What’s in a name? For Maine seafood companies, quite a bit

By Melissa Waterman

Last month we published an article outlining how some of Maine’s larger seafood processors market their products to companies abroad and at home. In this story, we look at how the name ‘Maine’ influences customers, both large distributors and retail consumers, and the growing need to protect that name.

John Hathaway, president of Shucks Maine Lobster in Richmond, is on a crusade to ensure that the name ‘Maine’ means something, at least to those who purchase his frozen lobsters. “Customers around the world are confused….Speaking only for those who purchase his frozen lobsters. “Customers purchased directly by retail consumers, Norton recognized as such.

Others see the name “Maine” as one factor among many that lead to successful sales. “The Maine name is not enough to sell the product,” John Norton, president of Cozy Harbor Seafood in Portland, said. He noted that his company sells lobster and other seafood products to the large supermarket chains, food service distributors, cruise lines and other companies that in turn sell the lobster to consumers. “Names don’t carry a lot of weight for those customers. Other elements, such as quality control, play into that decision,” Norton explained.

On the other hand, when Cozy Harbor products are purchased directly by retail consumers, Norton recognizes that the name “Maine” does create a strong feeling. “All our products say ‘Maine’ on them. It conjures up a generally positive impression,” he said. “But that

Lobstermen must decide: will investing in marketing bring better boat price?

By Melissa Waterman

This winter, the state’s Lobster Advisory Council (LAC) created a subcommittee to investigate better methods for marketing Maine lobster. The subcommittee, chaired by LAC chair Bob Baines and the Maine Lobstermen’s Association education coordinator Annie Tselikis, hired John Sauve, former director of the Wild Blueberry Association of North America and current president of The Food and Wellness Group, a marketing firm in Portland, to do just that. The result is Project Maine Lobster.

The subcommittee’s plan will be presented in public meetings this June at four locations along the coast. The plan offers specific, concrete actions that lobstermen, processors and the state can take during the next three years to improve recognition of Maine lobster in domestic and global markets and thus build demand for the state’s most abundant marine species.

As Sauve said at a May LAC meeting, “There aren’t many people out there happy with the boat price.” To make that price rise, he continued, one could either limit the supply of lobsters (more than 100 million pounds landed last year with a comparable volume predicted for this year) or boost consumer demand. A drop in lobster landings is not likely in the near future, barring unforeseen events, so the emphasis should be placed on building global demand for lobster harvested in Maine. “It’s not an issue of over-supply,” Sauve emphasized, “it’s an issue of under-demand. If you have 100 million pounds of lobster, you want to be 20 million short of the demand.”

Project Maine Lobster is organized into three phases that will identify, develop and initiate projects to be implemented over a three-year period. The cost: $3 million, 75 percent of which will come from lobstermen, 25 percent of which from dealers. The split in cost between dealers and lobstermen is the same percentage now used to fund the Maine Lobster Promotion Council. Under the plan the Promotion Council would be phased out and replaced by a new entity, the Lobstermen’s Association.

Continued on page 11

Early shedders worry lobstermen

By Wanda Curtis

When Maine lobstermen hauled their traps this past month, many were surprised to find a bountiful supply of shedders. Those soft-shell lobsters, also known as “new shell” lobsters, don’t usually appear in full force until June or July.

A basket of shedders cooked and ready to pick. Susan Bayley photo.

Continued on page 18

Working Together to
Promote:

- Sustainable Resource
- Sustainable Industry
- Sustainable Markets

Continued on page 9
Steaming Ahead

Lobstermen have an incredibly important opportunity in June to help shape the future of the industry. I know that many of you are not avid meeting goers but I hope you will put that aside and attend one of the “Project Maine Lobster: Increasing Global Demand” meetings being held June 12-19 along the coast. The topic: putting the profits back into lobstering.

Profit margins have been closing in on lobstermen at a quick pace since the price crashed in the fall of 2008. The sheer abundance of landings has been our saving grace, yet many wonder if that will be enough to pay the bills this year. And the spring fishery has certainly not calmed anyone’s nerves. For many, the fishery is running about six weeks ahead of past years with the spring run riper and shallower, sheds laying up in large numbers and a split price in May.

More and more lobstermen realize that regardless of how hard they work, it’s tough to make money. The Lobster Advisory Council saw the writing on the wall and formed a Marketing Subcommittee this winter to develop a plan to put profits back into the industry. This group recognized that despite the time and money that has been invested in ideas – such as the Lobster Task Force report – and marketing efforts – such as the Maine Lobster Promotion Council – nothing meaningful has happened.

Putting profits back into the industry can be tackled either from the supply side or the demand side or from both sides. Supply has long been a controversial topic in Maine. Should we be fishing with fewer traps or fishing during different seasons as a way to glut the market and land more shipable product? Or should we tackle the demand side by investing in marketing?

As you probably figured out from the title “Project Maine Lobster: Increasing Global Demand,” the LAC Marketing Subcommittee chose to work on demand up in theory, in order demand exceeds supply, price goes up. The LAC engaged the services of a consultant, John Sauve of the Food and Wellness Group, to develop a simple, transparent lobster marketing organization, including a budget, organizational structure and marketing plan, that will implement a new marketing strategy for the Maine lobster industry.

The goal is to boost demand for Maine lobster enough that it will increase the boat price. The plan will not solve all of the other problems, such as rising expenses or amount of shipable product that challenges the industry.

In June, you have an opportunity to learn what the LAC has been up to. The plan that has been created is certainly a big undertaking. It will require a lot of hard work and it will cost money; the recommended budget is $3 million.

Money is tight for everyone these days plus the idea of paying more money is never popular. Still, this is your industry and it is your future, so industry members must think about taking responsibility to improve things. I know that many lobstermen have expressed support for better marketing and increased demand for Maine lobster – as long as someone else pays for it. Folks have argued that if lobstermen invest, dealers will reap the rewards. Others have argued that it is not the harvesters’ job to market the product. Still others would be happy to invest if they were guaranteed a return.

We all know that there are no guarantees in life especially when it comes to fishing. As any stockbroker will tell you, however, there are good investments and bad investments. And there is plenty of evidence to suggest that investing in a well-organized marketing plan will reap rewards that are specific to Maine lobstermen.

If you don't invest in your future, who will? And if no one invests at all, what sort of future do you have? If you continue to do what you’ve always done, you will get the same outcome – the boat price will not change. You and your children will receive a price for lobsters which will not begin to cover the ever-increasing costs of bait, if you can get it, and fuel, much less repairs to your boat or a retirement in the future.

What I really like about this new approach is that it doesn't get caught up in a litany of excuses about why things will never get any better. Instead, it focuses on all of the positive attributes with which we have to work. It recognizes the lack of trust within the industry and frustration over the market. It recognizes that protecting and building the “Maine lobster” brand is critical, yet also recognizes our close relationship, both as colleague and competitor, with the Canadian lobster fishery. It recognizes that the Canadians are moving forward to market their product to the world. And it recognizes that if we do not take action, we could be left behind.

In the end, the decision on what direction we take for our future rests with the lobstermen, not with the state or anyone else. It is your industry and change will not happen without your investment. Whether you think this is a good idea or bad, you should attend a meeting this June. Take time to listen and learn about what is being proposed and let the LAC know what you think. Do you think it will work? Do you have ideas to make it better? Do you think this is a just a big waste of time?

The bitter truth here is that Maine's lobster industry is enjoying an unprecedented abundance of lobsters yet our financial future is uncertain. The LAC has developed a plan to put profits back into the industry; you can't afford not to be there.

I look forward to seeing you in June.

As always, stay safe on the water.
Science for the coast: Maine Sea Grant

By Paul Anderson

Once upon a time, finding a lobsterman who agreed with a government scientist was rare if not impossible occurrence. Number-crunching by regulatory agencies in the 1990s showed that lobsters were overfished, while the men and women hauling traps in the Gulf of Maine were harvesting record numbers of lobsters. Everyone was using a different source of information and nothing made sense. Disagreement led to mistrust, which led to some bitter words and overall discontent in the lobstering world.

Today, lobster landings have reached record highs and the fishery is the dominant industry on Maine’s working waterfront, supporting coastal communities and indeed the economy of the entire state.

To what can we attribute the success of Maine’s lobster industry? Certainly management, including many conservation measures instituted by lobstermen themselves, deserves some of the credit. But science plays a role, too, in improving our collective knowledge about the many factors that affect lobsters and the ecosystem.

