



# LANDINGS

News & Views from Maine's Lobstering Community

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## 70 YEARS OF MLA LEADERSHIP SHAPES THE MAINE LOBSTER INDUSTRY

By Robin Alden

For 70 years, the Maine Lobstermen's Association (MLA) has shaped the fishery that lobstermen know today. Fishermen have done this, working to keep lobstering as a fishery that works in communities all along the coast. The Maine lobster fishery is one of the healthiest community fisheries in the world. This success is worth celebrating.

Two months ago, I chronicled major achievements of the MLA's history. No oil refinery in Eastport. Crewmen are self-employed, not employees. Sales tax refunds on equipment. V-notch and the oversize measure are the rule from here to North Carolina. No landing dragger or gillnet-caught lobsters by Maine fishermen and restrictive limits elsewhere. Lobstermen are owner-operators of their businesses. Entry into the fishery is controlled by apprenticeship, not money. Lobstermen can set their own zone's in/out ratio. Within caps, they can also set their own trap limits and times of fishing if they want.

None of this has happened easily. The MLA's leadership has coaxed out these wins with a clear vision about what is important to the thousands of fishermen who pride themselves in having the freedom to go lobstering on their own terms. The MLA has pursued this with tenacity, holding ground. But success hasn't come from just bullying. The MLA has been skillful: listening, being trustworthy, and being willing to work with, not just against, to get things done ashore.

### Board leadership

The MLA Board of Directors, 100% commercial lobstermen, is at the heart of the MLA's effectiveness. It is why the association has successfully supported



For 70 years the MLA has ensured a sustainable fishery for lobstering families throughout the coast. C. Clegg photo.

the whole industry — large and small, eastern, midcoast, and southern — for 70 years. The board is the boss, say board members past and present, made up of people who are smart, get along with people, and are highly respected in their community.

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## LOBSTER ZONE COUNCILS CONSIDER THE FUTURE

By Melissa Waterman



Photo by N. Beaudoin.

The Department of Marine Resources (DMR) staff updated Maine's seven lobster zone councils during meetings in January and February on an array of issues, particularly the lobster gauge changes mandated by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) and the department's expanded right whale monitoring activities.

In May last year the ASMFC Lobster Board passed Addendum 27 to the lobster fishery management plan, which created a "trigger" mechanism that, when reached, would require a gauge increase. The purpose of the Addendum is to improve the resiliency of the Gulf of

Maine/Georges Bank lobster population by allowing more lobsters to reproduce before harvest.

The trigger was set at a 35% decline in juvenile lobster abundance, as established by three lobster surveys (Maine/NH/Massachusetts spring and fall trawl survey indices; and model-based ventless trap survey index). In October, ASMFC scientists determined a 39% de-

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IN THE NEWS



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

Maine is often said to be the largest neighborhood rather than a state. It seems like everyone knows each other and, in most cases, supports communities far and wide. The lobstering community is the perfect example of that connection. We see it in the toughest of times to the joined celebrations while winning court cases that keep our iconic fishery alive.

The network of support associations is no different. Many years ago, in 2010, the Maine Lobstermen's Community Alliance was formed to not only fight for the industry, but to educate the public about Maine's lobstering heritage, reinforce scientific research, and expand support to not just the fishermen but to their families and communities too.

For 14 years, we have done just that with programs that have expanded over time to include conservation, leadership programs and continuing education, including *Landings*,

our monthly newspaper. To be sure we can expand our programming and communications we have made a few updates to our structure. Our name will now be Maine Lobster Community Alliance and though our website URL is the same, *mcalliance.org*, you will notice a new look. With events being added often and new ways to give, support can come from more of you. Our store is up and running where you can purchase swag with a purpose, and anyone can sign up to have *Landings* mailed to their home.

Partnerships with organizations like the Maine Lobstermen's Association will allow us to continue to expand our outreach efforts and provide more value to our coastal communities. Our new look may be subtle, but our renewed focus remains committed to fostering thriving coastal communities and preserving Maine's lobstering heritage.



*Amber-Jean*

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

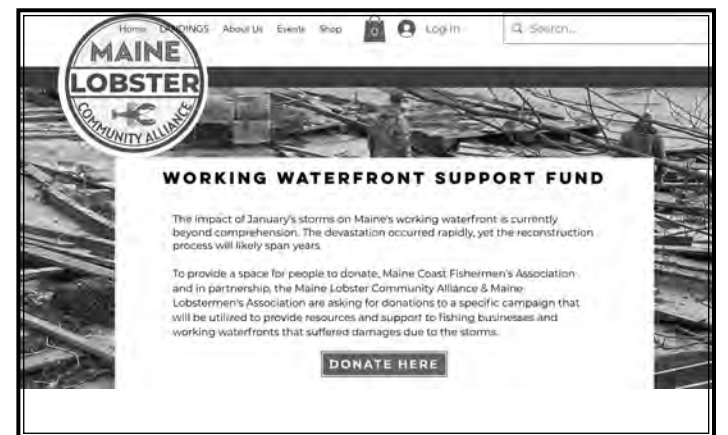
## MAINE LOBSTER COMMUNITY ALLIANCE DONATES \$10,000 TO HELP COASTAL COMMUNITIES REBUILD

The Maine Lobster Community Alliance (MLCA), whose mission is to foster thriving coastal communities and preserve Maine's lobstering heritage, announced in late February that it would donate \$10,000 to the Working Waterfront Support Fund.

The fund was established following January's devastating storms and historic flooding that caused widespread destruction and millions of dollars of damage in communities up and down the Maine coast.

The MLCA is working with other fishing and working waterfront partner organizations including the Maine Lobstermen's Association, Maine Coast Fishermen's Association, Maine Marine Trades Association, New England Fishermen's Stewardship Association, and the Maine Lobstering Union to survey the damage and determine how the Working Waterfront Support Fund can be most useful.

"Lobstermen can't get to work if they don't have access to working waterfront," said Amber-Jean Nickel, president of the MLCA. "Right now, so many hardworking families who live in our coastal communities are suffering and trying to pick up the pieces. We are confident that the state and federal government will eventually provide financial



resources to help the rebuilding, but we anticipate that the Working Waterfront Support Fund can provide not only a little bit of help today, but also a little bit of hope."

The MLCA also announced that it is selling special "Preserve and Protect" merchandise for anyone interested in helping to support the rebuilding process. Proceeds from the sale of this merchandise will support the Working Waterfront Support Fund. Products can be found at <https://www.mcalliance.org/category/protect-preserve>.

## Donate to the MLCA today!



Protecting the Future & Preserving the Past of Maine's Lobstering Industry.

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# LOBSTER INDUSTRY SADDENED BY RIGHT WHALE DEATH

By MLA staff

On February 14, 2024, Maine's lobster industry received the sad and shocking news that juvenile female right whale (5120), which washed ashore on Martha's Vineyard on January 28, died from a chronic entanglement. NOAA Fisheries determined the gear "is consistent with the rope used in Maine state water trap/pot buoy lines."

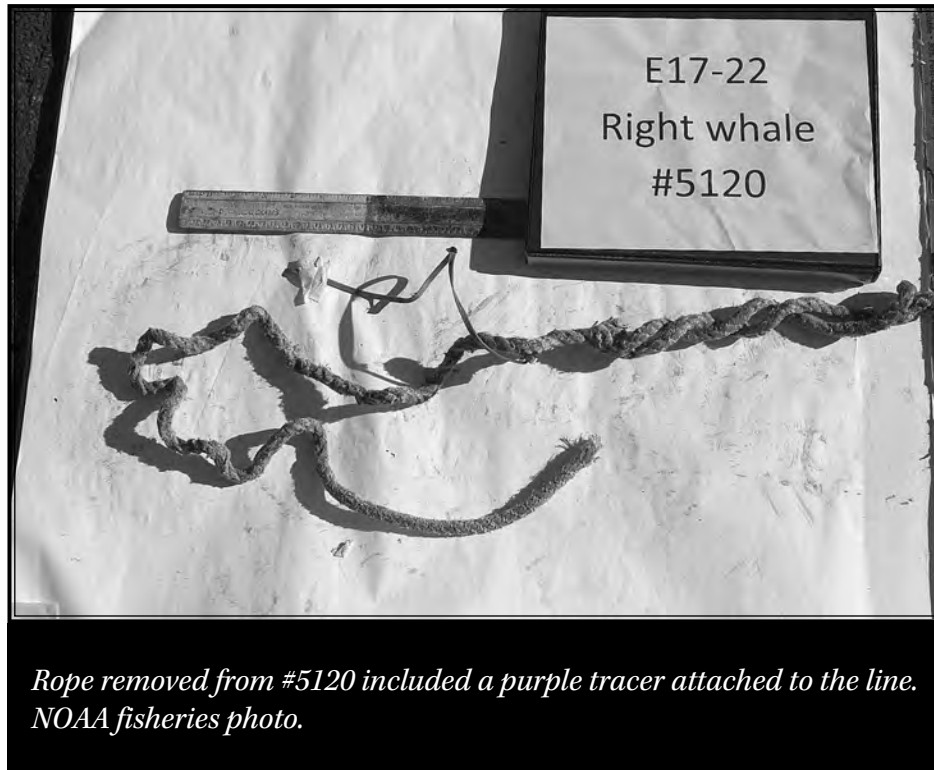
The necropsy, performed on February 1, determined chronic entanglement as the cause of death and found no evidence of ship strike. The gear analysis found that the gear most deeply embedded in the tail was 3/8" rope marked with a purple zip tie. The case is still under investigation by NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement.

Department of Marine Resources (DMR) Commissioner Keliher conveyed the "difficult news" through a letter to Maine's lobster industry, writing that the incident "is very unfortunate - our goal is zero entanglements."

A team of experts from DMR, including three Marine Patrol Officers, inspected the gear and agreed that it is consistent with Maine trap/pot gear. The DMR team disagreed that the gear originated from state waters, citing a lack of evidence on where it was set because too much of the gear had been lost. According to DMR, it is likely that only one endline was involved in this entanglement, ruling out the prospect of a secondary entanglement.

The whale was first sighted entangled in August 2022 with line wrapped around its tail and fluke blade, two buoys present at the tail, and approximately 200 feet of line trailing behind the whale at the surface. The trailing line was gone in a sighting off Massachusetts in January 2023. The whale was seen again in February in Canada and, when sighted in June 2023 in Massachusetts, the

buoys were no longer present. Disentanglement teams made many attempts to disentangle the whale but were not successful due to poor weather conditions and evasive whale behavior. Attempts to attach a tracking buoy were also not successful.



Rope removed from #5120 included a purple tracer attached to the line. NOAA fisheries photo.

