase of Lobster Trap Tags (Kumiega); ONTP (Majority), not reported out

LD 1454 An Act to Extend the Time for an Appeal of Limited Entry Fishing License Denial for Members of the Military (Battle); PH 4/24/17

Dead

LD 392 An Act Regarding Haal Times outside the 3 mile Line (Tuell); dead on 3/23/17

LD 149 An Act to Provide Additional Management for Limited-entry Lobster Zones (Hubbell); Dead on 3/23/17

LD 616 An Act to Ensure Consistent Access to Limited Entry Lobster Zones (Hubbell); dead on 3/23/17

NOTE: OTP=ought to pass; ONTP=ought not to pass; PH=public hearing; tabled=Committee will discuss again.
The Maine Lobstermen's Association comments on preferred alternative for Omnibus Deep Sea Coral Amendment for the Mount Desert Rock and Outer Schoodic Ridge coral zones

My name is Patrice McCaron. I am the Director of the Maine Lobstermen’s Association. I am here today to speak in favor of the Habitat Committee’s recommendation for Amendment 2, a prohibition on fishable bottom trawl gear to be accepted as the preferred alternative for the Downeast Gulf of Maine coral zones including Mount Desert Rock and Outer Schoodic Ridge.

The MLA supports the establishment of these two coral zones because we believe it is important that the fishing community recognize these areas as unique coral habitats worthy of protection. However, for economic, conservation and operational reasons, it is important that you to allow lobster fishing to continue in these areas.

While the two proposed areas appear relatively small in size, the impact of excluding lobstermen would be massive. The lobster fishery is everything to our Downeast Maine communities. These coral zones are located off the coasts of Washington and Hancock counties which have very limited economic opportunities. The communities in this part of the coast are quite literally economically dependent on the success of the lobster industry. Any negative economic impact on lobstermen will hurt not only the families of lobstermen and their crew, but will have far reaching impacts on the many families and businesses that depend on the revenues generated by lobstering.

The MLA has done much outreach on this issue, keeping lobstermen informed of the development of this Amendment through our monthly newspaper, weekly email updates and through many group and individual discussions. And this Amendment has gotten their attention.

From our conversations with lobstermen (and DMR will provide more up to date and detailed information), the MLA has estimated a minimum of 100 lobster fishing across these two coral zones, coming from at least 15 different fishing communities. These lobstermen have stated that these two fishing grounds are most important to them during the winter and spring months, but many lobstermen fish these areas year-round. I’ve spoken to a few who fish these areas exclusively. The MLA has communicated clearly to our lobstermen the importance of sharing information on how and when these areas are fished, and the economic impact of these fishing areas. We hope that our outreach efforts have aided Maine DMR in collecting this information.

For obvious reasons, lobstermen who fish these areas are very scared about how their businesses would fare if they lose access to fish in the coral zones. But it doesn’t stop there. MLA has also heard from many lobstermen who fish the areas adjacent to the proposed coral zones which are also areas of high gear density. If lobstermen lose access to the Outer Schoodic Ridge and Mount Desert Rock coral zones, they will not cope by completely removing lobster gear from the water. Instead, those traps will be displaced to adjacent areas. Lobstermen fishing in those areas will not be able to absorb the effort from more than 100 lobstermen who would be aggressively searching for productive fishing bottom.

And gear displacement would also affect endangered North Atlantic right whales. The areas of the proposed coral zones are transited by right whales. These whales typically feed in Cape Cod Bay and transit north to the Bay of Fundy and Gulf of St. Lawrence, and back to mid- and south-Atlantic. Maine lobstermen have invested much time and effort in making their gear more whale safe, including reducing the number of vertical lines in the water by trawling up and fishing sinking line between traps. Shifting gear from the coral zones to adjacent areas would aggregate gear and increase gear density and the probability of a right whale encountering Maine lobster gear. Neither the endangered right whale nor Maine lobstermen can afford to take this risk. So, how can we keep lobstermen fishing and achieve our goal of protecting coral in these areas? To put it simply, due to operational realities, lobster gear and corals do not mix. Lobstermen are familiar with where corals are located. They are typically found on steep slopes in areas where there is tremendous depth variation of up to a few hundred feet. Lobstermen need some conformity of bottom to run the federally mandated minimum 15 traps with sinking groundline to protect whales. Lobstermen will typically fish up to or along an edge, but cannot handle the depth variation by setting that trawl down into it. Furthermore, if lobster gear comes in contact with hard corals, the gear will become hung down and the trawl will be lost. Because of the sinking groundline and the bottom topography, lobstermen have no way to grapple that gear back. The $4,000 investment for the trawl-and the catch — will be permanently lost.

In summary, due to economic impacts, whale protection concerns and operational realities, the MLA strongly urges you to support alternative 2 as your preferred alternative for the Downeast Gulf of Maine coral zones.

The Maine Lobstermen’s Association comments on the ASMFC’s proposed changes to its herring management plan

The Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA) has reviewed the Draft Addendum I to Amendment 3 to the Atlantic Herring Plan. Atlantic herring is the most important bait fish for Maine’s lobster fishery which supports thousands of jobs. In 2016, Maine’s lobster fishery generated nearly $550 million in ex-vessel value. Managing landings of Atlantic herring through the peak fishing months of the lobster fishery is fundamental to its continued success.

Access to herring was a daunting problem for the Maine lobster industry in 2016. The price of bait doubled and many of Maine’s coops and buying stations had to ration bait. The lack of and the high cost of bait remain a huge issue of concern for Maine’s lobster industry.