For more than thirty years, from the first tagging studies that followed lobsters on their long-distance migrations across the sea floor to critical analyses of fishery and the fishery is the dominant industry on Maine’s working waterfront, supporting coastal communities and indeed the economy of the entire state.

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The human dimension of fishing has been a focus of Sea Grant research since 1977, when James Acheson, an anthropologist at the University of Maine, received funding to study the adoption of wire traps in the lobster industry. Acheson’s ongoing research studies, along with that of colleague James Wilson, show that the actions of Maine lobstermen have created the environmental conditions required for sustainable conservation. As a result of their work with lobstermen, the Maine legislature instituted a new law in 1996 empowering seven regional councils to “co-manage” local lobster populations.

More recently, Sea Grant funded Dr. Teresa Johnson to study the resilience of Maine’s coastal fishing communities to assess the risk faced by these communities through reliance on commercial fishing. The study will help highlight socioeconomic factors that should be considered in fisheries management.

Maine Sea Grant continues to take an active role in fostering science and management. This fall, in partnership with several other institutions, will host “The American Lobster in a Changing Ecosystem: A U.S.-Canada Science Symposium” in Portland. Participants from the two countries can learn more about all forms of science related to the American lobster.

These success stories should remind lobstermen who remember the early days of lobster science to stay involved, and encourage those who became lobstermen within the last decade to collaborate with Sea Grant-funded researchers.

BY PAUL ANDERSON

Paul Anderson is the director of the Maine Sea Grant College program. Sea Grant photo.
As I gaze appreciatively out on the harbor this morning, I must remind myself that I sat down to write about some things that are happening in Washington that might forever change the character of life here in Friendship. The connections between the two places, at least in my thoughts today, are the budgetary battles in Washington over whether to restrict funding for the implementation of the National Ocean Policy and the important regional ocean planning efforts that should soon follow.

Why should a lobsterman from Maine care about such things? The obvious answers, of course, are that the ocean is our workplace, our cultural heritage, and economically sustains us and our extended communities as it has for generations. Those of us who work on the ocean day to day live with the effects of small changes in climate and observe changes in habitat, all of which may be evident in our catch rates or how species progress through seasonal cycles. We are also solely dependent on a healthy resource that must be managed intelligently and effectively while remaining accessible to us.

We would be the ones to notice the first effects of ocean acidification caused by our carbon-based energy production and we are also the ones who might be displaced by the ocean renewable energy projects put in place to combat it. Ours are the communities that must decide whether to gear up for the economic growth of aquaculture or to try to retain the qualities and spatial freedom of “wild caught” fish. The calls for ecosystem-based management, protection and restoration of important habitat areas as well as protection of wildlife and endangered species are all important goals that affect the sustainability and economics of our fisheries and our daily lives.

These ocean and coastal agendas, uses and causes that we care about certainly are going to require many tough decisions and negotiations, and I for one would like to have a direct voice in whatever process is used to decide and plan for them. Presently, it would seem, we have two choices. The status quo is that whatever proposal is being made goes to multiple government agencies that believe they have jurisdiction. From there they go on to public hearings, impact statements, the courts and all the rest with each proposal handled as a separate project and locale. This would all be carved out with little if any requirement for planning as to regional placement or sense of purpose.

Secondly we have the introduction of the National Ocean Policy with its regional ocean planning or Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning. The virtue of the National Ocean Policy is that it develops and facilitates the planning process, deals with many overlapping ocean uses and expedites the approval process of new uses being introduced. Hopefully this will be done in a holistic fashion with the best available science, economic and cultural data, along with local place-based knowledge, all while keeping in mind the economic and cultural importance of the commercial and recreational fishing industries.

The National Ocean Policy offers an avenue for thoughtful planning and is the best choice for those stakeholders looking to be involved in the process or at least have some voice in the discussion. We should include these stakeholders by forming advisory bodies made up of ocean users including fishermen who are out on the waters every day. This would go a long way in increasing the level and quality of stakeholder participation. With the importance of our oceans to New England, our nation and the world, and with all the problems we face and solutions to be found, we would hope that Congress would support these endeavors or at the very least not stand in the way.

Getting involved locally with the National Ocean Policy

Richard Nelson is a Friendship lobsterman. Richard Nelson photo.

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Tie-ups and anti-trust law: U.S. and Canadian perspectives

By Melissa Waterman

It was the era of the robber barons. J.P. Morgan and peers ran the nation’s banks. John D. Rockefeller’s Standard Oil Company had a lock on the emerging oil fields of the nation. Andrew Carnegie had consolidated smaller steel companies to create the behemoth, U.S. Steel. In the 1880s a few industrial titans controlled much of the United State’s economy. Something had to be done. That something was the Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1890. Its purpose? To ensure competition in the marketplace and prohibit restraint of trade.

Since that time the Act has been used by the federal Department of Justice against large corporations that are suspected of creating monopolies, such as AT&T and most recently, Microsoft Corporation. It has been hailed as one of the strongest laws in the world that promotes business competitiveness. “There are now well over one hundred competition authorities around the world,” explained Mary Anne Mason, a lawyer with DLA Piper LLP in Washington, D.C., and pro bono lawyer for the Maine Lobstermen’s Association. “Basically all of them have the same basic format that prohibits anti-competitive agreements and unlawful monopoly conduct.”

Unfortunately this same law that was used so successfully against the robber barons of past centuries also applies to those who catch lobsters. Because each Maine lobsterman is an individual business, if a group of lobstermen act collectively and cease fishing for lobsters in order to force an increase in boat price, they can be accused of collusion and restraint of trade under the Act.

In Canada, a different law applies. The Canadian Competition Act was passed in 1985. It provides for both criminal and civil penalties for violations. Yet there are exceptions in both countries for those lobstermen who have formed cooperatives. “A separate statute, the Fisheries Cooperative & Management Act of 1934, gives anti-trust immunity to harvesters organized as a cooperative,” Mason said. “The immunity statute treats a cooperative of individual harvesters as a single entity, like an individual.” If two or more cooperatives, however, were to join forces to push the price of lobster up, such action would contravene Section 1 of the Act, which prohibits such restraints of trade.

The Canadian Competition Act also has an exception for cooperative arrangements among harvesters, according to Fanaki. The tie-up among southwest Nova Scotia lobstermen in early May illustrated the contrast between the legal regimes of the two countries.

“Any individual supplier is allowed to say that at this price, I’m not going to harvest it, whether that is lobsters or a stand of timber,” explained Adam Fanaki, former Senior Deputy Commissioner in charge of the Competition Bureau’s Mergers Branch and presently a partner in Davies Ward Phillips & Vineberg law firm in Toronto. But a group of suppliers cannot work together to withhold their products.

“I would suppose that one could make a really stretched argument to contend that the harvesters are in conflict with the principles of the Competition Act, but given the mostly criminal nature of the Canadian Act, the legislature would have to seriously consider the authorities,” he said via e-mail.

In the United States, however, any appearance of collusion brings down the wrath of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act. “It doesn’t matter what level of the market is affected or the size of the individual participants. A collective effort to reduce competition can give rise to civil or criminal liability because the Anti-Trust laws...
From the Dock

Work smarter, not harder

Dear MLA,

This has not been a great spring for me, and I know I’m not alone – I hear it from guys around me in Casco Bay and I hear it from guys Downeast. With a warm winter and spring, and the early arrival of shedders, this season has been an exception but it's prompted me to start thinking differently about how I fish and how the industry fishes.

I'm steaming about 50 miles to get to my gear just to pick away on bullshit lobsters and I can't help but think we're going about this business all wrong. I've recently started thinking about ways we could increase our profitability by getting our fuel and bait costs down – and I think that looking at defining a season around this part of the year could make a lot of sense and solve a lot of our problems.

I know that the Monhegan study has its criticisms, but I think it's a decent model that we should still think about. We need to be more strategic about how we fish and I know that we all need to work smarter, not harder. I'm as hesitant to change the lobster industry as anyone, but I'm tired of this status quo. We need a change.

Rusty Parmenter
F/V Patricia Ann
Chebeague Island
New Recruit

It all started with a dare

Genevieve Kurilec got a “daring” start in lobstering. Her first experience came while working at a boatyard in Blue Hill where she met a lobsterman who needed an extra hand on his boat for the summer. After stemming for him for the summer, she was tending bar when she received a challenge. “I was dared that I couldn’t fish out of Stonington,” Genevieve said. She took the dare. “I started out working with someone for three years. Now I’m on my seventh season.”

