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Maine Lobstermen's Community Alliance

Rebecca Nuzzi

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LANDINGS

News & Views from Maine's Lobstering Community

December 2023 | Vol. 31, No. 12



LOBSTERMEN STAND FIRM TO PROTECT LMA 1 FROM WIND LEASES

By Rebecca Nuzzi, MLA Policy and Advocacy Associate

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) held six virtual public meetings during November to get feedback on the 3.5 million-acre Gulf of Maine Draft Wind Energy Area (Draft WEA) released in October. The 30-day comment period on the Draft WEA ended November 20.

The meetings' objective was to provide stakeholders an opportunity to understand BOEM's process in identifying the area for potential offshore wind leasing and for BOEM to hear feedback and concerns about that area. BOEM anticipates announcing the Final Gulf of Maine Wind Energy Area in early 2024.

Lobstermen have voiced their opposition to offshore wind in the Gulf of Maine throughout the BOEM leasing process, with particular emphasis on the importance of keeping offshore wind leases outside of Lobster Management Area 1 (LMA 1).

The State of Maine, which set an energy goal of 3 gigawatts (GW) of offshore wind by 2040, has also remained adamant that offshore wind be sited outside LMA 1 in response to fishing industry concerns.

Governor Mills and Maine's Congressional delegation have sent two letters urging BOEM to avoid critical fishing areas and to keep offshore wind development out of LMA 1 to minimize conflicts between offshore wind developments and Maine's fishing industry.

Throughout November's meetings, BOEM highlighted the importance and influence of feedback from fishermen on the agency's decision to exclude LMA 1 from the Draft WEA. "We've heard that it's really difficult for fishermen to draw lines on maps. Every area is important: important to the ecosystem, important to either individuals' fishing operations or...their neighbors' fishing operations," said Zach Jylkka, BOEM's lead project coordinator for the Gulf of Maine. "Given that difficulty, if and when fishermen do draw lines on maps, listen. That's something we've heard and take seriously."

Despite BOEM's exclusion of LMA 1 in the Draft WEA, fishermen were surprised to see three Secondary Areas for Further Consideration (Secondary Areas) on the map, two of which — Secondary Areas A and B — fall directly in LMA 1.

BOEM staff explained that its computer model identified them as areas of "higher relative suitability" for leases due to wind conditions,

Continued on page 5



Two "Secondary Areas of Interest" for wind leases are located within LMA 1. Orsted photo.

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RIGHT WHALE POPULATION STABILIZES BUT ENTANGLEMENT REMAINS NMFS'S PRIORITY

By MLA Staff

Things may be looking brighter for North Atlantic right whales. According to figures released in October 2023 by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), the North Atlantic right whale population decline is leveling off. The right whale population estimate for 2022 is 356 animals. The 2021 population, originally estimated at 340 whales, was increased to 364 whales due to the addition of newborn calves to the population.



Right whale and calf. NOAA photo.

According to NMFS, while current data indicate a "flattening" of the population decline, it is too soon to know if the population is beginning to recover. The agency reports that serious injury and mortality incidents among right whales continue to exceed the level allowed under the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

NMFS's most recent data show that right whale births now exceed deaths. So far in 2023, two right whale deaths have been detected — one succumbed to a vessel strike while the other was an orphaned newborn calf — and twelve calves were born. In 2022, zero mortality

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COASTAL OUTLOOK *Thoughts from MLCA President Amber-Jean Nickel*

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Welcome to December! Another eventful year is drawing to a close. The Maine lobster industry has weathered some pretty serious ups and downs this year, from the threat of unprecedented right whale protection regulations to the possibility of the first-ever offshore wind energy leases in the Gulf of Maine. The historic success of the Maine Lobstermen's Association (MLA) lawsuit in June against the National Marine Fisheries Service was certainly a high point of 2023.

In our last issue of the year, *Landings* highlights the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) ongoing process to help meet the Biden Administration's ambitious renewable energy goals through leasing portions of the Gulf of Maine for offshore wind farms. BOEM held six meetings in November to receive feedback from fishermen on its proposed Draft Wind Energy Area in the Gulf, encompassing 3.5 million acres.

The MLA celebrates its 70th anniversary in 2024, a milestone no other New England fishery organization has attained. This month *Landings* begins a series of interviews with members of the MLA board of directors. The board members hail from all regions of the coast, from isolated Downeast harbors to tourist-filled coastal towns. Who are they and why do they believe it so important to serve the organization?

The #SaveMaineLobstermen campaign continues its steady string of fundraising events due to the efforts of MLA director of advancement Kevin Kelley and numerous people and businesses. A fundraiser at the Maine Mariner's hockey game in November gave lobstermen and their families an opportunity to see a great game and levy support for the industry as well. Many more events are planned for 2024!

We hear this month from the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative (MLMC) on its marketing plans for the new year. Since its creation in 2013, the MLMC has created many effective campaigns to promote Maine lobster to different sectors of the food industry, including celebrity chefs, food service companies, grocery stores, and of course, the individual consumer. Next year it will collaborate with the recipe web site Allrecipes to develop new lobster recipes designed for the home cook. The online recipes will give readers simple options to buy lobster, through a direct-to-consumer supplier, MLMC's online dealer guide, or a retail aggregator like Instacart – another way to make it easy to find and use Maine lobster.

Joshua Stoll, assistant professor of marine policy at the University of Maine, is tackling the tricky problem of finding

out just what the word "resiliency" means when it comes to Maine's lobstermen. Assessing the resiliency of the lobster population turns out to be much easier than determining how the lobstermen themselves are doing. Based on surveys, interviews, and extensive database research during the past two years, Stoll and his team have pinpointed eight specific issues that influence the resiliency of lobstermen and, by extension, of their families and communities.

One of the hallmarks of the fishing year is the annual Maine Fishermen's Forum, held during the first weekend in March. This year a new person is managing the complex logistics of this popular, three-day event, Kathleen Gilbert. In addition, several changes to the Forum's registration and room reservation processes are in place for the new year, as you will see in the accompanying article.

We also hear about the upcoming U.S.-Canada Lobster Town Meeting, hosted by the University of Maine Lobster Institute. The 19th annual meeting will take place on January 18 and 19 in Moncton, New Brunswick. The Town Meeting allows representatives from the lobster industry — harvesters, dealers, processors, government, and academia — to convene to share perspectives from both sides of the border. This year's agenda includes discussions about the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's mandated lobster gauge increase, scheduled to begin in January 2025,

as well as discussions about offshore wind development, climate change impacts, and ropeless gear development.

The state was shaken to its core by the horrific mass shooting in Lewiston in late October. The desire to help the victims and their families rippled along the coast. Steve Train, a Long Island lobsterman, decided to organize a fundraiser for the people in Lewiston drawing on what he knew best: lobsters. Train persuaded some Portland restaurants to offer a special lobster dish on Tuesday, November 14, and to donate all the proceeds to Lobsters for Lewiston fund. He then worked with lobstermen and dealers in the area to get those extra lobsters sent to the restaurants. The effort was a huge success. "To see everyone from the state come down to the city to help do something for Lewiston is what this whole state is about. We are happy to help and be a part of this," said Brian Noble, the assistant general manager at Luke's Lobster.

It's what the Maine lobster industry can rely on — that help will be there when you need it.



No doubt about it, winter is here. MLA photo.

Amber-Jean

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GUEST COLUMN: *Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative ready for 2024*

By Marianne LaCroix

The Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative (MLMC) board of directors met recently to plan for 2024. Before creating its marketing program, the MLMC seeks out feedback from industry members and evaluates market trends and conditions. A tactical plan is then designed to best take advantage of trends while supporting the industry’s marketing priorities. The plan for 2024 is designed to capitalize on the explosion of interest in accessible luxury meals to help keep lobster top of mind among consumers and restaurant customers.

As part of the planning process, the MLMC met with Maine lobster dealers to learn more about current conditions and anticipated challenges and opportunities in 2024. We learned that economic conditions are causing companies to be more risk averse. Credit is more expensive, so companies tend to process less and hold less inventory. Restaurant business is still shaky in some areas, especially those areas that rely on office workers for business. Moreover, consumer behaviors are changing rapidly, making it hard to anticipate or keep up.

We also examine food and social trends and came back with some revealing findings:

- We know that foodies are five times more likely to use recipes they have sourced digitally versus those found on TV.
- More than half of Americans consider themselves adventurous eaters.
- We’re seeing a shift in fine dining from pretentious to accessible.
- Fine dining videos on TikTok are most often showing how the price isn’t worth the experience or showcasing bizarre presentations.
- Another take on accessible fine dining is making common dishes more upscale, like adding lobster to mac-and-cheese.

This all adds up to consumers continuing to cook at home, while looking to elevate their everyday meals with high cost/low cost combinations and “quiet luxuries.” Additionally, we’re seeing these same combina-

tions on restaurant menus and in packaged goods produced by Maine lobster processors, such as lobster mac-and-cheese, lobster grilled cheese sandwiches, and lobster risotto bites.

To lean into these trends in 2024, MLMC is partnering with the digital powerhouse Allrecipes. They are America’s #1 trusted recipe resource, with over 39 million unique visitors each month, reaching 13% of the total digital population.

