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American Lobster Benchmark Stock Assessment finds stock not depleted but overfished

DEWEY BEACH, DE – The Commission's American Lobster Management Board received the results of the 2025 American Lobster Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report, which presents contrasting results for the two American lobster stocks in US waters. The Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank (GOM/GBK) stock is not depleted but has declined 34% since peak levels in 2018, and overfishing is occurring. The Southern New England (SNE) stock remains significantly depleted with record low abundances for all life stages in recent years.

“The Benchmark Stock Assessment is a considerable advancement in our understanding US American lobster resource. It was fully endorsed by an external panel of fishery scientists as the best scientific information available to manage the lobster resource,” stated Board Chair Renee Zobel from New Hampshire. “On behalf of the American Lobster Board, I commend the members of the Technical Committee and Stock Assessment Subcommittee for their outstanding work on the 2025 Benchmark Stock Assessment Report. This assessment reflects the commitment of the Committee and Peer Review Panel to providing the Board with the highest-caliber science to inform management decisions and improve our understanding of the complex and changing relationship between the environment and lobster resource.”



There are notable differences between the fisheries operating in the GOM and GBK portions of the GOM/GBK stock. The GOM fishery accounts for the vast majority of US lobster landings, averaging 82% of the annual landings since 1982, and is predominately carried out by small vessels making day trips in nearshore waters. The GBK fishery is considerably smaller, averaging 5% of the landings since 1982, and is predominantly carried out by larger vessels making multi-day trips to offshore waters. Total GOM/GBK annual landings increased from a stable period in the 1980s, averaging approximately 35.4 million pounds, through the 1990s and 2000s, exceeding 100 million pounds for the first time in 2009. Landings from 2012 through 2018 stabilized at record lev-

els, averaging 145.7 million pounds. Landings have declined since the last assessment, averaging 123.6 million pounds from 2019-2023.

Historically, the SNE fishery was predominately an inshore fishery. Landings peaked in 1997 at 21.8 million pounds and accounted for 26% of the total US lobster landings. Following the peak, landings from SNE have continuously declined to the lowest on record in 2023 (1.7 million pounds), now accounting for only 1% of the US landings. The fishery has also shifted to a predominantly offshore fishery as inshore abundance declined at a faster rate.

In the GOM/GBK stock, recruitment and spawning stock biomass estimates have declined in recent years from record highs. Recent

exploitation is just above the exploitation threshold, indicating overfishing is occurring. Given the overfishing status and rapid declines in abundance in recent years, the Stock Assessment Subcommittee encouraged the initiation of a management strategy evaluation to establish clear management objectives for all stakeholders, better understand socioeconomic status and concerns, and identify potential management tools that might be supported by the industry and prevent further declines. Although continued adverse environmental indicators suggest environmental conditions are major contributors to the poor abundance status in SNE, the Stock Assessment Subcommittee believes significant management action would provide the best chance of stabilizing or improving the abundance and reproductive capacity of this stock.

The assessment highlights extensive research on the influence of the environment on American lobster life history and population dynamics. Among the critical environmental variables, temperature stands out as the primary influence. The American lobster's range is experiencing changing environmental conditions at some of the fastest rates in the world, making consideration of environmental factors essential when assessing the lobster stocks. Therefore, the assessment incorporated environmental data time series including

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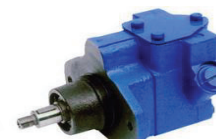
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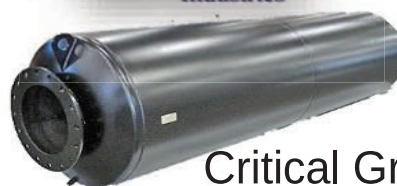
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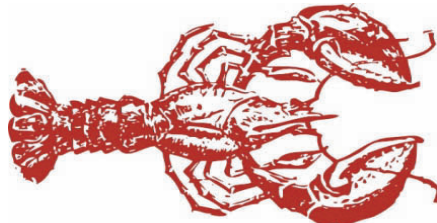
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The Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association

would like to welcome the following new members to the Association. Your Association will continue its efforts on your behalf to conserve the resource, protect your livelihood, keep you informed, promote the industry and provide you with increasing benefits as they are developed. MLA stands ready to help you in anyway, at anytime — just let us know how! Safe on the water and good fishing!

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Published by the Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association, Inc.
8 Otis Place, Scituate, MA 02066

— Published monthly —

Mailed to all paid members of the Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association

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As the HAULER TURNS

As 2025 winds down and we prepare for Thanksgiving and Christmas, the MLA is already looking ahead to our **2026 Annual Weekend & Industry Trade Show** this January! We're excited to welcome back many of our prominent vendors, offer a full slate of informative seminars, and, of course, host the **infamous MLA Hospitality Suite**—where the laughs flow as freely as the libations.

If you haven't yet reserved your hotel room or meal tickets, don't delay! Visit www.lobstermen.com today to secure your spot.

Amidst all the holiday and Annual Weekend preparations, we've also been hard at work developing a **new suite of MLA websites**. Our goal is to modernize our online presence while improving access to key information and services.

We'd love your feedback on the following sites:

- www.lobstermen.com
- www.fishermenservices.com
- www.lobsterfoundationofma.org

If there's **anything** you'd like to see added or improved, please email jlogan@lobstermen.com. Your input helps us serve you better!

On October 28th, the **ASMFC Lobster Board** met to review and approve the **2025 American Lobster Benchmark Stock Assessment**.

Dr. Tracy Pugh, Invertebrate Fisheries Project Leader for the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries and Chair of the ASMFC Technical Committee, gave a comprehensive presentation covering everything from lobster life history to recruitment covariates and effective exploitation modeling.

Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank:

Abundance is below the target threshold but above the limit, the stock is not depleted. However, exploitation is slightly above the threshold by 0.00066, indicating that overfishing is occurring.



Southern New England:

Abundance remains well below the threshold, and the stock is severely depleted, though overfishing is not occurring.

Following this review, the Lobster Board voted to have the Technical Committee **project the potential benefits to the GOM/GBK fishery** if the gauge increases outlined in **Addendum XX-VII** were implemented as originally scheduled. **Stay tuned for more details!**

As we close out 2025, I want to extend my **sincerest thanks** to all of you for your hard work, dedication, and continued support of the MLA and the commercial lobster industry.

Wishing you and your families a **Happy Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas, and a joyful New Year.**

Cheers to 2026!

Beth Casoni

Executive Director

Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association

A fisherman bears witness to WHOI's alkalinity experiment in the Gulf of Maine

By SARAH SCHUMANN

"So, you're going on an acid trip?" asked my captain, Dean Pesante, as we threw lines aboard the gillnetter F/V Oceana and prepared to head through the Point Judith Harbor of Refuge and into Rhode Island Sound to haul our gear one late July morning.

Acid trip? It took me a moment to catch his drift. Then I remembered: the afternoon before, I had looped him in on a group text as I tried to find a fill-in deckhand for the date of August 13, when I hoped to join a team from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute (WHOI) as a fishing industry observer for their "Locking Ocean Carbon in the Northeast Shelf and Slope" (LOC-NESS) research cruise.

"Actually, it's an alkalinity trip," I replied. "It may not expand my consciousness. But it could make a valuable contribution to the climate toolkit."