Genevieve, 29, completed the Apprentice Program in 2010 and looks forward to fishing this summer in her 21 foot center console BHM, Hello Darlin’. “I only got out a few times last year due to breakdowns. This will be my first year in my boat,” she said. She fishes out of Sunshine and sells her catch to Greenhead Lobster’s smaller branch in the same town. When she did get out lobstering last year, Genevieve took a sternman, but plans to go alone this year. “I’m a little more confident and the boat runs a whole lot better,” she said.

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Genevieve grew up on Mount Desert Island, but her family moved to Blue Hill when she was in high school. Now she lives and works in Stonington and is very involved in the fishing industry. “I go to meetings and classes and listen and learn from people,” she said. “I did the TAA program and learned about marketing, too.” Even when she isn’t on the water or attending meetings, Genevieve stays involved through the Island Fishermen’s Wives Association, for which she is secretary, and through her winter job at Island Fishing Gear.

“I’m the only person on the Association who fishes and isn’t a wife,” she said. The group meets once a month and puts on the Fishermen’s Day each summer. Genevieve said it’s a big time commitment, but that it’s worth it because the Association does so many good things for the community. “We give out college scholarships, fund safety classes, do a lot of community outreach and work closely with Penobscot East Research Center (PERC),” she explained.

“There are a lot of strong fishermen’s voices in the lobster industry,” Genevieve noted. She wishes that scientists and fishermen had a better relationship. “I think many fishermen are inherently afraid of scientists because they tell the state what regulations to make,” she said. But she has seen many people try to bridge this gap and improve relationships. “PERC is doing a good job of that. They employ scientists, but try to get a voice for everybody. The relationship is getting better.” Genevieve herself has volunteered to work with scientists who need to go out on boats. “I used to want to be a marine biologist. When I’ve worked on dragger boats I’m always the one looking at stuff wanting to know what it is,” she said. “And anytime scientists need to get on a boat, my name is on the list.”

Genevieve has 500 trap tags, but only fishes between 200 and 250 right now. “I’m still working my way up,” she said. She recognizes that Stonington is a huge port and the entire town depends on good landings. Her one worry for the lobstering industry is a collapse. “We’re in such an economic boom right now, but we’ve already seen the fishery dwindle in southern New England and even southern Maine. And all other fisheries are going away. If the bottom drops out, we’re screwed,” she said.

An outdoor enthusiast, Genevieve and her fiancé Cory McDonald of Stonington spend their free time camping, hiking, and exploring the island. “There’s a lot to do here if you aren’t looking for shopping or a bar,” she said. The couple has a wedding planned for early September. “I got some good advice to start planning early,” said Genevieve. She did most of the planning this past winter. “Now I just have to write the check this summer and show up,” she said with a laugh.

Lobstering has challenges no matter where you fish or who you are, but Genevieve said people have been good to her. “I apprenticed for five years so they’ve seen me put in my time and work hard. I think people respect that no matter who you are,” she commented.

Genevieve hasn’t received any special treatment as a woman who lobsters, but her gender hasn’t hurt her either. “There weren’t many women in the industry when I started. There are a lot more now,” she said. When the economy took a tumble in 2008, Genevieve noticed lobstermen bringing their wives and daughters out with them in order to keep the money close. Now, she sees women taking an active role in the industry. “I used to be the only woman when I pulled up to unload at the dock. Now if there are five boats there, probably three of them have women on board.”

By Sarah Paquette

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June 2012 MAINE LOBSTERMEN’S ASSOCIATION 7
Poetry in the water and in chopping wood

We all know the cliché vision of Maine lobstermen so popular in the general imagination: sturdy, taciturn, stoic about both the hardships and beauty integral to lobster fishing. They work hard, talk about engines and haulers, and when not fishing, are getting ready to go fish. Yet many if not most lobstermen have other, hidden talents. This article continues our series about Maine lobstermen who are not only successful fishermen but singers, poets, and artists.

By Sarah Paquette

Dana Morse doesn’t spend a lot of time sitting behind a desk. His job with the Maine Sea Grant Extension means that he is always on the go and generally in the direction of the ocean. “There are three main things I do,” he said. “Education programs, technology transfer, and applied research. For each of these, it’s always something around commercial fishing or aquaculture.” He’s been involved gear development and selectivity programs, oyster aquaculture, and the Trade Adjustment Assistance program, as well as upcoming projects for razor clam and sea scallop aquaculture.

One of Morse’s current projects is working with a group of shellfish growers from around the state to help them develop the ability to grow kelp. Kelp is a winter crop and pretty easy to grow, Morse explained, so it is a good way for fishermen to experiment with aquaculture. “It’s a good chance for fishermen to try growing something instead of catching it,” he said. Right now Morse is talking to potential buyers to find out how they want to buy aquaculture-raised seaweed and the range of prices to be expected. There’s been some interest from fishermen, but Morse understands that if they can’t make a good profit from seaweed aquaculture, interest will probably fade.

“It’s a blessing and a curse to have such varied projects. Sometimes it’s hard to know what brain to use,” he said with a chuckle. But the different projects have encouraged inspiration for one of Morse’s hobbies: writing poems.

Morse said he has been writing poetry off and on all his life. “I come from a long line of English teachers, so there has always been a lot of focus on literature my whole life,” he said. “I wrote a few poems last year. I liked them and got some good feedback from my dad.” Morse said his dad was his biggest reviewer and it has been tough since he passed away last year. Friends and family have suggested he try to publish his verse, but he has yet to go that route. “It’s still pretty new to me,” he said.

His work with people who make a living on the water, his previous time spent as a sternman in Rhode Island, and his collaborative research with fishermen offers unique experiences to write about. “There are a lot of interesting people in the marine field. And there is a lot to learn from it,” said Morse. “It’s such rich stuff.”

The Oxford dictionary defines poetry as literary work in which special intensity is given to the expression of feelings and ideas by the use of distinctive style and rhythm. Morse said that his projects often inspire ideas for poems, but that just as many of his ideas originate while he is splitting wood. He even wrote a poem about wood splitting and family. “I split all my wood by hand. It’s a good time to think. Sometimes a phrase comes to me and I have to run inside to write it down,” he said. But, he said, “You have to be disciplined to make time to write. I try, but like everyone else, I’m busy.”

“My writing process starts with an idea, a phrase,” Morse said. “I need to write it down as quickly as possible or I’ll forget it. Once I get it down – sometimes it comes out all at once – I let it sit.” He said the first draft comes out rough and he goes through the poem word by word, line by line, to make sure he has the right word or punctuation. “It’s amazing how one word or punctuation changes the flavor,” he said. “That’s what really good poets know how to do – they are able to pare it down to just the good stuff.” Morse said the cleaning up of a poem is probably the hardest part of the process. “I’ve read about what it takes to make it better. But it’s a tough thing to do,” he said. “On one hand you want to say ‘my poetry is the best.’ But I don’t really know if it’s good.”

Morse feels comfortable writing. “I do a lot of talking for my job, but I’m not a big talker. I’d actually say I’m a pretty quiet person. I’m better about expressing myself through writing,” he said. “Poetry is what is going through my mind, it’s what I think.” Morse has also written short stories and essays and hopes to accomplish a collection. “I have some written about the moon and people’s relationship to it. Native Americans have a name for the moon for each month or phase. I’d like to have a year collected, a piece for each month.”
Maine Lobster Global Marketing Council.

First among these efforts is to create a brand identity for Maine lobster as a differentiated product in the market. Some people consider all *Homarus americanus* to be the same. But others believe that the environment – the bottom characteristics, water temperature, currents – influence the flavor of the lobster. Therefore lobster from Maine is, in fact, different from lobster from Massachusetts or Nova Scotia, despite being the same species.

“Basically it comes down to this – we need to help ourselves. No one else is going to do it for us.”

Crafting that brand recognition will take time yet as Sauve noted, the name “Maine” carries some weight right now. “But competition for the center of the plate is getting stronger all the time. Other proteins are edging in,” he said. So getting consumers to recognize the value of Maine lobster, as they do Alaskan salmon or Chesapeake Bay oysters, is critical. Once demand for the product has increased, it will put pressure on supply. “With enough pressure you will feel it all the way down to the boat price,” Sauve emphasized.

Project Maine Lobster also will focus on promotional activities in the United States and overseas markets and on a new organizational structure to oversee those efforts.

Sauve pointed out that in most other commodity sectors, there is an entity that is getting stronger all the time. Other proteins are edging in,” he said. So getting consumers to recognize the value of Maine lobster, as they do Alaskan salmon or Chesapeake Bay oysters, is critical. Once demand for the product has increased, it will put pressure on supply. “With enough pressure you will feel it all the way down to the boat price,” Sauve emphasized.

