



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

MLA Year in Review Highlights 2009-2010

Keeping Maine Lobstermen Informed

MLA Newsletter: The MLA Newsletter is the primary source of information for the lobster industry. Through the generous support of our advertisers, the MLA has revamped the monthly newsletter's design and content and now distributes it to all Maine's commercial lobstermen and MLA members.

Weekly Email Updates: The MLA provides weekly e-news updates on state, national and international news related to the lobster industry. Additionally each week MLA members receive that week's lobster, bait and fuel prices for all the Gulf of Maine via email.

Industry Liaison: The MLA continues to effectively represent the Maine lobster industry across a spectrum on ongoing and emerging issues. The MLA attends many policy, science and management meetings to ensure that the Maine lobster industry is represented and to monitor issues that may impact our industry. The MLA is in regular communication with Maine's federal delegation, Governor, state officials and legislators.

International Lobstermen's Exchange: The MLA brought to Maine six lobstermen from Ireland, Western Australia, Tasmania, New Zealand, southwest Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island this winter. We engaged hundreds of Maine lobstermen and industry stakeholders in discussions about the future of the fishery. The international lobstermen visited 11 coastal communities through 23 separate events. Key issues discussed included marketing and price, management, safety, government accountability and fostering industry leadership.

Research

Annual V-notch survey: Since 1982, MLA members have collected data on the number of v-notched lobsters present in their traps to measure the impact of this conservation program on the lobster population.

Right whale research: The MLA continues to engage Maine lobstermen in research to help our industry cope with future whale regulations. Since 2005, MLA has worked with the Consortium for Wildlife Bycatch Reduction and with lobstermen to test experimental gear types. In 2009, MLA expanded its research partnership to include Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute. In this project, MLA met with Maine lobstermen from every

harbor along the coast to document when, where and how they are and are not fishing. This research will be used to help gauge the risk that Maine lobster gear poses to large whales.

The MLA is collecting retired sinking rope from Maine lobstermen to test its breaking strength and to provide feedback on the extent to which the sinking line has degraded over the course of fishing.

Lobster Shell Disease: The MLA serves on the executive committee of the New England Lobster Research Initiative, established through a \$3 million Congressional appropriation in 2006 to understand lobster shell disease. The Initiative has led to the identification of the key bacteria involved in shell disease. Research indicates that a variety of stressors may be making the lobsters vulnerable to bacteria that has long been present in ocean waters.

Federal Earmark Request: The MLA supported federal funding requests to continue lobster sea sampling and ventless trap surveys; to engage Maine lobster boats in herring research; and to work collaboratively with the lobster industry to identify solutions to whale entanglement that are operationally feasible and economically viable for Maine lobstermen.

Advocating for Steady Bait Supply

Herring Management and Research: The MLA participated in NEFMC meetings to debate the results of the herring stock assessment and quota allocations. The MLA surveyed Maine lobstermen and bait dealers on bait supply and prepared a report on the Maine lobster industry's bait supply. MLA attended ASMFC Herring Section meetings through which Area 1A herring landings are managed to advocate for a steady supply of fresh herring throughout the fishing season.

Menhaden Management: The MLA supported the state's proposal to require menhaden caught in state waters to be used as bait, limiting fishing and carrier vessel size and establishing landings restrictions. The MLA is monitoring the menhaden management through the ASMFC.

St Croix alewife Run: The MLA reiterated its concern to Maine's federal delegation over the continued closure of the alewife passage on the St. Croix River. The blocked

passage removes a valuable bait supply for Maine lobstermen.

Weighing-in on Important Issues

AMSFC Lobster Management: The MLA supported ASMFC's Addendum XVI to the Lobster Management Plan to establish new reference points and to allow the use of best available science in lobster management. MLA supports implementation of Addendum XV through federal rulemaking to prevent the transfer of non-Area 1 federal permits into Area 1. The MLA also is monitoring the Southern New England lobster stock crisis.

Acadia National Park MPA program: The MLA urged the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) not to hinder any commercial fishing uses when considering including the waters around Acadia National Park in the national system of Marine Protected Areas.

Ropeless Fishing: The MLA opposed a proposal to test ropeless lobster fishing off the coast of Maine as a potential whale entanglement mitigation method. This research did not move forward.

Federal Legislation: The MLA requested that Maine's Congressional delegation support legislation to exempt commercial fishing and charter vessels from obtaining individual discharge permits from EPA. The MLA supported Maine's Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety Council's recommendation to expand and fund federal safety requirements in the Coast Guard Reauthorization bill. The MLA opposed a provision in the federal Oil Spill bill which would eliminate general liability caps and likely result in increased P&I rates for commercial fishermen.

Access to Federal Training and Compensation: The MLA submitted an application on behalf of Maine lobstermen to become eligible for federal training and compensation of up to \$12,000 through the Trade Adjustment Assistance for Farmers (TAAF) program.

Maine's Working Waterfronts: The MLA intervened on behalf of a midcoast lobsterman who has encountered difficulty in obtaining a permit to store lobster traps on his commercial pier. The MLA continues to participate in Maine's Working Waterfront Coalition, which worked with Maine's Legislature on a bond for additional working waterfront preservation funds. The bond will go before Maine voters in November 2010.

Wind energy: The MLA is monitoring ocean energy development along the Maine coast. MLA weighed in on legislation submitted by the governor's Ocean Energy Task Force. The MLA opposed the development of wind

farms in state waters and instead, supported the development of ocean wind in offshore waters.

DMR budget: The MLA opposed the consolidation of the state's natural resource agencies as a solution to the budget crisis. MLA advocated to maintain DMR's budget, especially enforcement resources, and reminded legislators that lobstermen are paying increased license and trap tag fees.

Exploring Opportunities to Increase Profitability

Lobster Task Force: The MLA supported the state's approach to hold informational meetings with Maine lobstermen to discuss the potential benefits of a greater investment in marketing and branding of Maine lobster before legislative action is pursued.

Lobster Processing: The MLA supported legislation to remove restrictions on Maine's lobster processors to allow them to develop innovative new lobster products and expand their market share while honoring the conservation measures of the Maine lobster industry.

Marine Stewardship Council Certification: The MLA continues to monitor the Governor-endorsed effort to obtain Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification for the Maine lobster industry.

Exploring New Market Opportunities: MLA met with officials from Maersk Lines and Aqualife to discuss shipping live lobster internationally via cargo ships. MLA joined a diverse group of stakeholders to meet with Chinese officials during their spring visit to Maine. MLA emphasized the quality of our product and harvesters' interest in expanding into new markets.

GMRI profitability study: The MLA is collaborating with the Gulf of Maine Research Institute to document the operating costs of commercial harvesters. MLA has interviewed Maine lobstermen to document actual bait, fuel, gear and vessels costs. The data will be used to assess the vulnerability of lobstermen to cost fluctuations and the impacts of future management actions.

National Seafood Marketing Coalition: The MLA signed on to the National Seafood Marketing Coalition to advocate that a portion of the annual fishery custom import fees be used to market American seafood.

Monitor Financial Assistance Programs: The MLA has monitored and profiled federal stimulus programs of interest to Maine lobstermen, including the Marine Clean Engine program, SBA Arc Loan program and Trade Adjustment Assistance for Farmers program.

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