The purpose of the planned "alkalinity trip" was to release 16,500 gallons of highly alkaline sodium hydroxide solution into the surface waters of Wilkinson's Basin in the Gulf of Maine, and then activate a miscellany of scientific instruments – autonomous underwater gliders, aerial drones, all manner of sensors, and plankton sampling equipment – to understand the physical, chemical, and biological effects of this release.

A project like this had never been attempted before, and its novelty has made it a headline issue in New England during the last year. Some community members learning about the project for the first time were flummoxed by the prospect of scientists dumping caustic chemicals into our beloved ocean wilderness. The motives for this project, however, are

well-intentioned, and they relate to the ocean chemical property at the center of my banter with Dean that morning: pH.

The world's oceans have absorbed about 30% of the excess carbon dioxide (CO₂) gas emitted by humans since the Industrial Revolution, and their waters have become more acidic in the process, negatively affecting calcifying organisms such as shellfish and zooplankton. Meanwhile, global warming caused by rising concentrations of CO₂ and other gases in the atmosphere is melting glaciers, strengthening storms, intensifying droughts and heatwaves, and unleashing major changes to forests, farms, fisheries, and the humans who depend on them. These are the problems that the WHOI science team, and others like them around the world, are trying to help solve.

Scientists think that that by adding alkalinity to seawater – a practice known as Ocean Alkalinity Enhancement, or OAE – humans may be able to coax the ocean into removing and storing more carbon safely in the sea, by converting dissolved CO₂ gas to a naturally occurring molecule called sodium bicarbonate. This form of marine carbon dioxide removal (mCDR) could have an added benefit of restoring the pH of local seawater, boosting the survival of shelled marine organisms and the food webs and fisheries that depend on them.

Although these chemical reactions appear straightforward on paper, the WHOI team, led by Dr. Adam Subhas, aimed to go beyond a theoretical analysis. They wanted to put these relationships to test in the real world through an at-sea field trial, designed to be small enough to avoid ecologi-

cal harm but large enough to yield meaningful scientific information for understanding the potential contribution of OAE to carbon removal. They spent several years developing a research plan, assembling funding, securing an EPA permit, coordinating community information exchanges, chartering research vessels, and sourcing the required chemicals from around the world, all to answer the questions: If we add alkalinity to ocean water, how measurable are the indicators of carbon removal? And what impacts will occur to the surrounding ecosystem and sea life?

After all this prep work, they had a lot riding on the August 13 field trial event. And once I'd secured my fill-in deckhand, I had the opportunity to go along as a fishing industry observer and witness the event up close.



GETTING INTO POSITION

On the evening of August 12, the Offshore Supply Vessel (OSV) Peter M. Mahoney departed the shipyard in Quincy, Massachusetts and began to steam 70 nautical miles eastward to the Wilkinson's Basin in the Gulf of Maine. After a hearty meal of mac and cheese prepared by the ship's cook Shane, I read in my bunk until sleep carried me off.

Sharing my stateroom were the three other women on board: an EPA employee who was present to ensure that the project met the conditions of the permit issued under the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act; and two protected species observers to monitor for marine mammals and halt the experiment temporarily if any North Atlantic right whales appeared within 500 yards of the ship. Also on board were the crew of the ship, employed by Goodwin Marine Services; three marine engineers from WHOI; and a team from the global chemical logistics company Fluechem, who traveled from the UK to supervise the handling of the sodium hydroxide.

At 8:00 am on the morning of the 13th, we jogged in place at the designated dispersal side (near 42°32'33"N, 69°31'15"W). All personnel aboard – except the Mahoney's night crew, who were catching some winks after the nighttime transit -- began to assume their positions. In the bridge, ship captain Justin Goodwin took his post at the helm, while WHOI's lead engineer Tom Lanagan set up a table with his laptop, radio, and cellphone for communicating with the research vessel R/V Connecticut, which was arriving on the scene from Woods Hole with a team of scientists and their technical instruments on board.

The EPA monitor and protected species observers perched on the top deck with their cameras and binoculars. One of the Fluechem employees was there too, prepared to relay any information between the bridge and his coworkers, who were suiting up in PPE on the deck below and getting ready to ensure that the sodium hydroxide flowed smoothly and safely out of four ISO tank containers and into the

pipework designed by the WHOI team.

On the back deck, WHOI engineers Fran Elder and Nick Ellis had the job of monitoring flowmeters. The system they had set up two days before involved three separate flows: a finely calibrated pneumatic pump affixed to a manifold, for moving a 50% sodium hydroxide solution out of the ISO tanks through a network of 2" stainless tubes; an IBC tote containing 20% rhodamine water tracer dye (necessary for visualizing the solution once released into the environment) and equipped with an 110-volt pump and a clear 1" garden hose; and a 100-horsepower diesel-powered pump to move seawater from the side of the vessel to the stern of the vessel to enhance the mixing of the combined solution into ocean waters.

All three flows converged in a "snorkel" mounted on the transom, which was lowered to a depth of one to two meters below the waterline. At the end of the snorkel was an outflow nozzle, where the combined solution of saltwater, sodium hydroxide, and rhodamine tracer dye would soon be injected into the surface waters of the Gulf of Maine.

PAINTING THE OCEAN RED

At 9:00 am, the scientists on the R/V Connecticut radioed the OSV Mahoney and gave the go-ahead to start doing the thing that we were there to do: disperse 16,500 gallons of red-dyed sodium hydroxide into ocean water. Fran and Nick activated the pumps and flowmeters, and a feeling of anticipation gripped all those aboard both vessels.

Peering out from the top deck, I beheld a striking shot of magenta surge out of the "snorkel" and pierce the ultramarine surface of the Gulf of Maine. Under Captain Justin's skilled hand, the OSV Mahoney began idling in circles around the initial point of release. Over the next few hours, he slowly expanded his orbit as he created a red, alkaline patch measuring 800 meters in diameter.

The R/V Connecticut trailed 200 meters behind, picking up information about the surface

water's pH and fluorescence (an indicator of the concentration of rhodamine tracer dye). On the OSV Mahoney's bridge, a livestream of these measurements appeared on engineer Tom's laptop, enabling him to instantly spot any increases in pH levels above the EPA-approved thresholds of 8.7 or 10 parts per million (if exceeded, each threshold would trigger a distinct corrective action). As outlined in the research plan and permit, the entire release could take as little as four hours or as many as twelve, with flow rates dictated by the need to remain under the two-tiered pH thresholds to avoid potential harm to marine life.

About four hours into the release, the livestream data dashboard on Tom's computer showed a small spike in pH, exceeding the 8.7 pH threshold by a hair. After consulting with the science team on the R/V Connecticut, Tom instructed the back deck crew to dial down the flow rate by 50%, as stipulated in the permit. This corrective action would extend the dispersal activity by a few hours, but still well within the twelve-hour maximum allowed by the EPA.

The weather was beautiful – clear and sunny, with a gentle breeze. As we orbited the patch again and again, we settled into a pleasant rhythm. The back deck crew, perspiring inside their PPE and laser-focused on their flowmeters, may not have felt so relaxed. But for me, accustomed to rushing around doing deckhand duties on a fishing boat, this was an awfully easy way to be on the water.

I wasn't the only one lolling about in this red sea. At one point, a blue shark zigzagged back and forth beneath the boat. Soon after, an ocean sunfish flopped and basked for a while in the patch.