"Maine lobstermen have made many changes to their fishing practices to avoid harming a right whale," commented MLA's Policy Director Patrice McCarron. "Based on the timeline, it appears this whale became entangled before Maine lobstermen transitioned to weaker endlines."

The backlash from environmental groups has been fierce and anxiety is high in the lobster industry. "No Maine lobsterman wants our gear to harm a right whale or anything else in the ocean," said MLA President Kristan Porter. "Maine lobstermen have never turned our backs on working with scientists, regulators, and environmental groups. We've set the standard for whale conservation practices around the world," he said. "Now these radical environmental groups want to ignore the conservation measures we have in place and paint us as the bad guys."

The federal whale plan is based on a computer model which assumes Maine's lobster fishery is responsible for as many as five right whale deaths per year, a figure that the Maine industry disputes, explained McCarron.

Jane Davenport, an attorney with Defenders of Wildlife, said in a statement, "The Maine lobster industry's lobbyists and lawyers have been deceiving the public for years, claiming that Maine gear has never been tied to a right whale's death." NMFS data show that this is the first known right whale death resulting from an entanglement in Maine lobster gear.

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# DIFFICULT DECISIONS ON REBUILDING AFTER JANUARY STORMS

By Jacqueline Weaver

*This story was originally published by The Maine Monitor, a nonprofit and nonpartisan news organization.*

Kenneth Knauer, a project manager with Prock Marine, one of Maine's largest marine contractors, is used to being busy. But the past few weeks have been an exception.

"We've been getting phone calls pretty steady ever since the storms hit," said Knauer, referring to the back-to-back January storms that walloped the state's coast, with gusts from the southeast clocking in at 92 mph in some places.

Commercial docks are taking priority, said Knauer, while residential customers will have to wait. "We've been telling people for a residential dock or pier we won't be able to get to them until the summer of 2025."

Navigating the world of shoreland zoning is complicated on a good day. Now, Prock engineers are trying to draft designs for new wharves, docks and piers that will make the infrastructure less vulnerable to rising seas and stronger storms while still meeting regulations set by communities, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

There also are practical constraints, like lobster fishermen who need docks to be at a certain level to be able to unload or load their traps.

Many wharfs today are built at six feet above mean high tide, said Knauer, but he is recommending upping that to eight feet, given the historic high tides seen in much of the state last month, which topped 14.5 feet in some places. "When I first started we would do five feet, then six feet. The norm should be eight feet above the mean high water."

Meeting all these needs might mean not just building higher, but changing up materials altogether. Some waterfront property owners, said Knauer, are rethinking wooden piers and docks and considering using aluminum instead, or adding concrete or granite structures below as supports.

Even concrete and stone, however, are no guarantee, said Knauer, and may not make sense everywhere.

"We've seen some large concrete slabs and granite walls get destroyed because they're so rigid and compact." Aluminum decking can be removed ahead of a storm, but if it's left in place, creates a large surface area that could be impacted by the wind and waves.



*Rebuilding wharves and structures, like this one in Rockland harbor during the January 13 storm, requires hard decisions about what the future might bring. Maine Public photo.*

"Wood pilings and wood decking are more breathable, and it's cheaper to replace," Knauer said. "Sometimes you have to think: 'if something is going to break, how hard is it to fix?'"

What works in one place might not work in another, said Knauer — everything is on a case-by-case basis. "We normally go look at a site, give a proposal, and a lot of times refer them to other agents and engineers to help them get a permit," Knauer said. "It seems like every town has their own little thing. Then you add DEP and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers."

Under the DEP's "permit by rule," anyone seeking to rebuild or repair a damaged structure as it existed prior to the storms is able to begin work two weeks after filing for a permit, as long as DEP staff haven't raised any objections.

The Legislature's Committee on Environment and Natural Resources is considering a bill to allow fast track permitting and wharves built up to four feet higher than previously allowed.

Robert Wood, director of the Bureau of Land Resources for the DEP, said the bill would allow repair and replacement of wharfs, docks, and piers without a Natural Resources Protection Act permit, as long as the structure is the same as what existed before. The legislation would also allow the new structure to be four feet higher than previously permitted.

"A lot of folks who had damage are going to be repairing those structures, in some cases, replacing, and are very interested in bringing them up higher to be more resilient," said Wood. "Some docks are right above the normal high water line."

Chipman's Wharf, a wholesale seafood and retail establishment in Milbridge, lost 130 feet of dock and a bait shed in the storms, and is one of the many waterfront businesses tackling the rebuilding process.

Co-owner Amity Chipman said the family is working with an engineer on a design to make the wharf better able to withstand storms like the ones in January, which she said they had never encountered before. At the moment, the proposed wharf design might be higher and wider.

Chipman said that with added height of the wharf, fishermen also likely will be making more regular use of hoists to lift traps. The company had two hoists that were lost in the storms.

Those who live and work on the waterfront have a short list of options as sea levels rise, as marine geologist Peter Slovinsky told the Monitor last year: "Do nothing, avoid, accommodate, adapt, protect and relocate."

One thing, said Knauer, is for certain. "Try as you might, you're not going to stop the water."



*A waterfront building awash in Thomaston in January. PenBayPilot photo.*

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Lobster Zone Councils continued from page 1

cline in the recruit indices from the reference period (2016-2018) which triggered a schedule of management changes.

For Lobster Management Area 1 (LMA1), that decline mandated a gauge increase by June 1, 2024. DMR Commissioner Keliher successfully proposed that ASFMC delay implementation of the increase until January 1, 2025. The delay will provide additional time to work with Canada on measures that support equity for Maine lobstermen and stock resiliency on both sides of the border. It will also allow gauge manufacturers the needed time to produce new gauges.

On January 1, 2025, the minimum gauge size for LMA1 will become 3-5/16 inches, a 1/16-inch increase. On January 1, 2027, the minimum size will increase another 1/16 of an inch to 3-3/8 inches. Then on January 1, 2028, escape vent sizes will increase (2 inches X 5-3/4 inches rectangular; 2-5/8 inches circular).

The ASMFC Lobster Board also has initiated Addendum 30 to the lobster management plan to clarify how the measures of Addendum 27 will apply to imports of lobster from Canada. The Mitchell Provision in the Magnuson-Stevens Act prohibits imports of whole live lobster smaller than the minimum possession size, currently 3-1/4 inches. The proposed addendum would make clear that Addendum 27 shall comply with the Mitchell Provision, meaning the smallest minimum size for lobsters imported from another country would match the smallest minimum size in effect in the U.S.

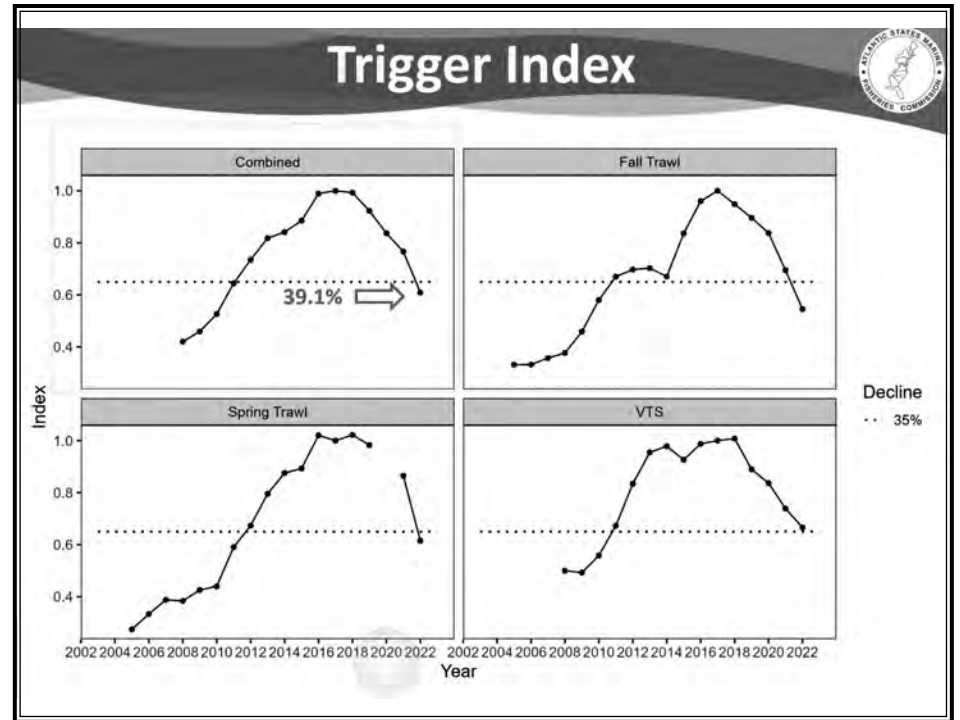
Concerning the state's right whale monitoring efforts, the DMR received funds through the 2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act to gather data on the occurrence of right whales in the Gulf of Maine. Because there was insufficient right whale monitoring in the Gulf and poor spatial data about where lobstermen fish, previous right whale and risk assessment models for the Gulf of Maine used by National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) had areas of high uncertainty.

Anita Murray, marine scientist in DMR's Division of Marine Mammal Research, spoke about the department's expanded passive acoustic monitoring activities. As of November 2023, 26 passive acoustic monitors were operating in Maine's state and federal Gulf of Maine waters. The monitors are anchored to the bottom with no surface expression, floating approximately six meters off the seafloor; each records all sounds, including whale vocalizations, within about a six-mile radius. The acoustic data, downloaded every four months, will be combined with new at-sea visual surveys undertaken in March, July, and November this year and planned aerial surveys.

DMR's extensive aerial surveys will begin this spring along the coast. The survey plane will fly at 1,000-foot altitude along survey tracks spaced four nautical miles apart. DMR's goal is to fly all the survey tracks every month.

Murray noted that currently right whale survey results, sightings, and acoustic

### Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission



detections from different sources are publicly available on [www.whalemap.org](http://www.whalemap.org). The site compiles data from 12 contributors on right whale movements along the Eastern seaboard and is updated in near real-time. The interactive map shows that right whales were definitively sighted in the western Gulf of Maine between January 1 and January 23.

DMR has also drawn on Consolidated Appropriations Act funds to set up an Innovative Gear Library for lobstermen. The Gear Library will allow lobstermen to try out different types of on-demand lobster gear, offer their comments, and collect data on the gear for researchers and gear manufacturers. It will include on-demand systems as well as other less-expensive technologies, such as electronic timed-released systems. Gear will be loaned to lobstermen, with enough gear to cover two trawls per lobsterman. Lobstermen will be compensated for up to eight days of testing each month at \$300-\$400 per day while fishing and \$1,920-\$2,400 per day when not fishing, depending on boat length. By testing the gear lobstermen can let both DMR and NMFS know what works and what does not work in different areas of the coast.