The MLA strongly supports Addendum I to the herring plan to give the ASMFC Herring Section additional tools to manage the timing of herring landings from Area 1A. The MLA supported Maine’s efforts in 2016 to limit the use of carriers and catch per vessel in order to ensure that the bait supply lasted through out trimester 2 and ensure a bait supply for the lobster industry. We encourage the ASMFC to adopt these measures so that Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts can work together to manage Area 1A landings and maintain fair and equitable regulations for all vessels in the fishery, regardless of which state they land in.

With regard to the specific management alternatives, the MLA provides the following feedback:

- Harvesting reporting requirements. The MLA supports requiring a state landings report if a vessel lands herring caught from Area 1A in a Maine, New Hampshire or Massachusetts port. If federal VTR reports are not made available to states for landings monitoring in a timely fashion.
- Prohibit landings of herring during a day out of the fishery. MLA supports the status quo on this coupled with a weekly landing limit per vessel.
- Weekly landing limit per vessel. MLA supports expanding the measures Maine had in place in 2016 to control landings. Therefore, MLA supports Option B or C to put all states on a level playing field to control the amount and timing of landings.
- Clarification of days out procedure. The MLA supports that the Herring Section continue to amend the default management measures be set to zero landing days if consensus is not reached. We believe that a shut-down of the fishery is something that all states will work to avoid.

Thank you for consideration of these comments.
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Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA) advocates for a sustainable lobster resource and the fishermen and communities that depend on it.

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- **SW Boatworks**
  - Lamonie, ME -- $1,000 discount for hull or top, on a 38' CB or 44' CB

### Documentation Services
- **Maine Design Company**
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### Education & Trade Shows
- **Maine Maritime Museum**
  - Bath, ME -- Free admission to MLA members.
- **Mount Desert Oceanarium**
  - Bar Harbor, ME -- Free admission to commercial fishermen and their families.
- **Penobscot Marine Museum**
  - Searsport, ME -- Free admission for MLA members.

### Electronic Equipment
- **Midcoast Marine Electronics**
  - Rockland, ME -- 10% off list price on all marine electronic products.
- **Navtronics, LLC**
  - York, ME -- 5% off of purchases.

### Financial & Investment
- **Back River Financial Group**
  - Farmingdale, ME -- Free initial consultation and review of previous tax returns.

### Fishing, Marine & Industrial
- **Alliance Rubber**
  - Hot Springs, AR -- 10% off custom printed lobster bands.
- **Hamilton Marine**
  - Searsport, Rockland, Portland, Southwest Harbor, Jonesport, ME -- Discounts available to commercial fishermen.
- **South Atlantic Power Products**
  - Exeter, NH -- 10% discount on parts and service.

### Gifts
- **Maine Camp Outfitters**
  - Sunset, ME -- 10% off all apparel and promotional product orders.

### Hydraulics
- **Coastal Hydraulics**
  - Seabrook, NH -- 10% discount on all in stock items for MLA members.
- **Hews Company, LLC**
  - South Portland, ME -- 10% off hydraulic components and Cable Craft cables.

### Industry Organizations
- **Maine Lobstermen’s Association**
  - Kennebunk, ME -- 10% off MLA merchandise.

### Insurance
- **Smithwick & Mariners Insurance**
  - Falmouth, ME -- Discounted vessel insurance plus 5% discount with proof of CG approved Drill Conductor course within the last 5 years.

### Legal Services
- **Nicholas H Walsh PA**
  - Portland, ME -- 20% off legal services.

### Lobster/Seafood/Wholesale
- **Atlantic Edge Lobster**
  - Boothbay Harbor, ME -- Fuel discount for MLA members.
- **Winter Harbor Fishermen’s Coop**
  - Winter Harbor, ME -- 10% off picked lobster meat.

### Newspapers
- **Commercial Fisheries News**
  - Deer Isle, ME -- Discounted annual subscription rate for $18.75 with MLA membership noted on check.
- **National Fisherman**
  - North Hollywood, CA -- Special annual subscription rate.

### Propellers
- **Accutech Marine Propeller, Inc**
  - Dover, NH -- 10% off propeller repair & new shafts. New propeller discounts vary.
- **New England Propeller Inc**
  - Plymouth, MA -- Discounts on marine propeller, shafting, and related items, sales & repairs.

### Refrigeration Services
- **Applied Refrigeration Services**
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### Safety Training & Equipment
- **Liferaft Services, LLC**
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- **McMillan Offshore Survival Training**
  - Belfast, ME -- 10% discount on USCG Drill Conductor training.

### Trap Builders, Stock & Supplies
- **Friendship Trap Company**
  - Friendship, ME -- 5% off list price on traps purchased at the Friendship store. Cannot be combined with other discounts.
- **Sea Rose Trap Co**
  - S. Portland -- 5% off list price on traps to MLA members.
LOBSTERMEN, INDUSTRY LEADERS HEAD TO BOSTON FOR SEAFOOD EXPO NORTH AMERICA

The Maine Lobstermen’s Association once again brought a crowd of cheerful lobstermen and others involved in Maine’s seafood industries to the Seafood Expo North America show in Boston in March. There they visited some of the thousands of seafood vendors, businesses and organizations involved in the global seafood trade. Here are a few comments from the trip:

For me it was a real eye opener. I have to think in terms of global fisheries and marketing and then realize what I saw was just the tip of the iceberg.