Every now and then as we circled, we'd pass a drifter buoy. These buoys have underwater sails that keep them pinned to the mass of water they are dropped in, even as currents move this water from its original location. Equipped with GPS beacons, the drifters' role is to make it possible for the science team to track the patch's location even after the rho-

damine tracer dye had ceased to be visible.

The crimson color of the patch became even more intense as we retraced our circles to fill in gaps. The experience began to feel less like a like science experiment led by scientists at WHOI and more akin to a landscape-scale art installation like those fashioned by famed artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude.

Climbing into the bridge and wiping the sleep from his eyes, the mate who had led us to this spot the night before looked out at the day shift's accomplishment.

"We painted the ocean red!" he exclaimed.

I recalled my earlier conversation with Dean on the F/V Oceana, and thought to myself: maybe this trip has some slightly psychedelic qualities, after all.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

At 3:00 pm, the back deck radioed the bridge to announce that the flow rate of the sodium hydroxide had suddenly dropped. The Fluechem crew rushed to the scene to ascertain the reason, which turned out to be simple: the tanks were running dry. Six hours into the day, the trial was complete: the OSV Mahoney had released 16,500 gallons of alkalinity in the Gulf of Maine.

The snorkel and seawater hose were lifted out of the water column. The Fluechem crew used a deck hose to flush out the remaining trickle of sodium hydroxide from the ISO tanks. Fran and Nick, still manning the back deck, packed up their flow meters, stripped off their PPE, and gave each other a fist bump. Nick, who had been testing rhodamine levels with a dipstick throughout the day, had bright pink hands.

As I came inside, I crossed paths with Tom, who was about to store his laptop and binder in his bunk to join his coworkers on deck. I congratulated him on the day's events, and he replied with a sigh of relief, "It only took a year and a half of planning to get this day right!"

Acid Trip

FROM PAGE 9

The OSV Mahoney's job was done, and we returned to Quincy that night. But the R/V Connecticut stayed with the patch for four more days, and WHOI's autonomous underwater gliders remained adrift in the area for another week after that.

It will take many months for the WHOI team to analyze all of the data they have collected, but lead researcher Adam Subhas offered a sneak preview in a mass email on August 17, saying that the treated patch of water had returned to normal pH levels between four and five days after the sodium hydroxide release, that no protected species had been spotted during the dispersal, and that "our shipboard data is confirming the initial hypothesis of no significant environmental impacts." He added:

What's more, our early data clearly shows that we successfully and safely enhanced the alkalinity

of the surface ocean, resulting in a small increase in pH and driving carbon dioxide from the atmosphere into the seawater patch that we tracked through time. We'll be digging into the data in the coming months and sharing results as the analysis proceeds. Our goal remains what it's always been: to provide independent, transparent research that helps determine whether OAE could safely play a role in climate response.

A PROPOSED ROLE FOR FISHING INDUSTRY OBSERVERS IN MCDR FIELD TRIALS

Many fishing vessels are required to take scientifically-trained fisheries observers along on trips to collect data on their catch and bycatch. In joining the OSV Mahoney's journey as a fishing industry observer, I was undertaking a role reversal, hoping to set a precedent for a position that should become standard in all mCDR field trials.

mCDR is a new set of climate solutions that are currently at the research and development stage of their evolution. If this field

expands, we fishermen will undoubtedly find ourselves on the front lines of any negative or positive impacts that may result from these projects. Designating a fishing industry observer to witness each mCDR field trial up close is a straightforward step that we as an industry can take to support transparency and to build our own literacy in these novel methods as they unfold.

It's important that the fishing industry observer commit to relaying his or her field notes to fishermen far and wide so that the entire fleet has access to the knowledge he or she gains. It's also important that fishing industry observers be compensated for their role, just as at-sea scientific monitors are, provided that this exchange of funds must not skew the observer's view of the project in any way.

Hosting a fishing industry observer on board a field trial should not be the first or last step that an mCDR project team takes to engage the fishing industry. In a series of roundtables hosted earlier this year by the Fishery Friendly

Climate Action Campaign and Responsible Offshore Development Alliance, fishermen from Alaska, the West Coast, and New England agreed that engagement of the fishing community should start as early as possible during the research design phase and continue all the way through to data analysis. The LOC-NESS team seems to understand that, and their move to accommodate (and compensate) me as a fishing industry observer on the OSV Mahoney was only the most recent piece of a multi-year fisheries engagement strategy that has also included a number of port workshops, trade show interactions, presentations to the New England Fisheries Management Council, and engagement of state and interstate fisheries management entities.

As future mCDR field trials get underway, I hope that research team leads will follow the LOC-NESS example by inviting a fisherman or industry representative to take part as an observer. I look forward to reading the field notes that future observers share with the industry!

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“Low Carbon Fishing Fleet” fellowship begins

BY DOREEN LEGGETT

Captain Dean Karoblis has a close relationship with the John Deere engine that powers his fishing vessel Molly May. He trusts it; as with all fishermen that’s crucial, for lobstermen perhaps even more so.

“Everything I fish is right whale critical habitat,” he said, adding the season is so short, missed days are disastrous. “If any lobsterman is down and out when it’s on, you’re screwed.”

Still, he is willing to experiment with something new.

“I’d go with a hybrid-electric boat. I tie up every night,” he said, gesturing to the electric hook up a few feet from his slip at the Sandwich Marina.

Karoblis’ decision to apply for the Fishery Friendly Climate Action Campaign’s “Low Carbon Fishing Fleet” fellowship was born of experience, forethought and temperament.

For stability and to supplement income, Karoblis recently got his CDL, commercial driver’s license, and learned the state is mandating more energy-efficient trucks, phasing in decarbonization. He has seen fishermen’s businesses upended by changing regulations they had no input on, so he wants to be proactive. And, already seeing the benefits of advocacy as an elected Delegate for the Massachusetts Lobstermen’s



Dean Karoblis aboard his f/v Molly May.

Association, he wanted to do more to help the industry.

When he saw a Facebook post from Sarah Schumann – director of the fishermen-led Campaign – asking for applications for funded fellowships, he applied.

“I had to do a resume for the first time,” the 40-year-old said with a chuckle. “AI (artificial intelligence) helped with that.”

Schumann fishes commercially out of Rhode Island and Alaska and joined four other researchers to publish a lengthy report, “Transition to a Low Carbon Fishing Fleet,” finished earlier this year.

She said wild seafood harvest already has one of the lowest carbon footprints among protein sources and plays an essential role in national food security. But maritime clean energy solutions lag behind innovation on land.

“Climate and energy issues are defining features of what it means to be a seafood harvester today,” Schumann said when the report was released. “Whether we’re grappling with ocean acidification, warming-induced volatility in our catches, or the impacts of ocean-based renewable energy development in our most precious fishing grounds, fishermen are feeling the heat. This research meets the moment head-on and shows the fishing community – and the working class in general – have what it takes to lead.”

The eighteen-volume report is the product of interviews with 148 fishermen across eight states, including a half dozen from Cape Cod.

The volumes detail real-world experiences, motivations, and barriers to adoption for numerous energy conservation strategies, as well as next-generation power systems such as electric propulsion, alternative liquid and gaseous fuels.

The bulk of the volumes evaluated a patchwork of funding supports that were already on the books, many unknown by fishermen and confusing.

An example: A lobsterman in Cutler, Maine (a town of just over



Sarah Schumann fishes commercially out of Rhode Island and Alaska and joined four other researchers to publish a lengthy report, “Transition to a Low Carbon Fishing Fleet,” finished earlier this year.