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Diners flock to lobster trucks

Marketing lobster to the public takes many different forms. These days one of the more popular ways to get lobster to the consumer is through a long-standing American tradition, the food truck.

Today food trucks have taken a leap up in quality. Starting with the gourmet taco trucks of California, food trucks now cater to nearly every culinary taste imaginable. Lobster trucks are a recent twist on the food truck tradition. The first lobster truck appears to have been the Lobsta Truck, started in 2010 by Justin Mi, a South Pasadena, California, native. Susan Povich of Maine opened Red Hook Lobster in New York City in 2009 but quickly moved into lobster trucks as well. Red Hook Lobster began operating two popular lobster trucks in Washington, D.C. in 2011 and then started another in Manhattan. Luke’s Lobster also revived up its lobster truck in May of last year.

Cousins Jim Tsilikis and Sabin Lomac opened their lobster truck, Cousins Maine Lobster, this May in Los Angeles. Tsilikis and Lomac say that business since then has been booming. “You don’t walk to places for lunch or dinner [in Los Angeles],” Tsilikis explained. “Everything is geared up to drive everywhere.”

The two cousins looked at various sites to start a bricks-and-mortar restaurant but decided that a mobile food truck was the right fit for them. “The benefits of a truck are that you don’t have a three to five year lease and you can go to the market rather than having the market come to you,” Tsilikis explained.

Tsilikis and Lomac offer both simple and chic items for sale from the truck. There are the traditional lobster, crab, and shrimp rolls plus a lobster bisque. But in keeping with the Californian influence, they also prepare lobster tacos, which are made with lobster, cabbage, pico de gallo and a cilantro lime sauce, as well as an edible lobster martini, complete with lobster meat-stuffed olive.

The truck goes to where the diners are, parking outside office buildings, Universal Studio complexes, and city parks. The weekly schedule is sent out via the popular social media networks, such as Twitter and Facebook, to keep customers apprised of the truck’s location all the time. “Last Sunday afternoon we had a line of 75 people almost all afternoon,” Tsilikis said. “It was great.”

Project Maine Lobster meeting dates

June 12, 6-9 p.m., The Log Cabin, 196 Main St., Yarmouth.
June 14, 6-9 p.m., Rockland High School Auditorium, 400 Broadway St., Rockland.
June 18, 6-9 p.m., University of Maine Machias, Science room 102, Machias.
June 19, 6-9 p.m., Ellsworth High School Cafeteria, 299 State St., Ellsworth.

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Among the concerns about offshore wind turbines in the Gulf of Maine is the potential effect power cables running to shore will have on ocean species. These power transmission cables commonly used for offshore renewable energy facilities are AC power cables, though DC cables may be used in projects that are farther from shore. Both AC and DC cables produce electromagnetic fields (EMFs).

Information about the effect EMFs have on marine animals is sparse. The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) conducted a study of EMFs on select animals and published the results in May, 2011 in a report titled “Effects of EMFs from undersea power cables on elasmobranches and other marine species.”

Many marine species have electro and magnetic senses. The most well-known are the elasmobranches (sharks and rays). These animals use the two senses to locate prey, navigate, and orient themselves in their environment. The BOEM report notes that the effects of EMFs have only been tested on some animals at a particular life stage, so the full response to EMFs is not well understood.

“Species of greatest concern are those with known sensitivities to EMF, like elasmobranches and species that undertake long-distance migrations and might use the earth’s magnetic field,” said Pete Jumars, professor and director of the University of Maine’s School of Marine Sciences, via email. Recent studies suggest that lobsters and other decapods, such as crabs and shrimp, may use electro and magnetic fields. The BOEM report summarizes responses to EMFs in five marine animals, one of which is the spiny lobster. Spiny lobsters use the earth’s magnetic field for navigating. “There is information out there about spiny lobsters and Caribbean lobsters, but none about the American lobster,” said Damian Brady, assistant research professor at the Darling Marine Center who is assisting the DeepC Wind consortium on marine studies related to offshore wind turbine siting. “It’s assumed that American lobsters will respond to EMFs the same way other lobsters do, but we don’t know that.” Jumars noted that American and spiny lobsters are not closely related.

Because they spend their adult life on the seafloor, lobsters are exposed to the highest magnetic field strength from undersea electric cables. This could affect the lobsters’ navigation during seasonal and feeding migrations. “What we want to know is, will lobsters avoid these cables,” explained Brady. DeepC Wind, in collaboration with the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL), is beginning to look at how American lobsters will react to EMFs. “We asked them to do the testing because of the primary importance of lobster to Maine’s economy and identity,” Jumars explained.

Researchers acknowledge that there are many gaps in knowledge about marine animals’ reactions to power cables and the electro-magnetic fields they produce. “It’s scary that large scale projects are being planned when we don’t really understand how they could impact our livelihoods”, stated Patrice McCarron, Director of the Maine Lobstermen’s Association. “It appears that the impacts can be mitigated if the cables are shielded, but that technology costs money”. The BOEM report concludes that more research needs to be done to better understand these interactions. Brady thinks there will be more conclusive information available in the near future. “Within the coming year we’ll know more,” he predicted. Jumars noted that undersea cables are not a new element in the marine environment. “There are many submarine power cables [carrying electricity] in various places around the U.S. coast and few reports of any major effects [on marine species],” he said.

The University of Maine will test three different turbine platforms at a site in the Gulf of Maine. The effect future electricity cables might have on marine species is as yet unclear.

Image courtesy of the Advanced Structures and Composites Center.

EMF exposure can be greatly reduced by shielding undersea cables. “There are simple things we can do to mitigate exposure,” Brady explained. One option is to bury the cables on the ocean floor. The magnetic field emitted from a cable decreases the deeper it is buried. Alternatively, layers of concrete or other material can be placed over the cables. Drawbacks to these solutions, as recognized in the BOEM report, are disturbance of the seafloor and changing the local habitat. The report suggests that sheathing cables may be the best way to limit EMFs without disturbing the habitat. Since the sheathing would also provide protection to the cables, this solution limits excess costs. “These are all options we will have to explore,” noted Brady. Researchers acknowledge that there are many gaps in knowledge about marine animals’ reactions to power cables and the electro-magnetic fields they produce. Because they spend their adult life on the seafloor, lobsters are exposed to the highest magnetic field strength from undersea electric cables. This could affect the lobsters’ navigation during seasonal and feeding migrations. “What we want to know is, will lobsters avoid these cables,” explained Brady. DeepC Wind, in collaboration with the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL), is beginning to look at how American lobsters will react to EMFs. “We asked them to do the testing because of the primary importance of lobster to Maine’s economy and identity,” Jumars explained.

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depends on the last experience [the consumer had] of something that has the name Maine attached to it.”

To promote lobster from Maine as a distinct product in the larger marketplace means paying attention to what Maine lobster actually is. “The Alaskan Seafood Promotion Council looked at what they were trying to sell,” Norton recounted. “They put in place a quality assurance program at the processor and buyer level that moved more salmon into the appropriate market. As a result the Alaskan Wild Caught Salmon campaign has been a huge success.”

“Not every lobster is a Maine lobster. The name is worth something because everyone wants to use it.”

Matching the right product to the appropriate customer is the core of good marketing, according to Norton. That’s certainly part of Haraway’s marketing technique. “We want to carve out a niche by developing value-added products with the world’s best food: Maine lobster. And we want people to know our products are the best because we are offering them Maine lobster,” he explained. “The ‘Maine’ brand means it’s the best lobster in the world.”

John Jordan, president of Calendar Islands Maine Lobster in Portland, agrees. “The reputation of Maine comes before the brand,” he said. “Think of Wyman’s Maine Blueberries or Stonewall Kitchen. They all use the Maine name. Maine lobster is unique because it is identified with the state of Maine.” But, Jordan continued, that name is not of equal value in all sectors of the marketplace. Retail consumers will respond to the name. Large corporations draw on other factors to make their buying decisions.

Calendar Island Maine Lobster turns lobster into value-added products such as lobster pizza, bisque, macaroni and cheese and other items that are easy for the home cook to prepare. To get those food items to the consumer, Norton said, “They put in place a quality assurance program at the processor and buyer level that moved more salmon into the appropriate market. As a result the Alaskan Wild Caught Salmon campaign has been a huge success.”

“Not every lobster is a Maine lobster,” Dorr said firmly. “The name is worth something because everyone wants to use it.”