Our idea is to work with Allrecipes’ team of expert recipes developers to have them create new recipes featuring Maine lobster in “quiet luxury” dishes. We will feature a unique sales link in each recipe, providing consumers with an easy purchase option via a direct-to-consumer supplier, through MLMC’s online dealer guide, or through a retail aggregator like Instacart. We will be able to directly fuel product purchases through our curated recipe content.

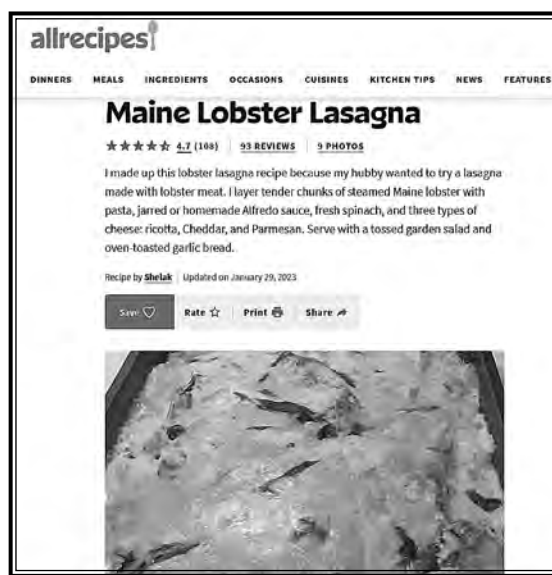
Because MLMC will own this content, we will be able to broaden its reach beyond Allrecipes by bringing it to Pinterest and MLMC’s other social channels.

As with all our content, the assets will also be available through MLMC’s online content hub for use by companies selling Maine lobster. We will increase engagement by encouraging at-home cooks and lobster lovers to share their take on “quiet luxury” Maine lobster recipes, engaging with the content in real time to continue the conversation.

The MLMC board of directors strongly supported the Allrecipes concept for 2024 since it taps into existing trends, provides new content for the industry, and has multiple measurement metrics available to evaluate the program. As always, we will share the content through our social media channels and in direct emails to the industry as it comes to fruition.



Marianne LaCroix is the executive director of the MLMC.



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MAINE FISHERMEN'S FORUM FORGES AHEAD IN 2024

By Maine Fishermen's Forum staff

The 49th annual Maine Fishermen's Forum returns February 29 – March 2 with a new executive director, Kathleen Gilbert, at the helm. Gilbert's professional event organizing experience has helped the Forum's board of directors reconsider some aspects of the event in order to provide more benefits for fishermen.



Kathleen Gilbert is the new Maine Fishermen's Forum coordinator. MFF photo.

"While a few new processes will be noticeable to attendees this year, everyone will find the old and cherished programming going strong," Gilbert said. "In coming years, the improvements to processes we are introducing this year will support expanded offerings to meet the growing needs of Maine's fishing industry into the future."

One notable improvement for Forum attendees is the process for making room reservations at the Samoset Resort in Rockport. For 2024, the Forum has reserved all Samoset rooms to pass along savings over market rates to those staying at the resort. It highly encourages fishing families to take advantage of organized children's programs and all the resort has to offer. As always, there is a two-night requirement for all Friday and Saturday reservations.

For the 2024 Forum all the rooms will be priced according to their accommodation size and amenities, allowing guests to self-select a room type when booking. Attendees

need to be aware that the Samoset sells out within two to three weeks, so anyone looking to stay in a family suite must book early! Reservations open on the Forum's website on January 2.

Another change for 2024 is the opportunity to sign up to attend the Forum, which remains free to all, in advance. Attendees are encouraged to register on the website and will find their name badge ready to print instantly upon arrival. There's also the option of registering upon arrival in the Samoset lobby at new name badge stations.



In just a few months, New England fishermen and families will gather again for the Maine Fishermen's Forum. MFF photo.

By gathering basic information, the Forum seeks to better meet the needs of the community and provide options for fishermen to communicate with other attendees, if they choose. For example, there is a growing interest to offer additional health-related services to fishermen at the Forum. Some health-related exhibitors want to hear from attendees beforehand so that they can tailor their health offerings to meet the real needs of fishermen.

All the reasons everyone loves the Maine Fishermen's Forum will remain in full swing in 2024. The Trade Show will have over 130 exhibitors. There will be three days of seminar presentations providing a constructive space for fishermen to engage with scientists and regulators. There are evening events all three nights including the silent auction on Thursday and live auction on Friday to provide scholarships for students of fishing families. There's a health clinic, water safety training, a first aid and CPR course, and children's programming.

As in years past, the New England fishing community comes together at the 49th annual Maine Fishermen's Forum.



Maine Fishermen's Forum February 29 – March 2, 2024

Book your room at the Samoset Resort for the upcoming Maine Fishermen's Forum

Booking opens online January 2, 2024

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Room reservations available only through the website:

www.mainefishermensforum.org

New Process for 2024

- You are in charge of room selection. Choose your room type online when booking.
- A limited number of rooms accommodate families and we'd love to see yours at the event. Book early.
- Rooms are priced according to amenities.

Be sure to book early for best selection!

Questions? Contact Kathleen Gilbert, the Forum's Executive Director at 207-442-7700

SAMOSSET RESERVATIONS OPEN JANUARY 2, 2024!



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2024 SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION

The Maine Fishermen's Forum Board of Directors offers a scholarship fund to benefit children or grandchildren or a legal dependent of someone actively involved in harvesting wild caught or farmed Maine seafood or a Maine based resource law enforcement officer regardless of financial need or academic achievement.

Applications will be accepted through March 2, 2024. **Please note that previous winners are not eligible.**

Scholarships will be awarded by a random drawing to be held on Friday, March 1, 2024.

You qualify for the scholarship drawing ONLY IF you check all 4 items below.

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What is required? (Both of these items are required to be a valid candidate)

- Did you send an **official transcript or Registrar's letter of standing with your application?**
- Did you **complete this application** and send it to the address at the top of this letter?

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BOEM meetings continued from page 1

proximity to potential connection points, as well as interest from wind energy developers — despite concerns raised by fishermen, the State of Maine, and federally recognized tribes.

BOEM sought comments to determine whether the Secondary Areas should remain in consideration for possible future leases — an effort they stated was in the interest of meeting Maine’s energy goals.

The fishing industry was united in its strong opposition to leasing in the two Secondary Areas, which encompass over 200,000 acres in LMA 1, and questioned how BOEM could consider development in areas that the state has specifically and repeatedly asked BOEM to avoid.

“If [BOEM’s] process is to meet the State’s energy goals, and the state says, ‘don’t put any [offshore wind] in LMA 1..’ it begs the question: why have you included two areas in LMA 1?” questioned Patrice McCarron, Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA) policy director.

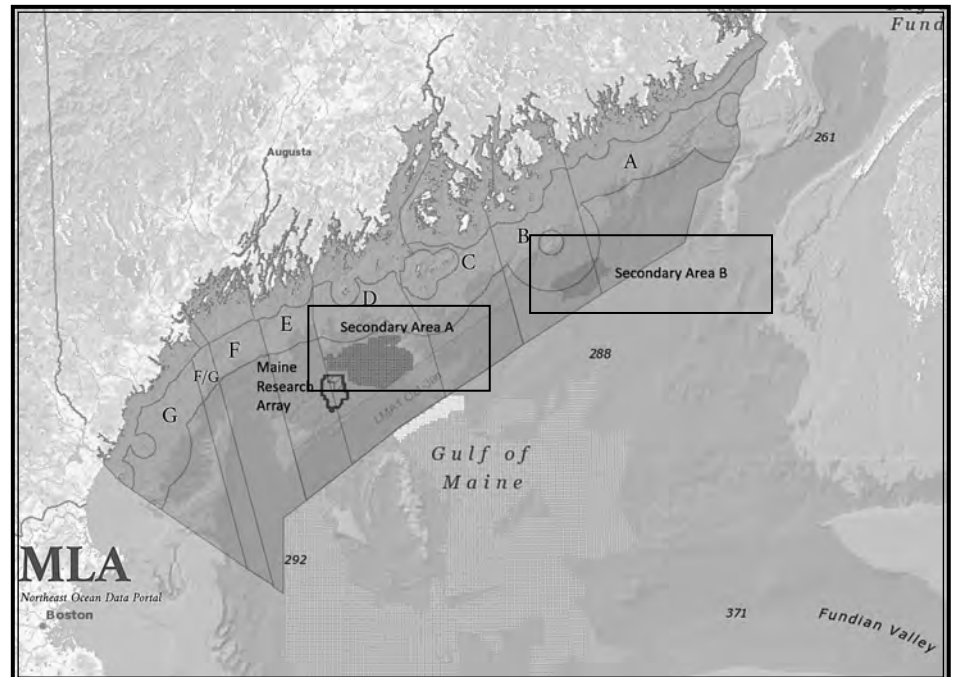
Participants expressed frustration at all six meetings with the lease planning process, which requires stakeholders and BOEM to speculate on projects that have yet to be designed and accept decisions made using the “best available data” at hand at a given stage of the planning process.

“One of the inherent challenges is that we’re planning for projects that are yet to be designed,” said James Morris, a marine ecologist from NOAA’s National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science. This, he said, “make[s] it difficult to discuss critical components such as transmission costs, potential points of interconnection, and the design of the wind turbines themselves, which make it difficult to determine the viability of any level of coexistence with the fishing industry, as well as potential impacts on the environment,” all of which were sources of great concern to attendees.