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## STEAMING AHEAD BY AMBER-JEAN NICKEL, MLA COO

This year is the 70th anniversary of the Maine Lobstermen's Association! Traditionally known as the Platinum Anniversary, it is a sign of both rarity and strength. If that doesn't accurately define the MLA, I don't know what does.

Let's think about it. In 1954, Leslie Dyer of Vinalhaven realized that lobstermen needed to work together in order to get a better deal from lobster buyers. To us that seems like a pretty straightforward notion, but remember, in 1954 lobstermen largely fished inshore, on a very specific territory. Getting together with other lobstermen from distant parts of the coast didn't happen often. Plus lobstering was not a full-time job in those days. Fishermen moved among many different fisheries depending on the time of year. The idea that a lobsterman might want to be part of an organization solely devoted to the lobster fishery, and pay money for the privilege, must have seemed a little strange in 1954.

Les Dyer persevered. He traveled to Beals and Cutler, he went down to Portland, he talked to lobstermen on the islands. With the assistance of Rockland attorney Alan Grossman, he pulled together enough lobstermen and enough money to organize the MLA. Its first meeting was held in the old Thorndike Hotel in Rockland on October 1, 1954. As a local newspaper wrote at the time, "The combination of low prices for their catch and the loss of gear in the two hurricanes has brought lobstermen along the Maine coast to a realization that something must be done to help their business."

Sounds familiar, doesn't it?

Since 1954 the MLA has been doggedly working to sustain the lobster fishery and the people and communities that rely on it. We are the oldest fishing organization on the East Coast. A list of the issues the MLA has tackled in 70 years would run longer than your arm. But no organization can afford to rest on its laurels. The fact that the MLA managed to block construction of an oil refinery in Downeast Maine back in the 1970s probably isn't foremost in the minds of young lobstermen dealing with re-marking their gear with purple color again this spring. The fact that the MLA packed the Augusta Civic Center with lobstermen to successfully crush the possibility of dragger-caught lobsters being landed in Maine might not make a lobsterman considering where to get good bait this season look up. The fact that corporate ownership of lobster licenses is prohib-

ited in Maine due to the political strength of the MLA may be just a hazy memory in the minds of some lobstermen.

But no one can forget the fact that the MLA took on the National Marine Fisheries Service in a time of dire peril for the fishery...and won.

If we had not been at the table, if we had not raised the money to hire the expertise of a stellar legal team, if we had not used our collective power to get Congressional action in late 2022, the state's lobster fishery would have been so restricted by regulations designed to protect right whales that it effectively would have died this year.

I took this position with the MLA around March 2023. If you asked me why, I think I would say that I was impressed by the honest dedication I saw among the board members and the MLA's staff. You don't find that sort of passion in many businesses or organizations. I respected the fact that the MLA had been doing what it does so well for so long. You don't find many small advocacy groups still taking on the big fights after so many decades of struggle.

I liked what I saw. I like it even more after a year.

And after a year, I need to ask you a question: Are you a member? Are you a donor? Are you a part of this iconic legacy, built over the generations? Thank you if you are! If not, why not?

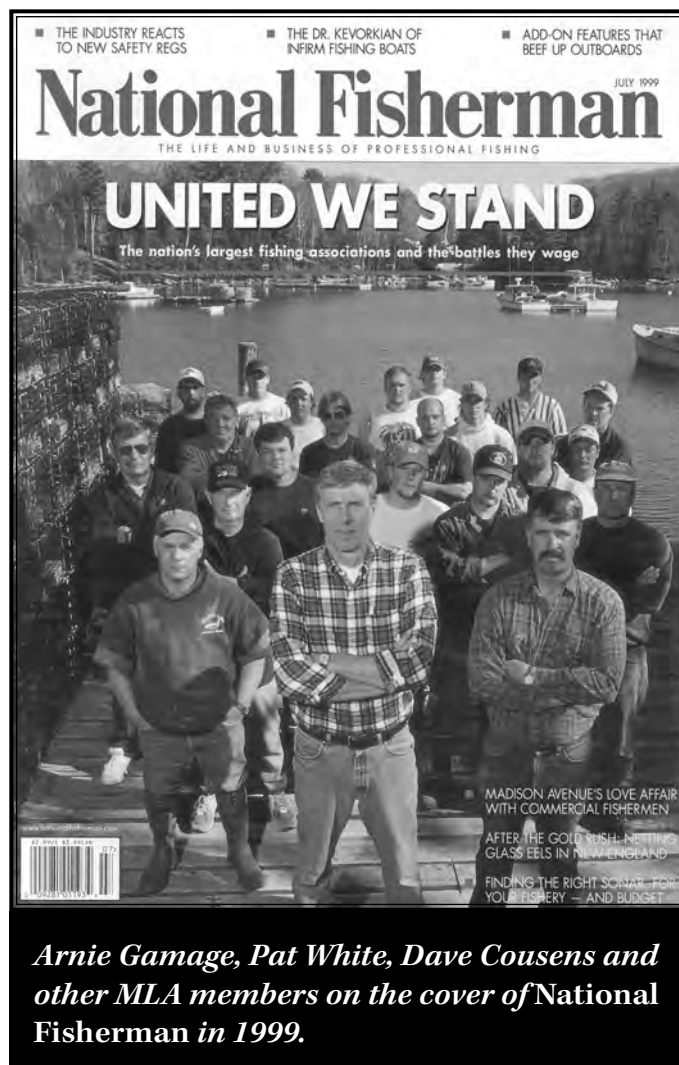
The MLA has been led by many people over the years

— Les Dyer, Ossie Beal, Ed Blackmore, David Cousens, and Kristan Porter. But at its core the MLA is its members. The members and the board of directors they elect make this 70-year-old miracle tick.

In our Platinum Anniversary year, please join us. While the victory in court last year has given the fishery breathing room for now, the very same regulatory efforts – to reduce the risk of entanglement by right whales in lobster fishing gear – are due to return in 2028. Once again the MLA will be fighting for Maine's lobstermen, all of them, through every means available to it. After all, that's what we've been doing for 70 years.

I hope you will be with us.

*Amber-Jean*



*Arnie Gamage, Pat White, Dave Cousens and other MLA members on the cover of National Fisherman in 1999.*



## Your Membership Matters.



## MAINE LOBSTERMEN'S ASSOCIATION UPDATE

### VESSEL STRIKE THE CAUSE OF RIGHT WHALE DEATH OFF GEORGIA

On February 16, NMFS announced preliminary findings from the necropsy of the juvenile female right whale found dead off of Georgia on February 13. The injuries are consistent with a vessel strike based on evidence of blunt force trauma, including fractures of the skull. Additional histological and diagnostic testing of samples is pending. This case is still under investigation by NOAA Office of Law Enforcement. The deceased whale is the offspring of Pilgrim (#4340) and was first documented in December 2022

### RIGHT WHALE ON MARTHA'S VINEYARD DIED OF ENTANGLEMENT

The MLA is closely monitoring information surrounding the death of Right Whale 5120 found on Martha's Vineyard on January 28. On February 14, NOAA Fisheries announced that the rope removed from the deceased whale "is consistent with the rope used in Maine state water trap/pot buoy lines."

A team of DMR experts familiar with how Maine lobster gear is rigged to comply with whale regulations viewed the gear removed from the carcass and concluded that it is consistent with Maine lobster gear. The DMR team disagreed with NOAA that the gear originated from state waters, citing a lack of evidence to make a determination because too much of the gear had been lost. According to DMR, it is likely that only one endline was involved in this entanglement, ruling out the prospect of a secondary entanglement.

The whale was first sighted entangled in August 2022 with line wrapped around its tail and fluke blade, two buoys present at the tail, and approximately 200 feet of line trailing at the surface behind the whale. The trailing line was gone when sighted off Massachusetts in January 2023. The whale was seen again in February in Canada. When it was observed in June 2023 in Massachusetts, the buoys were no longer present. Disentanglement teams made many attempts to disentangle the whale but were not successful due to poor weather conditions and evasive whale behavior. Attempts to attach a tracking buoy were also not successful.

The necropsy, performed on February 1, determined chronic entanglement as the cause of death and found no evidence of ship strike. The gear analysis found that the rope most deeply embedded in the tail was 3/8" rope marked with a purple zip tie. The case is still under investigation by NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement.

The MLA has pledged to conduct its own thorough, independent review of all evidence in this case as soon as it becomes available. The MLA will bring a team of lobstermen to analyze the gear, review all reports from this case including the necropsy, chain of custody of the gear removal, and all other evidence associated with this case. MLA will demand accountability for all discrepancies in the current findings, including DMR's dispute of NOAA's finding that the entangling gear originated from Maine state waters. We hope our investigation will shed some light on how this whale became entangled so we can ensure this does not happen again.

Additional whale regulations are not anticipated because the lobster fishery is in compliance with the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act until December 31, 2028.

### ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS SUE OVER VESSEL STRIKES

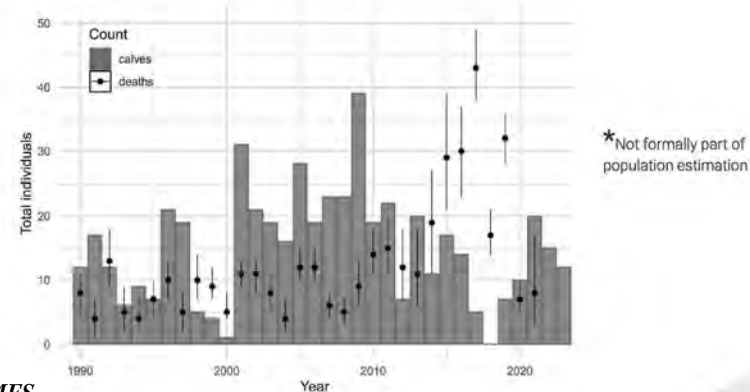
On February 13, several environmental organizations joined forces to sue NMFS to force the agency to issue a new Vessel Speed Rule to save the North Atlantic right whale. In August 2022, NMFS proposed changes to the Vessel Speed Rule to expand the locations and timing of seasonal speed zones along the East Coast. The proposed rule would also require the mandatory speed restrictions of 10 knots or less for most vessels 35 to 65 feet in length. The Whale and Dolphin Conservation, Defenders of Wildlife, Conservation Law Foundation, and the Center for Biological Diversity filed a request to allow a paused lawsuit about the ship speed rules to go forward. Members of the groups have criticized the federal government for delays in releasing the final rules and said they hope to force a deadline via their lawsuit.

### HOPE FOR RIGHT WHALE POPULATION

The most recent right whale population estimate by NMFS (2022) shows that the population's sharp decline has leveled off due to an increase in right whale survival. Entanglement deaths are down significantly.