No matter whether the company is a small family-run business or a large corporation with a global reach, if they are in Maine and they sell lobster, they draw on the name ‘Maine.’ The problem is, so do many other companies not located in the state or who sell Canadian lobster.

The MLA newsletter has the name ‘Maine’ prominently displayed. “When most people think lobster they think Maine lobster,” Dorr said. “I get frustrated when other Web sites say they sell Maine lobster and that they are catching it from their own boats. But they are in Massachusetts or Rhode Island. How’s that work?” He believes that Maine lobster connotes quality lobster, with a distinct taste and freshness that out-of-state retail sellers can’t match. His customers often tell him that the lobster they have purchased tastes better than any other lobster they have eaten.

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He said, “Why should I be an MLA member? The meetings are always interesting and there are good people on the board. I think every person in the industry should belong to an industry organization. It’s the best chance we have to represent ourselves.”

Tad Miller, Matinicus

“Before, I only wanted to represent what I believed in, not what others believed in. I think the older I get, the better I am at listening and more open I am to other opinions.”

Donny Young, Cushing

“I’m getting to be one of the older guys out there, so I’m fighting for a way to keep young guys fishing. The industry has been good to me, so I want to pay it back. I want to make sure it’s good for younger guys the way it has been for me.”

Dwight Carver, Beals

“I’m important to have a heads up to what is coming down the road. If you don’t hear it firsthand from the MLA, you’ll hear it secondhand and won’t know how true it is.”

Mark Jones, Boothbay

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In recent decades, many of the traditional fisheries and fishing techniques used in Maine have begun to fade away. As more fisheries become ever more restricted, fishermen who once moved among them with the seasons have found themselves trapped in lobstering. This series will look at some of the lesser-known fishing practices that still occur along our coast but with ever fewer participants.

Atlantic herring are known to form giant schools as they migrate along the New England coast. Scientists estimate that these schools can comprise hundreds of thousands of individual fish. So it’s no wonder that Native Americans who lived along Maine’s coast and the settlers that followed them quickly learned how to capture the silvery fish for use as food and fertilizer.

Weir fishing for herring was once common along the Maine coast. These heart-shaped enclosures were made of brush and wood poles driven into the seabed close to shore. The migrating herring would flow into the weir, move in a circle inside its edge and then end up in the pocket at its center. As the tide dropped, the fish massed and fishermen in dories scooped them up. These weirs can still be found today off Grand Manan Island in New Brunswick.

Later fishermen turned to stop seines to catch the prolific fish. A stop seine is a net drawn across the mouth of a cove into which the herring move as night falls. The fish become trapped behind the net in a square-shaped pocket as the tide drops. Men dip the fish from the pocket into their boats or the fish are harvested via suction by a larger herring carrier.

Justin Boyce, 28, of Stonington, stop seines for herring each spring, as his father and grandfather have done before him. He understands the nuances of this fishery, that the running twine must be pulled across the cove at the dark of the moon, that the cove’s bottom must be sand or mud, not rock, that the pocket must be set along the deepest part of the net because that is where the schooled fish will settle as the tide changes.

“We [Justin and his father] set on two coves last year,” Justin explained. “In years past we set up to fifteen.” It takes time to set up a stop seine. The practice is done at night when the herring, which have been feeding on the bottom during the day, move up in the water column and toward shore as the sun sets and predators are fewer. Justin will begin to set his nets as the tide is running in. “It takes probably an hour and a half. You set the net out, put the anchors on and then it takes about two hours to tie the pocket on,” he said. “Once the pocket is in you go back and straighten out your anchors.” Once the fish are harvested from the pocket, he must take up the running twine to ensure that it remains clean for the next set. “You don’t want it messed up with seaweed and sticks and so forth,” Justin said.

“It’s hard to say which set will bring a good catch and which will bring a poor one. Generally, the first sets of the year are better than the later. “The mackerel and other fish come in and the herring don’t bunch up so much,” Justin explained. “A good set at the beginning of the season will bring 1,000 bushels. Later you get smaller, 100 bushels sets after that.”

Now that all the sardine canneries have closed and the American appetite for the canned fish has all but vanished, the herring that Justin and his father catch are sold entirely for lobster bait. Demand for that bait remains high. “It makes sense to start on May 1 (rather than June 1, as is mandated by the New England Fisheries Management Council’s herring management plan), particularly this year when the water’s been so warm,” Justin said. “I always see them earlier than June.”
Tales of past years give insight into coastal life

Fishermen tell tales, that’s a fact. It might be the story of a storm, of a boat, or of some type of foolishness long in the past. Storytelling is a way of making sense of the world, of linking together people and places. It is part of exploring, whether you are a young person just getting in to the business or an old-timer watching from shore. In this series we will feature some of the people who make up the world of Maine lobstering and whose stories give color to that world.

By Melissa Waterman

Ralph Colby doesn’t move very fast these days. But then, he doesn’t have to.

From his snug single-story home facing a cove on Spruce Head Island he can watch lobster boats leave in the early morning, return in the afternoon and keep an eye on the activities at adjacent lobster wharves. “A lot of these new guys, they aren’t from here,” Colby, age 96, said, gesturing at the boats in the harbor. “They didn’t grow up on the water. They come from inland.”

Colby isn’t from inland. In fact, he is from Andrews Island, one of the Mussel Ridge Islands just visible to the south. He and his family moved off the island in 1920 to Spruce Head Island not long after the last schoolteacher left. At that time there wasn’t much to see on Spruce Head, other than the boarding house for workers of the Bodwell Granite Company and the small house of the man who owned most of the island. “It was just me and my dad here,” Colby remembered. “There might have been five houses over the bridge on the mainland.”

As a boy Colby fished ten or fifteen traps and helped his father as well. But at age 14 he went to work at a chicken farm a few miles up the St. George peninsula. There he lived for several years, coming home when he could. Eventually he left the farm and began tending herring weirs. “There were a lot around here,” Colby recalled. “I bailed a lot of fish out of those, all by hand. We didn’t have a bit of machinery.”

When the herring came in along the shore in the early summer, there was plenty of work for men like Colby and others who bailed tons of the silvery fish from dories within the weirs. “Guess what I was paid?” Colby asked. “One cent per bushel.”

Colby recognized that the lobstering world, like the world at large, has changed momentously since he began fishing so many years ago. The fact that so many young men and women from other parts of Maine and New England are now lobstering surprises and troubles him. “There aren’t many of them around anymore,” he said. “I had a compass. And you just know where things are, right?” he replied.

Being a lobsterman wasn’t a route to riches in past decades. Colby remembered one time when he and two other men loaded a crate and a half of lobsters. They decided to motor down to Witham’s Lobster Pound in Tenant’s Harbor (now owned by Linda Bean) to sell their catch. “They went for 13 cents a pound,” Colby said. “That was a penny more than we could have gotten here.”

Colby always fished from a wooden boat. He eventually had a 32-foot boat built on the Westcrag River in South Thomaston by his brother-in-law. “They [the McNen family] were stonecutters working down at Clark Island [in St. George],” Colby explained. “But my brother-in-law was a genius. He could do anything, I don’t care what it was. He designed and built me my boat.” Colby has never owned a fiberglass vessel: “I couldn’t stand the noise.”

Colby recognizes that the lobstering world, like the world at large, has changed momentously since he began fishing so many years ago. The fact that so many young men and women from other parts of Maine and New England are now lobstering in the waters that he and his father fished surprises and troubles him. “There weren’t many of them around anymore,” he said. “I had a compass. And you just know where things are, right?” he replied.

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Maine Lobstermen’s Association and Maine Lobstermen’s Alliance board of directors’ meetings

May 1, Belfast — David Cousens opened the meeting and welcomed Amy Lent, Executive Director of the Maine Maritime Museum, as a member of the MLAliance Board. Patrick McCarron reviewed old business including the April Meeting Summary, MLA’s comments on NEFMC Herring Amendment 5; and year-to-date financials.

The Directors raised concerns over this year’s spring fishery. Concerns include boat price, scarcity of lobsters, early arrival of shedders, and the earliest split price that anyone can remember. Dave Cousins and Bob Baines reminded MLA Directors about the upcoming LAC outreach meetings in June featuring John Sauve of the Food and Wellness Group. They asked directors to urge lobstermen to attend these meetings so that individuals can learn first-hand about a new strategy to build demand for Maine lobster as a means to increase boat price.