BOEM sought feedback on potential conflict to determine if coexistence between offshore wind and the fishing industry is possible.

“BOEM stands pretty strong in trying to maintain access as best as possible for fisheries, and navigation safely around those structures, and that will continue to be the mission until further notice,” said Brandon Jensen, a BOEM fisheries biologist, in response to concerns over where offshore wind fits in the Gulf of Maine.

“All of the things that are [in the Gulf of Maine] are currently coexisting with each other, and that’s the way it’s been for hundreds of years,” said Dustin




Lobstermen remain vehemently opposed to any wind lease tracts within LMA 1. MLA graphic.

Delano, MLA board member and New England Fishermen’s Stewardship Association chief operating officer. Throughout Maine’s maritime history, “different fisheries have coexisted with each other. We’ve made things work. We’re able to work it out. We’re able to utilize the same areas. That’s just not the case with offshore wind.”

November’s virtual public meetings were the fourth time BOEM has engaged with the public during the wind energy development process. BOEM emphasized the importance of continued input relevant to the Final WEA and whether the Secondary Areas are included moving forward.

BOEM estimates the Final WEA may encompass approximately 1 million acres and is expected to be published in early 2024.



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STEAMING AHEAD BY AMBER-JEAN NICKEL, MLA COO

"How is it already December?" is heard so frequently this time of year, as if time is accelerating. As the new year approaches, we're bombarded with articles and year-end messages that summarize our experiences, from the music we listened to, to the shows we watched. It's a familiar cycle that repeats year after year.

When I set out to write this month's column, I looked back at *Landings* summaries from years passed to get a sense of what has happened. In recent years, lobstermen's concerns spoke to an overwhelming feeling of dread, like last year when the fate of the industry was unknown. A scary and stressful place to be as you haul traps out for the season wondering if this could be your last time.

Thankfully, this year we know that you will have a winter season. You will have a spring and summer one too. But it is far less certain to be the same five years from now. All the while you continue lobstering, the MLA will continue supporting its members. We will fight to hold the government accountable and prevent over-regulation of our industry by continuing to demand that up-to-date science and unbiased assumptions are used for the next Biological Opinion, due in 2028. We will continue to work to prevent giant corporations from industrializing the Gulf of Maine for wind energy farms as well.

So instead of a recap of all the MLA has done in 2023, I want to remind you of how much you and the generations before you have done.

Lobstermen were the original environmentalists before that became a trendy thing to be. It was lobstermen who began V-notching egged females in order to protect them and provide a catch for future generations of lobstermen. It was lobstermen who demanded prohibitions on landing dragger-caught lobster, protecting the population from being overfished. It was lobstermen who pushed to make sure lobstering in Maine remained an owner-operator fishery, keeping large fishing corporations out of the state and ensuring our stewardship practices continue.

As responsible fishermen, you safeguard marine life and protect the Gulf of Maine every day. By recycling plastic bait bags and general packaging, you prevent them from floating in the water or littering our shores. Some of you have even gone the extra mile by upgrading engines or adjusting hauling schedules to reduce the frequency of trips, further minimizing negative impacts on the environment.

Every little bit counts. It's inspiring to see some individuals leading by example, almost unconsciously. Maine's sustain-

able lobster fishery requires a lot more than just common sense, however. It has taken years of persistent effort to establish great habits and set standards that are so ordinary they go unnoticed.

What if you broke that legacy? What if you stopped fishing in your grandfather's footsteps? Caught the eggers, trashed the ocean, landed the small ones? You would be destroying the future.

That's what the MLA does — protects the fishery for the future. As we go "steaming ahead" into 2024, we need to revisit and affirm our priorities, our partnerships, and our future goals.

We have done mighty things this past year. The Omnibus bill of 2022 that kept you fishing was no small feat. Patrice McCarron, MLA policy director, worked on it around the clock with DMR and Maine's Congressional delegation. Our historic court case against NMFS and its draconian whale

protection measures literally saved Maine's lobster fishery from being erased. Our efforts to protect LMA 1 from industrial wind farms are proving successful also.

To do all this, the MLA must have a robust membership. Truly, we must stand together or we will fall as individuals. Keeping the Maine lobster fishery afloat cannot be accomplished by one guy in a meeting. It can only be done through the concerted efforts of all lobstermen, standing as one, speaking loudly and clearly to the centers of power. That is the

only way to ensure you can build your business and that the next generation can be on the water too.

Let's not forget the legacy we carry but also, let's not forget that we define the legacy we leave in our wake. What will yours be?

If you asked someone why they became a member of the MLA, they may say it's because they fish. Some may say it's because someone in their family was always a member. Some may talk about the legislation and programs the MLA put in place during our 70 years. If you asked me, I would say because no one can do it alone. The MLA has been there for your grandfather, your father, for you, and we will be there for your children.

May you have a magical holiday. We'll see you in the new year, head down and steadfast, ready to get to work.

Amber-Jean



The Leigh Farnsworth family. C. Clegg photo.

MLA DIRECTORS MEETING SUMMARY

The MLA Board of Directors met on November 15 at Darby's restaurant in Belfast. MLA policy associate Rebecca Nuzzi briefed the board on BOEM's Draft Wind Energy Area (WEA) and Secondary Areas released in mid-October which identify potential areas for offshore wind leasing in the Gulf of Maine. MLA worked with other Maine fishing groups, Governor Mills, and the Maine delegation, to successfully advocate that BOEM not allow wind development in LMA 1. Although the Draft WEA does not include LMA 1, BOEM is seeking feedback on potential offshore wind leasing in Zones D and Zone B (crossing into Zone A). The Board directed MLA policy staff to submit comments to BOEM calling for the exclusion of both secondary areas so

there is no offshore wind leasing in LMA 1 and reiterated the MLA's opposition to offshore wind development in the Gulf of Maine.

Following the MLA's historic win against NMFS in the appeals court in September, environmental groups requested that the district court delay the execution of the appeal court's verdict. In November, Judge Boasberg denied the environmental groups' request and will order NMFS to issue a new biological opinion and whale rule in compliance with the appeals court ruling. In the environmental groups' own case against NMFS, the Department of Justice has a motion pending to dismiss the case. Final briefs are due November 28. The MLA is hopeful that the case will be dismissed and previous rulings vacated, because those rulings are no longer valid now that the Biological Opinion



MAINE LOBSTERMEN'S ASSOCIATION UPDATE

and Final Rule have been vacated as a result of the appeal court's June decision. The MLA is still waiting to hear from the Court in response to the case against Monterey Bay Aquarium.

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) determined that the lobster stock has declined by 39%, exceeding the trigger of 35% set in the lobster management plan. As a result, ASMFC must implement a series of gauge and vent changes designed to increase lobster biomass. Department of Marine Resources (DMR) Commissioner Keliher succeeded in getting the ASMFC to delay the implementation schedule for lobster gauge and vent increases by six months. The first lobster gauge increase will occur in January 2025 (rather than June 2024), and the first vent increase in January 2028. The MLA opposed the gauge increases and wrote a letter to ASMFC requesting a delay to implementation. The MLA board had an extended discussion over concerns that the gauge increase will have negative impacts on the lobster market and depress the boat price for Maine lobster.

The MLA once again filed comments on the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) List of Fisheries, making the case for NMFS to recategorize the lobster fishery in Maine state waters as a Category II fishery, which is considered to be of lower risk to right whales. The MLA has made this argument over a number of years, because Category II more accurately reflects the risk level posed by the fishery.

MLA policy staff attended the Ropeless Consortium and North Atlantic Right Whale Consortium meetings in October, and Rebecca provided a brief overview of each conference.

Membership director Andi Pelletier provided updates from the board's most recent Membership Committee meetings. The Committee has held three of its four scheduled meetings and will continue to meet in the future, particularly as the MLA prepares to celebrate its 70th year. The nominations process for new board members remains open through the end of January. Nomination forms will run in Landings until then. The next MLA board meeting is December 6.

LOBSTER ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING

The Lobster Advisory Council (LAC) met on November 15.

The November LAC meeting addressed the increase in the minimum gauge and vent required by ASMFC Addendum 27, DMR's research plan to collect data on right whales using the federal Omnibus Appropriation funds, status updates on litigation related to right whales, and the effort to have the Maine lobster industry re-categorized as a Level II fishery on the List of Fisheries.

Additional discussion items included the upcoming legislative session, Marine Patrol activities, as well as the BOEM Draft Wind Energy Area comment period. DMR plans to schedule lobster zone council meetings in late 2023 and early 2024.

WHALE UPDATES

List of Fisheries - The MLA submitted comments to NMFS on its draft List of Fisheries under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. This is part of MLA's long-term strategy to address NMFS's over-regulation of the lobster industry to protect right whales. The entire Maine lobster fishery (along with other northeast trap/pot fisheries) is a Category I fishery, the designation for fisheries that pose the highest risk to marine mammals. The MLA continues to request that NMFS recategorize Maine's state waters fishery as Category II, which is for fisheries that pose a lower risk to marine mammals. While NMFS has denied MLA's requests in recent years, the agency did grant Massachusetts' request to recategorize its state waters trap/pot fisheries as Category II last year.