According to NMFS, 19 right whale calves were born in 2024 so far, and right whale births have exceeded deaths since 2020. NMFS data show only two right whale deaths in 2020 from a vessel strike and an unviable newborn, two deaths in 2021 from a vessel strike and an entanglement in Canadian snow crab gear, zero deaths in 2022, and two deaths in 2023 from a vessel strike and an unviable newborn.

### Annual mortalities vs. calves\*



Source: NMFS

NMFS data show that right whale 5120 is the first known right whale death resulting from an entanglement in Maine lobster gear. The federal whale plan assumes Maine's lobster fishery is responsible for as many as five right whale deaths per year based on a computer model, a figure that the MLA disputes.

### MASSACHUSETTS LOBSTERMEN'S ASSOCIATION SUES OVER WEDGE CLOSURE

On February 9, the Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association filed a lawsuit against NOAA over the permanent closure of an area known as "the Wedge" to protect right whales. The area was closed through emergency rulemaking in 2022 and 2023. NOAA issued a final rule on February 6 to make the closure permanent.

The Wedge is a roughly 250-square-mile area which sits between the federal and state waters portion at the northern end of the Massachusetts Restricted Area. The wedge is currently exempted from the stricter gear limits imposed in the surrounding waters.

The Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association claims that permanent closure of the Massachusetts Restricted Area Wedge annually from February 1 to April 30 is unlawful under the Consolidated Appropriations Act (CAA) of 2023. The association called the move a "continuation of NOAA's unlawful conduct," and noted the area is of "critical importance" to the 650 commercial lobstermen still fishing in Massachusetts. According to the association, there has been historically low levels of right whale sightings in the region.

The Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association previously filed a lawsuit against NMFS in D.C. District Court in February 2023. The court did not grant immediate relief because the association failed to show irreparable harm from closure of the Wedge. When the Wedge area reopened, NMFS filed to dismiss the case, which was granted by the court.

### LOBSTER MARKET STABILIZES TO PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS

*SeafoodSource.com* reports that 2023 was a solid year for the North American lobster industry, due to a growing Asian market. According to a panel of shellfish experts at the 2024 Global Seafood Market, landings are expected to be down 5% in 2023 but the resource is in excellent shape and continues to be reliable.

Annie Tselikis, director of marketing and business development at Slade Gorton, reported that exports to China, Hong Kong, and Vietnam fueled growth. "Looking at the 2023 data, we're almost back to where we were not just pre-pandemic, but pre-trade war, which I think is pretty significant," Tselikis said.

Lobster imports from Canada into the U.S. were down in 2023, with live volumes dropping from 43 million pounds in 2022 to 34 million pounds in 2023, according to Ready Seafood Vice President Andrew Daughan. A major change in the fishery is that higher interest rates are impacting lobster distribution, he said. The industry continues to face challenges. Daughan reports that businesses are no longer willing to hold inventory in the offseason.

### VENTLESS TRAP SURVEY APPLICATIONS DEADLINE MARCH 8

DMR, in cooperation with the Gulf of Maine Lobster Foundation, seeks four industry participants for the Regional Ventless Trap Program through a competitive bid process. This is an opportunity to participate in a cooperative research project between industry and scientists from Maine through Rhode Island.

The lobster catch will be measured by a sea sampler and immediately returned to the ocean. All traps, line, and buoys will be supplied to participating fishermen. Interested parties will need to complete the application to identify vessel specifications, daily rate, and preferred sampling leg. Applications are due

MLA continued on page 8



## MAINE LOBSTERMEN'S ASSOCIATION UPDATE

MLA Update continued from page 7

via mail, email, texted picture, or fax by March 8, 2024 to Krystin Kleman at [kristyn.kleman@maine.gov](mailto:kristyn.kleman@maine.gov) or 207-350-7350. Additional information and application are available at [www.maine.gov/dmr/science/species-information/maine-lobster/lobster-life-stages-and-dmr-surveys/ventless-trap-survey](http://www.maine.gov/dmr/science/species-information/maine-lobster/lobster-life-stages-and-dmr-surveys/ventless-trap-survey).

### NMFS MANDATORY EVTR REPORTING EFFECTIVE APRIL 1

NOAA Fisheries is implementing mandatory electronic Vessel Trip Reporting (eVTR) for federal lobster permit holders beginning April 1. The landing reports include five additional lobster-specific data elements, with the requirement that all eVTRs must be completed through the effort section of the reporting app prior to landing and submitted to Great Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) within 48 hours of the conclusion of a fishing trip.

According to DMR, Maine lobstermen may submit their catch reports using VESL app or may report using NOAA Fish Online or eTrips (HarborLights Software) to fulfill state and federal reporting obligations. Reporting through LEEDS will not meet NMFS's reporting requirement.

NMFS recommends lobster vessel operators download one of the apps as soon as possible so they can become familiar with entering their catch information. The current NOAA Fish Online (FOL) iOS app does not support lobster reporting. Vessel operators who are currently submitting eVTR's through the iOS app will need to download and install the Fish Online Web app through their FOL account.

A few reminders for vessel operators and federal seafood dealers:

- Anyone submitting eVTR's on any of the available apps will also need to have a valid GARFO vessel operator permit. If a vessel operator does not have an operator permit, they can apply for a permit using their FishOnline account. If they need assistance with this, they can reach out to a Port Agent or contact the permit office by email [NMFS.GAR.Permits@noaa.gov](mailto:NMFS.GAR.Permits@noaa.gov) or by calling 978-282-8438.
- The reporting device is required to be on board the vessel while fishing, and all trip reports must be completed through the effort and catch portion of the eVTR before they enter port. All trips must be submitted to GARFO within 48 hours of landing.
- Vessel operators are responsible for giving the dealer(s) the 14-digit eVTR number created on their reporting app.
- Federal dealers are required to report that eVTR number on all federal dealer reports. The eVTR number is how GARFO matches the trip report to the corresponding dealer report.

For more information, call the vessel reporting helpdesk at 978-281-9188 with any reporting questions. You can visit NMFS website at [www.fisheries.noaa.gov/new-england-mid-atlantic/resources-fishing/how-complete-commercial-evtr-lobster-and-jonah-crabs-using-fish-online-evtr-web-app](http://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/new-england-mid-atlantic/resources-fishing/how-complete-commercial-evtr-lobster-and-jonah-crabs-using-fish-online-evtr-web-app). Sign up to receive email updates at <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USNOAAFISHERIES/subscriber/new>.

### MAINE OFFSHORE WIND RESEARCH TO BEGIN IN 2024

The Governor's Energy Office (GEO) announced two research awards totalling nearly \$400,000 on behalf of the Maine Offshore Wind Research Consortium, to begin in 2024. The research was identified by the Research Consortium's Advisory Board, an assembly of fisheries, wildlife, marine science, and industry experts advising Maine's offshore wind research plans. Karp Strategies and Dr. Alison Bates of Colby College will create a baseline inventory of socio-economic data pertaining to Maine's fishing communities. Karp Strategies is a certified urban planning and consulting firm. Dr. Alison Bates brings experience researching public perceptions of offshore wind.



Aqua Wind photo.

ERM Consulting and Engineering (ERM) in consultation with the Gulf of Maine Research Institute (GMRI) will explore approaches to fisheries coexistence with floating offshore wind. ERM is a global consultancy firm that assesses the environmental and socioeconomic impacts of floating offshore wind on commercial fishing communities. GMRI offers local knowledge and connections to Maine fishing.

The state will seek more proposals for research to address additional topics identified by the Advisory Board, including a benthic mapping project with opportunities for commercial fishing vessel support.

### NEFMC SEEKS INPUT ON DEVELOPMENT OF HERRING PLAN

The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) is conducting six scoping meetings to solicit comments on a range of alternatives for Amendment 10 to the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan, which will address when and where herring are allocated among fishing areas to minimize user conflicts, contribute to optimum yield, and support rebuilding of the resource.

The Council is also proposing to take action to enhance river herring (alewife and blueback herring) and shad (American shad and hickory shad) avoidance and other catch reduction measures to better support ongoing coastwide restoration efforts for those species. Details on the public scoping process will be posted on the Council's website under Amendment 10, <https://www.nefmc.org/management-plans/herring>.



Maine Public photo.

## MLA BUSINESS MEMBER OF THE MONTH: MIDCOAST SOLAR

Nate Curtis has been involved with solar energy installations for 22 years. Born and brought up in New Harbor, his grandfather was a lobsterman, as his cousins are now. His brother cultivates oysters. While fishing is part of his family's history, Curtis took a different direction. He founded MidCoast Solar to bring community-based solar energy options to the state.



N. Curtis photo.

"I chose to go into solar energy because it means working with nature for a sustainable energy source that has low impact which can provide our communities with lower cost electricity that doesn't pollute the air and ocean that my family and all of our coastal families depend on," Curtis said.

Curtis noted that the Gulf of Maine is one of the fastest warming regions of the Atlantic Ocean; 2023 saw the Gulf's temperature spike to record levels again. "I am committed even more to my mission of solar energy for Maine to help mitigate the environmental effects which we are seeing in the oceans that are devastating our fishing communities, our planet, our children's future, and our livelihoods," he said.

MidCoast Solar builds community solar farms that allow individuals and businesses to purchase subscriptions for solar-generated power. The electricity created by the solar farm offsets the electricity used by the subscribers. Each subscriber receives credits from their power company for the energy generated by the solar farm. In many cases, the credits zero out the existing utility bill.

"I am proud to support the Maine Lobstermen's Association," Curtis said. "I take every opportunity to educate visitors, new residents, and others on how Maine's lobster fishery is the most sustainable fishery in the world and how climate change, regulations, offshore wind turbines, and other pressures are threatening the future of this essential industry and Maine's coastal communities."

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Midcoast Solar  
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 207.350.3060 207.522.2797  
<https://www.midcoastsolar.com>





# MAINE LOBSTERMEN'S ASSOCIATION UPDATE

## MEET THE MLA BOARD MEMBERS

By Melissa Waterman

Laurin Brooks wanted to know more. The Kennebunk lobsterman had been on the Lobster Zone G council for some years and, about six years ago, he could feel that the lobster fishery was about to face some heavy weather. So he decided to join the MLA board.

"I was trying to sort out what was going on. I knew right whales would be a big thing and then of course wind came up too," he recalled. "Being on the MLA board gave me a heads up about what was going on."

Brooks brought more than a lobsterman's point of view to the MLA board. During his time at sea Brooks has fished for just about everything: tuna, shrimp, urchins, groundfish, and lobster. He had already seen fisheries diminish and close, and now the federal government was turning its attention to lobster.

"I came on as the whale thing was at its height. The court case, it was tough," he said. "The MLA had a very limited budget. We had to look at other avenues [than membership] to bring money in."



Laurin Brooks.

