



LANDINGS

News & Views from Maine's Lobstering Community

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MAINE COAST, BUSINESSES HEAVILY DAMAGED IN JANUARY STORMS

By MLA staff

Two powerful storms devastated the coast of Maine in January. The first, on January 10, blew from the southeast, bringing rain, melting snow and storm surges close to high tide. The second, on January 13, produced fierce winds and storm surge coinciding with the astronomical high tide, enveloping wharfs, docks, commercial and residential buildings from Kittery to Eastport.

The magnitude of damage is hard to fathom. Whether it was massive amounts of sand and stone moved from a southern Maine beach into adjacent roads and homes or stacks of traps and gear lifted and mangled by the unprecedented high tide, scarcely a property along the Maine coast escaped untouched.

At Bunker's Harbor, a small building at the end of a wharf used as an office



Greenhead Lobster in Stonington flooded badly in each storm in January. Photo by Allison Nelson.

space was swept away by the ocean and landed ashore a quarter mile away. In Stonington the second storm created a storm surge four feet higher than the predicted tide, flooding the town's fish pier, pulling wharves from pilings, and flooding nearby homes and businesses. Docks and buildings on Bailey Island in Harpswell suffered heavy damage. Wharves in many harbors remain standing but beneath are structurally unsound. The cost to repair the buildings, equipment, and homes and businesses damaged by the two consecutive storms will be in the millions.

Coastal towns and counties spent the weeks after the storms assessing the destruction and providing estimated financial damages to the Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA). MEMA collates the figures for each storm and sends the

Continued on page 19



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ANOTHER MAJOR LEGAL VICTORY FOR MAINE LOBSTERMEN



Photo by B. Wish.

By MLA Staff

On January 29, Judge James Boasberg of the D.C. District Court dismissed all claims in a long-running lawsuit filed by environmental groups (ENGOS) that would have resulted in closures of the Maine lobster industry. He also vacated multiple interim rulings in the lawsuit the ENGOS had sought to preserve for future legal fights.

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

The back-to-back storms that struck the Maine coast in January caused immense damage to Maine's coastal communities. The storms swept away or undermined wharfs, docks, buildings, and gear from Kittery to Eastport, delivering a severe economic shock to the state. Residents and businesses had until January 31 to detail the extent of damage to the Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA). As of the time of publication, it remains unclear what actions the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will be taking.

The impact of the January storms and the vast work of rebuilding what has been lost will undoubtedly still be on the top of many people's minds when the 49th Maine Fishermen's Forum convenes in early March. The three-day event brings together fishermen, academics, non-governmental organizations, state and federal officials and the general public to learn about the pressing issues in the world of New England fisheries. Along with seminars on everything from lobster science to fishing safety, attendees can visit the popular Forum Trade Show with more than 120 vendors. The Maine Lobstermen's Association will hold its 70th annual meeting at the Forum, on March 1 at 9 a.m.

Fishermen are notoriously reluctant to share information they have accumulated over the years about their fishing grounds with federal fisheries agencies. Yet that knowledge could be valuable in crafting new whale rules and managing lobster stocks. The Responsible Offshore Development Association (RODA), a nonprofit fisheries organization, understands that reluctance. It has created a Fisheries Knowledge Trust, governed by fishermen, to compile data that is owned and managed by fishermen. The goal of the Trust is to ensure that fishermen have confidence that their data will remain secure while ensuring data users that the information is accurate.

Despite its extensive coastline, Maine has a limited amount of working waterfront along the shore. The threats to the working waterfront properties still in existence have grown steadily year by year as more people moved to Maine during the Covid years and property taxes continue to increase. So it was good news to learn that the Jonesport Shipyard in Downeast Maine had been purchased by Jon Johansen, publisher of Maine Coast News and president of the Maine Lobster Boat Races Association. Johansen was

concerned by the conversion of other formerly commercial properties into private residences, complete with gates. He knew that once a business like the Jonesport Shipyard vanished, it wasn't likely to come back. "I bought it to protect it. For some people a million dollars is nothing. They could buy it and it all goes away," he said.

In *Landings's* continuing series "To Your Health" we explore the ramifications of alcohol consumption. In addition to providing the "buzz" of inebriation, alcohol consumption affects the human body in many negative ways. A healthy relationship with alcohol looks very different than an unhealthy one. As the authors noted, "alcohol causes cancer, organ failure, accidents, and damaged relationships." Researchers currently say that no amount of alcohol is good for a person, but that if you do drink, limit yourself

to two drinks per day for a man and one drink per day for a woman.

Landings welcomes two new members of the Department of Marine Resources Marine Patrol Bureau. Callahan Crosby will serve in the Rockland and Vinalhaven/North Haven patrol. He received a B.S. in Marine Affairs from the University of New England in 2023. August Campbell will serve as a Boat Specialist assigned to the Patrol Vessel Dirigo II in southern Maine. He attended Maine Maritime Academy and holds a Coast Guard 100-ton



The Port Clyde Fishermen's Co-op in 1959. Maine harbors such as Port Clyde suffered extensive damage from the January storms. Rebuilding will be a monumental task. Photo courtesy of Penobscot Marine Museum.

Master License. Both men will begin work immediately while they complete a 45-day field training program.

Finally, Judge James Boasberg of the D.C. District Court on January 29, dismissed all claims in a long-running lawsuit filed by environmental groups (ENGOS) that would have resulted in closures of the Maine lobster fishery. He also vacated multiple interim rulings in the lawsuit the ENGOS had sought to preserve for future legal fights. This is another major legal victory for Maine lobstermen and one that would not have been possible without the continued efforts of the Maine Lobstermen's Association.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *Landings* and look forward to your comment.

Amber-Jean

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FISHERMEN'S DATA, FISHERMEN-OWNED

By Melissa Waterman

Fishermen pride themselves on what they know. The ocean is their workplace, and they have unique and valuable knowledge of specific ocean areas. This knowledge is their trade secret and is what makes them successful as fishermen.

The lobster fishery is one of the last commercial fisheries to fall under a government mandate to comprehensively report all fishing activity. It is the last federal fishery in New England required to operate with a vessel tracker.

Maine lobstermen transitioned from 10% to 100% harvester reporting in January 2023 to comply with Addendum 26 to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) Lobster Management Plan. Data must be reported electronically, and many lobstermen were frustrated by the need to learn smart phone apps or use computers for the first time. But tensions boiled over in December 2023 when all federal lobster boats were required to operate electronic trackers to comply with Addendum 29 to the ASMFC Lobster Management Plan. In January, five lobstermen sued over the issue in the U.S. District Court for the District of Maine.

Many lobstermen simply do not trust the government and worry how the harvester reporting and vessel tracking data will be used. Will data be used to sustainably manage the lobster resource and reduce interactions with right whales or will it be misused for purposes for which it was not intended?

What fisherman wants to hand over a lifetime of fishing knowledge to the government? None. But contributing data to a data platform controlled by fishermen — that’s another story.

Enter Fisheries Knowledge Trust (the Trust), a data platform created by the Responsible Offshore Development Association (RODA), a fishing industry group comprised of fishery associations and businesses founded in 2018. “The Fisheries Knowledge Trust is the first industry-owned platform where fishermen can aggregate, secure and share the knowledge they collect about our oceans,” RODA’s website states. A critical feature of the Trust is its governance structure, which ensures any fishing industry participant who has sent data into the Trust maintains ownership and control of that data.

In stark contrast to government data collection programs, fishermen own the data in the Trust and can decide how their data will be used. The Trust’s objective is to enable researchers to access information collected by the fishing industry based on terms decided by the fishermen themselves.

“Fishermen hold extensive knowledge about marine ecosystems as well as valuable confidential business information. Separating these to inform the government raises multiple challenges,” said Fiona Hogan, research director at RODA. By ensuring that fishermen’s data remain secure the Trust makes sure that these data are used accurately to address complex resource management questions

The Fisheries Knowledge Trust was launched in 2020 to conduct pilot projects using data from the offshore herring, mackerel, surf clam and ocean quahog fisheries. The projects showed clearly that fishermen are willing to share their data when they trust the people involved. “The key point is that throughout the process the participating fishermen never lost control of their data,” Hogan said.

The Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA) approached the Trust in 2020 to consider a pilot project to test whether data collected by electronic navigation systems during lobstermen’s normal fishing operations could be aggregated to map lobster fishing effort. With funding from Sea Grant, the Lobster Proprietary Data Project (LPD) was launched in 2022 as a collaboration between the MLA, RODA, and the University of Maine Lobster Institute, under the governance structures of the Trust.

When ASMFC piloted its tracker program for the federal lobster fleet in 2018, lobstermen questioned why they needed a new system when they were already collecting those data through their navigation systems, explained Patrice McCarron, MLA’s policy director. “These data are proprietary and extremely valuable to fishermen. They worried that government trackers collect so much data and that it could be easily misused or misinterpreted. They wanted control of the data,” she said. “The Trust gave us a path forward to see if it would be possible to aggregate data from individual lobster boats.”

Boothbay Harbor lobsterman Eben Wilson is a participant in the project. He recognized how valuable his navigational data would be in management discussions. “The data can go to lobster science and it can show how fishing has changed. I’ve had mine for over ten years so it’s a way to reach back in time,” he said. These data can show which fishing areas are most important, both now and in the past. “When you lay it out you can see how so much of the Gulf is used,” he said. “I think guys are starting to realize that this stuff can help. But it has to be fishermen owned, no one else.”

This Lobster Proprietary Data project is assessing whether data from Olex and TimeZero navigation systems can be retrieved from lobster boats and aggregated into a database. From there, lobstermen will collaborate with the project research team to develop data products such as maps.

Once lobstermen’s data are incorporated into the Trust, with lobstermen’s permission it can be analyzed as part of stock assessments, fishery management decisions, and to assess impacts of proposed ocean development such as offshore wind.

“If we are going to save our lobstering heritage, we need data to inform management decisions that impact the traditional use of the ocean for lobster fishing,” noted McCarron. “And if we want lobstermen to provide data, they have to trust that the data will not be used against them. That is exactly what we are doing.”

Lobstermen who would like to learn more about the project or contribute data to the Trust should contact Patrice McCarron at patrice@mainelobstermen.org or call 207-967-4555.

Five Maine Lobstermen Sue Over Trackers

On January 2, 2024, five Maine lobstermen filed a complaint in the U.S. District Court for the District of Maine requesting a stay of implementation of Maine’s vessel tracker regulation. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) approved Addendum 29 to the Lobster Fishery Management Plan in March 2022, requiring electronic trackers to be installed and operating on federally permitted lobster vessels by December 15, 2023.

The lawsuit cited several concerns with the tracker requirement, most notably that vessels will be tracked even when they are not lobstering and a lack of transparency on how data will be disseminated.

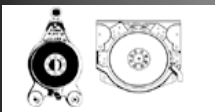
Plaintiffs ask the Court to declare that:

- The tracker requirement violates the Fourth Amendment (protection against illegal search and seizure) and Fourteenth Amendment (equal protection under the law) to the United States Constitution;
- The tracker requirement is void for vagueness and violates due process under Articles V (procedures to amend the Constitution) and XIV (due process and equal protection of the laws) of the United States Constitution and Article I, and § 6-A of the Maine Constitution (due process and equal protection of the laws);
- The tracker requirement is arbitrary and capricious and contrary to law under the Maine Administrative Procedures Act (abuse of discretion) and therefore it should not be enforced.

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ALWAYS SOMETHING NEW AT THE MAINE FISHERMEN'S FORUM

By Melissa Waterman

The 49th annual Maine Fishermen's Forum takes place from February 29 to March 2 at the Samoset Resort in Rockport. The three-day event brings together people from the worlds of fishing, academia, government and the environmental community as well as health professionals, students, family members and others involved in New England's ever-changing fisheries. The Maine Lobstermen's Association will hold its 70th annual meeting on March 1 at 9 a.m.



MLA Board member Craig Stewart and wife Mary at the Seafood Reception. MFF photo.

The Forum kicks off on Thursday, February 29, with a day-long session on shellfish management and science and another on offshore wind in the Gulf of Maine. The offshore wind session will include updates on the state-initiated Maine research array, proposed for an area off southern Maine, and on lease areas identified in federal waters. Presenters will also speak about the permitting process for offshore wind development in the Gulf and designs for proposed floating wind turbines.

In addition to the MLA Annual Meeting, Friday morning seminars include presentations on Atlantic cod management and planning related to the planned cod stock assessment beginning this year; an interactive session on seafood markets and market development held by SEA Maine; and an update on coming changes to the Northern Gulf of Maine federal scallop fishery.

The Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative will present the organization's annual report for 2023 and outline its marketing plan for 2024.

Friday afternoon includes seminars on safety and health for fishermen and on adaptation to distribution shifts among marine species due to climate change. The New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) will hold a scoping meeting to get comments on Amendment 10 to the Atlantic herring fishery management plan. There also will be the annual question and answer session with federal fisheries managers, including top officials from NOAA, the National Fisheries Management Service (NMFS), NEFMC, and the Northeast Fisheries Science Center.



Sen. Susan Collins at Friday night's Scholarship Auction. MFF photo.

Saturday morning starts off with seminars on decarbonizing the fishing sector, research and management priorities for the scallop fishery, and implications of black sea bass and other warm-water species in the Gulf of Maine.

Department of Marine Resources (DMR) staff will present the department's annual lobster science update Saturday morning. The presentations will review

2023 data drawn from DMR's many surveys which track Maine lobster through all life stages. Maine's commercial marine landings for 2023 will also be released at this time.

A Saturday afternoon seminar addresses Maine's working waterfront and coastal access issues. The devastating coastal storms in January brought renewed attention to the importance of working waterfront for Maine's fishermen and aquaculturists and its precariousness in the face of non-fishing pressures. The Maine Commercial Fishing Safety Council (CFSC) will host a seminar focused on safety at sea. Presenters will review data on at-sea disasters and demonstrate the benefits of having a Damage Control Kit aboard every vessel. Two kits will be raffled during the Forum.

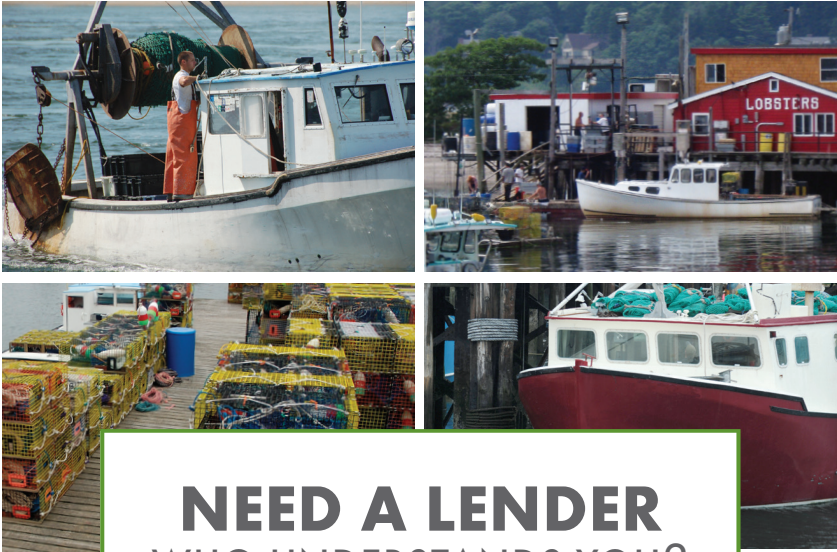
In addition to the Maine Lobstermen's Association, several other fisheries organizations will hold their annual meetings during the Forum. These include the Maine Elver Fishermen's Association, the New England Fishermen's Stewardship Association, Alewife Harvesters of Maine, and the Maine Lobster Boat Races Association.

Forum attendees can take a break from the seminars at the popular Marine Trade Show. The Trade Show brings equipment companies, fisheries organizations, marine insurers, banks and other businesses connected to New England fisheries into one space, allowing the public to look, learn, and chat with staff. More than 120 vendors will be at the Trade Show this year.