Peter Miller

The seafood show offered a zoomed-out view of our opportunities and challenges in the world seafood market. The reception was the icing on the cake. Another truly awesome piece was having a Marine Resources Committee representative on the bus ride home to ask questions and to share relevant legislative information as well as our viewpoints. For me that once again reaffirmed why MLA is such a great organization.

Brian Tripp

This Expo made it a great opportunity to get a greater picture of the processes that businesses face, whether a buyer, seller, or another particular party like a restaurant and so forth. Canada is really going to affect us so our live lobster shipping is crucial. There’s a lot we need to go over and hash out to make some things better. Anything is possible if we put our minds together to fix upcoming issues we face!

Krista Tripp

I personally really enjoyed the [Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative] reception. It was well-organized, focusing on Maine lobster. We had a blast talking and meeting folks. It was really good for me as a fisherman’s wife to meet everyone and also hear about topics that are being discussed. Thanks again! It was a great experience.

Lindsay Staples

Overall, between the benefits of the chance to meet, share and learn on the bus as well as attend the show, this is one of the great values that you are providing. An excellent and valuable time. I would welcome you offering this service annually and would generally plan to attend if you do.

Chris Rector, regional representative for Senator Angus King

Governor Paul LePage met with some of the people taking part in the MLA’s trip to the Seafood Expo North America MLA photo.

Peter Miller, left, and Merritt Carey, right, of the Tenants Harbor Lobstermen’s Co-op talking with Ryan McPherson. MLA photo.

April and Ron Chabourne of CBS Lobster and Bait in Portland and their friend Don Leavitt from Ready Seafood were just some of the MLAs business supporters found at the MLMC’s seafood reception. MLA photo.

(Above) It’s big, it’s loud and the Seafood Expo North America show is the place to be in mid-March. (Left) Maine lobstermen and others made the trip to the show to learn more about lobster’s place in the global market and the many other seafood products with which it must compete. MLA photos
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- Weather Resistant Zip Ties:
  Sizes from 4”-60”.
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As spring turns into summer Maine enters peak Lobster season, and the MLMC prepares to begin the largest marketing push of the year. The MLMC will engage media, chefs and consumers through a variety of pulse points from early June until November, which will accompany ongoing marketing efforts. Some of the activities include:

- **“Maine After Midnight” Year 2**: The signature events will commence in June, with one event per month until September. The first stop is Dallas, followed by Chicago, San Francisco and New York City. These chef industry night events are a chance for chefs and media in each city to learn more about the Maine Lobster story and see how they can incorporate Maine Lobster into their menus and stories.

- **Media**: In early June, the MLMC will travel to the country's media hub, New York City, for one-on-one meetings with reporters and editors to educate them about the Maine Lobster industry at the start of the season.

- **Chefs**: The MLMC has identified a targeted shortlist of chefs throughout the country who will receive Maine New Shell Lobsters at the beginning of the season to drive awareness and menu consideration.

- **Consumers**: The Maine Lobster social media handles will feature content including beautiful Maine scencis, lobster boats, wharfs, and how-to recipe videos to get consumers excited for the season ahead.

**Preparation for Peak Season with the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative**

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Guiding people through the process of applying for health insurance through the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is not the easiest job. Everything related to the ACA is complex, and it takes time and a great deal of patience to help a person complete the process. Alisha Keezer, the Maine Lobstermen’s Association health insurance Navigator, has been on the job safely more than two years and, with the help of Fishing Partnership Support Services of Massachusetts, has assisted more than 900 individuals with health insurance information and more than 560 people to gain health insurance.

In fact, Keezer has been so successful reaching out to Maine’s fishermen that she has been selected as a Navigator mentor by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), one of just eight such designations in the country.

[Keeker] made sure that information posted through Facebook made clear that the MLA was ready to help any fisherman apply for health insurance at no cost to themselves. Since the ACA came into force in 2013, the MLA has used a variety of outreach methods to get information about the health insurance program, its benefits and its penalties to Maine’s fishermen, many of whom live in remote coastal communities. That ability — to reach out to and communicate with a generally rural population — is what Keezer will be helping two other Navigator organizations develop. “Basically, I will work with the organizations over four months to help them achieve their outreach goals,” Keezer said. She is mentoring the Alcohol and Drug Council of North Carolina and Planned Parenthood of St. Louis, Missouri. “They are having problems reaching their special populations,” Keezer said, specifically addicted people in North Carolina and young adults not in college in St. Louis.

The MLA drew on a variety of communications techniques specifically tailored to the state’s 5,000 lobstermen. Those techniques reflected the culture of lobstering. “Many lobstermen aren’t available during typical office hours,” Keezer explained, “so I got in touch with them when they were home, like on the weekends or at night.” Lobstermen, like many small business owners, are extremely aware of where every nickel goes so Keezer emphasized in her messages the tax penalties embedded in the ACA for those who do not sign up for health insurance. She also stressed how affordable health insurance could be for a younger lobsterman. “I took the lowest premium for a Bronze plan in each coastal county for a guy under 30 and put it on a postcard. We sent that out saying, ‘Do you know how little health insurance would cost you?’ That got their attention,” she said. She also made sure that information posted through Facebook made clear that the MLA was ready to help any fisherman apply for health insurance at no cost to themselves.

As a Navigator mentor, Keezer confers with staff at the two organizations through a conference call each month and with other Navigator mentors once a month as well. “These calls have gone surprisingly well. We talk about various ways that might work with their populations. It’s important to seek people out rather than to wait for them to contact you,” Keezer said. She partnered with the Knox County Health Clinic, for example, to let lobstermen from midcoast communities know she could meet with them in a central location familiar to them.