When the MLA legal case against the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) was denied in 2022 on all counts by the Washington D.C. District Court, the MLA board had to take stock. To battle a federal agency in court took superb legal expertise, and such skill was expensive. Should the MLA appeal the court's decision and commit itself to even greater legal bills?

"We never had a down attitude," Brooks recalled. "We were going to at least try. We held our ground and stayed with the plan. And here we are now. What we did is really amazing."

Brooks will step down from his place on the board this month. He will miss his fellow board members but not the long drive from Kennebunk to Belfast each month. "Me and [fellow board member] Chris Welch travel together but the summers are hard. Part of the reason I joined was that the board only had Chris from this part of the state, south of Portland," he said.

Brooks is glad to see younger lobstermen getting involved in the MLA and joining the board. "They are really smart and know what they are talking about. It's great to see them step up," he said. "I would love to see the MLA grow. I would like to see all lobstermen in the state be members. We need more members behind us."

MLA board member John Tripp, Tenants Harbor, remembers the tough years when the MLA was countering the whale rules. "The legal fight was nerve-racking. It was David versus Goliath. There was just no way we were going to beat the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the environmental groups. But we did."

Tripp, 35, joined the board in 2014 after having attended the Lobster Leadership Institute program the previous winter. Through the program Tripp and other young Maine lobstermen learned about the management, conservation, and economic elements of the fishery, attended management meetings at the local and state level, and delved into the global markets for Maine lobster.

"I started sitting in on MLA meetings as part of the Leadership Institute. I think I've attended nearly every meeting since then," Tripp said.

He started just as the right whale issue was heating up. In 2017 and 2018 an unprecedented number of right whales died in Canadian waters. Pressure mounted from environmental organizations and the federal government to do something to save the endangered whales. MLA board meetings grew tense, yet the camaraderie among board members remained strong.

"It's a group from throughout the coast of open-minded people who can see both sides of an issue," Tripp commented. "You can have a conversation without fighting."

As the regulations designed to protect right whales brewed on the horizon, offshore wind energy developments in the Gulf of Maine started popping up as well. Governor Mills announced the state would apply to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) for a lease 20 nautical miles off southern Maine to construct a research array of wind turbines. The federal government declared the Gulf of Maine open for commercial offshore wind leases.

"The one thing that is hard about being on the MLA board is being aware of everything hanging over our heads all the time. It was a lot easier fishing because you don't really know what's happening until it's right in your face. I miss that peace of mind," Tripp said.

Getting together once a month with lobstermen from throughout the coast has given Tripp perspective on fishing in other parts of the state as well as a better understanding of the commonalities shared among all commercial lobstermen. He wishes that more lobstermen would understand the benefits of being members of the MLA.

"The fishery is more united than it has been. We're in a super-connected world now. It's important that we come together. We could do really great things with more industry backing," he said.

"If we have to go to court every 10 years to keep fishing, then we are going to do it. Other lobstermen might not agree with us all the time but the fact is, we get things done."



John Tripp and his daughter aboard his boat in Tenants Harbor. J. Tripp photo.

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

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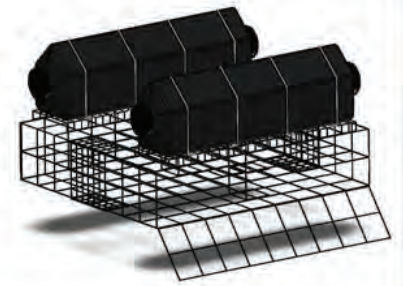
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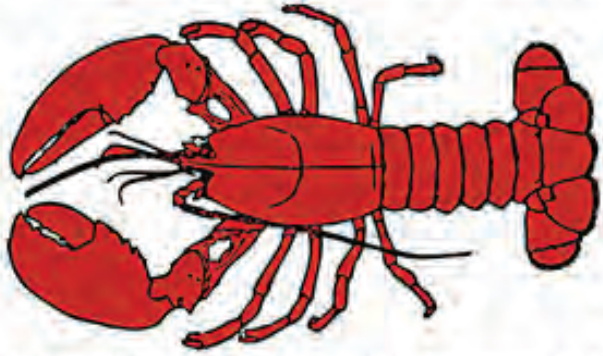
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[www.atlanticseafarms.com](http://www.atlanticseafarms.com)



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**Island Fishing Gear & NAPA Auto Parts**  
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207-367-5959  
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**Weirs**  
1513 Portland Rd.  
Arundel, ME 04046  
207-985-3537  
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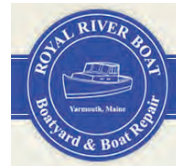
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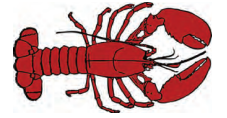


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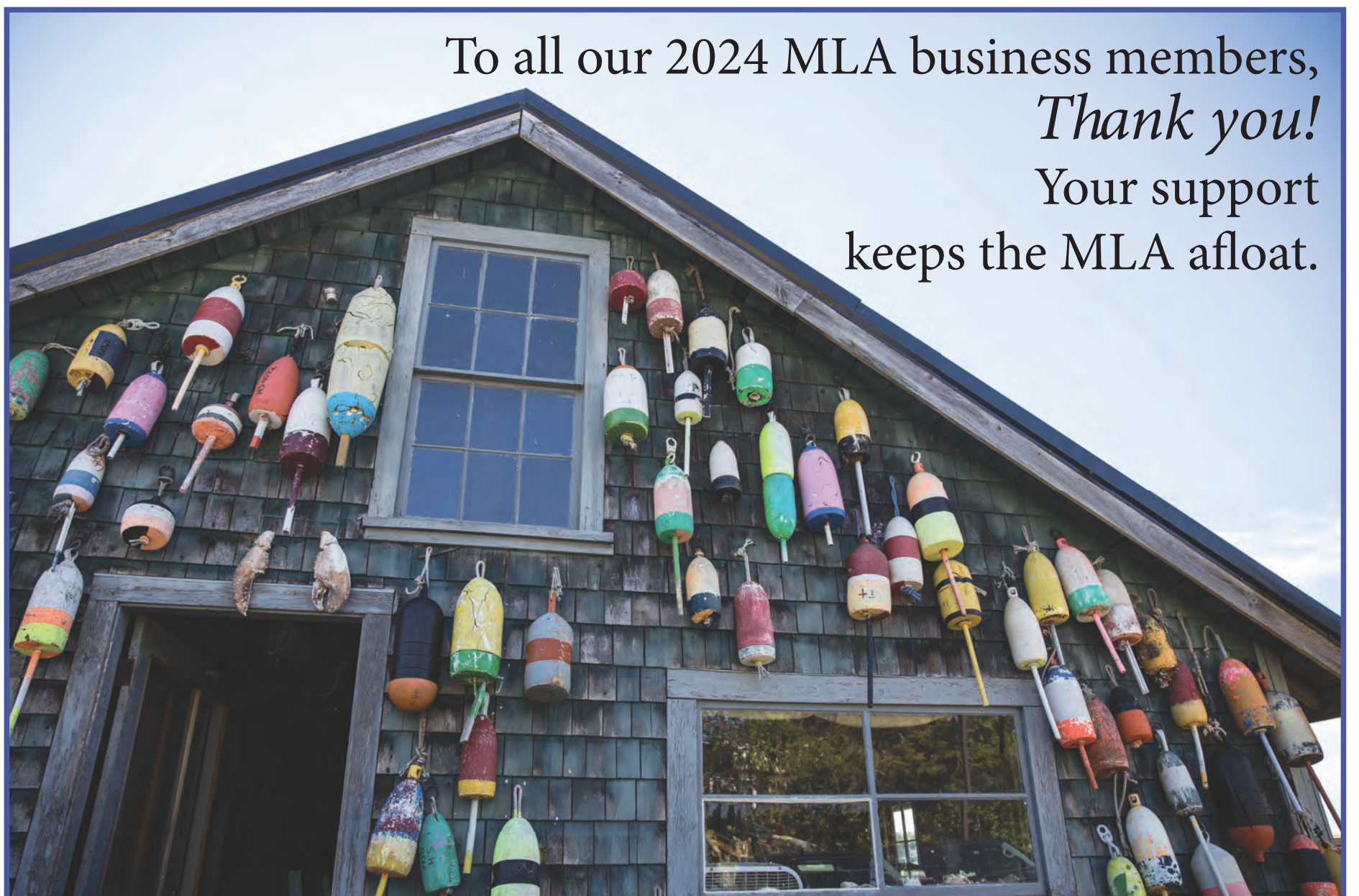
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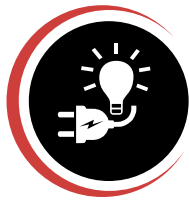
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# A GROWING MUSEUM IN ROCKLAND STANDS OUT FROM THE CROWD

By Melissa Waterman

Museums don't have to be sleepy places packed with dull and dry history. In fact, the Sail Power and Steam Museum on the waterfront in Rockland is anything but quiet. "We're like an octopus," founder Captain Jim Sharp said, "there's just so much going on."

Sharp and his wife Meg started the Museum in 2007 on property abutting the Rockland harbor, once owned by the Outward Bound School. The two had amassed an extensive collection of maritime items gathered over years of sailing and operating four schooners out of Camden. In fact, the collection was getting a bit too large for comfort, according to Meg.



"We were driving around and saw the Rockland property. I knew the property [once the site of the famed Snow Shipyard] was hallowed ground, part of Maine's maritime history and Rockland's," Sharp recalled. The couple purchased it and began to consider opening a museum fueled by their varied collection of maritime objects. But both were retired. "I was 75 years old. We tossed a quarter, heads we do it, tails we don't. It came down tails, a definite NO. But what does a quarter know?" Sharp said.

The Museum, a registered 501 (c)(3) nonprofit, opened quietly in 2007. Meg recalls going around to yard sales to buy display cases and other furnishings for the collections. "It's a down home museum," she said. "Nothing fancy, just cozy and personable."

In the famous words from the movie "Field of Dreams," if you build it, they will come. And they did. People came to see the collection of engines, sextants, ship models, gear and memorabilia and to listen to Sharp tell stories about everything in the building. Some visitors would mention to him items they had stored in the attic at home, or out in the barn or the boat shop.

"They would donate them or loan them to us. We have so many more artifacts now than when we started," Sharp said. Among those is the 1801 backstaff used by the renowned navigator Nathaniel Bowditch, author of *The American Practical Navigator*, for his navigation calculations (a backstaff uses the shadow of the sun instead of a direct view of the sun to obtain altitude).

As the Museum's collections have grown, so have its programs. Throughout the season, local and world-renowned musicians hold concerts of traditional music. Each Sunday afternoon since the Museum opened local musicians have gathered there for a musical jam. "I used to sing and play the guitar on the schooners," Sharp said. "I love music. So every Sunday afternoon we have music. It's often twice as many musicians as audience but that's alright. It's fun, it's a social thing. Some people never miss it."