Throughout the Forum, students from the University of Southern Maine School of Nursing will be conducting screenings for fishermen and their families. These yearly services include free blood pressure, cholesterol, glucose and general health screenings. A dermatologist will also be available to provide free skin cancer screenings.



The Forum Trade Show draws vendors from throughout New England. MFF photo.



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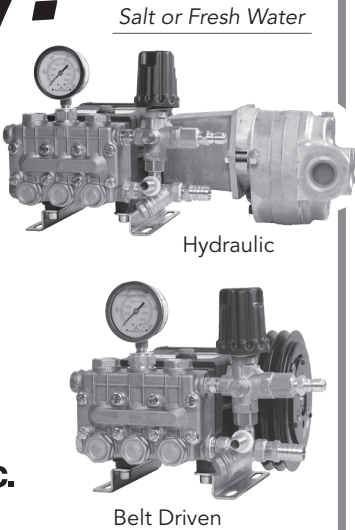
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MAINE LOBSTERMEN'S ASSOCIATION UPDATE

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STEAMING AHEAD BY PATRICE MCCARRON, MLA POLICY DIRECTOR

We are fishing people. We've been through a lot. The Maine lobster fishery has been under siege for years now and its future remains uncertain. But we continue to land on our feet because despite our fierce independence, we are willing to work together when things get tough to save our fishing heritage. Maine is lucky to have a strong network of fishing associations, like the MLA, which come together as one when needed.

Less than a year ago, the lobster industry was staring death in the face because of the National Marine Fisheries Service's misguided whale regulations, but thanks to the MLA's legal efforts and an Act of Congress, we have lived to see another day. Ocean industrialization disguised as offshore wind projects threatens our livelihood. Maine's fishing industry worked together and it appears that we have largely dodged this bullet, with almost all of Lobster Management Area 1 (LMA 1) dropped from lease consideration.

We are now bracing for a gauge increase compliments of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) to stabilize lobster stocks, but lobstermen remain concerned that there has not been adequate consideration of market impacts from this change. And ASMFC is also requiring federal vessels to carry trackers, leaving lobstermen with unanswered questions about why the government would violate their privacy and track them even when they are not fishing.

It is not just the policy arena that threatens the fishery. The lobster business itself is highly volatile. As small business owners, many lobstermen and lobster dealers have been pushed to the brink over the last few years. Continued instability in the supply chain and lobster markets leaves many working hard yet unsure if there will be a meaningful profit at the end of the year.

And now Mother Nature has taken a major swing at us. The devastating coastal storms in January created unprecedented and widespread damage to Maine's working waterfront. So many individuals, businesses, coops, and towns lost buildings, docks and wharfs which must be rebuilt. The state quickly organized to survey the damage and work with towns, while fishing associations and non-profits worked together to get information out to those who suffered storm losses.

There is no doubt the stress of it all has taken its toll on many. Yet these threats and disasters also have a way of bringing people together. When there is so much on the line, people put their egos aside and work collaboratively to keep fishermen and businesses afloat.

The gravity of the issues facing Maine lobstermen over the past years has brought the state's fishing organizations together. It would be impossible, and a waste of limited resources, for each association to try to do everything on every issue. Instead, each organization must be true to its strengths — at times taking the lead and at times supporting those groups better equipped to tackle a specific issue. Each organization shares a similar goal: we all want vibrant commercial fisheries in Maine, robust working wa-

terfronts, and thriving fishing communities, today and in the future.

The MLA's strength has long been advocating for Maine lobstermen, fighting against over-regulation and keeping the industry informed of what is happening. The pinnacle of this work was MLA's historic win in court last June, which prevented NMFS from misusing its data to over-regulate the lobster industry. The MLA also played a key role in pausing the whale rules for six years.

Organizations such as the Maine Coast Fishermen's Association (MCFA) are addressing other critical concerns such as fishermen's health and wellness, advocating for groundfishermen, and promoting the importance of seafood as a healthy food source. MCFA deserves kudos for its leadership in responding to the devastation caused by the January coastal storms. The MLA has supported its efforts while ensuring that lobstermen are well informed on

what's happening. We will all continue to work together to address what's needed to rebuild our working waterfront.

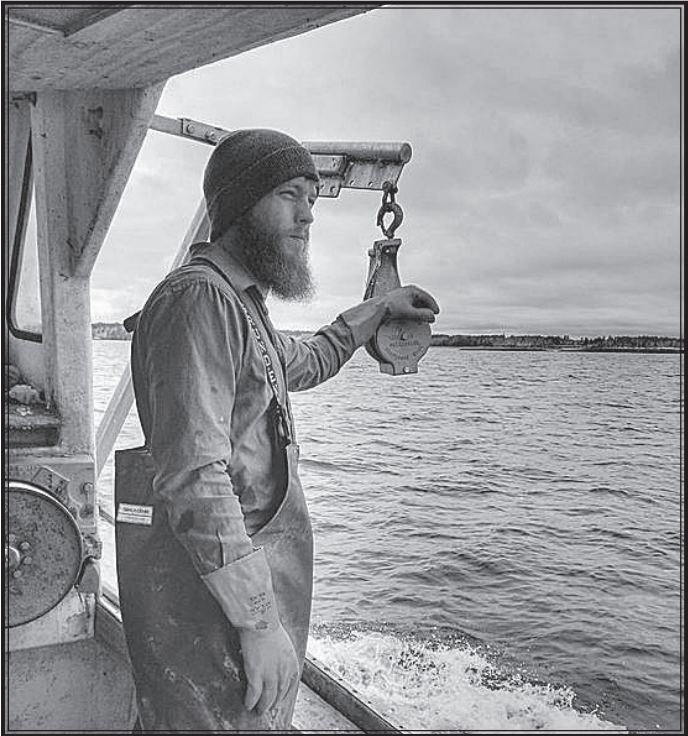
When fishing associations work together, we accomplish great things. The progress we've made on offshore wind is a prime example of that.

Maine's fishing industry groups recognized that we must work together if we were to have any chance of fighting offshore wind. While MLA had a seat on the state's offshore wind advisory committee, in the end keeping offshore wind out of Lobster Management Area 1 was successful because the fishing industry worked together through the subcommittee process. We talked with each other, defined our position clearly, and agreed on what

we wanted. Because of that, we were able to gain the support of Governor Mills and the Maine Congressional delegation. The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) took notice and removed almost all of LMA 1 from lease consideration.

Don't misunderstand me — we don't always see eye-to-eye on all of the issues. The focus of each organization is uniquely its own, as it should be. What's comforting is to realize that we have the ability to work together when it matters most.

The future is unclear, even in the best of times. It's safe to say that Maine's lobster fishery will be hitting rough seas in the next few years. When that happens we will rally once again, pull in the same direction, and fight together once more to preserve Maine's fisheries and heritage. Together we stand, divided we fall.



Maine's fishing organizations each have their own missions but when trouble comes, they find ways to work together. B. Mullin photo.

Patrice



MAINE LOBSTERMEN'S ASSOCIATION UPDATE

MLA 70TH ANNUAL MEETING MARCH 1

Join us for our Annual Meeting to celebrate MLA's platinum anniversary. For 70 years, the MLA has provided a consistent, credible, and informed voice to fight against over-regulation of the lobster industry and preserve Maine's lobstering heritage.

Department of Marine Resources (DMR) Commissioner Keliher will be our keynote speaker to update MLA members on pressing issues, including status of the lobster resource and the scheduled gauge increase. He will also bring us up to speed on the DMR's major expansion of its science branch, including the launch of its right whale research program.

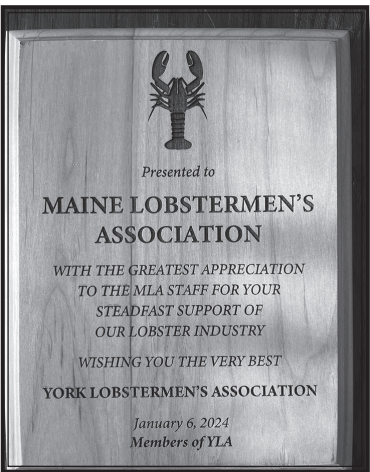
The MLA will conduct its annual board of directors election and share the outcome of its strategic planning meeting to get feedback from the membership on the future direction of the organization.

MLA staff will provide updates on other important policy issues such as right whales and offshore wind development. As always, we welcome your questions, comments, and guidance and will allow plenty of time to for discussion. MLA members, family and the public are encouraged to attend.

MLA STRATEGIC PLANNING

The MLA Board held a strategic planning meeting on January 26 and 27 in Bangor to brainstorm and discuss vision and future goals for the association. The board and staff will work together over the next few months to refine this work and develop a strategic plan to guide the MLA's future work.

YORK LOBSTERMEN'S ASSOCIATION HONORS MLA



MLA's policy director Patrice McCarron joined the York Lobstermen's Association for its annual dinner social in January. President Jeff White presented her with an award for the Maine Lobstermen's Association "with the greatest appreciation to the MLA staff for your steadfast support of our lobster industry." Thank you to all the York Lobstermen's Association members. Your support of the MLA has been critical to our success and we are honored to lead the fight for the future of our fishery.

REBUILDING AFTER THE DEVASTATING STORMS

The MLA and the Maine Lobster Community Alliance (MLCA) are partnering with other industry organizations, including Maine Coast Fishermen's Association (MCFA), to help commercial fishermen, lobstermen, marine industries, and communities as they recover and rebuild from recent historic storms. The organizations are surveying commercial fishing and marine businesses that depend on the working waterfront to identify solutions to help lower the barriers to accessing goods and services needed to rebuild and identify other available resources.

In addition, the MLA and MLCA are assisting the Working Waterfront Support Fund, which was established by MCFA immediately following the storms. The survey results will help the organizations better understand the best ways to use the donated funds.

More information on the survey and the Support Fund can be found online at www.maine lobstermen.org.

MAINE LEGISLATURE

The Second Regular Session of the 131st Legislature began January 3, 2024. The session will adjourn April 17. This session is limited to legislation from the Governor, budgetary matters and bills of an emergency nature that are approved by the Legislative Council.

The Marine Resources Committee received its Annual Report from the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative on January 11. The Collaborative provided a review of its 2023 work and a summary of its 2024 workplan. The Committee will consider two bills to address eligibility criteria for those who didn't qualify for a menhaden license due to medical issues. The Committee will also reconsider *LD 710 An Act to Fund the Lobster Legal Defense* which was carried over from the First Session. The DMR withdrew a proposal to consider expanding license suspension for those who commit violent crimes.

The MLA submitted comments in support of *LD 2030*, put forward by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), to exempt certain activities from permitting requirements to make it easier for Maine towns and people to prepare for and respond to storm events and flooding. The MLA urged the Committee to ensure that the regulatory relief set forth in L.D. 2030 helps all who need it by providing communities maximum flexibility to rebuild Maine's working waterfront quickly and smartly. Legislative updates are available at www.legislature.maine.gov.

RIGHT WHALE UPDATES

Monterey Bay Aquarium Court Case – The Maine Lobstermen's Association and several other plaintiffs sued Monterey Bay Aquarium for defamation over its red listing of Maine lobster in March 2023. The case was filed in U.S. District Court for the District of Maine in Bangor. The case is still active and awaiting direction from the court on a timeline for next phase of this case.

The Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association (MassLA) reported that the three lobstermen who had filed a Class Action Suit against the Monterey Bay Aquarium about the red listing agreed in January to drop the case. Their case was filed in Louisiana district court but was transferred to the district court in northern California in September 2023. A MassLA spokesperson told the Boston Herald that, "The laws in California would ultimately hold these individuals financially responsible for the defendant's legal fees should they prevail."

Environmental organizations case against NMFS – This case was filed in 2018 and amended in 2021. The court ruled the federal whale plan must achieve its target within six months of adoption, resulting in an accelerated schedule to implement measures to achieve a 90% reduction in the lobster industry's alleged risk to right whales. Congress intervened in December 2022 to pause any new federal whale rules for six years. T

he Department of Justice filed a motion to dismiss this case and vacate the court's previous rulings in favor of the environmental organizations. The parties were awaiting the court's decision on the request to dismiss this case. On January 29, the D.C. District Court granted motions to dismiss the lawsuits and vacated most of its previous rulings.

2024 Right Whale Calving Season – As of January 31, 2024, 17 right whale calves have been identified. Unfortunately, the fate of three of these whales is uncertain. Two mothers (1301 and 3780) have since been sighted without their calves. The calf of RW 1612 (Juno) was sighted with serious injuries consistent with a vessel strike. To date the calf has survived and shown some signs of healing.

The right whale calving season runs mid-November through mid-April. Researchers closely monitor the southeastern Atlantic coast for right whale mother/calf pairs. Right whale calving rates have been improving since the historic low of zero in 2018. Seven calves were identified in 2019, 10 in 2020, 20 in 2021, 15 in 2022, and 12 in 2023. More information on the 2024 right whale calving season can be found at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/ endangered-species-conservation/north-atlantic-right-whale-calving-season-2024>.

Vessel Strike Rule – NMFS released a proposed rule to reduce harm to right whales from vessel strikes in July 2022. The public comment period closed in October 2022. NMFS has not released any updates on the status of the proposed rule.

Vessel Strike Workshop – NMFS will hold a right whale vessel strike risk reduction technology workshop from March 5 to 7 in Virginia. NMFS will promote research, development, testing, and operationalization of innovative tools and management practices to offer vessel operators additional options for reducing lethal collisions with whales. The public may attend this meeting online.

ASMFC LOBSTER BOARD TO CLARIFY IMPACTS OF GAUGE CHANGE ON FOREIGN IMPORTS

At its January meeting, the ASMFC Lobster Management Board initiated Draft Addendum 30 to clarify how the gauge changes required under Addendum 27, approved in May 2023, will apply to foreign imports of American lobster.

Under Addendum 27, changes to the current gauge and escape vent sizes in LCMA 1 (inshore Gulf of Maine) were triggered in October 2023 when decline of 39% is observed in recruit abundance for the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank

Continued on page 8



MAINE LOBSTERMEN'S ASSOCIATION UPDATE

MLA Update continued from page 7

stock. A series of gradual changes to gauge and vent size will begin January 1, 2025, starting with an increase to the minimum gauge size in LCMA 1 from 3-¼" to 3-5/16". This 3-5/16" gauge size will be the smallest minimum gauge size in effect.

The Magnuson-Stevens Act prohibits imports of whole live lobster smaller than the minimum possession size in effect at the time under the Commission's American lobster management program. This provision, referred to as the Mitchell Provision, was passed to prevent imports of lobster smaller than what the U.S. industry can harvest.

Draft Addendum 30 aims to clarify that Addendum 27 shall include compliance with the Mitchell Provision, meaning the smallest minimum size for foreign imports would match the smallest minimum size in effect for the US industry.

The Board will meet in late February/early March to consider approving Draft Addendum 30 for public comment. There are currently no regulations in place to restrict the maximum size of imported lobster, though the Board expressed interest in exploring this possibility further through a new Amendment to the lobster plan. For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at cstarks@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

MLA POSITION ON GAUGE INCREASE

The MLA has monitored ASMFC's efforts to develop Addendum 27 since it was first discussed in 2015 to consider standardizing measures across lobster management areas to keep the lobster stock and the industry resilient. The Amendment was put on hold several times, then was amended to consider changes to the lobster gauge as a proactive measure if the stock were in decline.

The MLA opposed ASMFC's proposals to increase the minimum gauge in response to a stock decline when ASMFC solicited public comment in April 2023.

The MLA noted that ASMFC did not include any analysis of the impacts of gauge changes on the lobster market which contradicted the stated purpose of the management action to keep the lobster industry economically viable. The MLA pointed out that ASMFC did not address potential trade issues and

market impacts arising from the Magnuson Act prohibition on the import and sale of lobsters smaller than the U.S. minimum (the Mitchell Bill provision). The MLA wrote, "Given that the lobster stock remains in a favorable abundance regime, ASMFC must first conduct a study of the market impacts of changing the LMA 1 gauge, particularly to understand trade dynamics between the U.S. and Canada. This would allow time to consider expanding the reference period and collect more survey data to survey deeper waters and fill in for the poor Covid years."

MLA'S POSITION ON ASMFC VESSEL TRACKERS ON FEDERAL VESSELS

In 2017 the MLA opposed Addendum 26 to achieve 100% harvester reporting because the Lobster Technical Committee determined "the current 10% harvester reporting to be sufficiently precise to track trends in the lobster fishery" and "is accurate relative to dealer landings." However, ASFMC adopted Addendum 26 in 2018 to implement 100% harvester reporting by 10-minute square and to initiate a pilot program to develop and test electronic trackers aboard lobster vessels.

ASMFC initiated draft Addendum 29 in December 2021 to mandate electronic trackers for federal lobster boats.

The MLA opposed this proposal and urged ASMFC to instead fully implement its new 100% trip level harvester reporting, which would become effective in January 2023, and separately address data deficiencies for federal lobster permit holders not required to report through a state program. ASMFC can then identify any remaining data gaps and consider whether electronic vessel tracking is necessary to address those.

The MLA also identified members' concerns with the proposed tracking program, including lack of understanding about how data will be used, potential for data to be used against the industry, the requirement that the unit must be in operation even when the vessel is not fishing, and likelihood that many lobstermen were unaware of this proposal because ASMFC held online public hearings.

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

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MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Sunshine Mechtenberg, MLA membership director, has been busy meeting MLA members and talking to businesses up and down the coast about the benefits of joining the MLA.

More and more companies are realizing that being part of the state's oldest and dynamic fisheries organization, which works hard to ensure a profitable future for Maine's lobstermen is the right thing to do.

We are happy to welcome the following businesses to the MLA.

Brooklin Boat Yard, Brooklin: Boat design, service, storage and sales

Custom Float Service, South Portland: Float design, build, supply and service

The Lobster Guy, Narragansett, R.I.: quality live Maine lobsters shipped directly to your door

Atlantic Wealth Planning Group, Augusta: ready to help with all your financial planning needs

Edwards Brothers Supermarkets: Local grocery stores in Trenton, Unity, and Dover-Foxcroft.

Yankee Marina & Boatyard, Yarmouth: Family-owned full service marina on the Royal River.

For more information about how your business can become part of the MLA, please contact Sunshine at sunshine@mainelobstermen.org or at 967-4555.



MLA's membership director Sunshine Mechtenberg.



MAINE LOBSTERMEN'S ASSOCIATION UPDATE

MEET THE MLA BOARD MEMBERS

Forty years ago, Jack Merrill of Islesford joined the Board of the Maine Lobstermen's Association. Next month he will step down from the post he has held for four decades.

"I thought it was important to my future. The MLA was the only voice I could see that would stand up for the fishermen and our livelihood," Merrill said, recalling how he became a board member. "We were being told back then that the fishery was close to collapse, but I saw that wasn't the case and other fishermen saw it too."

The late Eddie Blackmore, MLA President, and lobsterman Warren Fernald reached out to Merrill to persuade him to join the MLA Board. Very quickly after that he was elected MLA vice-president, a position he held for many years. "Eddie Blackmore, myself and others realized the only way to combat the government was to find a group of scientists to collaborate with us," said Merrill.

At the time, the New England Fisheries Management Council (NEFMC) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) managed the lobster fishery. Lobstermen and scientists viewed each other with profound distrust. Merrill and the MLA felt that the best way to stand up for lobstermen was to generate data and information about the fishery independent of federal scientists.

"With scientists like Bob Steneck and Bob Bayer we initiated annual V-notch surveys. This gave us a basis to back our claims that plenty of female lobsters were reproducing. Up until this time the feds didn't recognize the V-notch law as a legitimate conservation measure. It took years, but finally the feds extended the V-notch law into New Hampshire and Massachusetts."

The Lobster Institute at the University of Maine was founded in 1987 and organized by the MLA, Maine Lobster Poundkeepers Association and Maine Dealers Association to foster research focused on the sustainability of the lobster fishery in the U.S. and Canada. "The University scientists helped us develop a frozen product, answered questions about lobster health, marketing, the effects of shoreline pesticide use, and many other concerns," Merrill said.

The MLA was also instrumental in getting the state's sea sampling program started as well as the ventless trap and other surveys related to lobster populations. "We worked with the DMR. There were questions that needed to be answered," Merrill said. The MLA Board even battled with NMFS scientists over the formula used to conduct stock assessments in the late 1980s and into the early 2000s. "The feds said that we were overfishing although our catches were steady," Merrill recalled. "We contacted Yong Chen [at the University of Maine]. His new assessment model changed everything. It took a lot of work to get the feds to accept this new formula, but it was important because they could no longer say we were overfishing."

He remembers attending a lot of hearings in Augusta, including the battle the MLA fought back in the 1980's to keep in place the maximum gauge size. "We had to work to educate legislators. It was a very close vote. At one point, I jumped in the elevator going up with one legislator who was critical to the vote. He wanted to get out, but I pushed the down button and kept him in there until he heard what I had to say." The MLA also fought successfully to limit draggers from targeting lobsters and from landing them in Maine.

The MLA advocated for one bill in particular that meant a lot to Merrill: the owner/operator law. "I brought it to Jill Goldthwaite and Dennis Damon [former state senators]. It's important to have a locally owned fleet, no corporate ownership. I thought if we waited too long it might be too late. As it was, the bill went through smoothly. It is something that makes this lobster fishery unique," he said.

Since Merrill began fishing the changes have been tremendous. "I think the fishery has changed more than the MLA has. I started with wooden traps and a wooden boat. Then came wire and fiberglass. Then technology and electronics," he said. "When I was young we had a compass and a flasher that would show you the bottom. I used the islands as markers, that was how you navigated. Today's bigger, faster, computerized boats could not have been imagined back then."

While much has changed in 40 years, one thing remains the same, according to Merrill: government over-regulation. "I don't understand the need for trackers and daily reporting. The fun in lobstering was in the freedom and that freedom has been slowly taken away. We fish where there are lobsters."

Merrill is proud of what the MLA has achieved and his part in it. "We had a tremendous victory last year against NMFS on the right whale regulations. At least common sense will prevail for a few years," he said. "The MLA represents lobstermen everywhere along the coast. It still advocates for the fishery every day. The threats to our way of life won't stop. We need to be heard."

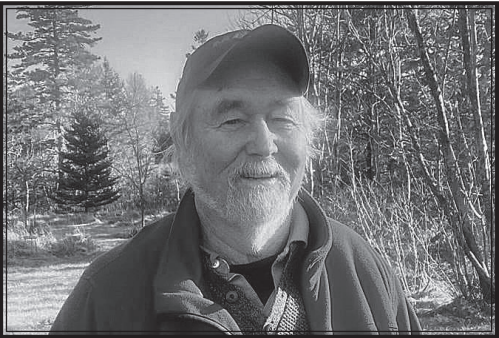


Photo by N. Lincoln, Mt. Desert Islander.

Joshua Beal is thinking about basketball right now. The 33-year-old Milbridge lobsterman is busy chaperoning his 5 and 7-year-old children to winter games, just like so many other Maine residents. Beal, however, is also thinking about the future of the 70-year-old Maine Lobstermen's Association (MLA), where he serves as one of the newer members of the board.

Beal started fishing when he was 12 years old after learning the ropes from his father and grandfather. As a youngster, lobstering was a fairly easy way to make some money. "I remember it was all about getting yourself up in the morning," he laughed. "It was a heck of a lot less stressful then. You had a routine."

He had been an MLA member for years but hadn't really paid much attention to the organization or all the issues it was involved in. "But then I got curious. No one in this area was on the board and so people didn't know much about it," he said. Three years ago he put his name forward and was elected to the MLA board.

Since then he has kept his eyes and ears open as the MLA has navigated through complex legal and political challenges related to federal regulations designed to protect North Atlantic right whales. The MLA's successful court case against the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) in June 2023 was a precedent setting win for the organization and for Maine's beleaguered fishery.

"It's good that the MLA has been involved in all of this for so long. I think everyone has realized after the court case that the MLA's O.K. They are a lot more aware of all that the MLA's done," Beal said.

When he's not helping his children out with basketball, Beal fishes year-round from his 44-foot Calvin Beal boat *Kayla Anne*. In the summer each child goes with Beal on different days, just as he once did with his father.

"I think the best thing about being on the board is I get to see and meet people from up and down the whole coast," Beal said. "The MLA has been good about getting lobstermen together because if we are not together, then we're not going to make it."



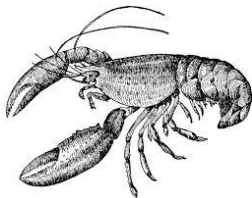
Joshua Beal and his family. C. Clegg photo.

The Maine Lobstermen's Association will hold its **70th annual meeting** on March 1 at 9 a.m at the Samoset Resort in Rockport

Amber-Jean Nickel, MLA Chief Operating Officer, will review highlights of the MLA's past year and outline activities for 2024.

Department of Marine Resources Commissioner Patrick Keliher will speak about the state of the fishery and the impacts from January's storms.

Members are urged to attend!





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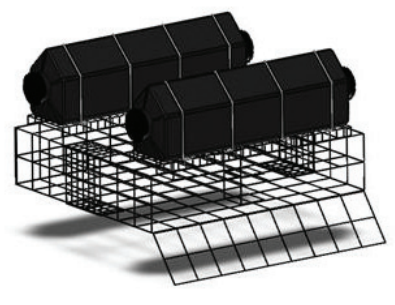
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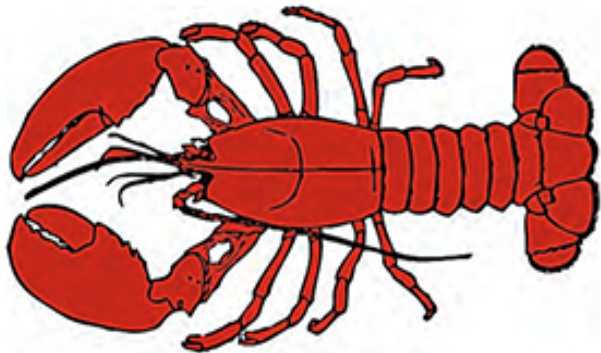


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MAINE LOBSTER

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- 1** Reached 3.5 million people with our Maine Characters campaign, sharing the personal stories of key members of the fishery with consumers nationwide
- 2** Brought together a powerhouse partnership of TikTok influencers to showcase a day on the water with a lobsterman, capturing videos that reached 5 million consumers and earned 87,000 social media engagements
- 3** Inspired home cooks with new, accessible air fryer recipes featuring Maine Lobster that drove over 12 million impressions across Meta and Pinterest social platforms



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We're so grateful. When the MLA made the decision in September 2021 to sue the federal government, our backs were against the wall. We knew that the proposed federal rules intended to protect the endangered North Atlantic right whale were flawed and that they would effectively kill Maine's lobster industry yet fail to save the whale. We also knew that we could not afford to sue the federal government without asking for help. You did not let us down!

Now, we move into 2024 with some impressive victories. On June 16, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit ruled overwhelmingly in favor of the MLA in its appeal of a lower court ruling.

Most recently, a judge dismissed lawsuits filed against the lobster industry and vacated most of its previous rulings. These are tremendous victories for lobstering families and our communities.

These wins would not have been possible without the strong and persistent efforts of the MLA and our legal team, and they certainly would not have been possible without all the generous supporters listed here who believe in our work to preserve our tradition, our heritage, and our way of life. Thank you!

We will face future challenges, but your continued support will keep the MLA fighting to ensure a brighter future for Maine's lobster industry and our next generation of lobstering families.

Again, thank you.

Amber-Jean Nickel
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We cannot do this without you.



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For information on our programs or how you can contribute, please visit us at www.mlcalliance.org or call 207-967-6221

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JONESPORT SHIPYARD REMAINS PART OF MAINE'S WORKING WATERFRONT

By Melissa Waterman



The Jonesport Shipyard is a mainstay for fishermen on the Downeast coast. Now it is under new ownership. Photo from Facebook.

It all started with a casual conversation.

“I was talking with Tim Toppins [Toppins Diesel and Marine Service in Columbia Falls] and he told me that the Osmond Beal’s boatshop [on Beals Island] sold. It wasn’t offered to anyone on the island. A person from Florida bought it, cleaned it up and put up a gate and a lock,” said Jon Johanson, publisher of *Maine Coast News*, president of Maine Lobster Boat Racing Association and the Maine Built Boats organization.

Johanson was concerned. There remain only a small number of properties along the Maine coast dedicated to boatyards, wharves and all the other uses needed for the state’s commercial fishing fleet. Those properties have high value to those who want to live by the sea and have the money to pay for the privilege. But the need for working boatyards and access to the ocean remains critical to fishermen.

“The writing’s on the wall about what’s going to happen,” Johnson said.

So, rather than see another important property in the area change into a non-commercial use, Johanson decided to act. In November 2023 he concluded purchase of the Jonesport Shipyard, known as the Frost Shipyard until it was purchased by Sune and Patricia Noreen in 1985. The property had been for sale for several years.

“It’s the only boatyard between Mount Desert Island and Eastport, other than a small one in Sorrento and the one that closed in Winter Harbor,” Johanson said.

“Sune had worked with Bert Frost years ago. He had Bert’s shop and then they built the big building and small store and office,” Johanson said. The approximately four-acre property fronting on Moosebec Reach includes the two boat-building structures as well as a 20-by-130-foot launch ramp, two deep-water moorings for boats of up to 45 feet and a three-bedroom house. Over the years the Noreen family added services including storage, wood and fiberglass repair,

restoration, haul and launch service, showers and laundry, moorings, supplies, and rental apartments for visiting yacht crews.

Johanson also learned that Wilbur Yachts had been sold. The property had been purchased by a Southwest Harbor neighbor. Johanson promptly bought the entire machine shop, filling three tractor trailers, and one boat mold for a duck boat. “We’ll build one and see what happens,” he laughed.

Services offered at Jonesport Shipyard are already expanding. “Joe Lowell is moving his shop, Downeast Custom Boats, up from Yarmouth. I’ve got a young welder who will be working in the new welding and machine shop. A new guy at H&H will be doing wiring and electrical work. I know lots of people up and down the coast so if there’s a problem, I know who to call.”

Alonzo Alley will run the yard and oversee operations. Johanson’s wife, who retired from Eastern Maine Medical Center last September, is in charge of the business at the moment.

His aim is to build up a clientele of commercial fishermen who want to store their boats or have work done on them during the winter. Johanson knows that the word will get out eventually and hopes that the business builds up slowly and steadily. But underneath it all remains his dedication to ensuring Maine continues to have working waterfronts. “I bought it to protect it. For some people a million dollars is nothing. They could buy it and it all goes away,” he said. “A big chunk of Beals Island could come up in the next ten years. And then what?”



Joe Lowell will be returning to Downeast Maine when he moves his boat shop to the Shipyard from Yarmouth. Facebook photo.

Storm damage continued from page 1

total to Governor Mills. The Governor, in turn, sends a request to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for assistance if the estimated costs are greater than the damage threshold set for the state.

In late January Maine’s Congressional Delegation wrote to FEMA in support of the Governor’s request that the agency consider the two storms as a single disaster for purposes of damage assessment. MEMA sent a letter to FEMA on January 17 stating that the damage thresholds have been met to qualify for FEMA assistance in all eight of Maine’s coastal counties.

Those affected by the two storms can find information at

- Maine Flood Resources and Assistance page: <https://www.maine.gov/governor/mills/flood>
- The MLA’s Disaster Relief Resources page: <https://www.maineobstermen.org/>
- The Island Institute’s page: www.islandinstitute.org/2024/01/11/january-2024-storm-resources-for-assistance-and-damage-reporting.



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TO YOUR HEALTH: *A healthy relationship with alcohol is important*

By Matthew Hamm, MD, MPH, and Ann Backus, MS, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

Many of us grab an alcoholic drink or two after a day at work to celebrate and unwind. Most of us know a friend or family member who gets a little carried away with alcohol from time to time. What's the big deal? To answer this, one must understand what alcohol is and how it affects your health. This knowledge can help you help a loved one who has an unhealthy relationship with alcohol.

For thousands of years, civilizations across the globe have consumed beverages containing ethanol, a simple molecule commonly called alcohol. Like today, ancient alcohols were made from a variety of plants and were used socially, religiously, and medicinally. However, most primitive spirits contained only 1% alcohol by volume. As distillation enabled "harder" drinks — drinks with more alcohol — the social temperance movement grew to oppose alcoholic drinks and the effects of drunkenness. In fact, Maine was among the first states to make alcohol illegal to produce or consume, from 1851 until 1934.

Alcohol affects our body in many ways. When we drink, alcohol is absorbed quickly by the blood vessels in our gut and spread throughout every part of our body. Our cells turn ethanol into acetaldehyde and other toxic chemicals which in turn affect cell function and change how our bodies work. Most of us have experienced how alcohol turns down brain activity overall, helping reduce stress and perhaps ease falling asleep.

The negative consequences of alcohol outlast and overshadow its positive effects. Alcohol causes cancer, organ failure, accidents, and damaged relationships. There is no "safe" amount of alcohol. In the past year more and more medical groups have encouraged everyone to cut back or not even start drinking. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend to not start drinking, and if you do drink, limit yourself to 2 drinks per day for men and 1 drink per day for women.

What does a healthy relationship with alcohol look like? Those with a healthy relationship can turn down a drink at any time. They may enjoy drinking, but they do not strongly crave it. Alcohol does not get in the way of their responsibilities at home and work. Relationships with family and friends are not problematic because of their drinking. They never feel shaky, nauseous, or restless the morning after drinking.

According to "Alcohol's Effects on the Cardiovascular System," by Dr. Mariann Piano, many researchers stated that low to moderate drinking — 1 to 2 drinks per day, for example — reduced some of the factors associated with cardiovascular disease such as high blood pressure (hypertension). However, recent research suggests that this health benefit was due to the healthy lifestyle choices made by the study participants rather than a benefit of their mild drinking. Even low consumption of alcohol increases your risk of cardiovascular disease.

What does an unhealthy relationship with alcohol look like? For those with an unhealthy relationship, drinking interferes with how they want to live. They give up social or work opportunities because of alcohol. They are apt to do

risky or dangerous things while drinking. Whereas a handful of drinks used to work, they now need to drink even more to feel buzzed. Alcohol is preventing them from being who they want to be at work, at home, or in the community. According to Dr. Piano and a more recent study from the Biddinger team, the scientific research tends to agree that more than a drink or two per day causes increased blood pressure, hypertension, and coronary artery (heart) disease.

If you've ever known someone with an unhealthy relationship with alcohol, there's a good chance they were addicted. Alcohol abuse or binge drinking are

common; over half of all Americans struggle at some point in their life. Some people drink while using sedating medication, marijuana, or other drugs. Mixing drink and drugs is especially dangerous. Mixing the two further impairs judgement and slows response time. For a fisherman, this could seriously affect how quickly and effectively he or she responds to a dangerous situation. Additionally, while many who drink alcohol think it warms the body and counteracts cold weather, the opposite is true. Alcohol increases blood flow to the periphery — to arms, legs, face — which results in a more rapid loss of body heat.

These days there are many ways to help people struggling with alcohol. More than ever, new medications, behavioral treatments,

counseling, and community groups are available and succeeding in helping those addicted turn life around and recover from unhealthy relationships with alcohol.



The negative consequences of alcohol outlast and overshadow its positive effects. Alcohol causes cancer, organ failure, accidents, and damaged relationships. There is no "safe" amount of alcohol.

If you know someone who might be struggling from the effects of an unhealthy relationship with alcohol, asking with genuine concern might be just what he or she needs right now. Confronting our demons is difficult, and we all could use a good friend to see us through.

Whether your goal is to be financially secure, to live better, or to strengthen your relationships in 2024, having a healthy relationship with alcohol is a necessary first step. Whether you call someone

to help or simply turn down another drink, the steps you take today will benefit you for a lifetime.

Help Is Available

The National Helpline for substance abuse
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GUEST COLUMN: *Two perspectives on challenges in 2024*

The Working Waterfront, a publication of the Island Institute, asked several leaders involved in the marine sector for their thoughts on challenges facing coastal communities in 2024. We reprint two commentaries here. First published January 23, 2024.

By Jeff Putnam

As we enter 2024, the industry must be proactive in monitoring the health of the resource. The Department of Marine Resources conducts trawl surveys, a ventless trap program, settlement tracking, and sends staff out on harvester boats to count and measure every lobster trapped. There has been a decline across the spectrum in recent years that has triggered a measure increase effective January 1, 2025.

Harvesters statewide have participated in these surveys, listened to the results, and provided feedback from their own perspectives. The feedback that many have provided, and what the most recent surveys are capturing, is that there are positive signs in the juvenile lobster stock.

Harvesters and DMR scientists agree that expanding the surveys into a broader habitat and depth range is important to capture the changes that we have seen, such as increased sub-legal lobsters offshore.

Expanding the ventless trap program requires the collaboration of harvesters willing to tend those traps and regulators willing to change the process from random to targeted locations.

The sea sampling program needs more harvesters that are working the offshore waters to participate for the purpose of capturing accurate resource shifts into deeper water. If more data can be gathered from this program, then DMR can cross-check what we are seeing in our traps with the trawl survey, which has its flaws, and provide more information for the indexes that are used to regulate the harvest.

Jeff Putnam is a member of Zone F Lobster Council and chair of the Lobster Advisory Council.

By Sebastian Belle

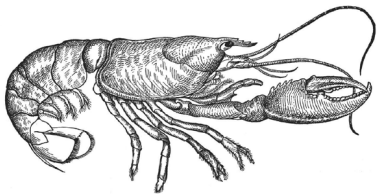
More and more coastal community members have no family or historical connection to making a living from the ocean. The ways many new residents view and value the ocean are often quite different from folks whose livelihood depends on the commercial use of the oceans.

As these demographic shifts occur, Maine's working waterfront communities also find themselves facing a rapidly changing marine ecosystem driven by climate change. Those environmental changes directly affect the resources that are the basis for our working waterfront economy. Traditional working waterfront families and communities are struggling to adapt and find ways to continue their maritime heritage. Navigating a course through these challenges will require new tools and changes in how we use the ocean to provide a viable future for the next generation of working waterfront families.

Aquaculture is one tool that will help coastal communities become more resilient and provide opportunities for the next generation to continue Maine's maritime heritage. Aquaculture permits go through a rigorous public process that ensures they will not damage the environment and create any conflicts with other marine resource users. Put another way, they need "social license" to operate. That's a good thing and the state's aquatic farmers support that requirement. Social license requires that accurate information is available to the public and that resource management agencies base their decisions on good data.

As Maine's coastal communities consider how to preserve their working waterfront traditions, accurate and objective information about aquaculture will be vital. Maine is lucky that we have some of the most qualified aquaculture and marine ecosystems researchers in the world. Their objective engagement will be critical to the sustainable use of aquaculture as a tool to grow local, healthy food and maintain our working waterfront traditions.

Sebastian Belle is the executive director of the Maine Aquaculture Association



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In the
NEWS

HERRING SUIT HEARD AT SUPREME COURT

The Supreme Court’s conservative majority appears likely to curtail the ability of federal agencies to regulate a host of areas, signaling that a 40-year-old decision known as the “Chevron decision” could be in jeopardy. The two challenges before the justices in mid-January arose from a 2020 federal regulation requiring owners of fishing vessels in the Atlantic herring fishery to pay for monitors who collect data and oversee operations while they’re at sea. But herring and the rule that gave way to the disputes were seldom mentioned during oral arguments. Instead the plaintiffs argued that federal agencies should not be given deference to interpret laws that were vague in language.

MAINE EEL COMPANY RECEIVES INVESTMENT

American Unagi Inc., a Waldoboro company that is the only U.S. producer and processor of American eel, received a \$1.5 million investment from RuralWorks Partners LLC, an impact investment firm with offices in Vermont and Minnesota. The investment aims to support the company’s future growth. Operating in partnership with the local Passamaquoddy Tribe, American Unagi said it’s positioned to supply escalating demand for eel among food consumers, notably within a fast-growing market for Japanese cuisine.



Sara Radamaker,
founder and president
of American Unagi.

CANADIANS CONCERNED ABOUT U.S.
MINIMUM SIZE INCREASE

In January 2025 the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) will institute automatic increase in the minimum size of lobster that can be harvested in the U.S. This change has caused some concern among Canadian lobstermen and processors. In January 2025, the minimum legal size will increase

to 3-5/16 inches (84 millimeters), and it will go up to 3-3/8 inches (88 millimeters) in 2027. Legal carapace sizes in the Maritimes vary from as small as 2.95 inches (75 millimeters) to as large as 3.25 inches (82.5 millimeters).

The change will likely mean more small lobsters will have to be processed instead of sold whole, said Charlie McGeoghegan, chair of the Lobster Fishers of P.E.I. Marketing Board. At its January meeting, the ASMFC clarified that it intended Canadian lobsters smaller than the new U.S. minimum for Lobster Management Area 1 cannot be imported to the U.S. ASMFC has drafted an addendum to solicit public comment on this.

2023 U.S. LOBSTER SEASON “SOLID”

Stable supply and a strong Asian market provided the basis for a solid year for the North American lobster industry, according to *SeafoodSource*. North American lobster landings are expected to be down 5% in 2023 once totals are released, but the resource is in excellent shape and continues to be reliable, according to a panel of shellfish experts speaking at the 2024 Global Seafood Market Conference in Florida in January. “We’ve been hovering right around 300 million pounds as a total category for many years after a big run-up in the 1990s and early 2000s,” said Ready Seafood Vice President Andrew Daughan. “It’s a wild-caught species, so you’re going to have some fluctuations in landings, but year after year it has proven to be a consistent fishery.”

MAINE KEEPS STABLE ELVER QUOTA

In January the Department of Marine Resources announced that Maine would retain its 9,688 pounds of elver quota after a decision by the American Eel Board at the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s (ASMFC) winter meeting. The fishery generated more than \$20 million in revenue last year. The Board recognized the strong management measures that DMR has put in place to avoid exceeding the state’s allotted quota and to reduce incidents of illegal harvesting. Draft Addendum VI contains options for how long the quota should remain in place. The ASMFC will provide an opportunity to review and comment on the Draft Addendum later this year.

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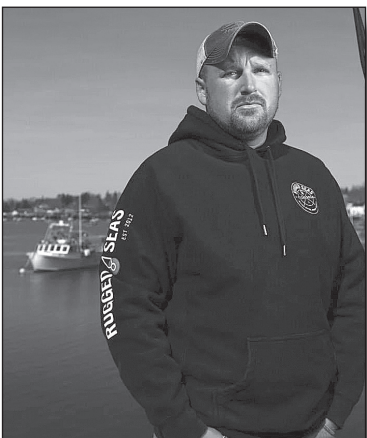
The New England Fishermen’s Stewardship Association is an alliance of the wild harvesters of the waters off of New England, dedicated to educating the public about how best to manage our seafood resources through sound science and best practices of conservation used by fishermen, with a view toward economic 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.maine lobstermen.org

February 5

Lobster Zone F Council Meeting, 4-5 p.m., Yarmouth Town Hall.

Aquaculture Public Scoping Session, Robert Brewer and Marsden Brewer, 5 p.m., Deer Isle Town Office.

February 7

Lobster Zone A Council Meeting, 4 p.m., Washington Academy Library, East Machias.

February 12

Maine Sea Grant American Lobster Initiative Regional Research & Outreach Summit, Portland Regency Hotel, Portland.

Shellfish Advisory Council Meeting, noon-3p.m., DMR offices, Augusta.

February 12-13

Sea Grant American Lobster Initiative Regional Lobster Research and Outreach Summit, Portland.

February 14

Aquaculture Public Hearing - Love Point Oysters, 1 p.m., Harpswell Town Office.

February 15

Public Hearing for Proposed Rule-Making for Atlantic Menhaden, 2024 Season, 5 p.m., DMR office building and via Teams.

February 23

Aquaculture Public Scoping Session - Ferda Farms, 3:30 p.m., Cundy's Harbor community hall, Harpswell.

February 25

2nd Annual Chowder's On! Community Luncheon & Fundraiser, Kittery Community Center. Event is SOLD OUT, but donations accepted at www.mlc alliance.org/events-1.

February 26

Aquaculture Public Scoping Session - Pleasant Cove Oyster Farm, 3 p.m., Boothbay Town Office.

February 29-March 2

Maine Fishermen's Forum, Samoset Resort.

March 1

MLA 70th Annual Meeting, Samoset Resort, Rockport.

March 5-7

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

March 10-12

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

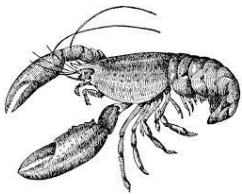
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NEW FACES IN MARINE PATROL

Two new Officers have joined the Department of Marine Resources Maine Marine Patrol after graduating from the Maine Criminal Justice Academy. Callahan Crosby of Rangely will serve in the Rockland and Vinalhaven/North Haven patrol.

As a Marine Patrol Officer, he will conduct patrols, inspections, investigations, and protective services work related to marine resources, boating safety, and criminal laws and regulations and will also participate in search and rescue efforts on tidal waters. Crosby served as an intern with Marine Patrol from 2021 to 2022 focusing primarily on the lobster and elver fisheries. He received a B.S. in Marine Affairs from the University of New England in 2023.



From left, Callahan Crosby, Marine Patrol Colonel Matt Talbot, DMR Commissioner Patrick Keliher, August Campbell. DMR photo.

August Campbell of Rockport, Massachusetts, will serve as a Boat Specialist assigned to the Patrol Vessel Dirigo II in Section 1 which extends from Kittery to Yarmouth.

As a Boat Specialist, Campbell will be responsible for patrol vessel operations during routine law enforcement patrols, search and rescue efforts, and investigative work. Campbell's work history includes serving as a marine mechanic and as a deckhand and sternman on Massachusetts-based fishing vessels. He attended Maine Maritime Academy and holds a U.S. Coast Guard 100-ton Master License.

"These two Officers bring important skills and experience to busy patrol areas," said Marine Patrol Major Rob Beal. Both men will begin working in their assigned areas immediately while they complete Marine Patrol's 45-day field training program.

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1958 PHOTOS CAPTURE GLIMPSES OF LOBSTER FISHERY'S PAST



Maine photographer Kosti Ruohomaa was a award winning photojournalist during the 1940s and '50s. He grew up in Rockland and graduated from Rockland high school. He attended art school before leaving Maine to work for Walt Disney Studios. Ruohomaa then specialized in photography, working for the famed Black Star photo agency in Manhattan. He shot assignments all over the world for publications like *Look*, *Life*, *National Geographic* and *Ladies Home Journal*.

Ruohomaa documented the reality of rural Maine, both inland and on the coast, and made it visible to the world. He became an excellent photographic storyteller, depicting Maine residents with honesty and dignity. Many years after his death in 1961 his photographs passed on to the Penobscot Marine Museum in Searsport, which has catalogued the images and made them available online.

<https://penobscotmarinemuseum.org/kosti>.



Top right, Floyd Conant of Port Clyde and a dog pass the time in his fish house. *Maine Coast Fisherman* ran a regular column for a number of years called “Fisherman’s Mug-up” which featured portraits of fishermen. This photo by Ruohomaa ran in the column in May 1958.

Bottom right, Ote Lewis and family were long-time residents of “Trails End” in Owls Head. He was one of the founders of the Rockland Lobster Festival and member of the MLA board of directors in the 1950s. In this 1958 photograph, Lewis works on lobster traps in his workshop with freshly painted buoys above his head.



Left, Gene Rackliffe, a lobsterman from Wheelers Cove in South Thomaston, works on lobster traps in his workshop in 1958. Ruohomaa took many photographs of Gene and members of his family at work and at their home in Spruce Head.



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