



The MLA advocates for a sustainable lobster resource and the fishermen and communities that depend on it.

Advocating through the Economic Crisis

Understanding the Situation: MLA directors held several emergency meetings during the Fall 2008 to understand circumstances surrounding the precipitous drop in boat price, and attended a multitude of meetings to monitor the situation and brainstorm potential solutions.

Getting out Information: The MLA disseminated information on the state of Maine's short-term financial assistance programs to refinance debt through local banks as well as information on federal stimulus programs including the SBA loan program and Marine Engine Replacement Program.

Lobster Task Force: The MLA met with the Governor to request leadership and action from the state to help the lobster industry navigate the impacts of the global recession. The Governor formed a Task Force on the Economic Sustainability of Maine Lobster to better understand the challenges facing the industry and develop recommendations. MLA's executive director served as co-chair of the Task Force. The MLA is advocating for implementation of the key recommendations of the Task Force, particularly the establishment of a new lobster marketing entity to focus on marketing and branding of lobster caught in Maine.

Exploring Options: MLA participated in meetings outside the Task Force to brainstorm alternative business models to increase profitability at the harvester level.

Advocating for Steady Bait Supply

Management Meetings: The MLA advocated on behalf of the lobster industry for a steady supply of fresh herring throughout the fishing season, particularly during the fall months through both ASMFC and NEMFC. The MLA also supported Addendum I to the ASMFC Herring Plan to allow managers more tools to extend the availability of quota.

Industry Meetings: The MLA convened a meeting between the herring industry and lobster industry to discuss strategies on how to work together towards a more steady bait supply over the long-term.

Stock Assessment: The MLA is monitoring the progress of the herring stock assessment update which has potential to lead to further reductions in available quota, and will advocate to hold area allocations at their current levels.

Whales

Take Reduction Team: The MLA represented the Maine lobster industry on the federal Large Whale Take Reduction Team. MLA's legal counsel from Hogan & Hartson also attended the meeting. The MLA supported NMFS' 5 year timeline to develop new vertical line rules, pursuing an approach to allow for more flexibility in management options, but did not support any strategy that included trap reductions as a means to reduce vertical line risk.

Assessing Risk from Vertical Lines: MLA has spearheaded a partnership between the MLA, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, New England Aquarium and Institute for Broadening Participation to develop a model to estimate the risk of vertical lines to whales in waters along the Maine coast.

Monitoring Sink Rope Rule: The MLA advocated for the monitoring of the industry's experience fishing sinking rope. The Gulf of Maine Lobster Foundation distributed a Voluntary Sinking Rope Tracking Form for lobstermen to report their day to day experiences fishing sinking rope to help Maine demonstrate the very real costs of compliance, and perhaps help us in future rounds of whale rules.

Right Whale Research: MLA continued its relationship with the Consortium for Wildlife Bycatch Reduction to ensure that industry's research priorities and feedback are considered whale research.

Advocacy on Important State Issues

Legislature: The MLA testified against creating new loopholes for entry into the lobster fishery, ending the state waters pogy fishery, allowing crabs to be landed as bycatch in the dragger fishery, consolidating Maine DMR with other natural resources agencies and the 15% increase in lobster license fees. MLA testified in favor of the island bill as a means to ensure that island communities are able to sustain viable year round communities, increasing penalties for violation of lobster laws and closing the owner operator loophole, bond funds to support working waterfronts and improving Maine's business practices to better support the lobster processing sector. The MLA monitored legislation on the creation of a saltwater fishing license.

Sustainable Fishery Certification: MLA has closely monitored the Governor endorsed effort to explore Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification for the Maine lobster industry. The MLA advocated that Maine proceed cautiously and fully understand the implications of MSC certification if the industry qualifies as a result of our full assessment (due summer 2009). The MLA worked to ensure strong harvester representation on the MSC "client", which is responsible for deciding if the Maine lobster industry pursues certification. The MLA has consulted with the Gulf of Maine Research Institute on the development of a Gulf of Maine-based sustainable seafood program. MLA is working with the Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch program to clarify misinformation about the lobster fishery with regard to interactions with whales which could impact Maine lobster's sustainability rating.

Working Waterfront Coalition (WWC): The MLA continued to participate in the Working Waterfront Coalition and supported \$2 million bond funding for the Working Waterfront Access Pilot Program which will go to voters in 2010 for approval.

Meet the Candidates: MLA held a series of 3 meetings for candidates running for the Maine Legislature to meet lobstermen and learn about issues of importance to the lobster industry. The MLA also made a presentation to the Marine Resources Committee to introduce them to the association.

Public Health: The MLA advocated for additional testing to fully understand the extent to which lobster tomalley is affected by PSP in order to minimize export limitations of Maine lobster to other countries.

Advocacy on Important Federal Issues

ASMFC Lobster Management: Supported development of an Addendum to the ASMFC Lobster Plan to prevent the transfer of non Area 1 federal lobster permit holder into Area 1, and preventing the activation of federal non-trap lobster permits within Area 1.

National Healthcare Legislation: The MLA supported an effort spearheaded by the Massachusetts Fishermen's Partnership to work for to establish affordable health insurance for fishermen.

Fisheries Research: The MLA supported requests to Maine's Congressional delegation for federal funding for Maine's lobster research, herring and right whale research.

Communication: MLA continued to liaise with Maine's federal delegation on a regular basis to keep them updated on issues of importance to the Maine lobster industry.

Education and Communications

The MLA Board completed a strategic plan and hired a communications coordinator and are now revamping the monthly newsletter and implementing other communications improvements.

The MLA serves on the board of the Maine Fishermen's Forum Board and attended a variety of meetings including the Boston Seafood Show, North Atlantic Right Whale Consortium, Natural Resources Network of Maine, Mass Lobstermen's Annual weekend, Lobster Biz workshop, and many others.

The MLA fielded hundreds of local, state and national media inquiries about the state of the Maine lobster industry and conducted presentations to community groups and at conferences.

For more information, contact the MLA at 207-967-4555