*The Museum's sailing program is free for children ages 8 to 14. SPSM photo.*

The Museum's property includes a waterfront dock and floats as well as a small sandy beach. "It's a good waterfront, it should be used," Sharp. Board member Bob Williams came up with the notion of a free sailing program for children. "I'm an old Scotsman and I wasn't so sure about something free," Sharp laughed. "It is a good idea, though, and connects children to the water."

Sail Kids For Free (SKFF) teaches children ages 8 to 14 each week throughout the summer how to sail using Optimist prams. More than 150 children take part each season. There are also sailing lessons for individuals or groups, a sailing club for women, and afternoon youth sailing lessons. There are even plans this coming year to add a Classic Charter Club, which will allow people to sail classic boats owned by the Museum.

The Museum now has quite a fleet. In addition to its prams, sunfish, catboats, and Herreshoff 12-1/2's, a local resident donated the unfinished Friendship sloop *Persistence* in 2011. During the next three years a dedicated band of volunteers carefully finished the vessel. A second Friendship sloop, *Black Jack*, soon followed. The *Black Jack* was built by Wilbur Morse of Friendship and

launched in 1900. Volunteers also rebuilt the 40-foot vessel and launched her with a team of oxen in 2018. She is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Over the years the Museum has created a Heritage Tour for the increasing numbers of cruise ship passengers who stop in Rockland during the summer and fall months. It all started with a giant donated tent and the smaller cruise company American Cruise Lines, which had begun to call in Rockland. "The cruise line was looking for something to do in Rockland. We had the tent and a guy had a gas-rigged lobster cooker. So we invited them to come for a tour and a lobster lunch under our tent," Sharp said. "And it worked!"



*Jim and Meg Sharp. Photo courtesy of Courier-Gazette.*

Since that first visit, the tours have continued to evolve. Passengers arrive at the museum to learn about Maine's maritime heritage with a museum tour. Afterwards, they head down to the beach to watch preparations for a traditional shoreside lobster bake. During lunch they are entertained by traditional music and Sharp speaks about Maine's sustainable lobster industry and its importance to the state. "Last summer, we had 35 Heritage Tours, perhaps 4,000 people altogether," Sharp said.

"Beyond our active waterfront programs and museum, we host talks throughout the year," said Museum executive director Robin McIntosh. "Boat Talk has been our most recent addition — a series of talks designed for local boaters on subjects like sails and rigging, composites, buying and selling a boat. Captains' Quarters has been running since the start of the pandemic when we introduced online talks, which are now available for viewing on our website. That series covers historic vessels of interest as well as topics as diverse as the weather or cruising around the world. And during the summer, we host Museum Mondays with movies and speakers on topics of interest to both visitors and residents alike."



*Boats old and new fill the Museum's fleet. SPSM photo.*

"As a nonprofit, we have an active board of directors, and much of our funding comes from donations and memberships. We are a community resource, and we count ourselves lucky to have such strong community support," she added.

It's all part of the Museum's educational mission — To celebrate, honor, experience, and share the story of Maine's maritime heritage. "Yes, we've got the tiger by the tail now," Sharp laughed. "Meg and I say we flunked retirement."



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# MAINE SEACOAST MISSION OFFERS COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS, HOME REPAIR ASSISTANCE

*Press release*

The Maine Seacoast Mission is accepting scholarship applications until Friday, March 29 for the 2024-2025 academic year. Mission scholarships are open to graduating high school seniors and adults who have completed the HiSET or GED, who live in Washington County, eastern Hancock County or on a Maine outer island served by the Mission.

Since 1918, the Mission has awarded almost \$3 million to more than 3,500 students from Maine's outer islands and Downeast coastal communities. For the 2023-2024 academic year, 75 Mission Scholars received \$211,500 in scholarships. Seventy-two percent of those scholars attended a college in Maine and 46 percent of the scholars attended a University of Maine campus or a Maine community college. Each year approximately 20 new scholarships are awarded.

In addition to offering financial support, the Mission provides guidance throughout each scholar's transition to college and during their academic career. Moira, a current Mission Scholar who graduated from Charles M. Sumner Learning Campus, said the Mission staff "were always happy to chat with me if I had any questions, connect me with resources that might help my academic career and show their support in little ways that mattered."

"The Mission offer regular workshops for our Scholars once they enter college, on topics ranging from time management to graduate school," Oliveri added.

For more information on schools and to apply, visit <https://seacoastmission.org/downeast/scholarships>. For inquiries about scholarships, email [scholarships@seacoastmission.org](mailto:scholarships@seacoastmission.org) or call (207) 814-8546.

The Maine Seacoast Mission also operates a Housing Improvement program for homeowners in Washington and eastern Hancock counties. The program, established in 2003, brings hundreds of volunteers to Cherryfield each year to make improvements to homes in the Mission's service area. Applications are also open for groups who would like to volunteer this summer.

"This program has allowed community members to stay in their homes which is vital to our mission of supporting and strengthening communities," says Jennifer Kempthorne, Housing Improvement program director.

In addition to providing repairs, the Mission partners with Downeast Community Partners (DCP), which identifies homes DCP can weatherize after Mission volunteers make improvements. This work lowers homeowners' heating costs over time. This partnership between the Mission and DCP is supported by the C.F. Adams Charitable Trust. The program also connects recipients to other resources available from the Mission and partnering organizations offering comprehensive support to individuals and families.

Homeowners qualify for the Housing Improvement program if they self-identify as low to moderate income, provide proof of homeownership, own one home, live in the home receiving repairs and reside within a 30-minute drive from the Mission's Cherryfield campus.

Homeowners can apply online through the Housing Improvement web page at [seacoastmission.org/housingimprovement](http://seacoastmission.org/housingimprovement). For assistance in applying, call 546-4466 or visit the Mission's Cherryfield office.



*The Maine Seacoast Mission's Housing Improvement program helps Downeast homeowners keep their homes accessible, warm and dry. MSM photo.*

## Maine Seacoast Mission mission statement

*Rooted in a history of compassionate service and mutual trust, the Mission seeks to strengthen coastal and island communities by educating youth, supporting families, and promoting good health.*

For over a century, the Maine Seacoast Mission has been meeting people where they are, helping to grow stronger communities, resilient children, engaged families and connected older adults. Our programs and services—providing food, fixing up homes, supporting students, distributing scholarships, offering health-care, and sharing laughter and fellowship—are a way of boosting the inherent strengths of these communities. We listen, we respond, and we are here for the long haul.



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# TO YOUR HEALTH: "Stop the Bleed" - An efficient response to deadly bleeding

By Christopher Leopardi, DO, and Ann Backus, MS, Harvard Chan Education and Research Center

Cuts, lacerations, and amputations are occupational risks for commercial lobstermen. Like countless other dangers at sea, the risk can be reduced through knowledge, training, and preparation.

The "Stop the Bleed" campaign is an initiative aimed at enabling individuals without a medical background to act quickly and effectively in bleeding emergencies. Fishermen who understand the principles of bleeding control can save lives and help ensure a proper and quick response to crew members in trouble.

The Stop the Bleed campaign originated within the military, emergency medicine, and trauma surgery communities. Having someone nearby with practical experience proved critical for immediate control of bleeding in life-threatening situations.


When a person loses a large volume of blood rapidly, the body goes into hypovolemic shock. Hypovolemic shock means your heart can't provide your body with the blood (and oxygen) it needs to function. In response, the brain and heart become the top priority for receiving blood.

The first steps in bleeding control are to

- 1) evaluate the trauma;
- 2) add direct pressure to the wound; and
- 3) when direct pressure alone is insufficient, apply a tourniquet to stop the bleeding. Write the time the tourniquet was applied on the tourniquet. At this point, the injured person can be safely transported by first responders to the nearest medical facility.




*An inexpensive tourniquet that can be applied with one hand is an important piece of equipment to have on board.*



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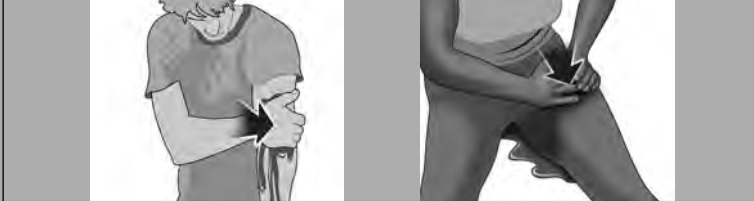


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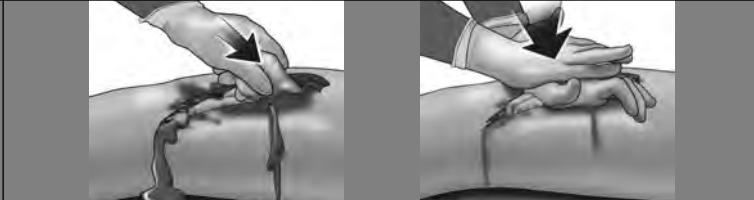
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**TIME**

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causing significant harm. As a result, safety and medical professionals now recommend that responders such as fishermen use tourniquets to stop bleeding. Inexpensive, commercially-available tourniquets designed for quick and effective bleeding control are essential components of every emergency medical kit onboard fishing vessels. They provide a crucial response to severe hemorrhage at sea.

Commercially available tourniquets are easy to apply with one hand, even in high-stress situations. A properly applied tourniquet requires the application of a good amount of pressure, which can be difficult to do the first time. The Stop the Bleed tourniquets feature mechanisms that allow rapid tightening around the affected limb.

If a tourniquet is not available, items such as a line, a belt, clothing, etc. can be effective substitutes. Occasional practice sessions on correctly applying tourniquets can enhance crew preparedness and foster the familiarity and confidence needed when responding to bleeding incidents.

It is possible that a crew member could be taking a daily blood thinner medication. Knowing whether the injured person is taking a blood thinner could be valuable information with respect to controlling bleeding.

Having on board a sealed envelope from each crew member that lists medical status and prescription drugs could facilitate the hand-off to U.S. Coast Guard or other first responders in the event of an emergency. Another option would be a Medic-Alert bracelet. There are now inexpensive, colorful silicon "blood thinner"

bracelets (and others for penicillin allergy, diabetes, prescription drugs, etc.). Fishermen must be self-sufficient at sea and are often their own first responders in emergencies. The time for adding tourniquets to your First Aid Kit is now. You could be the next one to save the life of one of your crew members or be the first with a tourniquet to respond to a nearby vessel.