In June Keezer and three other Navigator mentors will be presenting a summary of their outreach efforts at an ACA summit in Maryland. “It’s all about knowing how to communicate the information and how to use social media,” Keezer said. “And just having some good ideas!”

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**MLA NAVIGATOR RECOGNIZED FOR OUTREACH WORK**

by Melissa Waterman
FISHERMAN'S ACADEMY KEEPS STUDENTS IN HIGH SCHOOL

By Alex Acquisto

First published by the Bangor Daily News, reprinted with permission.

Were it not for the fisherman's academy at Oceanside High School, 16-year-old boat captain Payten Simmons said she would have little incentive to go to class. "I don't know if I [would have] dropped out. I don't know what I'd be doing ... [but] it makes me want to go to school," she said. "I like to come to school now." Simmons, who lives in Friendship and is the only girl out of six 11th-graders in the program, bought her own lobster boat, Fear Knot, and has been operating it for the last three years. She is the only member of the program who hauls traps in the winter and the summer, which means most of her weekends during the school year are spent hauling, sometimes with the help of her dad, who also is a lobsterman.

Simmons, who has a student lobster license, is limited to fishing 150 traps, which tend to yield around 1,000 pounds of lobster each time she goes out to haul her traps. With Maine fishermen being paid on average $4 per pound the past couple of years, she makes good money.

When the option of making that kind of money is on the table for a student, "part of me doesn't blame them for not [wanting] to come to school," said Ian Carey, a social studies teacher at Oceanside who also teaches academy students. "I can definitely see how the value of an education is definitely clouded."

For Simmons, who said she "was pretty much raised on the water" and has been helping her dad fish since she was 11, having something like the fisherman's academy is a big deal. It allows her to get an education through traditional academic means, such as by reading about the history of coastal fishing, but also with hands-on experiences that provide her with actual skills and knowledge she can apply to lobstering. For example, the students are learning to work with tools at the Apprenticeshop — a nonprofit educational woodworking and boatbuilding center in Rockland — where they have been spending time with woodworking apprentices once a week to build 12-foot rowing skiffs.

The idea for a fisherman's academy was conceived by former Oceanside Principal Renee Thompson in 2015, as a way to curb the high truancy rate at the Rockland high school, said Dwight Blue, who teaches a specialized English class to the group of six juniors.

The academy is loosely modeled after the Maritime Studies Pathway program at Deer Isle-Stonington High School, in that it caters to students whose ties to the ocean run deep and who will more than likely pursue careers working as commercial fishermen or in a maritime-related field after they leave high school.

In addition to English class, the group attends separate social studies and science classes and spends one day a week working at the Apprenticeshop in Rockland. Next year, the group will work every other day in the shop. The students are learning to build their boats with electric tools but with a special emphasis on hand tools, which Simmons said is particularly beneficial.

"That's a great skill to learn because on the boat, you don't have a bandsaw. I've learned a lot that I can actually use on the water and in my whole career," Simmons said.

Expecting the group to "sit in a room and do any one or two things for 80 minutes is not going to happen," Blue said last week. The woodworking and "boat building workshop environment is so much better for them and their interests [as opposed to] having them sit in a plastic seat for eight hours," he said.

The high school curriculum is designed to accommodate the real-world interests of the students, some of whom have other part-time jobs in addition to lobstering. Garrett Young, 17, for example, operates his own lobster boat and also works part-time with the fire and emergency medical services unit for the town of St. George.

Blue and Carey rework their lessons to include material that would be useful or of interest to the group. In Carey's social studies class, for example, he is teaching the students about the history of Maine as it relates to the ocean and fishing. So far this year, the group has also been working to create an online lobstering dictionary, which Carey hopes to finish by the end of the year.

In Blue's class last week, he read "The Ledge," by Lawrence Sargent Hall aloud to the class — a short story based on the true tale of a man, his son and nephew who, while on a duck hunting trip in December 1956 on an island off Harpswell, found themselves stranded after their skiff floated away. All three hunters died. "That's one thing I would always make sure of — that my skiff was tied down," Noah Morse said in class after Blue finished the short story. Morse, who also has an apprentice lobster license, said he plans to attend a technical school after graduation.

Getting the students to even consider college or expand the expectations that they've set for themselves has been a feat of the program, Carey said.

"One of the good things I've seen is that they're not just thinking [exclusively] about fishing now — a couple of them are very able to at least consider colleges, like the Maine Maritime Academy," he said.

But even if some still don't plan on pursuing higher education, that's OK, too. Keeping them in school and showing them that learning in the classroom has value is an important lesson in itself. Blue said. In some ways these students, because they've been holding down multiple jobs and independently lobstering since they were early teenagers, are more mature than their peers.

"We talk about money every day in class — you can just tell it's so important to them, [and] they think about it all the time," Carey said.

But, the teacher added, he wants his students to recognize that getting an education is about more than just preparing for a job. One of his goals recently has been to ask them, 'If money wasn't an object, what would you do?'

"They may not understand yet that there's more out there in life," Carey said.
Bill Needelman, City of Portland waterfront coordinator. “For some there’s no record of them ever being dredged.”

The decreasing water depth poses obstacles not just to the harbor’s lobstermen, but to myriad other vessels that frequent Portland Harbor – cruise ships, huge oil tankers, container ships such as those run by Eimskip of Iceland, Coast Guard vessels and recreational boats as well.