McCarron presented an update on the right whale risk model developed by Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, with support from MLA, to estimate the risk of a right whale encountering lobster gear. Earlier runs of the model contained errors in the fishing effort data. Current runs of the model show different results than the NMFS model. The Directors discussed what the model results mean for future management options and concluded that all of these models are just a guess at what may be happening. They believe the proposal that MLA developed in collaboration with Maine DMR, which creates a new 6-mile line, is still the best plan on the table for Maine. The MLA is working with the New England Aquarium to get a camera on some lobster traps to better understand the source of abrasion in the sinking groundline off the header trap. There was confusion around the use of floating gangions in the bottom rigging system. David Cousens will follow-up with Col. Joe Fessenden to clarify what is legal.

The Board discussed a transition strategy to move Maine Lobstermen’s Association to the non-profit Maine Lobstermen’s Alliance. The MLA has non-profit status in Maine, but has still not received IRS approval as a charitable non-profit organization. The MLAlliance is working towards applying for grants to hire a Policy Director and to start a Leadership program for lobstermen.

The MLAlliance Board approved a conflict interest and a personnel policy (Motion Elliott Thomas, second Jim Dow; Unanimous approval). The MLAlliance Board will evolve to include members from outside of lobster industry to gain expertise in fundraising, financial management, marketing and operations. However, the MLAlliance must still rely on commercial lobstermen to set policy and vision for the organization, and can assure this participation through advisory committees. The MLA Board will continue to guide this transition. The MLA Board will continue to meet monthly while the MLAlliance Board will meet quarterly.

The Directors agreed to launch the new MLAlliance this summer. Staff will look into the Maine Lobster Festival in August in Rockland as well as additional events in other parts of the coast to promote the launch. Therefore, MLA renewals will be done through the MLAlliance. Staff will work on branding the MLAlliance and developing materials for the launch. A membership renewal committee was formed to discuss changes in the membership structure for this year’s renewal (Jim Dow, Amy Lent, Jack Merrill, David Cousins, Jim Henderson) as well as launch events for the Alliance.

Directors suggested that John Sauve attend the next board meeting to run through the presentation he will be making in June.

lobster advisory council

May 16, Hallowell — The Lobster Advisory Council (LAC) re-elected Bob Baines of South Thomaston as Chair and John Drouin of Cutler as Vice-Chair to serve another term.

John Sauve of the Food and Wellness Group provided the LAC an update on his work through the LAC Marketing Subcommittee, entitled Project Maine Lobster: Build Global Demand. Sauve presented a strategy to increase demand for Maine lobster. The premise is that if you continue to do what you’ve always done, you will get the same outcome, so the Maine lobster industry needs to change its marketing strategy. Sauve, joined by the Lobster Advisory Marketing Subcommittee and Maine DMR staff, will conduct a series of outreach meetings in June in Machias, Ellsworth, Rockland and Yarmouth to present this new marketing strategy to the industry for feedback. The LAC hopes to build industry support and submit a bill to the Legislature for the upcoming session in January 2013.

The LAC Marketing Subcommittee presented options to fund a new lobster marketing entity. Commissioner Kellher explained that due to Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with National Marine Fisheries Service, funds can...
Shedders continued from page 1

John Norton, president of Cozy Harbor Seafood in Portland, estimates that between Pemaquid Point and Portland about 70 percent of the catch is “new shells” which are already being sold for split prices. “We started seeing those at least two weeks ago,” said Norton in mid-May. “The presence isn’t a surprise but the percentage in some areas is very high.”

Lobster experts estimate that it takes six to seven years for a lobster to reach one pound in weight. During those years, it molts about 25 times. An adult male lobster sheds its shell twice each year and a female usually molts once each year, increasing its size by about twenty percent. It takes about six to eight weeks for the shell to harden.

One of the owners of Bayley’s Lobster Pound in Scarborough explained that not all shedders can be sold in the retail market because of their fragile condition. Those that can’t be transported must be processed rapidly, which lowers the price that lobstermen are paid.

Sue Bayley noted that it is important to recognize that 30 to 80 percent of shedders, depending on the area of harvest, are not even close to retail quality and must be cooked and processed fairly immediately. “In order to price the retail-quality lobsters, you have to take into account how much of the catch was not usable unless processed,” said Bayley. Vincent Clough, Bayley’s husband, added that the fact that shedders have less meat per pound also affects the price.

Research associate Professor at the University of Maine School of Marine Sciences, Richard Wahle, explained that the warmer water temperatures this past winter may account for the early molting. “July is usually the peak of the shedder season in the midcoast area,” Wahle said. “We might have a second shedder season later in the year. Usually only a small proportion molts a second time. A larger proportion may molt a second time this year [because of warm water].” Wahle said that Rhode Island fishermen have also reported the early appearance of shedders in that area. “They’re appearing ahead of the game,” he said.

Department of Marine Resources lobster biologist Carl Wilson said that the early appearance of shedders could make it difficult for fishermen to plan. Lobstermen usually find shedders first in the shallow water and then follow them into deeper water. However, some of the shedders are already being hauled from deep water. “The question mark,” he said, “is whether more shedders will show up later in the season.”

Although there has been an abundance of shedders in southern Maine, that’s not been the case throughout the state. Katrina Young of Young’s Lobster Pound in Belfast said that she has not seen the abundance reported in southern Maine but has noticed shedders appearing earlier than last year. “We’ve seen some a lot earlier but not many,” said Young. “And they’re selling for a split price.”

Warren Polk, manager of the Corea Lobster Coop in Gouldsboro, reported that lobstermen aren’t finding many shedders in that area either. “We haven’t seen too many, maybe five percent,” said Polk. “I talk to lobster dealers in the area and they haven’t reported too many either.” Polk acknowledged that the ones that have been landed are two to three weeks earlier than in previous years and are already selling for a split price.

Norton confirmed that in areas like Tenants Harbor and Port Clyde 10 to 15 percent of the catch are shedders. Whether there will be a second molting season later this year remains a mystery. So, for now, some Maine lobstermen will venture out early to take advantage of this unusual opportunity.

Colby continued from page 16

never was anyone in it except ones born and brought up here,” he commented. “Now everyone is out there because there’s money in it.”

At the mouth of the lane leading to Colby’s house sits a large rusting anchor approximately four feet in length. Colby explained that the anchor was found on the shore in front of his house one year and hauled up to the road. It may have come from a schooner that lay off his property. Back in the 1800s, the schooners bearing lime made in Rockland would anchor and wait for good winds in the lee of the Mussel Ridge Islands. They wanted to get their dangerous cargo down to the larger ports of Boston and New York City as quickly as they could. When the wind came around, off they would go. “In the old days they told me that there would be near a hundred schooners hiding in this cove waiting for the wind,” Colby said nodding toward the harbor. “If they had a good chance, they would cut their anchor and go.”

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So you want to know:

By Emily Elliott

While lobsters prefer fresh food, they will eat just about anything. As the plentiful supply of fresh herring has diminished and frozen baits have become more common, the nature of what lobstermen use as bait has changed as well. In the brave new world of bait, more and more bait dealers can offer unusual fish processed in exotic locales to Maine lobstermen.

Seth Anderson of O’Hara Bait in Rockland carries a variety of bait products at his facility. He said the bait industry has undergone many changes in the sixteen years he has been in the business as lobstermen moved from using primarily fresh to mostly frozen lobster bait. The strangest bait fish he has on hand in mid-May were orange roughy and alfonsino from New Zealand. He also has carried split Asian carp heads from Mississippi and tuna heads from Vietnam.

“I sometimes get rockfish from Vancouver, the equivalent of redfish. I’ve gotten ten Icelandic sheepheads and buffaloheads from Illinois. Some of these fish are the byproduct of flooding in the catfish farms down south in the 1990s,” Anderson said.

The rockfish at O’Hara Bait come from the seafood distributor, Pacific Seafood, located in Oregon. According to Tyson Yech, sales representative at Pacific Seafood, the fish are wild-caught along the Canadian, Alaskan and Californian coasts. “The fish are caught with trawl nets or sometimes hook and line from fishermen. They are offloaded at the docks and sent to our factories. We slice up the fish into fillets, which we sell to wholesalers, retailers, and restaurants. The leftover carcasses are used for bait,” Yech said.

Jenny Bichrest owns and operates Purse Line Bait in Sebasco Estates. She said that most non-traditional bait sold today is caught in the United States, processed overseas and shipped back to American bait dealers. Purse Line often buys Asian carp heads and cobia harvested in Mississippi, as well as tuna heads from Ghana.