Ropeless Consortium - The Ropeless Consortium held its Annual Meeting in October. The meeting included updates from 10 ropeless fishing technology companies developing-demand systems, gear location marking technology, and interoperability solutions. Government agencies and conservation groups presented updates on field trials underway by lobstermen, snow crab fishermen, and gillnetters in the U.S. and Canada. There were also presentations on the cost to transition to ropeless fishing and representatives from NMFS and DFO/Canada provided updates on each country's plan to expedite adoption of ropeless fishing to allow fishermen access to areas closed to fishing to protect right whales. Despite progress, there are still significant challenges in developing comprehensive systems that include gear location marking, gear retrieval, lost gear recovery, and enforcement enabled by acoustic communication standards.

North Atlantic Right Whale Consortium (NARWC) - The NARWC Annual Meeting was held in late October. The NARWC released the updated right whale population estimate and presented an update on the population's status. The right whale population estimate for 2022 is 356 animals. The 2021 population, originally estimated at 340 whales, was revised to 364 whales. Current data indicate a "flattening" of the population decline, although scientists say it is too soon to know if the population is beginning to recover.

The New England Aquarium reported 32 human-caused injuries to right whales (6 entanglements with attached gear, 24 entanglements with no attached gear, and 2 vessel strikes) to date in 2023 and two documented deaths (1 vessel strike and an orphaned new born calf). As always, the meeting featured presentations on ongoing right whale research, including updates on right whale demographics, population modeling, health, reproduction and mortality, acoustic monitoring, right whale distribution, feeding ecology, interactions with offshore wind, and entanglement and vessel strike mitigation strategies.

Right Whale Population Viability Analysis - In October, NMFS released the results of its newest suite of computer models which predict the right whale population in 100 years based on different levels of entanglement in fishing gear, vessel strike rates, and availability of prey. The model results indicate that entanglement and vessel strike continue to pose significant threats to right whales. Without further management action, the right whale population remains at risk of decline. The model assumes that conditions present in 2019, when mortalities were high and calving was low, will continue for the next 100 years. The peer review of the model concluded that it used the best available science, but reviewers provided a suite of recommendations to improve the model as it is further developed.

New Vessel Speed Compliance Tool - In October, NMFS launched an interactive dashboard generated from Automatic Identification Systems (AIS) data for vessels that are subject to existing mandatory speed regulations. The dashboard allows users to explore vessel activity by speed, season, month, speed zone, and vessel type. AIS is an automated safety tracking system that provides the location and other information of vessels in a given area.

NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement and the U.S. Coast Guard (USGC) enforce the right whale vessel speed regulations and help vessels comply with the rules. According to NMFS, AIS data indicates high compliance with mandatory vessel speed zones designed to protect North Atlantic right whales.

BOEM ANNOUNCES GULF DRAFT WIND ENERGY AREAS

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) held a series of virtual public meetings in early November following the announcement of the Gulf of Maine Draft Wind Energy Area (Draft WEA). BOEM also requested comment on three Secondary Areas in addition to the Draft WEA. The MLA participated in each of the virtual meetings and submitted comments on the Draft WEA, calling for BOEM to exclude all of LMA 1 in the Final Wind Energy Area by removing Secondary Areas A and B from consideration.

The MLA's comments state, "The MLA appreciates BOEM's acknowledgement of the repeated concerns raised by Maine's fishing community over siting offshore wind in the Gulf of Maine by excluding Lobster Management Area 1 (LMA 1) from the Draft Wind Energy Area (WEA). However, the MLA remains deeply concerned over the inclusion of the two Secondary Areas within LMA 1 presented for consideration alongside the Draft WEA. BOEM has repeatedly stated that it is moving forward with offshore wind leasing in the Gulf of Maine at the request of the states to meet their renewable energy goals. The state of Maine, and the entire Maine delegation, have made it clear that offshore wind development should not be sited anywhere within LMA 1. Secondary Areas A and B in particular cover over 200,000 acres of critical lobstering grounds within LMA 1 and must be removed from consideration."

ASMFC PREPARES FOR AMERICAN LOBSTER BENCHMARK STOCK ASSESSMENT

ASMFC initiated a benchmark stock assessment for American lobster to be completed in the summer of 2025. The assessment will evaluate the health of stocks along the Atlantic coast to inform lobster management. The Commission is accepting data sets through January 8, 2024. Such data includes, but is not limited to, data on abundance, biological samples, life history information, catch, and information on environmental influences on lobster population dynamics. A data workshop will be held in February 2024 to review and select available data sources for the stock assessment.

REMINDER TO CERTIFY INSTALLATION OF VESSEL TRACKERS

As a reminder, ASMFC Addendum 29 requires all federal lobster permit holders to install an approved tracker device on their vessel by December 15. Addendum 29 was adopted in March 2022 to support more accurate stock assessments and address challenges associated with risk reduction requirements for whales, emerging ocean uses, and enforcement.

DMR sent Particle Tracker One vessel tracking devices to Maine's federal permit holders along with instructions on the installation and use of the trackers and how data from the trackers will be managed. Lobstermen are required to



MAINE LOBSTERMEN'S ASSOCIATION UPDATE

MLA Update continued from page 7

certify to DMR that the approved trackers have been installed and are operational through an online form prior to their first fishing trip on December 15. The state is covering the cost of the trackers as well as three years of cellular service to support the devices' data plans.

Four trackers have been approved by the state: Particle Tracker One (Particle Industries), Nemo (Woods Hole Group), hiSky Smartellie Dynamic Ku terminal (Network Innovations), and Boat Command VMS (Viatrix Automation Corporation). If a lobsterman chooses an approved device other than Particle Tracker One, they will be responsible for the cost of the device and data plan. For more information, visit <https://www.maine.gov/dmr/fisheries/commercial/fisheries-by-species/lobsters/trackers>.

MENHADEN UPDATE

Maine's menhaden fleet continues to participate in the Episodic Events Fishery Set Aside (EESA) program, which allows for harvest of 4,285,786 lbs. Under Maine's EESA fishery, vessels are limited to 6,000 lbs., or 17 barrels per vessel, to be harvested on Mondays and Fridays. The EESA fishery was authorized by ASMFC following the closure of the state allocation fishery.

The 2023 Maine menhaden state fishery closed on August 30 following the fulfillment of the state allocation quota. Under ASMFC guidelines, Maine was allocated 4.8% (24 million lbs.) of the total menhaden quota (233,500 mt) for 2023. The season opened to pound nets and fish weirs on June 1 and to all other gears on June 19.

Maine Menhaden Commercial Fishery Landings			
As of November 20, 2023			
Quota (lbs.)	Reported Landings	% Quota Caught	% Quota Remaining
24,510,314 (State Allocation)	20,500,000	100.0%	0.0%
4,285,786 (episodic)	~2,636,535 (preliminary)	~62.52%	~38.48%

Source: Maine DMR Menhaden Commercial State Allocation Fishery Landings

HERRING UPDATE

The Atlantic Herring fishery for Management Area 1A closed on November 6 when the fishery was projected to exceed 92% of the sub-annual catch limit (ACL). This included an in-season increase of 1,000 mt to the Area 1A sub-ACL from 3,345 mt to 4,345 mt. The Area 3 fishery closed on May 14 when the sub-ACL was estimated to have been landed. The Fixed gear set-aside of 30 mt will continue to be available to fixed gear fishermen operating in Area 1A west of Cutler through December 31, 2023.

Cumulative Landings Atlantic Herring			
As of November 16, 2023			
Area	Quota (mt)	Cumulative Catch (mt)	% of Annual Catch Limit
1A	4315	4,575.0	106.0%
1B	555	194.9	35.1%
2	3589	457.0	12.7%
3	4806	5140.6	107.0%
Annual Catch Limit	13,287	10,367.5	78.0%

Source: NMFS Atlantic Herring Quota Monitoring

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

Senator Collins introduced *The Working Waterfront Preservation Act* to help preserve access to working waterfronts for fishermen and maritime workers in coastal communities. "Waterfront access is critical to the future of Maine's lobster industry. You simply can't make a living from the sea if you aren't able to get to it," said Patrice McCarron, MLA policy director. "The bipartisan legislation will help protect existing working waterfront and preserve access for fishermen, and the unique character of our fishing communities." *The Working Waterfront Preservation Act* would establish a \$20 million grant program to permanently protect waterfront areas for commercial uses.

DMR NOTICE: Accepting 2024 License Renewal Applications

The Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR)'s online licensing system opened in November, and paper applications were made available on the DMR website on November 14.

To avoid unnecessary delays in obtaining your license and tags, please consider the following:

REPORTING: Make sure your landings reports are up to date, or you will not be able to renew your lobster license (or any other license that requires reporting). You can use the VESL app or LEEDS to submit your reports. If you need assistance, please contact the Landings Program at landings.dmr@maine.gov or by phone at 207-633-9414.

TRAP TAG EXPIRATION DATES: Your 2023 lobster tags are valid through May 31, 2024. You have until May 31, 2024, to purchase your full allocation of 2023 tags. When you purchase your 2024 tags, you will only be able to purchase 100 more tags than the number of 2023 tags you have purchased by May 31, 2024.