So the area needs to be dredged. “The alternative is to continue losing space on the Portland waterfront. If we have no working waterfront, then the wharf owners will have to get their money from other, non-waterfront businesses,” Needelman said. Adding additional floats or finger piers is not possible; the existing structures are nearly all built out to the extent of the city’s jurisdiction.

The Army Corps of Engineers is responsible for keeping the nation’s navigable waterways open to vessel traffic. Thus the Corps dredges Portland’s federal navigation channel on a regular basis. The agency is not responsible, however, for making the berthing areas around the harbor’s numerous public and private piers navigable. That is the duty of the city and private wharf owners.

Everyone knows that dredging is expensive. It is also a permitting nightmare, requiring consecutive permits from numerous federal and state agencies. But whether one can dredge at all depends on what one plans to do with the dredged material. If the dredge spoils contain no contaminants, such as heavy metals, they can be disposed of on land or at sea. If the material contains the residue of centuries of industrial uses, as is likely in Portland, as well as the more modern contaminants contained in stormwater and sewage, disposing of the dredge spoils becomes extremely complicated.

In 2013, the Portland Harbor Commission decided to tackle the issue in a collaborative fashion. The Commission teamed up with the cities of Portland and South Portland, waterfront organizations, and lobstermen to figure out the best and most economical way to make the harbor usable to all vessels again.

It applied to the EPA for a $350,000 Brownfields grant to study the submerged soils around 22 public and private wharves to determine what contaminants were there.

“The Brownfields study is still going on,” Needelman said. “The volume of material that will be removed will be evaluated after the study is finished.” He estimates that between 200,000 and 400,000 cubic yards of material may need to be removed.

In 2014, a Non-Federal Dredge working group was formed to analyze options for disposing of the dredged material. The work group recommended that the cities pursue creation of a Confined Aquatic Disposal (CAD) cell in Portland Harbor to receive the dredged material.

The principle of a CAD cell is simple: dig a deep hole in the seafloor, place contaminated dredge spoils in it, and cap it with clean material. CAD cells have been used in dredge projects in highly contaminated harbors like New Bedford Harbor on Cape Cod.

“Confined aquatic disposal cells are becoming a more common solution for contaminated material, especially in highly contaminated harbors,” Strout commented.

Eventually the group identified a site off Munjoy Hill as a possible CAD site. However, members of the Maine Lobstering Union noted that the area has value to lobstermen as a migratory route for lobsters moving in and out of the harbor on a seasonal basis. Needelman said. A CAD cell there would impact lobster fishing. “The group then identified a site that was in the intertidal area, but it turned out to be important for birds, so that didn’t work for the Friends of Casco Bay or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,” Needelman continued.

In December, 2016, the group selected another potential site for the CAD cell, known as Site C. Site C lies outside the federal channel between South Port Marine and the Coast Guard Station, just southeast of the Casco Bay Bridge.

“Now the focus is whether we can remove enough material [from the site] to take the dredged sediments,” Needelman said. “They did a grab sample just to see what was on the surface. Next they will do a drill core sample and drive piles in other areas to confirm the boring.” Other issues complicating the process is whether the soils within the selected site are contaminated themselves. If so, the material taken from the site poses a disposal problem of its own. “The question is whether it is clean enough to be disposed of at sea. If not, do we put it back in the CAD cell or create a smaller CAD cell for it?” Needelman said.

Restoring the navigability of Portland’s private and public wharves will not take place overnight. Still, in an era of confrontation and conflict, the process of arriving at a solution to a seemingly intractable problem has been remarkably cordial. “Everyone involved in the process has had a voice, whether its Friends of Casco Bay, private wharf owners, the Lobster Union. Bill’s done a good job,” Strout commented.

“But we didn’t come to a conclusion and then go to the environmental community for their support over the last 21 years. That support helps make the Fishermen’s Voice the news of their industry. 207-963-7195 www.FishermensVoice.com
Shellfish represent 85 percent of Maine’s fisheries landings value, a number that’s been steadily increasing in recent years due to growth in the lobster and aquaculture industries. While this trend is forecasted to continue, there is also growing concern about the impact of increasing ocean acidity, as well as growing interest in finding ways to guard against its effects. This represents a significant challenge to the worldwide aquaculture industry, but we have found that growing seaweed alongside shellfish may offer a local solution to this global problem.

Ocean acidification is primarily due to increased absorption of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. This change in water chemistry makes it harder for shellfish to grow their shells. Maine is uniquely vulnerable to ocean acidification from both an environmental and socio-economic perspective, and it was the first East Coast state to convene a task force to address acidification of its waters and understand the potential impacts on commercially important species.

The negative impacts of ocean acidification on shellfish have been well studied, but we don’t yet know where the most vulnerable habitats are in Maine or which approaches are most effective at mitigating the effects of increased acidity. Without this information, we are investing in an industry without critical information needed to ensure its longevity and resilience in a changing ocean.

With the help of the Island Institute and Ocean Approved, Bigelow Laboratory scientists have been examining the effectiveness of co-culturing seaweed with shellfish to improve local growing conditions.

Our initial research suggests that many seaweeds, like kelp, actually grow faster in water with elevated levels of carbon dioxide. In effect, the extra resource that’s been steadily increasing in recent years due to growth in the lobster and aquaculture industries. While this trend is forecasted to continue, there is also growing concern about the impact of increasing ocean acidity, as well as growing interest in finding ways to guard against its effects. This represents a significant challenge to the worldwide aquaculture industry, but we have found that growing seaweed alongside shellfish may offer a local solution to this global problem.