Anthony Robinson of Dropping Springs Bait in Portland sells primarily pogies and herring, the baits long favored by lobstermen. In the seven years he’s been in business, the strangest bait he’s seen offered for sale is rawhide. Yes, rawhide, from a cow. “The strangest thing I have on hand right now is probably rockfish from Vancouver, British Columbia. I really usually just carry the ordinary stuff for this area. I don’t get a lot of really unusual fish as bait,” Robinson said.

Glenn Hall, owner of Superior Bait and Salt in Tenant’s Harbor sells only pogies and herring, nothing out of the ordinary. “This is a small outfit, a family operation. We don’t process a lot and we do all the work ourselves, my family and I. We get some help from a couple of housewives. We don’t have a big freezer or train cars to allow us to transport those foreign fish. We pride on ourselves on the quality of our bait, that’s why we’re named Superior Bait,” Hall said.

Herring runs in his blood, Hall said. “I’ve been in the bait business since 1975, in the herring business all my life. I started out purse, then stop-seining, and running herring with my boat. Eventually we bought trucks. We built this business from the bottom up.”

Frozen bait now comes from the far ends of the globe to Maine’s many lobster wharves. Patrice McCarron photo.
Stop seining continued from page 15

Justin is frustrated that those who stop seining for herring have been lumped in with the mobile herring fishermen in reference to the herring quota allocation for Area 1A. “It doesn’t make any sense,” he said. Under the NEFMC herring management plan, he must abide by the 10 percent by-catch limit for river herring. “I don’t know if I’ve hit that until I take the herring out [of the pocket] and then I have to dump the whole set,” he said. He also doesn’t understand why fishermen east of Cutler are exempt from Maine’s herring regulations, which set specific days on which stop seine fishermen can operate.

Justin’s uncle, lobsterner Ted Boyce, 63, started seining for herring as a child in grade school with his father, George. “My grandfather bought some seining outfits back in the thirties. When Dad got out of the service he took that over,” Ted explained. In those days stop seining began on Memorial Day and went through to July. “It was quite an operation,” Ted recalled. The first and most important part of the process was to find the herring. The fish might be in this cove or that cove and most important part of the process was to find to July.

Eventually Ted learned to fly a small airplane and began spotting the schools of herring from the air. That, he said, changed the whole operation. “We had real good luck. One time we got a nice bunch of fish over to Islesboro. We set over there for a couple of weeks and the carriers would come every day,” Ted remembered. He estimated that they cleared 2,000 hogshead of herring (63 gallons to a hogshead) in that location.

Seining herring wasn’t Ted’s only line of work. “We did a little clamming. My dad always went scalloping.

“My dad had a peapod. We’d go up to the Merchants Island area quiet as we could. He’d put cloth in the oarlocks [to muffle sound] and I’d row him about. He’d use a feeling pole to find the fish and judge the size.” It takes two men in dories to stretch the net across the cove’s mouth. Sometimes Ted’s father would leave him on shore while he and the other man went out to check the mass of the herring again. “I’d be scared to death, wondering what was coming out of the woods for me,” Ted said with a chuckle.

In those days nets weren’t made of monofilament or nylon threads. “It was cotton twine and cork floats,” Ted said. “We had to salt everything in [when the nets were pulled] to keep it all from rotting.”

During the years when there was no herring we would collect that Irish moss for the plant in Stonington,” he said. Stop seining for herring may be a practice found less frequently along the Maine coast these days but it still provides a lot of bait to local lobsterner early in the season. And a profitable, if back-breaking, line of work for fishermen for the lean months of spring.

Meeting Roundup continued from page 17

not be raised through a tax on landings because it would conflict with the state’s landings and statistics program. The Subcommittee is seeking industry feedback to assist in developing options to raise $3 million from the lobster industry, through either an increase in license fees, or a combination of increasing license fees and trap tag fees. The funds would be raised over 3 years with a proposed budget of $1 million in 2014, $2 million in 2015, $3 million in 2016. The LAC briefly discussed the lack of consistency amongst enforcement on the zero tolerance v-notch definition. LAC members strongly endorsed continuing with the zero tolerance v-notch definition, but encouraged DMR to work internally to ensure consistency in enforcement. DMR is encouraging all fishermen to renew commercial licenses through the Maine’s online system located at www.dem.state.me.us/licenses. Local libraries throughout the state are trained and can help fishermen with online renewals. Online renewal will also expedite trap tag orders and help the DMR move towards a paperless licensing system that could save up to $75,000 in postage and printing costs.

Col Fessenden announced that a new Marine Patrol Officer will be starting in the South Thomaston area. The travel survey is currently underway with minimal conflicts with local gear. The elver fishery continues to strain enforcement resources as elvers reportedly sell for more than $2,000 per pound. While the elver resource is under stress, the tribal government has issued an additional 235 licenses. Marine Patrol has a short lobster case in Washington County working its way through the area. The tribal government asked for more enforcement at particular location with respect to shell disease. DMR’s sea samplers will be on vessels throughout the season to collect samples for shell disease.

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

The ASMFC met April 30 to May 3. The Commission’s Atlantic Herring Section approved for public comment Draft Addendum V to Amendment 2 to the Atlantic Herring Management Plan. The Draft Addendum proposes measures effecting Atlantic herring spawning regulations. These regulatory changes are in four main areas – the fishery management program, catch monitoring at sea, measures to address river herring bycatch, and mid-water trawl access to groundfish closed areas. The Draft Addendum came about as a result of observed changes in Atlantic herring spawning behavior (size of spawning fish and extent of spawning area) as well as the need to clarify spawning regulations so that they are interpreted and applied consistently among the implementing states. Public comment on Addendum V will be accepted until 5 p.m. on June 15.

The American Lobster Board approved for public comment Draft Addendum XVIII to Amendment 3 to the American Lobster Management Plan. The Draft Addendum responds to the depleted condition of the Southern New England (SNE) lobster resource. Its intent is to scale the capacity of the SNE fishery to the size of the resource, with an initial goal of reducing trap allocation by at least 25% over a five to ten year period. Since the scope of the SNE resource encompasses all or part of six of the seven LCMA’s, additional addenda will be developed to address effort reduction in the remaining LCMA’s.

The Draft Addendum proposes a consolidation program for LCMA’s 2 and 3. Measures considered in the addendum include trap allocations, trap banking, and controlled growth for participants in the fishery. Because each LCMA has limited entry programs with specific criteria and eligibility periods, latent effort differs between the areas. Thus different measures will be developed for each LCMA. Public comment on the Draft Addendum will be accepted until 5 p.m. on July 10.

Regarding river herring, an independent panel of scientists endorsed the findings of the 2012 Benchmark Stock Assessment for River Herring, concluding the overall coastwide population of river herring (alewife and blueback herring) stocks on the Atlantic coast is depleted to near historic lows. The Board reviewed the alternatives under consideration in the New England Fisheries Management Council’s Draft Amendment 5 and recommended that a letter be sent to the NEFMC supporting any measures that will improve accuracy and accounting of catch reporting.
In the News

Statoil seeks public input on offshore Gulf of Maine wind project

Statoil North America, Inc. will be holding introductory public information sessions for the Hywind Maine pilot offshore wind project during June. All sessions will be Open House format so individuals can speak to our team members, gather information, and learn how to stay informed throughout the regulatory process. The pilot project will include four floating wind turbines in federal waters and is scheduled for construction in 2016.

The meetings will be held:
June 25, 4 – 7 p.m., Boothbay Firehouse, 911 Wiscasset Road, Boothbay; June 26, 5:30-8 p.m., Rockland Public Library, 80 Union Street, Rockland; June 27, 4 – 7 p.m., Gulf of Maine Research Institute, 350 Commercial Street, Portland.

Lobster shipments to China blossom

Atlantic Canada is selling 30 times as much lobster to China as it was just two years ago, suddenly making it one of the east coast’s most important lobster export sources. Lobster brokers believe that China’s economy will support continued and increased imports of Canadian lobster in coming years. Currently Belgium is the second largest buyer of Canadian lobster; the country acts as the gateway for lobster sales in Europe. The United States remains the largest importer.

New face at DMR

Meredith Mendelson has been named the new deputy commissioner of Department of Marine Resources. She began her job on June 4. Mendelson returns to Maine from Washington D.C. where she worked for Senator Olympia Snowe as a staff attorney focusing on national fisheries legislation and policy.

Mendelson attended Bates College and went to University of Maine School of Law in Portland before obtaining a fellowship at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resources. She worked for the Community Program at the Gulf of Maine Research Institute for three years, then served as groundfish sector manager in Pt. Judith, Rhode Island. Her responsibilities at DMR will focus on federal policy issues, legislation, and budget items as well as emerging issues such as offshore wind.