500 people) may access funding for highly efficient LED lights under the USDA’s Rural Energy for America Program. The fisherman’s cousin in Portland (a city of almost 70,000) can access the same funding opportunity, but only because she also grows kelp and oysters in addition to lobstering. Their uncle in New Bedford, who owns and operates a scalloper, will continue to run his inefficient sodium lights because there is no program available to support urban fishermen not also engaged in aquaculture.

Schumann said there are a lot of small energy-efficient fixes commercial fishermen would benefit from if funded. She said it is often assumed fishermen have already made those upgrades, but regulatory, market and environmental uncertainties make investments difficult.

She considers the last volume, which contains fishermen’s recommendations for new policies and programs, the most important.

The fellowship is meant to take the information gathered and develop action plans to fill gaps, educate and involve fishermen. Schumann said she looked for fishermen in Maine, Massachusetts and Rhode Island who were curious, emerging leaders invested in making the next few decades a success.

“(Karoblis) is exactly the kind of person I was looking for,” she said.

Karoblis, from Plymouth, has a lobster pedigree. His late father, also Dean, fished out of Sandwich as well. The younger Karoblis has been on the water since he was five and began lobstering in earnest during summers in high school.



LFoM Update: Cleaner Seas, Smarter Gear, Stronger Voice



TRASH TALK: A CLEANER OCEAN, ONE BAG AT A TIME

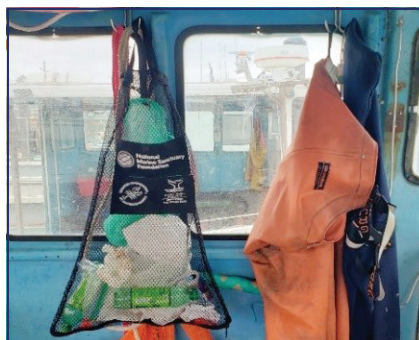
At the Lobster Foundation of Massachusetts, protecting the ocean that sustains our coastal communities is what we're all about. Ocean conservation can sound complicated, but sometimes, it starts with something as simple as a "trash bag".

Thanks to generous funding from the Bilezikian Family Foundation, we're expanding our marine debris educational outreach campaign, reaching more people, sharing better tools, and strengthening on a message we care deeply about: *What we do on the water matters.*

Back in 2019, we teamed up with the Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association (MLA) and Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary to launch a marine debris educational outreach campaign with a clear ask: *don't toss your trash overboard.*

Our slogan, "Use the Pail, Not the Rail," quickly became more than words, it became a shared commitment.

Although a catchy slogan was a good start, we knew it wasn't enough to keep trash out of the ocean. That's why we created the "Boat Trash Bag."



Built tough and simple, it fits right on any boat, whether you're hauling traps or just spending time on the water with family. It's an easy way to keep trash where it belongs, on board, so together, we can protect the ocean that's been part of our lives for generations.

As part of this campaign, we developed useful educational materials for commercial fishermen, recreational boaters, and the public. No speeches, just straightforward info that empowers people to do the right thing.

Now, with additional support from the Bilezikian Family Foundation, we're rebranding for today's diverse marine community. That means a new slogan:

"Bag Your Debris Before It Hits the Sea."

It's still catchy and clear, just a simple way to remind us we're all in this together.

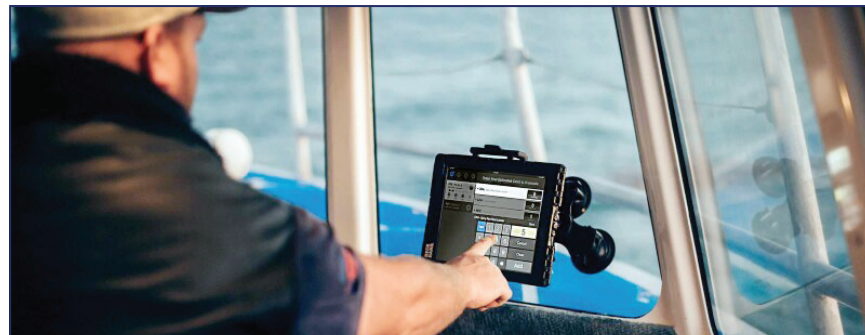
We're also rolling out updated materials, more engaging, easier to share and yes, *the bags are still free!* Come grab one at the MLA's Annual Weekend and Industry Trade Show, January 30–February 1, 2026, at the Margaritaville Resort Cape Cod in Hyannis, MA. Let's keep our ocean clean, "one bagful at a time".

PROJECT UPDATE: GRAPPLING WITH TECHNOLOGY, SMARTER, CHEAPER FISHING GEAR

I am happy to share that we are making strong progress on our "Grappling with Technology for Cost Effective Solutions in Fishing Gear Innovation" project, aimed at creating more cost-effective fishing gear solutions for commercial fishermen.

Key components are coming together, and the Deckhand workflow led by Real Time Data North America LLC is moving forward, with some adjustments still underway. We recently had a site visit from our grant manager from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and it was encouraging to see progress and catch up with everyone involved.

This project aims to develop reliable, cost-effective fishing gear that performs well on the water. By col-



laborating closely with fishermen, researchers, and technology partners, we're working to deliver innovative gear that's both smart and affordable and a more practical alternative to costly on-demand gear. I will keep you posted as the project develops.

LOOKING AHEAD: POTENTIAL NEW PROJECTS ON DECK

In addition to our marine debris work, LFoM recently submitted two pre-proposals for projects focused on sustainability, transparency, and climate action in the seafood industry.

"Fishing Footprint from the Wheelhouse"

In partnership with the MLA and Real Time Data North America LLC, (Deckhand) this potential project would help fishermen log where and when they fish, especially in and around Wind Energy Areas.

With offshore wind development moving in fast, it's more important than ever to clearly show your footprint on the water. Deckhand's electronic logbook makes this easier by helping fishermen protect their grounds, reduce paperwork, and stay in control of their own data.

Why is this important? Because if you can't clearly show where you fish, it becomes much harder to protect your access when ocean developers come calling. This tool helps ensure your voice is heard, your fishing footprint is visible, and your rights are respected.

It's also about saving time. Deckhand simplifies required reporting with less paperwork and more efficient log keeping, all accessible from your tablet. If further funded, the project would bring software up-

grades, training, and support to ensure it's easy to use and fits smoothly into your daily routine, not the other way around.

At the end of the day, it's about making sure commercial fishermen control their own data, using it to protect their livelihood, prove their presence, and help shape ocean decisions before they're made without you.

"The True Cost of Seafood"

This public education initiative aims to shed light on the carbon footprint of Massachusetts seafood. By developing detailed carbon estimates for key species like lobster, scallops, and groundfish, we will launch an interactive web platform hosted on the MLA website. This platform will allow consumers to explore and compare the environmental impact of different seafood options, providing easy-to-understand data and insights. Through this tool, consumers can make more informed, climate-smart choices while supporting local fisheries. Ultimately, the project seeks to increase transparency in the seafood supply chain and promote a more sustainable and equitable seafood system.

I'm proud of these proposals and the strong partnerships behind them. Right now, we're waiting to hear if one (or both!) will move forward.

Whether it's keeping trash out of the ocean or helping fishermen protect their way of life, LFoM remains committed to the coastal communities that make Massachusetts strong.