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The data immediately indicated lower pH and higher concentrations of calcium in the water immediately upwind of the kelp farm lines. We were able to clearly detect phytoremediated water at the kelp farm, and the kelp was only 14 inches long at the time. We continued to collect data from inside and outside the farm until the kelp was harvested in late spring — at about 14 feet long!

From this initial study, we were able to clearly detect phytoremediated water from both the kelp farm that would provide better growing conditions for shellfish. It appears that the strength of this “halo” is enough to protect against the level of ocean acidification expected in the Gulf of Maine in the coming decades, but the presence of the halo is not necessarily constant over the entire growth period of the kelp. Our research revealed that the effect is strongest during the early, rapid growth phase of juvenile kelp and appears to taper off as the kelp gets larger. While we don’t yet know why this occurs, it is presumably due to slower growth rates and microscopic organisms that build up on kelp and counteract its absorption of carbon dioxide.

This year, we set out to repeat and augment the pilot study. We hope our data will better reveal the size of the halo and the consistency of its strength throughout the growing process. To help answer these questions, we’ve also partnered with scientists from the University of New Hampshire to conduct a mapping study around the Ocean Approved farm in March and May of this year.

One of our aquaculture partners is already making use of this research, growing kelp alongside its mussels. As we gather more data and further document the extent, utility, and practicality of kelp’s phytoremediation potential, we hope to see use of this technique spread and provide a tool to help ensure the continued success of shellfish aquaculture in the Gulf of Maine.

CAN SEAWEED PROTECT SHELLFISH FARMS FROM OCEAN ACIDIFICATION?

by Nichole Price

Two-month-old kelp growing off of Little Chebeague Island.
MAINE GREEN LINE, ATLANTIC LINK MAY MAKE GULF A BUSY PLACE

Electricity is essential to our current way of life. Everything, from our kitchens to our offices, requires electricity. The way in which we generate that electricity has significantly affected our world’s climate, plant and animal species, and ourselves as well. Finding ways to create electricity in a manner that does not harm the environment has grown in importance in recent decades.

That demand took a step forward in 2016 when the state of Massachusetts passed H.4568, An Act to Promote Energy Diversity. The legislation authorized the state to purchase 1,200 megawatts of electricity — specifically hydropower and on-shore wind generated electricity — each year.

The Atlantic Link would transmit 900 megawatts of high voltage direct current from a converter station to be constructed at Coleson Cove, New Brunswick, to a station at one of two possible sites in Massachusetts.

Two projects have been proposed to bring renewable electricity to Massachusetts and other New England states. The first, known as the Maine Green Line project, calls for construction of a high voltage direct current electric transmission cable to move electricity from western Maine to Plymouth, Massachusetts. A project of Anbaric Co, the Maine Green Line follows on the heels of the company’s earlier project, the Vermont Green Line.

The Vermont Green Line was designed to bring electricity generated by Hydro-Quebec and wind turbines in upstate New York via a submerged cable laid in Lake Champlain to southern New England stations. The combination of hydropower and wind power means that electricity will be generated all the time, not just when the wind blows. The project was developed in response to the New England Clean Energy group’s request for proposal, a renewable electricity initiative of Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island. The three states rejected the Vermont project last fall, however, instead opting for smaller solar energy projects, including two large solar projects in Maine, part of a package submitted by Ranger Solar of Yarmouth.

The Maine Green Line would transmit up to 1,200 megawatts of wind and hydro-generated electricity through two direct current cables running 220 miles across the Gulf of Maine, beginning in Penobscot Bay.

A second project, called Atlantic Link, has been proposed by Emera Corporation of Halifax, Nova Scotia. The Atlantic Link would transmit 900 megawatts of high voltage direct current from a converter station to be constructed at Coleson Cove, New Brunswick, to a station at one of two possible sites in Massachusetts. Emera is currently building another submerged electric link, from the Muskrat Falls hydro-electric facility in Labrador to Nova Scotia, which would in turn connect to the proposed Atlantic Link.

Emera released a request for proposals earlier this year to generate offers for both production of renewable energy and transmission of that energy through the undersea cable system. The deadline for submittal was extended, according to John Dalton of Power Advisory LLC, which supervises the bid process. “After the deadline [April 19] we will evaluate the proposals then determine which is the most attractive,” he explained. “Then we will attempt to negotiate a contract based on that. That will determine who Emera will work with to submit a proposal to Massachusetts by late July.” The energy contract would be in place for twenty years; Emera plans to have Atlantic Link operating by 2022. To generate the financing for such an ambitious project, Emera will use the twenty-year contract when it goes to lenders to show the stability of its revenue stream, Dalton said.

Other hurdles stand in its way, however. Transmitting electricity across the Canadian-U.S. border requires a Presidential permit from the Department of Energy. Shipping electricity from Canada requires an export permit from Canada’s National Energy Board. And then there are the numerous state and federal permits necessary to lay a submerged cable in federal and state waters.

RRT continued from page 1

be further examined at the laboratory and make the arrangements for pick-up or shipping. Laminated copies of the A.C.E. card were distributed at the Maine Fishermen’s Forum so lobstermen can keep them close at hand on their boats or in their wallets. Cards are also available by contacting the RRT.

According to RRT’s leader Deborah Bouchard, manager of the Maine Aquatic Animal Health Laboratory, “In order to look at the lobster’s susceptibility to disease, we need to rapidly respond to incidence of disease — particularly possible new and emerging pathogens. Protection of the lobster population is critical to both the ecosystem and to the thousands of people that rely on a healthy resource for their livelihood. We must be able to respond rapidly to lobster health and environmental crises facing the lobster industry [and part of that is the ability to] simply diagnose and analyze diseased and suspicious lobsters, without being bound by the long lag-time encountered when trying to secure grant or state contract funding.”