Drone dives into the deep

An ocean-going drone known as a Wave Glider was launched in early May launched in the Gulf of Maine. Unmanned and remotely operated, the Wave Glider will collect data on ocean conditions in the Gulf of Maine for six to eight weeks. While making its way through the Gulf at one to two m.p.h., the 7-foot robot will collect data on ocean conditions in the Gulf of Maine for six to eight weeks.

Lobstermen

Please contact Laura Ludwig at 207-263-5300 or lldowneast@gmail.com, if you have any amount of used, 7/16” (15-thread) line also acceptable; call for details. Both float rope and sink rope are acceptable. Rhode Island and New York are eligible for this last rope buyback opportunity. All data are transmitted from the Wave Glider to shore using satellite radio transmission. This is the first time an oceanographic drone has been deployed on the east coast.

Classifieds

For Sale: 660 traps for sale. Built by Brooks Trap Mill or Northeast Trap, good to “like new” condition. Fifty 7/16 Everunion sinking groundlines; 100+ 7x15 buoys and flags; one Spectra twine skiff net with 45’ chain sweep, 6” twine and 7” knotless nylon bag; one Stainless Steel piccolo-style gillnet lifter. Call Aaron at 401-218-5764 (cell) during the day and 401-284-3384 in the evening for prices.
**Events Calendar**

**June 4**  
Island limited entry program and Monhegan Island Apprenticeship program rulemaking hearing, 6 p.m., Ellsworth City Hall Auditorium, Ellsworth.

**June 5**  
MLA Directors meeting, 5 p.m., Darby’s Restaurant, Belfast.

**June 6**  
NEFMC Herring Committee, 9:30 a.m., Radisson Hotel, Plymouth, MA.  
Island limited entry program and Monhegan Island Apprenticeship program rulemaking hearing, 6 p.m., Casco Bay Lines conference room, Portland.

**June 12**  
Project Maine Lobster: Build Global Demand, lobster industry outreach meeting, 6-9 p.m., Log Cabin, Yarmouth. FMI: 967-4555.

**June 14**  
Project Maine Lobster, industry outreach meeting, 6-9 p.m., Rockland Oceanside High School Auditorium, Rockland. FMI: 967-4555.

**June 16**  
Boothbay Harbor Lobster Boat races. FMI: 633-3915

**June 17**  
Rockland Lobster Boat races. FMI: 354-8763

**June 18**  
Project Maine Lobster, industry outreach meeting, 6-9 p.m., University of Maine Machias, # 102, Machias. FMI: 967-4555.

**June 21**  
“Claws & Spines,” Maine lobster and spiny lobsters, 6-7:30 p.m., Penobscot East Resource Center, Stonington.

**June 24**  
Bass Harbor lobster boat races. FMI: 244-9623.

**June 25**  
Hywind project information session, 4 – 7 p.m., Boothbay Firehouse.

**June 26**  
Hywind project information session, 5:30 – 8 p.m., Rockland Public Library.

**June 27**  
Hywind project information session, 4-7 p.m., Gulf of Maine Research Institute, Portland.

**June 30**  
Moosebeck Reach Lobster Boat races, Jonesport. FMI: 598-6681

**Upcoming**

**July 10**  
MLA Directors Meeting, 5 p.m., Darby’s Restaurant, Belfast.

**July 12**  
“Tall Tales,” 6-7:30 p.m., Fishermen’s Friend Restaurant, Stonington.

**July 22**  
Annual Fishermen’s Family Fun Day, Stonington Fish Pier.

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Photograph from the Penobscot Marine Museum collections


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Anti-trust continued from page 5

are indifferent to everything except the preservation of competition,” Mason said. Even more troubling is the fierce scrutiny given to any actions that could possibly restrain trade. Mason explained that, under the U.S. Act, agreements can be defined as either explicit or tacit. “One of the most difficult things to deal with when defending clients can be a series of circumstantial events that effectively lead to an agreement,” she said. “Conversations followed by specific actions that are consistent with that conversation can be deemed to be an agreement.”

Through its revisions in 2009, the Canadian Competition Act also strengthened provisions pertaining to the definition of agreements. “In order to convict under the conspiracy provision, you had to prove the agreement had been implemented and that it would have a significant anti-competitive effect,” Fanaki explained. “That section was too broad. Now it focuses on agreements between competitors to fix prices, allocate markets and reduce output.”

Canada generally uses the Competition Act sparingly, according to Brun. “Fish harvesters have been historically perceived as a hybrid situation of both being in a labor relationship and owner of small businesses. Not to mention that the authorities are greatly underfunded and choose their battles very carefully,” he commented.

But on this side of the border, Maine lobstermen find themselves between the proverbial rock and a hard place. As individual businessmen, they enjoy a high degree of independence, choosing when to work, where to work, and what to pay their sternmen, who are not considered business employees. On the other hand, should two or more individual lobstermen or lobster cooperatives take any actions that appear to influence the price of those lobsters they harvest, they can be accused of violating the Sherman Anti-Trust Act. And so the long arm of a law created in the days of J.P. Morgan and Standard Oil continues to catch many in its trap!
I wanted to be involved with the MLA to represent lobstering downeast,” MLA Board Director Kristan Porter said. “Every part of the state fishes a little bit differently, so it’s important to have your voice heard for your area.” Porter, 41, has been lobstering from Cutler throughout his life and was elected to the MLA Board of Directors in 2003.

Lobster is not the only fishery Porter’s involved in. He also holds a federal permit for scallops and quahogs. His involvement with fishing industry associations started in 1991 when he became a member of the Downeast Draggers Association. Porter also has served on the Maine Fishermen’s Forum Board of Directors for 16 years, and was elected president three years ago.

As a full-time lobsterman, Porter believes it’s important to be a member of the MLA. “I think everybody, especially the younger guys, should be aware of what’s going on,” he said. “A lot of things happen in the industry, and a lot of things don’t happen because of the MLA,” he said, referring to some proposed policy changes that would have been detrimental to the industry. Porter acknowledges that it’s difficult for the younger generation of lobstermen to join an industry association. He can relate, with three kids at home. “With so many other things in life, it’s hard for people to commit to meetings each month,” he said. For Porter, however, it’s worth the time commitment. “You get to know people up and down the coast. It’s good to understand how everyone is fishing,” he said.

“We have a great board,” Porter said about the MLA. “I hope everyone knows how hard the board works for the state and for the people who make their living fishing. It’s not a western or eastern Maine fishery. We do what’s best for all full-time fishermen.”

Mike Myrick of Cushing also makes time to be on the board of the MLA. “I was involved in various things throughout the years. It was really just the natural progression of things to join the MLA,” Myrick said. He was elected to the Board of Directors in 2005.

Myrick, 60, has been fishing full-time in Zone D since 1971. He got his lobster license when he was seven years old. “I’ve always had an interest in the MLA, way back to the days of Ed Blackmore,” he said. “I always tried to keep in touch and always was a firm believer in the MLA.” Myrick was on the Zone D Council for ten years, starting in 1996, and was a representative from Zone D to the Lobster Advisory Council. “I’d rather know what’s coming and be proactive, not reactive,” he explained about his involvement. “I like to know what’s coming down the road rather than sit around and guess. I’ve been around too long to do that.”

Myrick also volunteered this past January to join Heather Tetreault, MLA’s whale projects coordinator, and fellow MLA director Bobby Ingalls on a right whale survey trip. “That was a real eye-opening experience,” Myrick said. The day was spent recording sightings of right whales in Jordan Basin and the Cashes Ledge area on a 112-foot catamaran. “It was worth the trip and worth the day off from fishing,” he said.

In 2006, Myrick received the MLA Golden V Notch Award, the association’s highest honor, at the Maine Fishermen’s Forum banquet. The award was created to recognize an industry member who has gone “above and beyond the call of duty” in an effort to maintain a healthy resource and fishery for Maine lobstermen. “I was really proud,” Myrick said about receiving the award. “If I can be supportive in any way, I’ll do it as long as I can.”

Being part of the MLA board has proved to be a valuable experience for Myrick. “I’ve met a lot of really great people along the way. It’s been a good ride and worthwhile. I enjoy the directors meetings. It’s a good time to get together and talk with other fishermen up and down the coast. You can sit down and get a real sense of what’s going on. For the young fellows who have the opportunity to get involved, they should. I wish I had started younger!”