## Are you ready to Stop the Bleed?

### Key takeaway points:

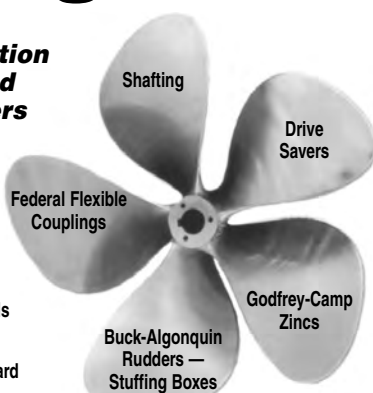
- In a bleeding emergency, controlling the bleeding quickly takes precedence over all other basic first aid measures.
- Apply direct pressure.
- Have a tourniquet in your first aid kit.
- Learn how to apply it correctly. Practice putting one on someone briefly and having one placed on you at least once to familiarize yourself with how they work and what they feel like. Wearing a tourniquet or packing a wound is supposed to be uncomfortable!

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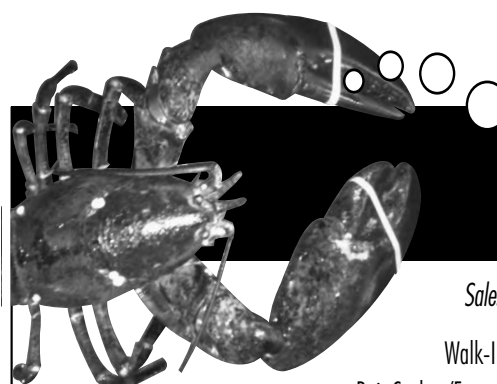
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MLA 70th continued from page 1

Leadership isn't easy. Month after month, members have to work out their differences, strategize how to convince regulators or politicians, and face fishermen at home who see things their own way.

One harbor's perspective is probably not shared coastwide. One area may be getting four pounds per trap. Another, just one pound. Fishing in the tide off Lubec is completely different than fishing the shipping channel off Portland Harbor. Some zones have lots of offshore area; one is right up against the Canadian line. There are bay fishermen and offshore fishermen, and nothing is quite like the narrow guts of the mid-coast. As one board member said, "You may come in full of piss and vinegar, but other lobstermen have other ideas, also for good reasons."

Over the years, the MLA board has hashed out the association's positions. Board members, the president, and staff have trusted each other and spoken with one voice. Dave Cousens, president from 1991-2018, said that during his tenure the board members "brought respect to the table." Board members were friends, despite their differences. As heated as an argument would get, mutual respect meant that you could still have a beer together when the meeting was done.

He added, "You have to have leadership. You can't have consensus in fishery management. You have to have leadership, make decisions — do what's best for the industry with an eye toward the future." He could have added: and not everyone will like it at the time.

### Values

The MLA's values have remained consistent through the years. Ossie Beal, president from 1967-1974, said his goal was to make the Maine fishing industry "the best thing there is on the coast."

"The board has always worked for what's best for the industry," Dave Cousens said. "Not best for individuals, not for an island or an area. We were always about being fair and equitable." The late Arnie Gamage from South Bristol and retired board member Dwight Carver always kept the board focused on keeping lobstering open for successive generations, he added.

Kristan Porter, current MLA President, said, "It's all about towns and communities and the future of the fishery. You can't have that if you throw certain parts of the industry under the bus." He said that could have happened very easily when the Take Reduction Team (TRT) process for the whale rules proposed to shut down eastern Maine fishermen in Zone A during the summer.

Patrice McCarron, MLA's previous executive director since 2001 and current Policy Director, said, "The MLA has a board of fishermen. For me, the board has been the inspiration. When we meet every month, I am reminded just how much our work matters. They believe in it."

### Staff smart s

But, of course, the disagreements aren't just among lobstermen. The MLA has also navigated the complexities of the shoreside world with diplomacy, strategy, straight facts, and science, working with the many groups that have a say in fishery issues.

Since 1979, the association has been willing to pay for staff to do this homework, inform the board, and go to so many meetings. First, Eddie, then Pat, then Patrice and the larger staff she built. Staff — and good attorneys — have become ever more important as the arenas have changed from the state legislature and Congress to working with scientists, federal regulatory agencies and the courts.

Dave said, "Patrice professionalized us to a whole new level." Nowhere is that clearer than in the scientific and legal team assembled to fight the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) in the Washington D.C. District Court.

Kristan summed it up. "If you go to court, you go in to win. If I buy traps, I'll buy the best. It's the same thing for science or legal advice. Patrice is awesome, sorting out what is needed."

### Waypoint s

It's hard to imagine the forces that Eddie Blackmore was bucking when he donned his suit coat and drove his used, older-model Cadillac, a concession to the thousands of miles he drove from his home in Stonington to Augusta and Massachusetts, where he was a member of the New England Fishery Management Council. He was fighting for Maine's common sense rules in the first federal lobster management plan that was developed in the late 1970s and published in 1983 after the 200-mile limit came into force. He was not in friendly territory. Lobstermen on Cape Cod, offshore, and south of the Cape were dead set against any V-notch. NMFS and state lobster scientists were too.



Eddie Blackmore.

But Eddie was dogged. He built relationships over years, and he communicated: "We may not know what the mortality is from V-notching, but we damn sure know what it is when we throw them in the pot."

And he came in the back door to change the science, championing the MLA's own V-notch survey to prove that large, V-notched egggers were out there. His efforts brought V-notching into the mainstream of both science and management where it is now accepted as a key part of how and why the lobster population is healthy.

### Trap limits, dragging and science

On a dripping, sweltering June day in Augusta, Pat White and Dave Cousens weren't out to haul. It was the very last day of the 117th legislative session (1995), and the big lobster bill that would set a trap limit, control entry, and set up the zones was about to be voted on in the House. Pat, Dave, MLA board members, and other lobstermen were working the crowded halls of the Maine legislature, Dave's commanding voice turning heads and making it easy to start conversations with legislators.

The bill passed, fending off a federal approach to limited entry and trap limits. It wasn't everything the MLA wanted. They and many others had worked for months to craft something that could pass to stave off the federal government from controlling management of the lobster fishery, no small feat given that the Casco Bay legislators were hearing "no trap limits" from the large-gang fishermen and the Downeast legislators were hearing that lobstermen didn't want any limits at all, certainly not on entry. The result was creation of the state's seven lobster zones, giving zone councils authority to respond to local priorities and apprenticeship-based entry that would let young people into the fishery.

The next major challenge was to stop dragging and gillnetting for lobsters. Dave and Pat and many members fought for Maine's tough rules in the state legislature every session. But even Pat, representing lobstermen on the New England Council with his superb diplomatic skills, couldn't budge the draggers, gillnetters, other states, or NMFS on the subject. Refusing to give up, the MLA took the issue to the U.S. Senate where Senator Olympia Snowe added an amendment to the reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The Snowe Amendment limited non-trap caught lobsters to 100 lobsters/day and a maximum of 500 lobsters/trip. The MLA wanted a total ban and were definitely not happy with the numbers, but it was nevertheless a major victory to get limits in place. As Dave said, "We could live with it."

Science was the next leadership challenge. Lobstermen didn't trust scientists or their results and membership was divided. "We decided to work with science, not against it," Dave explained. Scientist Bob Steneck at the University of Maine was studying lobster and wanted to learn from fishermen. "I invited Bob Steneck and his grad students to many board meetings, and said we need to work with them."

The successful cooperation with scientists led to broadened respect for lobstermen and clout for the fishery in many arenas. Even more important, it reshaped the science that is used to assess and manage the lobster stock, transforming DMR's lobster science programs and opening the world of science to participation by lobstermen.

### Whale s, whale s

By 2001, Patrice McCarron was the MLA's executive director. She hit the ground running tackling the right whale issue, which has been center stage ever since: Take Reduction Team meetings, New England Fishery Management Council meetings, dealing with unusual right whale mortality events, risk reduction, computer models, Biological Opinions, trawling up requirements.



Patrice McCarron.

At the same time, there were many other important issues to address. She has kept MLA deeply involved in protecting working waterfront, restricting pesticide spraying, starting an International Lobstermen's Exchange and a leadership program for Maine lobstermen, organizing a two-year business diversification program for lobstermen, helping fishermen sign up for health insurance, increasing funding for the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative, and working on both bait supply and bait safety, to name just a few.

Continued on next page

It all came to a head, though, in 2019 when NMFS was developing its “decision support tool” to assess the risk posed by lobster gear to right whales. “When I got home from the TRT meeting, I knew the model didn’t make sense,” Patrice recalled. “I locked myself in a closet for three months. All I could do was go back through the data. I knew the government was wrong. I went through every report, every whale, every mortality.” Based on conclusions drawn from her careful review of existing data on whale injuries and mortalities, the industry finally knew which gear or fishery was involved. The MLA could definitively say there had never been a right whale death in Maine lobster gear and there was no documented entanglement in nearly 20 years. Armed with data, the MLA board withdrew its support for NMFS’s risk reduction goal.

When the Biological Opinion dropped in 2021 stating that the lobster industry must reduce risk by 98% to stay in business, the MLA was ready. For three years the MLA threw everything it had at preventing the shutdown of the lobster fishery. The association quickly assembled a team of lawyers and scientists to challenge NMFS’s Biological Opinion and whale rules. By September of that year, the MLA boldly sued the federal government, carefully crafting its arguments to take its case all the way through the appeals process and beyond, if necessary. When the MLA lost its case in September 2022, it immediately filed an appeal and recruited the nation’s most talented appeal attorney, Paul Clement.

As a result of a lawsuit filed by environmental groups, the industry would also face a debilitating 90% risk reduction in 2024. The MLA swiftly turned its attention to Congress while the legal case made its way through the courts, playing a critical role in securing a six-year pause in federal whale regulations. In June 2023, the MLA won a historic legal victory, changing the interpretation of the

*Whale continued from page 3*

The MLA cannot ignore the clear photographic evidence of the purple wire ties, indicating Maine gear marking, in the rope removed from the whale, explained Porter. “The MLA will conduct its own thorough, independent review of all evidence in this case and will bring a team of lobstermen to analyze the gear,” he said. The MLA believes that lobstermen’s knowledge of the gear can shed some light on how this whale became entangled to make sure it does not happen again. DMR’s investigation of the death is also ongoing.

“While the loss of any right whale is a tragedy, there is still reason for optimism,” said McCarron. The most recent right whale population estimate shows that the population’s sharp decline has leveled off due to an increase in right whale survival. The good news is that entanglement deaths are down significantly. NMFS data show only two right whale deaths in 2020 from a vessel strike and an unviable newborn, two deaths in 2021 from a vessel strike and an entanglement in Canadian snow crab gear, zero deaths in 2022, and two deaths in 2023 from a vessel strike and an unviable newborn.

According to NMFS, 19 right whale calves were born in 2024 so far and right whale births have exceeded deaths since 2020.