TRAP TAG ORDERS: From the date you order your tags, it will take a minimum of 4 to 6 weeks for your tags to arrive. If you plan to be fishing on June 1, please order your tags no later than April 20 to ensure arrival. If you have increased the number of tags in 2024 from 2023, and intend on fishing your 2024 tags prior to June 1, you must submit an affidavit requesting to use your 2024 tags. If you have the same number of tags in 2023 and in 2024 and would like to put your tags in prior to June 1, 2024, you must ensure that all your traps have 2023 tags in them. Keep in mind 2024 replacement tags cannot be issued before June 1, 2024.

FEDERAL PERMIT HOLDERS: At the time you renew your license, your vessel will be checked against the NOAA database to ensure that it has a current and valid federal permit. If your federal lobster permit is not valid and current at the time you renew your license, you will receive State issued tags (NON).

If you intend to renew your federal permit, but have not done so at the time of renewal, you **must** provide proof (application) that you have applied to renew your federal permit, and **call** DMR Licensing to notify us that we will need to change your tag order from State (NON) tags to federal tags (EEZ) (or

vice-versa if you are planning on giving up your federal permit). If you do not notify Licensing within 24 hours of purchasing your license and tags, you will have to pay for a second set of tags to obtain the appropriate tag status. Your tag status is found under the "Permit" area on your license. Please check your license — it must say "EEZ" for federal or "NON" for state tags.

APPRENTICE/STUDENT LICENSES: You **MUST** be licensed in order for any fishing time to be eligible to be logged under the apprenticeship program. You must list any sponsors (up to three) that you will be fishing with to log time. Your sponsor **must** be licensed at the time you list them on your license as a sponsor. If one of your sponsors is not licensed at the time you purchase your license, it is **your** responsibility to contact the Department to add them when they obtain their license.

If you are under the age of 18 and obtaining a student license, you will be attesting to your status as a student on the license application. If you are over the age of 18 and obtaining a student license, you will be required to provide proof that you are enrolled as a student, carrying at least half of a full course load.

SECOND ZONES: If you intend to fish a secondary zone, you **must** select that secondary zone at the time of application. We cannot add a second zone or provide second zone tags after you have obtained your commercial lobster license. Student license holders cannot obtain second zone tags.

ONLINE RENEWALS THROUGH LEEDS: If you obtain your license online through LEEDS, you will need to print your license; a copy of your license will not automatically be sent to you. If you do not have a printer please contact us and DMR will print and mail it to you.

LEEDS ONLINE LICENSING LINK: <https://maine-dmr-leeds-prod.pegacloud.com/prweb> or visit the DMR website (<https://www.maine.gov/dmr/home>) to print off a paper application.



MAINE LOBSTERMEN'S ASSOCIATION UPDATE

MEMBERSHIP UPDATES

It's been a busy year in the MLA membership department with 10 new businesses joining. Welcome to all of you and thank you for your support of the Maine Lobstermen's Association!

Agri Access is a lending organization which has a local representative familiar with Maine's lobster fishery. Matthew Senter worked for Farm Credit East for many years and lends to lenders who work with fishermen and fishing businesses.

Coastal Enterprises Inc. is a local lender helping small businesses find the resources needed to solidify or expand in order to support Maine's working waterfront.

Coastal Equipment Corp. in Portland is a material handling services company which serves and is passionate about the lobster industry. The company provides the infrastructure for food production and product distribution.

Downeast Dayboat was founded by Togue Brawn to provide the freshest possible scallops to its customers. Joining the MLA shows how closely entwined all Maine's fisheries are.

Gillespie Marine is a marine service shop based in the Midcoast serving fishing boats.

Mason's Famous Lobster Rolls is a Virginia Beach franchise that serves lobster rolls in two locations and feels strongly about supporting Maine lobstermen.

Seacoast Lobster Bands was founded in 1979. The MLA is happy to welcome the Massachusetts-based business as members!

Shop Lobster Inc. is a brand-new way to buy lobster with an app on the phone for easy ordering.

Trident SPS is a sustainable plastic solution company that offers everything from fish totes and lobster crates to insulated boxes that are recyclable. They offer recycling solutions for existing plastic totes too.

Finally, we said a sad goodbye to business member **Cape Porpoise Bait Co.** as it closes its doors; **Venture Bait** has stepped in to take over and continue providing a wide supply of bait products.

MEET THE MLA BOARD MEMBERS

By Melissa Waterman

Matinicus Island lobsterman Jarod Bray, 39, didn't think of being a lobsterman when he was a child growing up on the island, even though his father was one. "I got seasick," he laughed.

It wasn't until he was in his late teens that he felt the itch to go lobstering. After attending Southern Maine Community College for building construction and masonry, he headed back to the island and the fishery. "I like being independent. It's something where you get out what you put into it," he explained.

Bray was elected to the Maine Lobstermen's Association (MLA) board in 2022. "My father was an MLA member. He saw the value in it. I always appreciated what the MLA was doing for the industry," Bray said. "Tad Miller [former board member from Matinicus] took me under his wing. He nominated me to take his place when he got done."

Since joining the board, Bray has moved onto the executive committee. When MLA vice-president Dustin Delano stepped down from his position earlier this year, the board then elected Bray to be the association's vice-president.

"There are terrific guys on the board. They are outstanding leaders in their industry," Bray said. "I don't want to disappoint them or the lobstermen I represent."



Jarod Bray and his wife Leslie.

Bray, who fishes from *Artemis*, a 46-foot Super Wesmac, was one of the lobstermen who lost fishing ground when the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) instituted a closure within LMA 1 in 2021. "That closure changed how I fished, big time," Bray said. "I used to fish offshore half the year, and now I'm not there. I don't want to move my gear when it opens during the harsh month of February. Now I'm 100% around Matinicus."

He reflected on the successful court case the MLA brought against NMFS to halt the imposition of harsh new rules to protect North

Atlantic right whales, rules that would have decimated the fishery.

"I wish more people understood how big a deal it was. The cost [in legal fees] was astonishing," Bray said. "The MLA saved the industry for six years. A lot of non-members say that someone else, like the state, would have stepped up to do the court case eventually. There was no one else. If the MLA weren't involved, we would be in trouble."

Bray has a hard time understanding how any lobsterman could not be a member of the MLA, given possible punishing regulations that the fishery still faces. "The younger generation [of lobstermen] have lots of information at their fingertips, and they know what the MLA has done and will continue to do, but some still aren't joining. That's scary, that's astounding. We need members to continue the fight ahead of us," he said. "2028 will be here before we know it."

Currently, Bray lives part of the time on Matinicus and the rest on the mainland, in South Thomaston. Where once island lobstermen largely remained on the island all the time, living and raising their children there, that pattern is not true today, according to Bray.

"The younger guys, they have worked hard, they have been successful earlier in their career. So, they have a house on the mainland. There are more opportunities for their kids on the mainland. I think in the last 20 years it's changed, and for the better," he said. Bray knows that he will be in the fishery for years to come. "It's still challenging. You can keep excelling. Sure, it might be monotonous 99% of the time, but what job isn't?"

Vinalhaven lobsterman Johnny McCarthy, 35, remembers the day about four years ago when he decided to join the Maine Lobstermen's Association (MLA). He was shooting the breeze with fellow fisherman Steve Rosen when Rosen asked him casually if he was an MLA member. McCarthy isn't someone who was afraid to get involved. He is on the Vinalhaven Fishermen's Co-operative board and serves as a member of the Zone C Zone Council. He had heard about the MLA throughout his life. But he had never joined. So he signed up. "I thought, why didn't I do this before?" he recalled.

Now he sits on the MLA board. "I love this," McCarthy said enthusiastically. "I'd way rather go to an MLA meeting than any other. With the MLA the board is all volunteer and everyone is looking out for each other and the fishery. They have the fishery and what's right for it at the bottom of what they do."

McCarthy's roots on Vinalhaven go back five generations on his mother's side. Although he was born in Florida, his family moved back to the island when he was seven. His father worked as a sternman for a family friend and McCarthy started lobstering when he was in middle school. "I went with a bunch of guys through high school, then I got my full license in my senior year. I started with 50 traps and worked up to 270," he said.

Looking to broaden his skills, McCarthy attended a 14-month outboard/small engine maintenance program in Orlando. After finishing the program, he returned to Vinalhaven. "My dad told me that Amby Alley was looking for a sternman. He said if I didn't have anything else lined up I should go. So I did," McCarthy said.

During the five seasons McCarthy went as sternman with Alley the older fisherman taught the younger man much, not by talking but by fishing. "I really, really enjoyed fishing with Amby. I was fishing with him in my early twenties and now I know how lucky I was to go with him. I was very fortunate," McCarthy said.

By 2013 McCarthy had his own 35-foot boat. By 2021 he moved on to a new boat, a 45-foot Dixon, which launched the same year as the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) declared a large portion of LMA 1 closed to lobstering from October through January. "I fished trawls just outside [in the area now closed]. Not the best time to get a new boat!" he laughed.

Being an MLA member and then a member of the board has given McCarthy insight into how important the organization is. "Growing up I would hear guys complain about something negative they thought the MLA did 20 years ago. You hear too much of that and you don't think about the good stuff," he commented. "The MLA is the best chance and the best voice, one that we can depend on. It's not a state organization, it's a group trying to do the right thing for the fishery."