Dr. Bob Bayer, Team member and executive director of the Lobster Institute, notes, “The Team will be able to respond with solid, scientific research where the need is the greatest and when the need is the greatest.” He added that the RRT wants to hear about, and hopefully see via photos, all suspect lobster whether they are legal or not legal for landing. The RRT has been in communication with the Maine Marine Patrol and they are aware that certain suspicious lobsters may be held on lobster boats pending RRT analysis, even if they are shorts, over-sized or eggers.

Primary funding for the RRT came through an award from the Lobster Research, Education and Development Fund, supported by lobster license plate fees. This allowed the RRT to contract with the Department of Marine Resources to provide the needed laboratory analysis. For more information, contact Cathy Billings at the Lobster Institute at 207-581-2751, or email lobsterinstitute@maine.edu.
Alliance for Maine’s Marine Economy
Grants Program Announced

Press release

The Alliance for Maine’s Marine Economy, in partnership with the Maine Technology Institute (MTI), is responsible for coordinating a Capital Grants Program to assist traditional fisheries, aquaculture and other seafood-related businesses to grow, become profitable, and create jobs by providing up to 50% of the costs of capital equipment or related projects and/or to advance the standards and practices in these marine industries. Capital grants will be awarded on a competitive basis to sustain and advance Maine’s marine economy through business expansion and new product development.

The Capital Grants Program is designed to integrate with the many other funding sources available in Maine so that complete projects leverage many of the currently available programs that may not directly fund capital and equipment. The program is a complementary strategy to the other granting programs of MTI, Maine Sea Grant and the Maine Aquaculture Innovation Center. The program is a part of a larger strategy proposed by the Alliance and approved through the Marine Economy and Jobs Bond approved by voters in November 2014. Because funds available are publicly-app

Award: From $25,000 to $500,000
Timing: Guided by annual RFP; next deadline is September 15, 2017.
Intent: Capital equipment or infrastructure projects within the marine economy that assist traditional fisheries, aquaculture and other seafood-related businesses to grow, become profitable and create jobs and/or advance the standards and practices of these industries.

Business Support: If you have questions about starting a new business or expanding your current business, we can work with you to build a solid business plan and help you move forward with your idea.

Island and Coastal Innovation Fund: We provide flexible and community-focused loans for entrepreneurs looking for a lender that understands their community and is able to provide the business support necessary to make the business successful.

Microgrants for Entrepreneurship and Community Impact: These are small grants to businesses intended to help Launchpad participants access professional development opportunities and/or grow and strengthen their business.

Digital and financial literacy classes: We offer seminars to help groups of fishermen, bookkeepers and businesspeople improve their accounting or advertising skills. We offer free classes like “Quickbooks for Business” or “Social Media for Business” for island and coastal residents.

Aquaculture Business Development Program: We are currently accepting applications for our program that helps to get fishermen and community members start oyster, mussel or seaweed farms, see our website for more details on how to apply; applications close at the end of March.

Launchpad program staff have worked with a person starting an island’s only water taxi, supported a smoked lobster business, helped with business planning for island farmers, worked with seaweed farmers and processors, helped people get into oyster aquaculture, and worked with many other talented entrepreneurs who are focused on living and working in their communities.

Check our website for more information on our business support programs, or to subscribe to our Commercial Currents newsletter focused on best business practices. We are eager to work with any type of island and remote coastal business, so if you are a fisherman looking to diversify or add value to your product, an innkeeper, a grocery store owner, or a farmer, please give us a call.

Garbo Lobster

We put our name on it

Garbo depends on the hard work and stewardship of Maine lobstermen.

Thank you!

127 Pound Rd • PO Box 334 • Hancock, Maine 04640
207-422-3217 • peter@garbolobster.com
In April, the New England Fisheries Management Council voted as its preferred alternative to allow lobster fishing to continue in proposed Downeast coral protection zones. The Council had spent two years developing proposals to regulate and protect the coral areas found deep underwater in the northwestern Atlantic Ocean. The Council voted 14-1 to ban only mobile bottom-tending gear in the two Downeast Gulf of Maine areas where slow-growing, cold-water corals are found. Based on information from the Maine Department of Marine Resources and individual lobstermen, and testimony from the Maine Lobstermen’s Association stating a trap ban would cost the industry millions of dollars, the Council agreed to support an exemption for lobstering in the coral zones. The proposal will go out for public comment sometime in May. If approved at the Council’s June meeting in Portland, the exemption would allow lobstering in the Mount Desert Rock and Outer Schoodic Ridge coral protection zones, where Maine officials believe state-based boats land about $4.2 million worth of lobster a year.

**MARINE PATROL OFFICER MATTHEW WYMAN HONORED FOR PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE**

Maine Marine Patrol Officer Matthew Wyman has received the 2017 Northeast Conservation Law Enforcement Chief’s Award. The award honors a law enforcement official for professional excellence.

Officer Wyman was recognized by Marine Patrol Sergeant Matthew Talbot, who nominated him for the award for his depth of skill and knowledge and for addering the movement of the crew. Officer Wyman demonstrated exceptional effort and ability. “During 2016 Officer Wyman was instrumental in a lengthy investigation involving a lobster harvester who was found to be illegally fishing unmarked, untaged, sunken lobster traps in offshore waters,” said Sergeant Talbot. “In addition to spending a great deal of time underway, Officer Wyman exhibited skill in drafting search warrants and managing the technological portion of the investigation. Officer Wyman also participated in an investigation into a lobster harvester who was found to be scrubbing egg-bearing lobsters. This is an egregious resource violation and he worked smartly and efficiently alongside his fellow officers to help build a solid case.”