Many ask what comes next for Maine’s lobster fishery. Commissioner Kelihier reminded lobstermen in his letter that this “doesn’t change the fact that Congress

Endangered Species Act. No longer would the government be able to use worst case scenarios in regulating the lobster fishery, saving the fishery from devastating regulations.

**The next 70 years**

During the next decades, the need for the MLA’s leadership remains urgent. Right whale protection efforts aren’t going away. How will lobstering evolve and still stay the diverse, community-based fishery MLA has fought for? It will take vision, willingness and steadfast leadership to look at problems square in the eye.

The lobster population is far larger than it was 70 years ago, but the Gulf of Maine is less stable ecologically. Unpredictable changes lie ahead as its waters warm and new species benefit, whether they be sea squirts or blue crabs. The lobster industry, and its harvesting practices, must adapt to these changes to ensure that the both the industry and the lobster population weather this.

The fishermen who rise to be the future MLA leadership have the footsteps of the strong leaders who came before them to follow, to continue to stand up for the long-term health of the resource and all Maine lobstermen, so that their sons and daughters, nieces and nephews, will have the opportunity to wake early, steam out in their own boat, see the sunrise, and put the check in the cupboard, even if it be a virtual check.

*Robin Alden is retired Founding Director of Maine Center for Coastal Fisheries. She founded Commercial Fisheries News and co-founded the Maine Fishermen’s Forum. She was Commissioner of Marine Resources in the mid-1990s.*

has stated in law that this fishery is in compliance with the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act until December 31, 2028.”

“The MLA will demand accountability if we find any discrepancies with the current findings,” emphasized Porter.

On February 16, NMFS announced the death of another juvenile female right whale off the coast of Georgia. The preliminary necropsy determined the injuries to be consistent with a vessel strike based on evidence of blunt force trauma including fractures of the skull.

**Here’s what we know about the gear removed from the whale**

Approximately 70 to 80 feet of rope and two purple zip ties were recovered. Only one purple zip tie was 12” long.

Approximately 38 feet of 3/8” white line with a blue tracer which was either cut or parted off. This is the rope that was most deeply embedded in the whale’s tail.

Approximately 20 feet of 1/2” blue line, which was frayed at the bottom, connected to a knot transitioning into the 3/8” white line. There was a single purple zip tie on the blue 1/2” line where it transitioned to the 3/8” line.

Approximately four feet of line spliced into a loop which had a 12” long purple zip tie.

Photos of the entanglement also show some gear that was not recovered including two go deep buoys, and some orange rope that was part of the trailing line in the original sighting of the entanglement.



*All of the rope removed from North Atlantic right whale #5120 that was examined laid out in a parking lot. Credit: NOAA Fisheries*

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**AIS CAN HELP SHIPS SPOT RIGHT WHALES**

In late January, the first real-time text message via Automated Identification System (AIS) was sent to a ship exceeding the speed limit within a Right Whale Seasonal Management Area. The messaging feature, a collaboration between Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary, NOAA Fisheries, Maritime Information Systems Inc, and the U.S. Coast Guard, was created to enhance compliance with applicable speed rules. The short text message (“MAX SPEED 10 KNOTS PER 50CFR224.105-31”) was displayed on the screen of the AIS receiver and the electronic charting system display of the vessel. The messaging feature also captured an acknowledgement message from the vessel, certifying that the message was successfully received. It is anticipated that the messaging feature will also be able to transmit near-real time North Atlantic right whale sighting data to vessels with AIS capability. This project was conceived through an ad hoc group of stakeholders in Maine to identify and advocate for technology to minimize right whale interactions with vessels and fishing gear.

**SEARS ISLAND TO BE SITE OF OFFSHORE WIND STAGING PORT**

Governor Janet Mills announced in February that her administration selected Sears Island in Searsport as the preferred site for development of an offshore wind port. Selection of the site follows a public stakeholder process led by the Department of Transportation and the Maine Port Authority which considered several potential options in Searsport, Eastport and Portland. The state concluded that the Sears Island parcel is the most feasible port development site. It’s expected to be 100 acres of development in total. Sears Island is better suited physically for supporting floating offshore wind projects. Sears Island offers a large, unencumbered flat space with deep water access which would not have to be dredged, and officials said it offers the most direct approach in and out of the navigation channel. The port proposal is subject to extensive and independent state and federal permitting, including environmental impact assessments; permitting is expected to take about a year.

**DOWN EAST LOBSTER CO-OPS WORKING TO RECOVER FROM DEVASTATING STORMS**

Maine’s Downeast lobster co-ops including the Corea Co-op in Gouldsboro, Chipman’s Wharf in Milbridge, Beal’s Lobster Pier in Southwest Harbor, the Stonington Lobster Co-op and Greenhead Lobster in Stonington, and the New Harbor Co-op in Bristol are among those needing to rebuild after suffering hundreds of millions of dollars in damage after January’s two powerful storms. The lobster buying businesses are assessing the damage prioritizing the critical repairs that must be made before lobster fishing comes on strong this summer. These working waterfront businesses are awaiting help to rebuild, anticipating a disaster declaration from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). They are also hoping that more than \$50 million in state funds will be approved in addition to grants to help the rebuild.

**LOBSTERFEST AT RED LOBSTER**

Lobsterfest is back at Red Lobster. It’s first-ever nationwide Endless Lobster Experience is officially underway providing an opportunity for 150 guests across the U.S. to enjoy all-you-can-eat lobster. The promotion follows last year’s one-day-only Endless Lobster Event in New York City. Guests at the Times Square restaurant got to sink their claws into as many 1 ¼ pound Live Maine lobsters as they could handle. This year, each winning guest will be treated to a complimentary two hours at the Red Lobster of their choice, to enjoy non-shareable endless lobster, with two sides, and warm Cheddar Bay Biscuits. Guests can choose from live Maine lobster, Maine lobster tails, or Caribbean Rock lobster tails.

**NEW WHALE DIRECTOR AT CENTER FOR COASTAL STUDIES**

Center for Coastal Studies has hired Dr. Daniel Palacios as the new Director of the Center’s Right Whale Ecology Program. Dr. Palacios, who will begin in May, succeeds Dr. Charles “Stormy” Mayo, co-founder of the Center for Coastal Studies and long-time director of right whale research. Dr. Mayo is retiring after more than 45 years at the Center. Dr. Palacios currently serves as the Endowed Associate Professor in Whale Habitats, Department of Fisheries, Wildlife, and Conservation Sciences at Oregon State University, where, in 2020, he established the Whale Habitat, Ecology & Telemetry (WHET) Lab. His research focuses on the environmental factors that affect whale ecosystems.

**NO FISHING IN MARINE NATIONAL MONUMENT**

A complete ban on all fishing, including red crab and lobster within the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument’s nearly 5,000-square-mile area will take effect on March 18, 2024.

In 2016 President Barack Obama created the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument, two submerged areas of canyons and undersea mountains off New England. Fishing for red crab and lobster were permitted to continue in the Monument area for seven years, until September 2023.

Fishing organizations went to court after its creation, claiming President Obama did not have the authority to establish the the Monument. The suit was denied. Their subsequent appeal of the decision was denied. Over a year later, the U.S. Supreme Court also opted against taking up the case. In 2022, the Pacific Legal Foundation brought suit, arguing again that the creation of the monument is an abuse of the Antiquities Act.



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# Events Calendar

More details on all of these events can be found online at [www.mainelobstermen.org](http://www.mainelobstermen.org)

**March 1**

MLA 70th Annual Meeting, Samoset Resort, Rockport.

NEFMC Herring Amendment 10 Scoping Meeting, 1-2:30 p.m., Samoset Resort, Rockport.

**March 5-7**

North Atlantic Right Whale Vessel Strike Risk Reduction Technology Workshop, Arlington, VA.

**March 6**

Department of Marine Resources Aquaculture Listening Session, 4-6 p.m., Portland High School, Portland.

**March 7**

Department of Marine Resources Aquaculture Listening Session, 4-6 p.m., Belfast Area High School Gym, Belfast.

**March 10-12**

Seafood Expo North America, Boston Convention and Exhibition Center, Boston.

**March 13**

Department of Marine Resources Aquaculture Listening Session, 4-6 p.m., Lincoln Academy Cafeteria, Newcastle.

DMR New Meadows Lakes Stakeholder Meeting on DMR's quahog surveys and Manomet's blue crab research, 1-3 p.m., Curtis Memorial Library, Brunswick.

**March 14**

ASMFC American Lobster Management Board meeting on draft Addendum XXX, 2-2:30 p.m. FYI: <https://asmfc.org/calendar/3/2024/American-Lobster-Management-Board-/2284>.

Department of Marine Resources Aquaculture Listening Session, 4-6 p.m., UMaine Machias Science Building Room 102, Machias.

**March 21**

Department of Marine Resources Aquaculture Listening Session, 4-6 p.m., Moore Community Center Theater, Ellsworth.

**March 21-24**

Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association Annual Weekend, Hyannis, MA.

**April 3**

Maine Lobstermen's Association Board of Directors, 5 p.m., Darby's Restaurant, Belfast.

**April 9**

Aquaculture Advisory Council Meeting, 11a.m.-1p.m., DMR Office Building, Augusta

**April 16-18**

New England Fishery Management Council meeting, Mystic, CT.

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## STATE INVESTS IN PROTECTING WORKING WATERFRONT

The Land for Maine's Future Program and DMR are accepting letters of intent to apply for Working Waterfront Access Protection Program (WWAPP) projects through March 4. Eligible applicants for WWAPP proposals include private landowners, non-profit land conservation organizations, counties, cities, towns, and state agencies. \$2.1 million is available for working waterfront projects in this round.

The Maine Working Waterfront Access Protection Program provides funds to protect and secure commercial fishing access in Maine. WWAPP requires future development of funded property retain its use for commercial fishing and closely related activities. The program has protected 30 working waterfronts so far.

Maine Coastal Planning grant applications are being accepted for coastal planning projects. Approximately \$300,000 in funding is available. Funding comes from NOAA funding to the Maine Coastal Program.

In response to the significant impacts of recent storms experienced by Maine's coastal communities, the FY 2025 Coastal Community Grant Program and Shore and Harbor Planning Grant Program are being combined and the matching fund requirement has been eliminated. The application process requires a Letter of Intent. Only those invited to apply may submit a full application.

Letters of Intent are due by 5 p.m. on Friday, March 29, emailed to Ashley.Gamache@maine.gov. Additional information is available on the Maine Coastal Program website.



Working waterfronts, like this one on Vinalhaven, took a hit during the January storms. MLA photo.

**The MLA's 2024 T-shirt is here!**

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## **SHOW YOUR LOBSTER LOVE AND HELP THE WORKING WATERFRONT SUPPORT FUND.**

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