Like so many lobstermen, McCarthy is hesitant to predict what lies ahead for himself or the fishery. In 2028 NMFS is required to release a new Biological Opinion and with it will come new rules designed to protect North Atlantic right whales. In addition, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) will require gauge changes beginning in January 2025.

"I don't know how much [the gauge change] will affect us," he said. "I hope we have a decent few years, because a lot of people are not doing that great right now. If too many more regulations get piled onto the fishery in 2028 a lot of communities are going to be hurting." When he's not fishing, McCarthy enjoys spending time with his wife and their three children.



Johnny McCarthy.

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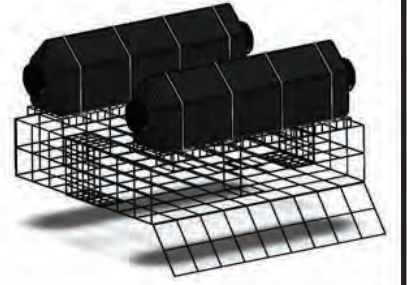
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Register Here: umaine.edu/lobsterinstitute/events/

For information about sponsorship opportunities, exhibit space (new this year!) or travel funds for harvesters via the Klaus Sonnenberg Memorial Fund, contact:

Chris Cash at christina.cash@umaine.edu 207-581-1443 or 207-975-0003

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C7.1



C7.1 Tier 3 Commercial Ratings:
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 400 HP @ 2600 Intermittent Duty "D" **IN STOCK**
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C9.3



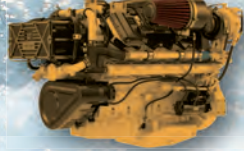
C9.3 Tier 3 Commercial Ratings:
 375 HP @ 1800 Heavy Duty "B"
 416 HP @ 2100 Maximum Continuous Duty "C"
 476 HP @ 2300 Intermittent Duty "D"

C18



C18 Tier 3 Commercial Ratings:
 470 HP @ 1800 Continuous Duty "A"
 600 HP @ 1800 Continuous Duty "A"
 670 HP @ 1800-2100 Heavy Duty "B"
 715 HP @ 1800-2100 Maximum Continuous Duty "C"
 803 HP @ 2100 Intermittent Duty "D"

C32



C32 Tier 3 Commercial Ratings:
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*** Tier 4 Exempt Light Commercial Ratings:**
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*All T4 Exempt Light Commercial Ratings, require qualifications review and approval by CAT Factory.
 *Contact Nick Fawle or Your Authorized Marine Dealer for Tier 4 exemption qualification details.

For Marine Engine Sales, contact Nick Fawle, our new Marine Market Manager.

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MLA Seeks Nominations for Board of Directors

MLA Members -- Don't miss your opportunity to influence the future of your organization and your industry!

Did you know?

- MLA Directors are elected for a 3-year term
- MLA Directors meet monthly (except August)
- Board members expected to attend at least 4 meetings/yr

Overview of MLA Board

- Maximum # of Board members: 21
- Current Board: 21 members
- **Number of Directors with Terms expiring: 7**
- Average age of MLA Board: 49
- Youngest MLA Board member: 28
- Oldest MLA Board member: 75

MLA Board representation

- Zone A 4 (2 expiring)
- Zone B 3
- Zone C 3 (2 expiring)
- Zone D 3 (1 expiring)
- Zone E 3 (2 expiring)
- Zone F 2
- Zone G 3
- Islands represented 4

2024 Board Priorities

- Dedicated lobstermen who care about the future of the industry
- Lobstermen who can talk about the industry's needs and priorities
- Balanced industry representation across the state

MLA Director Nomination Form (detach and return)

Nomination Requirements

- To make a nomination, you must be an MLA member in good standing.
- All nominees must hold a Maine lobster license & be an MLA member in good standing.
- Deadline for nominations: January 31, 2024.
- Feel free to nominate yourself, or someone else.

Nominee Information (must be MLA member)

Name: _____

Fishing Port: _____

Zone: _____ Town of residence: _____

Please let us know how this nominee could contribute to the MLA Board:

Person submitting nomination (must be MLA member)

Name: _____

Lobster Lic. #: _____



Thank you for helping to keep the MLA strong!

**Mail your nomination to the MLA office: MLA, 2 Storer St, Ste 203, Kennebunk, ME 04043
Or feel free to call in your nomination to 967-4555 or email: amberjean@mainelobstermen.org.**



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2028 is right around the corner and
we must be ready.**



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SAVE MAINE LOBSTERMEN CAMPAIGN SKATES INTO NEW YEAR

By Kevin Kelley, MLA Director of Advancement

Enthusiasm for Maine's lobstering families filled the Cross Insurance Arena in Portland on November 10. The Maine Mariners ice hockey team hosted "Lobstermen's Appreciation Night" with fun-filled activities held throughout the evening to highlight the importance of the lobster industry to our state's identity. MLA chief operating office, Amber-Jean Nickel, was invited onto center ice and dropped the puck to officially begin the game.

A portion of the proceeds from tickets sold via a special link benefited the MLA. A 50/50 raffle was held, and the winner (who remained anonymous) donated their portion back to the MLA. The Mariners also donated a special hockey stick, autographed by team members, which was raffled off at the MLA's information booth.

Preparations are already underway for "All Hands On Deck" events to be held in 2024. Organizers of the second annual "Chowder's On" event in Kittery

are busy soliciting sponsors and raffle prize donations for our first event of the new year, which will be held at the Star Theatre at the Kittery Community Center on Sunday, February 25. NewsCenter Maine morning anchor, Sharon Rose, has agreed to emcee this community event.

As we wrap up fundraising activities for 2023, we look back with gratitude and forward with hope. Thank you to everyone who has donated, attended an event, or purchased a #SaveMaineLobstermen t-shirt, sweatshirt, or hat. When we kicked off our campaign in the fall of 2021, it sure seemed like the tide was turning against us, but your support helped lift us and made our decisive court victory earlier this year possible. We may have some breathing room today, but we know that there will be challenges to face in the coming months and years, which is why it is more important than ever to support our efforts to ensure we are financially ready to face whatever challenges those may be.



MLA COO Amber-Jean Nickel drops the puck at the November 10 Maine Mariner's hockey game in Portland. MLA photo.

NEW BUOYSLINK WITH ANY ON-BOARD PLOTTER

Fishermen at November's Pacific Marine Expo had the opportunity to try out Blue Ocean Gear buoys. Designed to track and monitor fishing gear and equipment the buoys are small and light enough to be stored inside a Dungeness crab or lobster pot, according to a recent article in *National Fisherman*, yet durable enough to be bounced off the deck or whipped around at sea.

The buoy's new PlotterLink system means it can be integrated with any plotter. Benefits of the PlotterLink system include being able to provide direct

communications with Blue Ocean Gear smart buoys, seeing the display directly on GPS chart plotters and being able to share data with other nearby vessels.



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2024 U.S.- CANADA LOBSTER TOWN MEETING ON JANUARY 18-19

By Christine Cash

The 19th U.S.- Canada Lobster Town Meeting, hosted by the University of Maine Lobster Institute, will be held January 18-19, 2024, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Moncton, New Brunswick.

The Town Meeting allows representatives from the lobster industry — harvesters, dealers, processors, government, and academia — to convene and share perspectives from both sides of the border. The 2024 meeting runs all day Thursday, January 18, followed by an evening social, and concludes Friday, January 19, at noon.

The American lobster fishery is facing unprecedented challenges. Whether it's shifting lobster distributions in a warming ocean, gear and gauge modifications, unpredictable global markets, or spatial squeeze, harvesters, dealers, and resource managers realize that they need to work together to succeed.

Town Meeting panels will include:

Addendum 27 (increase of the U.S. minimum gauge size) will address unanswered questions and anticipated cross-border market impacts of the January 2025 gauge change. Panelists will include management leaders, harvesters, dealers, live shippers, and processors from the U.S. and Canada.

Marine Spatial Planning - Offshore Wind Development will discuss the status of offshore wind developments from Southern New England to Canada. The panel will include fishermen from Maine, Southern New England, and Newfoundland, as well as representatives from the Responsible Offshore Development Alliance (RODA), the Maine Department of Marine Resources, and BOEM.

Climate Change and Warming Waters focuses on where and when lobster is being caught, molt times, lobster location, and collaborative research initiatives. Panelists will include managers, researchers, and harvesters and fisheries association representatives throughout the Gulf of Maine and Atlantic Canada.

Innovative Gear will feature gear manufacturers, harvesters testing gear, and management representatives to share design updates, first-hand experiences, and challenges with gear location and conflicts.

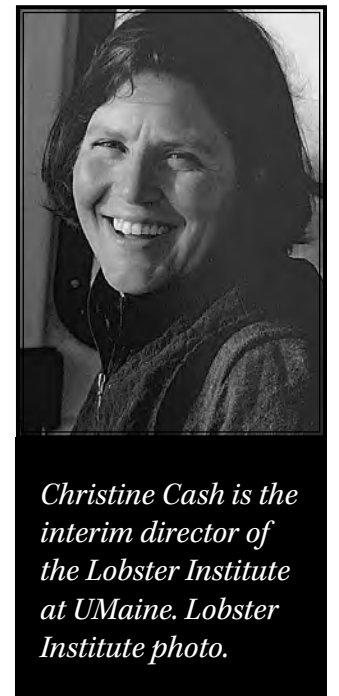
A \$75 registration fee includes conference materials, meals, and the seafood reception on Thursday evening. Hotel rooms, including parking, are available at \$115/night (\$155 CAD).

Thanks to two generous sources, we are able to cover hotel costs for commercial harvesters to attend Town Meeting in Moncton. If you want to take advantage of this opportunity, please register online indicating you are a commercial harvester. The Lobster Institute will follow up with you directly about lodging logistics. The Crowne Plaza is a family-friendly hotel with pool facilities within walking distance of downtown amenities.

Don't forget to make sure your passport is current, but don't worry if you need a new one. Turnaround times are good, and there are expediting options, as well as rush passport options securable two weeks prior to international travel.

We welcomed a record number of attendees to our meeting in Portland in 2023, with over 200 people hailing from eight states and five Canadian provinces, and we hope to do the same in 2024. Please reserve early to guarantee your spot, as tickets, like last year, are expected to sell out.

For more information, to register or make hotel reservations, go to umaine/lobsterinstitute/events or contact Chris Cash at christina.cash@umaine.edu or 207-975-0003.



Christine Cash is the interim director of the Lobster Institute at UMaine. Lobster Institute photo.




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Whale population continued from page 1

ties were observed and 15 calves were born.

However, NMFS assumes that for every right whale that is known to have died, two additional right whales died but were not seen. This is known as cryptic mortality.

Factoring in cryptic mortality, right whale births also exceeded deaths in 2021 and 2020. In 2021, two right whales were confirmed dead. One died as a result of a vessel strike and the other due to entanglement in Canadian snow crab gear. Based on cryptic mortality, NMFS recorded nine deaths and 20 calves that year. In 2020, two right whales were confirmed dead. One was killed by a vessel strike and the other was an infant mortality. NMFS recorded seven deaths and 10 calves that year.

These figures are in stark contrast to 2017 to 2019 when right whale mortalities reached record highs. Combined deaths for those three years, including cryptic mortality, totaled 92, while combined births totaled only 12. For cases where a cause of death was determined, the majority were traced to vessel strikes in the U.S. and Canada and entanglement in Canadian fishing gear.

Despite the striking improvement since 2019, the conservation community remains concerned. “While this is an encouraging change, the number of human-caused injuries that will likely lead to death or reduced reproduction in the future remains high,” said New England Aquarium senior scientist Philip Hamilton. “We need to continue to reduce human-caused death and harm to this species for the population to trend upward.”

Lobster industry leaders are more optimistic. “U.S. lobstermen have done our part to reverse the right whale decline by making our fishery even safer despite zero evidence that right whales are dying in our gear,” stated Kristan Porter, president of the Maine Lobstermen’s Association. “Now that right whales are successfully feeding again and Canada has put meaningful protections in place, I fully expect the right whale population will begin to rebound.”

In October, NMFS released the results of a new population viability analysis (VPA), its latest suite of computer models which predict the right whale population in 100 years based on different levels of entanglement in fishing gear, vessel strike rates, and availability of prey. The model results indicate that entanglement and vessel strike continue to pose significant threats to right whales.

The model examines different threat scenarios to determine the probability of extinction. Rather than looking at the probability that threats would result in the right whale population reaching zero, the VPA estimates the likelihood of “quasi-extinction” in 100 years, which is when right whales are still present but there are fewer than 50 proven females.

Under the 2019 baseline conditions, the model predicts a 93% probability of quasi-extinction for right whales in 100 years. The model then explores a variety of scenarios. For example, if the whale rules implemented in 2022 reduced entanglement by 50%, the population would be expected to increase by 52% in 100 years, reducing the probability of falling below 50 proven females to 35%.

The model also evaluated the relative impact of threats individually. If all other threats remain, removing all entanglement risk reduces probability of quasi-extinction from 93% to 5%; removing all vessel strike risk reduces it to 34%; while removing the threat of limited prey availability only reduces it to 88%.

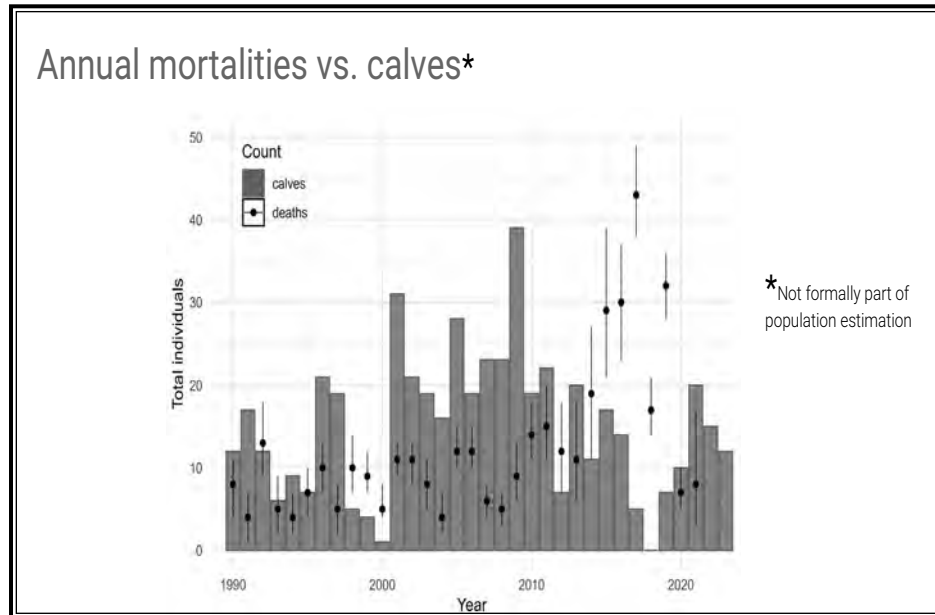
NMFS Population Viability Analysis (VPA) Results Probability of <50 proven females in 100 years (quasi-extinction)	
Threat Scenario	Probability of Quasi-extinction
No change (2019 baseline)	93%
Entanglement	
Remove all entanglement risk, other threats remain	05%
Remove half entanglement risk, other threats remain	35%
Implement 50% weak rope, other threats remain	62%
Vessel Strike	
Remove all vessel strike risk, other threats remain	34%
Prey Availability	
Remove prey availability, other threats remain	88%

A peer review of the VPA was conducted by the Center for Independent Experts in 2022 and included guidance on next steps. The panel concluded that the VPA incorporated the best available science, but reviewers identified concerns and provided a suite of recommendations to improve the model as it is further developed.

The reviewers raised concern with certain elements of the model. One reviewer noted that the model used 2014-2019 data for entanglement injury and mortality rates while using 2010 to 2019 data for other analyses. The reviewer noted, “This is a critical assumption because estimated mortality jumps sharply in 2014 from low rates, and 2017 (17 reported deaths) is the only year since 1990 with more than 7 reported deaths (*Pace et al. 2021*).” Another reviewer noted that the lack of proper mathematical description of the model “has resulted in a ‘jury-rigged’ presentation of the model that remains unclear in parts and impossible for others to check the computations of the presented results.”

The Peer Review panel recommended that the VPA use a consistent time period — 2010-2019 — for all analysis, provide a proper mathematical description of the model and details of the analyses, and include a spatiotemporal structure to understand where right whales and human threats overlap so the model can meaningfully inform management.

According to NMFS, this model is a living tool that can be improved, adapted, and extended as new data, new methods, and new questions arise. Additional documentation on the underlying models and the model code will be available in a public data repository to promote further development and improvements.



The model assumes that conditions present in 2019 – when mortalities were high and calving was low – will continue for the next 100 years. The model concludes that without further management action, the right whale population remains at risk of decline.

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MAINE'S LOBSTER FISHERY IS MORE THAN JUST LOBSTERS

By Melissa Waterman

Resiliency is a term tossed around these days like confetti. You can scarcely turn around without being hit in the eyes by “resiliency,” whether it applies to Maine’s moose herds, clam beds, or blueberry crop. Merriam-Webster dictionary defines the word as “the ability to recover from or adjust easily to adversity or change.” Figuring out the resiliency of Maine lobster stocks is relatively easy. Figuring out the resiliency of Maine’s lobstermen is a lot harder.

Joshua Stoll, assistant professor of marine policy at the University of Maine, has been working to do just that. Stoll and his graduate students have spent the past two years exploring just how to measure the resiliency of the state’s lobstermen in the face of a changing marine environment and regulatory structure. Funding for his research work has come from the Sea Grant American Lobster Research Initiative and the Senator George Mitchell Center for Sustainability Solutions, among other sources.

“The lobster fishery is important to Maine. We have many biological monitoring programs that monitor lobsters throughout their life cycle. We use those data to triangulate how things are going. But the lobster fishery is not just lobster, it’s also people. And there are no monitoring programs to learn how the fishery is going from a people perspective,” Stoll said. “We could all benefit from thinking about the people.”

To do that, Stoll traveled throughout the coast to ask specific questions concerning the lobster fishery and fishermen’s lives. He wanted to know what they saw and thought: How do you evaluate if fishermen are having a good fishing season? What is one thing you notice when the lobster fishery is not doing well? After many, many interviews, Stoll and his colleagues sat down to summarize the information they had collected.

They found that answers to their questions varied along the coast. “The variability suggested that we think about these issues at a finer scale than just statewide,” Stoll explained. So they reviewed their data at three scales – state, regional, and individual fishing community.



The strength of the lobster fishery relates to the resiliency of lobstermen. MLMC photo.

Eight issues that related to the resilience of lobstermen stood out: profitability, coastal accessibility, business investments, community change, risk taking, financial health, personal spending, and physical and mental health.

“Then the question became, how do you measure these things? So we went to find data sets connected to these eight areas,” Stoll said. In the end the team gathered more than 70 data sets on everything from truck registrations to property transfer taxes. Long hours were spent sifting through the data.

“We ran something called a factor analysis. It’s a statistical approach to see how these databases fit together and which ones were important,” Stoll said. Using the technique allowed him to understand the importance of each area in different regions of the coast. “For example, coastal accessibility is going down more

in southern Maine than eastern Maine,” he said. “The goal of our work is to complement what lobstermen know themselves, to understand what’s happening on the coast like we understand lobster populations through biological surveys.”

Throughout the project, Stoll and colleagues have held monthly meetings to report on the status of their research. The meetings were open to all. At first those who were familiar with Stoll and his work attended. Slowly more people intrigued by his research began to attend, to ask questions, correct the researchers, and comment on the project’s direction. At the close of the 18th monthly meeting, more than 100 fishermen, community members, policy makers, and researchers had attended. “It was a different model for us. We’ve been showing them the sausage-making process, demystifying the results,” he said.

Stoll is quick to agree about the complexity of calculating something as intangible as resilience among the thousands of different people in different sections of the coast who make their living from the lobster fishery. “But that doesn’t mean you can’t find some way to measure it. There are lots of data sets out there that can help us understand what’s happening. They are all pieces of the picture of resilience,” he said.

Many thanks to these fine businesses, the MLA’s Keeper members!

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In the NEWS

DECEMBER 15 IS DEADLINE FOR TRACKERS IN FEDERAL WATERS

Maine lobstermen who fish in federal waters have until December 15 to install and activate recently distributed tracking devices on their boats to comply with a requirement of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) approved last year. The Particle One devices were sent by the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) with an accompanying letter of explanation. The tracker will collect both the time and position of the boat any time it is moving. The device will also monitor a boat when it is tied up every six hours until it moves again. The tracker and three years of cellular data service is provided to lobstermen at no cost through congressional appropriations provided to DMR. The tracker requirement affects the 1,055 Maine lobstermen who hold permits to fish in federal waters.

N. B. CRAB FISHERMEN RECEIVE MONEY TO TEST ROPELESS GEAR

The Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) and the New Brunswick provincial government announced a total of \$2.8 million to help fishermen in New Brunswick test “whale safe” gear for snow crab fishing. The government funding will go to the Association des Crabiers Acadiens Inc. (ACA) to support the project, which has a total cost of \$3.8 million. It is a follow-up to a study done in 2018-2020 on the co-existence for North Atlantic right whales and snow crab harvesters in the waters off northern New Brunswick. The project has three separate activities that will take place over three years: testing on-demand technology in closed areas of the Gulf of St. Lawrence with trawls of traps, testing fishing with low-breaking strength rope in open areas of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and tracking whales and vessel activity using hydrophones.

WORKING WATERFRONT PRESERVATION BILL INTRODUCED

In November, Maine Senator Susan Collins and Senator Jack Reed of R.I. introduced the *Working Waterfront Preservation Act*. The bipartisan bill would help preserve access for the nation’s fishermen and maritime workers to the waterfronts in coastal communities, supporting the commercial fishing, aquaculture, boatbuilding, and recreational fishing industries that are vital to cul-

ture, heritage, and economies of coastal communities. According to the most recent data from NOAA, commercial and recreational fisheries are responsible for more than 1.7 million jobs in the U.S., \$253 billion in sales, and \$117 billion in value-added impacts. The bipartisan bill would establish a five-year, \$20 million annual grant program to provide those wishing to improve working waterfront property and work within the maritime industries. To be eligible for a grant, recipients must permanently protect an area as a working waterfront.

ALL SORTS OF WHALES TRAVERSING GULF OF MAINE THIS FALL

The New England Aquarium reported the appearance of dozens of humpback whales and endangered fin whales in the Gulf of Maine’s offshore waters this fall. Whale watching companies confirmed the rare sighting of an endangered blue whale 15 miles offshore of Boothbay, Maine. “The amount of wildlife we’ve seen feeding has really been quite astounding,” Orla O’Brien, a scientist who leads the aerial survey team for the New England Aquarium, said in a statement. “From fin whales lunge feeding on krill, to right whales and basking sharks skim feeding side by side, to groups of humpbacks, pods of dolphins and a blue whale — all brought here by a large amount of prey in the Gulf of Maine.”

A NEW WAY TO CRACK A NUT

This holiday season, forget the nutcracker. Maine lobsterman Jacob Knowles, with 2.5 million TikTok followers, recently posed and definitively answered the question of how best to crack a walnut. Knowles, known for sharing educational videos about lobstering, created a series of videos showing a lobster’s ability to crush carrots, apples, and a stick of chalk. Then he decided to test a lobster’s crushing strength with an unshelled walnut. As his short YouTube video shows, a 1.5-pound shedder wasn’t up to the task. It took a 2-pound hard shell female lobster to break open the walnut. At the end of the test, the large female was returned to the ocean.



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The New England Fishermen’s Stewardship Association is an alliance of the wild harvesters of the waters off of New England, dedicated to educating the public about how best to manage our seafood resources through sound science and best practices of conservation used by fishermen, with a view toward economic well-being, ecosystem sustainability, and U.S. food security.

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Events Calendar

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

December 4

Central Maine Regional Shellfish Meeting, 2-4 p.m., Bucksport Town Office.

December 5-7

New England Fishery Management Council meeting, Newport, RI. FMI: <https://www.nefmc.org/calendar/december-2023-council-meeting>.

December 6

MLA Board of directors meeting, 5 p.m., Darby's restaurant, Belfast. FMI: 975-4555.

Aquaculture Public Scoping Session - Downeast Institute, 6 p.m., Downeast Institute, Beals Island.

December 14

Public Hearing on Atlantic Striped Bass Draft Addendum II, 6-8 p.m., remote via Teams and at DMR office building, Augusta.

December 15

Deadline for installation of electronic trackers for lobster boats operating in federal waters.

January 10

Aquaculture Public Hearing - Stuart Ryan, 1 p.m., Freeport Town Office.

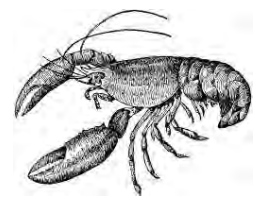
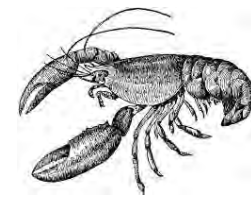
January 23-25

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission winter meeting.

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LOBSTERS FOR LEWISTON

By MLA staff, from a National Fisherman article

In mid-November, lobstermen, restaurants, and lobster dealers in the Portland area raised \$24,250 for the victims of the Lewiston mass shooting and their families.

Lobsters for Lewiston was organized by lobsterman Steve Train of Long Island. He contacted individuals from Luke's Lobster, J's Oyster, DiMillo's On the Water, and The Porthole to support the event. Each restaurant agreed to feature a lobster special on Tuesday, November 14.

With the restaurants committed, Train then turned to lobstermen and dealers to supply the lobsters, and connected them to specific restaurants to ensure they had what they needed throughout the day. Local lobstermen and dealers such as CBS Lobster Inc., Free Range Fish, Looks Lobster, Luke's Lobster, and Ready Seafood all immediately agreed to participate.

On November 14, the restaurants cooked and prepared the lobster dishes, with 100% of the proceeds from the meals going to the Maine Community Foundation's Lewiston Victims and Survivors Fund.

"The dealers' answers were all a quick yes. We all want to help support the community, and as lobstermen, we can all agree that the community has been there for us when we have needed it," Train said of the response.

Steve DiMillo of DiMillo's On the Water said, "We decided to do a twin lobster dinner for the twin cities (Lewiston and Auburn). People came out of the woodwork for the special and were so pleased to help the families affected."

"To see everyone from the state come down to the city today to help do something for Lewiston is what this whole state is about. We are happy to help and be a part of this," said Brian Noble, the assistant general manager at Luke's Lobster.

"We set an estimated pounds for the whole day, and we flew through it during the lunch rush," said Patrick Chadbourne, owner and operator of CBS Lobster. "It's awesome to see the community come together, from those on the boats to the dealers, to the restaurants, and the people who came out to enjoy and eat lobster."



Ward Peck, tank room manager at Luke's Lobster in Portland. Doug Stewart photo.



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AT THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR

As we come to the end of an eventful 2023, *Landings* considers the complexity of the Maine lobster fishery, as reflected in the families who make it strong.

Some lobstermen fish from congested western harbors, others from tiny ports along the Downeast coast. Some have larger boats and bigger engines and head offshore throughout the year. Others fish grounds inshore, where their fathers and grandfathers fished before them. There are as many lobstermen and methods of fishing as there are stars in the sky but they all have one thing in common: each lobsterman is part of a community, linked inexorably to a particular place and people. And it is the people of the Maine lobster fishery who we honor and celebrate.

Photos by Cheryl Clegg.



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