**WHO MAKES THE BEST LOBSTER ROLL?**

Portland will host the state’s first Lobster Roll Festival, drawing chefs from across the country to compete for a new title: World’s Best Lobster Roll. The inaugural event, organized by Down East magazine, will take place at Thompson’s Point on July 8. A dozen cooks from Maine to California will be selected to compete. Festival participants can vote for the top three rolls, then a panel of judges will crown the King of the Roll. Food, music and Allagash beer will be part of the day-long bash. The Maine Lobstermen’s Community Alliance is proud to be a benefactor of the event.

**GROUNDFISHERMEN MUST PAY FOR ON-BORD MONITORS**

For the second time, a federal court has rejected New Hampshire fisherman David Goethel’s challenge of the federal government’s legal right to impose the costs of at-sea monitoring on commercial groundfishermen. In April, the three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals in Boston upheld the July 2016 ruling by U.S. District Court Judge Joseph Laplante that Goethel and his fellow defendants did not file their lawsuit within the 30-day statute of limitations. In his July 29 ruling, Judge Laplante also commented on the merits of Goethel’s case, stating the fisherman’s challenges would have failed even if the lawsuit had been filed on time. Goethel, a longtime groundfisherman from Hampton, New Hampshire, and former member of the New England Fisheries Management Council, filed the original lawsuit in December 2015. Northeast Fishing Sector 13, based in South Dartmouth, was a codefendant.

**E.U. TARIFFS REMOVED ON CANADIAN LOBSTER EXPORTS**

The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between Canada and the E.U. will come into force perhaps as early as May. The final step is the ratification by the Canadian parliament. Certain seafood items will have zero duty from the first day of the agreement. Among them are live lobster, monkfish, and scallops. The duty for live Canadian lobster and scallops imported into E.U. countries has been 8%; it will drop to zero on the day of implementation.

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**2017 Lobster Boat Races schedule**

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<td>Jon Johansen (207) 223-8846</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 9</td>
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http://fish-news.com/cfn/MLA
Steve Smith lives on Otter Creek on the west side of Mount Desert Island. Smith fishes his 76 lobster traps from a rowboat, hauling by hand throughout the season. His father, his grandfather, in fact, most of the men in his family going back seven generations have made their living as fishermen, many in the same location as Smith. Now in his later years, Smith has fished in the area for decades. He has an intimate knowledge of Otter Creek and he doesn’t like what he’s been seeing. “The seals have eaten just about everything there is here, the fish, the little lobsters, everything,” he said.

Two species of seals are prevalent in the Gulf of Maine: grey seals and harbor seals. Harbor seals have a short, concave snout; in profile their heads look like the heads of dogs. Grey seals reach up to eight feet in length and are most often recognized by their long, straight snout. Their nostrils look like the letter “W” versus the “V” shape nostrils of a harbor seal. Because seals are mammals they are protected from hunting under the federal Marine Mammal Protection Act. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which oversees seal protection under the Act, they are “opportunistic” eaters, which means that they will eat just about anything.

That’s just what’s happened in Otter Creek Cove, according to Smith. He would like to know if other fishermen along the Maine coast have seen similar infestations of seals close to shore. Allison Rosner, Marine Mammal Outreach Coordinator at NOAA’s Gloucester office, noted that other organizations would like to know as well. “If you have questions about seals, you can call 978-281-9328. Folks might also be interested in the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute’s Northwest Seal Consortium which engages fishermen and researchers in collaborative discussions about seals.” The Consortium’s web site is http://nasrc.whoi.edu/home.

Steve Smith lives on Otter Creek on the west side of Mount Desert Island. Smith fishes his 76 lobster traps from a rowboat, hauling by hand throughout the season. His father, his grandfather, in fact, most of the men in his family going back seven generations have made their living as fishermen, many in the same location as Smith. Now in his later years, Smith has fished in the area for decades. He has an intimate knowledge of Otter Creek and he doesn’t like what he’s been seeing. “The seals have eaten just about everything there is here, the fish, the little lobsters, everything,” he said.

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That’s just what’s happened in Otter Creek Cove, according to Smith. He would like to know if other fishermen along the Maine coast have seen similar infestations of seals close to shore. Allison Rosner, Marine Mammal Outreach Coordinator at NOAA’s Gloucester office, noted that other organizations would like to know as well. “If you have questions about seals, you can call 978-281-9328. Folks might also be interested in the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute’s Northwest Seal Consortium which engages fishermen and researchers in collaborative discussions about seals.” The Consortium’s web site is http://nasrc.whoi.edu/home.

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Participants in the Maine Lobster Leadership Institute were busy this spring. Top left, Sam Sewell and Brian Tripp, center, take part in a media training exercise. Top right, Carroll Staples testifies before the Marine Resources Committee in Augusta. Bottom left, (from left) Mike Ross, Jamien Hallowell, Dimitri Zaiets, Krista Tripp, Brian Billings and friend Eben Wilson at the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative exhibit at the International Seafood Expo in Boston. MLA photos.

NEXT GENERATION OF LOBSTERMEN TAKE PART IN TRAININGS, PUBLIC HEARINGS AS PART OF LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE