



What Has the MLA Done on Issues Important to You? 2004-2005 MLA Highlights

New Whale Rules

NMFS has proposed new whale rules that threaten the survival of the lobster industry. How has the MLA responded? The MLA has been working to change the whale rules, line up relief money to help the industry transition to either sinking or low profile line and assist in gear research to test and develop new rope technologies.

- We continue to work with our Congressional delegation and Maine DMR so that Maine is sending out one consistent message: banning float rope for groundlines is not acceptable.
- The MLA met with Dr. Bill Hogarth, Director of NMFS, to explain why these rules are unworkable. We have received a commitment from Dr. Hogarth that NMFS will reconsider its recommendation to ban floating groundlines.
- We are working with the Gulf of Maine Lobster Foundation on a request for a \$6 million Congressional appropriation over 3 years to establish a rope buyback and exchange program. This will provide financial assistance to Maine lobstermen due to changes to the Whale Plan. To date, the Senate has approved the \$2 million for the first year.
- We are working with New England Aquarium and Maine DMR to develop and test new ropes and collect scientific data on how the ropes perform so we can strengthen our position that it is not necessary to ban floating groundlines.
- The MLA continues to represent Maine through the Take Reduction Team (TRT) to fight for whale rules that don't put fishermen out of business.

Preserving Working Waterfronts

Waterfront property values continue to skyrocket, and many are selling working waterfront land to 'people from away' because they can't afford their taxes. How has the MLA responded?

- The MLA believes that the fishing industry does not have a future if we do not save our working waterfronts.
- The MLA is a founding and active member of the Working Waterfront Coalition.
- We worked with the Legislature to approve sending a Constitutional amendment to allow for the current use taxation of working waterfronts out to voters in a referendum in 2002, and again this year in 2005.
- The MLA is working on the campaign to ensure that current use taxation for working waterfronts is approved by voters on the ballot this fall.
- The MLA has worked with the Working Waterfront Coalition and the Legislature for a working waterfront bond proposal to dedicate state funding to prevent the conversion of working waterfront properties to other uses.
- The MLA continues to educate towns and the public about the importance of Maine's mere 25 miles working waterfront in order to protect the 39,000+ water dependent jobs and \$740 million of economic impact it supports.

Pesticide Spraying

The Casco Bay region continues to be threatened by potential for aerial spraying to control the region's brown tail moth nuisance. Lobstermen have observed pesticides drifting into the water and coating lobster traps along the shoreline. How has the MLA responded?

- The MLA has attended many municipal meetings to convince town officials not to conduct aerial spray programs.
- The MLA sponsored a bill to ban the aerial spraying of pesticides used to control brown tail moth within 1000 feet of the high tide mark. Instead the MLA recommended that these coastal areas be treated with ground-based equipment to protect our marine resources.

- The bill was well received by the Agriculture Committee, which has recommended that the Board of Pesticides Control work with the MLA, DMR and Forest Service to find a solution to address the MLA's concerns.

Legislature

The MLA continues to serve as a watchdog and advocate for the lobster industry in Augusta. Each year, there are many legislative bills introduced that could jeopardize the lobster industry. How has the MLA responded?

- The MLA organized several "Candidates Nights" to allow our members an opportunity to meet the candidates running for state legislative office and educate these legislators about issues important to Maine's lobster industry.
- The MLA sponsored LD 527 to authorize DMR's Commissioner to regulate the use of alternative bait in our fisheries. The Legislature approved this bill and also banned the use of offal (animal renderings), including hide bait with hair.
- The MLA was pivotal in defeating LD 1147 which sought to circumvent the existing limited entry program and drastically change the way licenses are issued.
- The MLA supported several bills which were passed to close enforcement loopholes, maintain the provision to limit new entrants to 300 traps and an increase of 100/year, expand the power of zone councils so that all zones are now on equal footing, and defeated bills which would have weakened our lobster laws.
- The MLA has supported tax reform to protect fishing families and working waterfronts, including the successful passage of the constitutional amendment to allow current use taxation for working waterfronts (which goes to voters this fall).
- The MLA has supported a bond package to help preserve working waterfronts.

Fishermen Unity

The fishing industry and our fishing communities are being threatened throughout Maine and across the country. How has the MLA responded?

- The MLA has been involved in 2 separate efforts to try to bring fishermen together to help preserve all of our livelihoods.
- Nationally, MLA has joined a national fishermen's coalition, so that groups from across the country can help support one another.
- In Maine, the MLA is involved in bringing fishermen together to talk about our common interests and create an ocean ethic.

Keeping a Seat at the Table

The array of issues facing Maine's lobster industry is vast, but the MLA is committed to keeping our membership informed and representing the interests of the lobster industry when it matters. To that end, the MLA remains active in many arenas:

- ASMFC: The MLA continues to maintain a strong presence through a Governor appointed Commissioner's seat on the ASMFC. This allows MLA to be part of all negotiations and management decisions affecting the lobster industry and other fisheries such as herring.
- Maine Fishermen's Forum: The MLA is committed to educating and celebrating Maine's fishing industry and participates on the Board of the Forum. Each year the MLA organizes many educational sessions and promotes exchange between US and Canadian fishermen.
- Other: The MLA also participates in the Working Waterfront Coalition, Whale Take Reduction Team, Lobster Advisory Council, Maine Lobster Promotion Council, Lobster Zone Councils, Gulf of Maine Ocean Observing System (GoMOOS), Sea Grant Policy Advisory Committee, Gulf of Maine Lobster Foundation, Lobster Institute, among others.



MLA: Our Strength is in Our Numbers