I'll keep sharing what's coming over the rail. Stay tuned....

Best,
Tracey Abboud



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What's wrong with this picture?

— An essay in “FOOD FOR THOUGHT” —

By BOB NUDD

Everyone has seen the picture of the lobster trap packed to the door with lobsters. So, what's wrong with that? Ask a lobsterman: “There is nothing wrong with that picture”.

It just shows that regulators are wrong, there are plenty of lobsters. There are more shorts than I have ever seen. I have never seen as many eggers and V-notches. There are tons of oversize lobsters. As for settlement, there wouldn't be this many shorts without good settlement. Science is just sampling in the wrong places. Lobsters have just moved into deeper water.

We nurture this resource. We're farmers. We feed them, we don't take the little ones, we don't take the big ones, we preserve the brood stock, we don't take eggers, we V-notch. We vent our traps to let the little one's escape. There is nothing wrong with the lobster fishery, leave it alone. You can probably come up with even more comments that paint a rosy picture. Then why are all these numbers not showing up in the legal landings?

Before I go on, let's look at some of what has changed over the last 10 or so years (for some things longer than that). First the environment has changed. There is no doubt that the Gulf of Maine has changed. Water temperatures have become warmer resulting in changes in currents which distribute lobster larvae and effect growth of bottom habitat. We have a huge increase in people pollution. What's that? It started south and you could watch it move north and east. Coastal development, sewer plants and storm water run-off all emptying into the



ocean. The fisheries have changed.

The absence of the ground fish fleets has opened enormous areas of bottom to the lobster fishery. That has resulted in a lobster fishery targeting a portion of the fishery that was always a buffer in the past. Costs of bait, fuel, help, and everything else have gone up resulting in longer soaks and the use of alternative bait. Coastal access has been disappearing. I am sure that people reading this could add pages to the list of changes but let's go back to the picture.

So why are the catches declining? Why are all these shorts not showing up in the catch? Ask a fisherman. There are fewer fishermen so there are fewer lobsters landed. Fish stocks are coming back, or new species are showing up. Cod fish are eating the shorts; Strippers are everywhere eating the shorts. Green crabs are eating the babies; porgies are eating larvae. I'm sure you can think of a whole list of reasons.

So, let's go back to “Farming Lobsters”. We're all “Piss Poor Farmers”. Just think back when bait was cheap and everyone packed the bags with herring and hauled on short sets. We hauled the traps and the first thing we did was empty that half bag of herring overboard and filled it up with new. Millions of pounds of feed left for lobsters on the bottom. What happens now? We haul on long sets; we don't dump much because it's all gone. We bait with whatever is available and we use alternative bait like cowhide and pig hide which stays in the trap until it's gone. All that free food for the little ones on the bottom is gone.

We fed the resource until it was huge and now, we are starving it. Anyone ever raise chickens? You put food in the feeder and some on the ground. The big birds go right

to the feeder. If the little ones try to eat from the feeder and the big ones chase them away or peck at them until they're dead. As a farmer, that's why you separate the chicks. On the bottom of the ocean when the little ones must eat from the feeding station (the trap) does the same thing happen? Remember this is just “JUST FOOD FOR THOUGHT”.

How about the bird feeder concept? At your house you put up a bird feeder and birds come so you put up, say four more and more come. So down the street is a vacant lot with no birds, so you take one of yours down there. You go back the next day, and it's gone and on the lot is a bulldozer. A few days later you find out that the bulldozer company is out of business, so you take another feeder down. You go back and there are lots of birds, so you bring two more feeders. Pretty soon most of the birds are at the vacant lot. So, are lobsters like birds and follow the feeders further from shore? “JUST FOOD FOR THOUGHT”

So, let's go back to farming. What farmer would look for a chicken the right size to send to market and go into the coop and start throwing chickens over the fence until he finds the right size? Guess what's on the other side of the fence. The Fox. Sound familiar? “JUST FOOD FOR THOUGHT”.

SO, WHAT IS WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE? EVERYTHING!

Predation is the basis for the problems we are encountering with the lobster fishery. No matter how many eggs we produce or how much we feed the resource if we can't get lobsters to legal size we are in trouble. Guage increase doesn't do it, V-notching doesn't do it. Both will get you more eggs and of the two I think v-notching is the tried-and-true method for protecting the brood

stock but like the eggs we need those lobsters to survive.

So why is everything wrong with the Picture? Except for rare occasions there should never be that many shorts in a trap. Those lobsters should be left at the bottom where they can hide and defend themselves. Every time you put a lobster into the water column you put it in jeopardy. Every time you handle a lobster there is risk of injury. Back to the chicken farmer, he would have had a lot more chickens the next year if he didn't feed the fox.

So, am I saying that we need larger escape vents? Absolutely not. What I am saying is we need to look seriously at the way we use what we have. Why can you watch one fisherman spend 5 minutes emptying a trap and you do the same thing in seconds and have the same or more keepers? It makes no sense.

What we need is to require uniform placement of the vent where it will work best. In the parlor, at the bottom edge, in a horizontal position and unobstructed. Allow any number of vents in other locations. Ban the use of all vents less than 1 15/16” (which is the legal size) and ban the use of circular vents of any size. While I am at it, we should require a larger opening for the biodegradable vent. The current opening is not large enough.

My name is Robert Nudd. Most everyone knows me as BobbyNudd (that's one word according to my wife). I fish out of Hampton New Hampshire. I certainly have not, have not fished as long as some, but I've been around for a while. I am adding this because I don't make or write anonymous comments. So now you know who to vent your anger towards.

Remember, this is just “FOOD FOR THOUGHT”!



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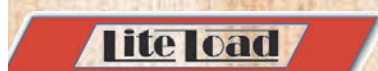
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Stock

FROM PAGE 1

water temperatures at several fixed monitoring stations throughout the lobster's range, average water temperatures over large areas such as those sampled by fishery-independent surveys, oceanographic processes affecting the environment, and other environmental indicators such as lobster prey abundance. These data time series were analyzed for significant shifts in the lobster environment and population that can affect stock productivity and impact recruitment levels and the ability to support different levels of fishing pressure.

Stock abundance is characterized using reference points for abundance and exploitation. Based on these reference points, the GOMGBK stock is not depleted and overfishing is occurring. The average abundance from 2021-2023 was 202 million lobsters, which remains above the abundance limit reference point, but below the fishery/industry target, indicating the stock's ability to replenish itself is not jeopardized, but economic conditions for the lobster fishery may be degrading. The average exploitation from 2021-2023 was just above the exploitation threshold, indicating overfishing is occurring.

The SNE stock is significantly depleted and the stock's ability to replenish itself is diminished. The average abundance from 2021-2023 was 6 million lobster, well below the abundance threshold (18 million lobster) and the lowest on record. The average exploitation from 2021-2023 was between the exploitation threshold and target, indicating overfishing is not occurring.

Stock indicators, which are based strictly on observed data and are free from inherent assumptions in the stock assessment models, were also used as an independent, model-free assessment of the lobster stocks to corroborate the assessment model results. Indicators of adult lobster abundance generally showed similar results to the assessment model for the GOM/GBK stock, with abundance declines from peaks since 2018. GOM/GBK young-of-year (YOY) indicators have shown increases from lows in the 2010s, but remain below higher levels observed in the 2000s.

Inshore surveys exhibit stronger abundance declines than offshore surveys, and indicators show higher exploitation rates inshore. New to the 2025 assessment, recruit-dependency indicators show inshore harvest is highly dependent on incoming recruitment (lobsters that enter the fishery due to catchable size). Landings and revenue indicators show declining trends but remain at positive levels. Indicators related to environmental conditions, particularly bottom water temperatures, remain positive in GOM/GBK and shell disease prevalence, although increasing in some areas, remains low relative to SNE.

SNE abundance indicators agree with model results and indicate declines to record low abundances for all life stages in recent years. The contraction of the SNE stock has continued and is now evident offshore as well as inshore. Given data and survey challenges leading to increased instability in the SNE model, consistent poor stock status estimates, and the lack of evidence suggesting environmental and stock conditions will improve in SNE, the Stock Assessment Subcommittee recommended future assessments evaluate the condition of the SNE stock using model-free indicators, and prioritize modelling efforts on the GOMGBK stock.

The Peer Review Panel found the 2025 assessment meets and exceeds the standard for best scientific information available and provides a suitable foundation for management. The Panel commended the addition of socioeconomic data that provide insight into changes in the fishery and the considerable efforts to evaluate environmental impacts on the stock. However, the Panel cautioned against placing too much emphasis on environmental effects and discounting the effects of fishing on the lobster populations.

The Board accepted the Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report for management use. A more detailed overview of the stock assessment, as well as the Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report will be available on the Commission website: asmfc.org/species/american-lobster/ under **News and Resources**. For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Coordinator, at cstarks@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.



Annual Weekend & Industry Trade Show **2026** January 29-February 1, 2026

MEMBER / ATTENDEE INFORMATION

Dear MLA member and Annual Weekend attendee,

In an effort to reduce our carbon footprint on the earth we are now going paperless, and all the MLA Annual Weekend & Trade Show information and registration forms will be sent out in our weekly emails and are available on the MLA's website: www.lobstermen.com. If you would like the registration forms to be mailed to you directly, please call the MLA office and speak with Tracey at 781.545.6984 Ext.2.

The 2026 MLA Annual Weekend & Trade Show is scheduled for January 29 - February 1, 2026, at the Margaritaville Cape Cod Resort, 1225 Iyannough Rd., Hyannis, MA 02601.

www.margaritavilleresorts.com/margaritaville-resort-cape-cod

If you have not attended the Annual Weekend and Trade show in many years, well then this is the year you won't want to miss out on all the fun and camaraderie. There will be lots of giveaways, raffles, great entertainment and laughs with friends you may not have seen in years!

All rooms and booths are on a first come first served basis. If you would like a specific room or booth location **DO NOT** delay getting your reservations in early.

The last Annual Weekend & Trade Show was a great success thanks to the many MLA members, vendors and show attendees who are dedicated to the fishing industry. The Annual Weekend Committee continues to work hard to bring you new vendors to keep you up to date with all the newest gadgets and equipment in the industry.

If you are interested in helping at the show, please call the office and we will be more than happy to have your help. Let's make this 2026 Annual Weekend one to remember!

See you in January,
MLA Annual Weekend Committee





Annual Weekend & Industry Trade Show **2026** January 29-February 1, 2026

EVENT SPONSORSHIPS

The Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association will be holding its Annual Weekend & Trade Show 2026 at Margaritaville Cape Cod Resort Hyannis, MA on January 29th - February 1st, 2026 (*The 29th is set up day*). The show hours are Friday & Saturday 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM and Sunday 8:00 AM - 10:00 AM.

The Annual Weekend & Trade Show is to provide an opportunity for commercial lobstermen, commercial fishermen, seafood dealers and equipment suppliers to get together and talk about ALL things fishing related, educational seminars and, *to have some fun too*.

The MLA provides annual educational grants to college bound children of our members and has given out over nine thousand dollars per year for the last many years.

The Annual Weekend Committee is asking if you would help us by being a sponsor for one of our show's activities, raffles, or donate to the MLA Scholarship Fund. These are some of the sponsorship opportunities: the Scholarship Fund Raffle, the Craft, the Legal Defense Fund or Let the Committee decide.

All contributors will be recognized in the show program. Please note all donors will be listed in the show program if the donations are received prior to January 4th. All others will be noted in the following MLA newspaper.

The MLA currently has over 1,800 members which include lobster fishermen, lobster and seafood dealers and equipment suppliers and works all year for the collective good of the resource and the lobster industry.

We sincerely hope that you will consider helping us out and we thank you in advance for any support you can give.

Please return this page with your donation

MLA Annual Weekend Committee

Name: _____ Amount: \$ _____

What would you like to sponsor?:
☐ Scholarship Fund ☐ Craft
☐ Legal Defense Fund ☐ Let Committee Decide

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Thank you for your continued support of the MLA Annual Weekend & Trade Show



Annual Weekend
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January 29-February 1, 2026

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- Individuals reserving their guest rooms may use our toll-free number 888-297-2200.

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****Meal Tickets:** All meal tickets **MUST** be purchased through the MLA prior to Thursday, January 22, 2026. If meal tickets are not purchased by this date, we cannot guarantee your meal. **All Meal tickets MUST be picked up at the MLA Booth.**



Annual Weekend
& Industry Trade Show **2026**
January 29-February 1, 2026

EXHIBITOR INFO &
BOOTH RESERVATION

Dear Exhibitor,

We are excited to offer you the opportunity to celebrate with us and to present and/or sell your products and services to scores of commercial fishermen during our MLA Annual Weekend & Trade Show starting on Friday, January 30th - February 1st, 2025. *(Thursday, January 29th is vendor set up day.)*

This year's event will again be at the Margaritaville Cape Cod Resort Hyannis, MA.
www.margaritavilleresorts.com/margaritaville-resort-cape-cod

In our effort to reduce our carbon footprint, all the MLA Annual Weekend & Trade Show information & registration forms will be sent out in our weekly emails and are available on the MLA website: www.lobstermen.com

- In addition to the Friday and Saturday 9:00am-4:00pm hours, the exhibition hall will be open on Sunday morning an hour early at 8:00am and remain open until 10:00am so that you will have two hours of uninterrupted time.
- A single Booth space includes one 6' table with a tablecloth and 2 chairs.

Once we receive your payment, we will mail you a confirmation letter for your booth and have it waiting for you beginning at 9:00am on Thursday, January 29th for set-up. If the Thursday set-up day is difficult for you, we can make special arrangements to admit you early on Friday morning January 30th.

However, please be advised that the Exhibit Hall opens at 9:00am and all exhibits must be fully set up by 9:00am. (Show hours are Friday & Saturday 9:00am-4:00 pm and Sunday 8:00am -10:00am.)

All goods must be removed by 1:00 pm on Sunday afternoon, February 1st.

If you have any questions or need further information, please contact the MLA office and speak with Tracey at 781-545-6984 ext. 2. We look forward to seeing you at the show.

Thank you,
MLA Annual Weekend Committee

2026 MLA ANNUAL WEEKEND EXHIBITOR BOOTH RESERVATION FORM

Each booth comes with a 6' tableclothed table & two chairs. Set-up begins at 9:00 AM on Thursday, January 29th and must be completely removed by 1:00 PM Sunday, February 1st unless other arrangements have been made in advance.

***MLA MEMBERS
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City, State, Zip: _____

People in charge of booth: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Primary Product or Service: _____

BOOTH SELECTION

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3 Booths	\$1350	_____
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Acceptable payments: Mastercard, Visa, Check (Made payable to MLA)
Please note a 3% service charge will be applied to credit cards.

Call 781-545-6984 ext. 2 and speak with Tracey to process credit cards.

Mail form to:
MLA, 8 Otis Place, Scituate, MA 02066.

Please DO NOT DELAY as this is a new venue and space is limited.



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 28, 2025 | PRESS CONTACT: Tina Berger, 703.842.0740

Daniel McKiernan Elected ASMFC Chair

DEWEY BEACH, DE – Today, member states of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) thanked Joseph Cimino of New Jersey for a successful two-year term as Chair and elected Daniel McKiernan of Massachusetts to succeed him.

“I’m honored to be chosen by my fellow Commissioners to lead our efforts for the next two years. One of my priorities will be to work with my colleagues in the states and federal agencies to seek resources to fund fundamental fisheries data collection and science activities to support our management programs. Other key topics over the next two years will be our ability to adapt to changes in species distribution and availability and how best to respond to the recalibration of recreational fishing effort and harvest data from the Marine Recreational Information Program Fishing Effort Survey,” said Mr. McKiernan.

Mr. McKiernan continued, “I want to thank outgoing Chair, Joe Cimino for his leadership in tackling some challenging management issues for species such as American lobster, American eel, Atlantic striped bass, Atlantic menhaden, horseshoe crab, and red drum. He helped support the advancement of fisheries science through the completion of an

impressive number of benchmark stock assessments and assessment updates for river herring, red drum, American lobster, horseshoe crab, tautog, Atlantic sturgeon, and Atlantic menhaden (single species assessment update

and ecological reference points benchmark assessment). Further, under his leadership, the Commission also strengthened stakeholder engagement in horseshoe crab management by bringing together diverse stakeholders for a Delaware Bay management objectives workshop to provide recommendations for possible revisions to the management process, and by increasing nontraditional stakeholder representation on the Horseshoe Crab Advisory Panel to more equitably balance user group perspectives. Lastly, Mr. Cimino initiated the process to consider possible changes to voting practices and declared interests on species management boards.”

Additionally, advances in habitat conservation were made by the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP) through its funding of five on-the-ground projects, which will open over seven river miles and restore over 110 acres of habitat. These include dam removal projects in New Jersey and Massachusetts, as well as saltmarsh and oyster restoration projects in Maryland and Florida. ACFHP will also be hosting a Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Workshop in 2026 focused on developing a Seed Transfer Best Management Practices Guidance Document.

From a data collection and management perspective, the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) also made progress under Mr. Cimino’s leadership. ACCSP supported 20 partner agency data collection projects and expanded the scope and security

of the ACCSP Data Warehouse. ACCSP held a data accountability workshop and extended data validation tools within electronic reporting systems; extended implementation of harvester One Stop Reporting; and made progress on a methodology to more fully use for-hire logbooks in Marine Recreational Information Program’s catch statistics.

Mr. McKiernan has directed the Massachusetts Division of Division of Marine Fisheries (MA DMF) since late 2019, where he develops agency policies, represents the Commonwealth in interstate and federal fishery management forums and administers nearly all aspects of the DMF’s in-state management and regulations for fisheries management. He began his professional career as a field biologist for DMF in 1985 and worked closely with the lobster fishery as a sea sampler and an assistant marine biologist. He brought his field experience to DMF’s headquarters and has worked on fisheries management and policy for almost four decades. He has worked diligently to achieve co-existence between endangered right whales and the maritime and fishing industries in Massachusetts. In 2023, Massachusetts was recognized with the NOAA Fisheries “Partner in the Spotlight” award for exceptional efforts to the conservation and recovery of Northern Right Whales.

Mr. McKiernan is practiced in the arenas of federal and interstate fisheries management. As a long-standing representative to the Commission, he has chaired



New ASMFC Chair Daniel McKiernan

numerous species management boards and was recognized for his management efforts with the Commission’s Award of Excellence in 2018. He is a strong promoter of conservation and accountable fisheries management for commercial fisheries, recreational fisheries, and the seafood industry at large. Mr. McKiernan is a graduate of UMASS-Dartmouth and earned an MS in Fisheries Biology from Auburn University. He received the Massachusetts Pride in Performance Award, as well as the Massachusetts Lobsterman’s Association “Ralph W. Maling” Award of Excellence for dedicated service on behalf of the Commonwealth’s lobster industry.

The Commission also elected Doug Haymans, Director of the Georgia Coastal Resources Division as its new Vice- Chair.

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Office of Advocacy U.S. Small Business Administration:

Fighting for the future of commercial fishing

On September 15th, Congressional candidate Tyler Macallister convened an in-person roundtable with a diverse group of individuals representing every facet of the commercial fishing industry. From fishermen and seafood processors to marine mechanics and Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association Executive Director Beth Casoni, all came together to share their insights, concerns, and passion for the future of this vital industry.

This meeting brought together voices from generations of fishing families and industry professionals who are deeply committed to protecting and preserving one of America's oldest professions. They were joined by high-level representatives from the U.S. Small Business Administration's Office of Advocacy — an agency that reports directly to the President of the United States — including Thomas Rossomando, Director of Regional Affairs; Geoff Grove, National Special Advisor in Manufacturing, Energy, and Technology; and Janet Fogarty, Region 1 Advocate for New England.

The commercial fishing industry is one of the most heavily regulated sectors in the country. These regula-

tions, while often well-intentioned, are making it increasingly difficult for long-standing members to stay afloat — and nearly impossible for the next generation to enter. The industry is in a constant struggle to maintain its place, despite being essential to both local communities and the national economy.

As each attendee shared their story, the emotional weight in the room was palpable. The disappointment and frustration with current policy were clear. But so too was the hope — especially as the Office of Advocacy representatives listened closely and showed genuine recognition of the challenges discussed.

This meeting was a critical reminder that we are stronger when we work together. Collaboration and advocacy are essential to ensure the survival and resurgence of an industry that helped build this nation.

We extend our sincere thanks to Tyler Macallister for organizing this impactful discussion and for bringing federal leaders face-to-face with those most affected by the changing tides of regulation. With continued effort, we can pave the way for a brighter, more sustainable future for commercial fishing in the U.S.



Commercial fishing permit holder electronic reporting requirement to begin March 1, 2027

Effective March 1, 2027, the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) will require all Massachusetts commercial fishing permit holders to submit trip-level reports electronically using an approved application such as eTRIPS online or eTRIPS Mobile. Beginning in March 2027, paper submittals of catch reports will no longer be accepted regardless of when the trip occurred. Federal reporting vessels are already required to report trips electronically to NOAA Fisheries and will continue to be exempt from DMF trip-level reporting.

To comply with this new requirement, permit holders must have access to the internet via a computer with a compatible internet browser or a tablet or phone that can download the eTRIPS mobile application. All eTRIPS applications are free to the user.

The DMF Fisheries Statistics Project is expanding its harvester support program to manage this transition to electronic reporting. Over the next 17 months, DMF staff will be working to provide training and guidance for those users who have been hesitant to transition over to electronic reporting. The Statistics Project will also continue to operate their support desk during normal business hours from 8 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday. Further information regarding support for permit holders will be distributed in 2026.

DMF encourages permit holders to begin electronic reporting prior to 2027. To switch your current reporting method to electronic reporting or receive more information, please contact the Statistics Project's support desk via email at dmf.stats@mass.gov or call 978-491-6279. Visit our website: www.mass.gov/ETLrequirement



AOLA & MLA send joint letter on Fisheries Survival Fund

September 4, 2025

Howard Lutnick, Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW, Washington, DC 20230
TheSec@doc.gov

Eugenio Piñeiro Soler,
Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries NOAA Fisheries
1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910
Eugenio.E.PineiroSoler@noaa.gov

Re: Fisheries Survival Fund petition (April 2025) to create a scallop access area on the Northern Edge of Georges Bank

Dear Secretary Lutnick and Mr. Piñeiro Soler,

We the undersigned write concerning the petition reference above ("Petition") submitted on April 28, 2025 to the Department of Commerce and the Office of Management and Budget. The Petition requests the Secretary of Commerce compel the National Marine Fisheries Service ("NMFS") to order the New England Fishery Management Council ("Council") to create a rotational limited access scallop area within the Closed Area II Habitat Closure Area ("habitat management area" or "HMA") along the Northern Edge of Georges Bank.

The Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Association and Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association represent over 1,000 lobstermen and hundreds of vessels, many of which fish in or near the HMA. We do not object to the Secretary compelling the Council to reopen its examination of the Closed Area II HMA, but are adamant that any reconsideration must occur at the Council level, and the Council should not be compelled to approve the Petition's desired outcome.

We agree that the proper venue for this examination is with the New England Council, not in Washington DC. Sections C-F of the Petition provide a history of the ecological reasons for implementing the HMA nearly 30 years ago, and the Council's and NMFS' reluctance to allow mobile bottom tending gear in a discrete ecologically sensitive area (a "habitat area of particular concern," or "HAPC") on the Northern Edge.

Between the spring of 2023 and the summer of 2024, Council and NMFS members and staff, along with industry advisors across various fisheries, invested an untold number of hours examining scallop dredge access to portions of the HAPC. Thousands of pages of highly detailed and technical documents were produced examining potential scallop yields from the area, versus impacts from dredges to bottom habitat; scallop, cod, and herring spawning; and damage to lobsters. This extensive and high quality work led the Council to identifying two very discrete possible areas to allow scallop access on the Northern Edge, before deciding it could not resolve seasonal and spatial conflicts between fisheries, on top of its fish spawning and habitat concerns. The Council discontinued the action but did not preclude future reconsideration.

Fishery management in New England is a very intensive, public, and transparent process. The Council seeks counsel from its fishery advisory panels (consisting largely of people who make their living from the sea) and a variety of stakeholders such as fishermen, seafood processors, and environmental organizations. If reconsideration is to occur, the Council must continue to receive input from stakeholders to better understand impacts, some not yet considered.

For example, improper timing of scallop dredge access to the Northern Edge could have devastating consequences to the population of ovigerous female lobsters which congregate there. Fishermen need to discuss avoiding gear conflict. And it is unclear to us how one bottom tending gear (scallop dredges) can be allowed access, but another (fishing trawls) would continue to be denied.

The Petition itself, in its Section IV, recognizes much development work needs to be done. It acknowledges there would be negative impacts on other fisheries. These intricate discussions and balancing of interests cannot possibly be conducted in Washington DC. The Council was and remains the proper venue for analyzing and acting on the myriad of issues at hand.

We agree it is appropriate for the Administration to provide guidance to agencies in weighting diverse and sometimes competing interests, such as the Magnuson Act's "practicability" requirement. However, this guidance should not extend to dictating an outcome such as an opening which, even after re-weighting, is not found by the Council to be in the best interests of the region's collective fisheries and habitat.

Nor should the Secretary simply rescind the ban on all bottom tending mobile gear fishing in the HMA, even with the Petition's recommended 365 day stay. If for any reason that deadline was missed, the entire HMA could be subject to intense, year-round, and annually recurring gear impacts. The habitat and fishery impacts of that outcome alone could take months to analyze and understand.

Magnuson tasks the "...Regional Fishery Management Councils to exercise sound judgment in the stewardship of fishery resources through the preparation, monitoring, and revision of [fishery management] plans..." Should the Council be tasked to reconsider Northern Edge access, there should be no preconditioned or compelled outcomes as requested in the Petition.



Hank Soule

Hank Soule, Deputy Director
Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Association



Beth Casoni

Beth Casoni, Executive Director
Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association

cc: Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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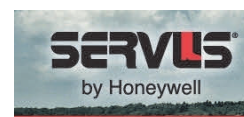
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MLA SUMMER EVENTS RECAP



The MLA returns to Marshfield Fair

For the first time in 40 years the MLA made a return to the Marshfield Fair! The Marshfield Fair Agriculture Coordinator reached out to us and asked if we would be interested in having a booth in their hall this year – all expenses paid. They truly believed that having a booth from an industry that is so deeply dedicated to all things lobster would benefit the public – we gladly accepted this offer.

The MLA staff divided and conquered this event as we were scheduled to be there August 18th – August 21st. Administrative Director Julia Logan and Executive Assistant Tracey Abboud split the days up to help educate the public on all things lobster in Massachusetts. A few highlights from this experience were when MLA Treasurer and lobstermen Captain Dave Casoni accompanied Julia on August 19th and dazzled the public with his wealth of knowledge. Additionally, this was the second time the MLA was able to market our new phase “*Lobstervore*”, and people were extremely receptive of the idea and proudly claimed they were a “*Lobstervore*”. Such great fun!



Thank you, Marshfield Fair Agriculture, for having us this year, we hope to attend again next year!

Lobstervore [lob-ster-vore] • adjective

A person whose diet consists of high protein lobster, that is locally and sustainably harvested



Cisco Brewers Summer Lobster Luau 2025 event, partnered with the MLA

This year Cisco Brewers celebrated all things lobster with their very own *Cisco Brewers Lobster Luau Event*, featuring a hula dancer performance, ukelele performers, lobster & drink specials. Cisco Brewers so graciously asked to partner with us for these events, as they wanted to give back to a local organization that promotes the lobster industry.

Out of the four events held at each of their locations: Boston Seaport, Nantucket, New Bedford, and Fenway. MLA Executive Director Beth Casoni, Treasurer Dave Casoni, and Administrative Director Julia Logan were able to attend their first Lobster Luau held in Seaport on July 15th, and man oh man, was that day scorching hot. So hot we worried no one would show. But to our surprise people did, and the event went off without a hitch.

The next event we were able to attend was held at their New Bedford location on August 13th. This time Administrative Director Julia Logan and Executive Assistant Tracey Abboud were joined

by MLA's very own Vice President Captain Jarrett Drake. With a special guest appearance from Captain Jason Drake, an MLA member, who tied up his F/V Voyager to the dock, where attendees could see a real lobster boat up close in person. That was a huge hit!

At both events where the MLA was able to attend, we had free educational handouts, containing all you could ever need to know about lobster, energy to converse with attendees, and we even held a raffle where attendees had a chance to win an MLA swag bag, and all proceeds went to the legal defense fund. These events brought great vibes and fun for all ages!

We are deeply appreciative of Cisco Brewers for not only wanting to put on these events to promote all the things lobster, but for choosing the MLA as the benefactor to proceeds made. So, on behalf of our 1,800 members, **MAHALO** (thank you)!



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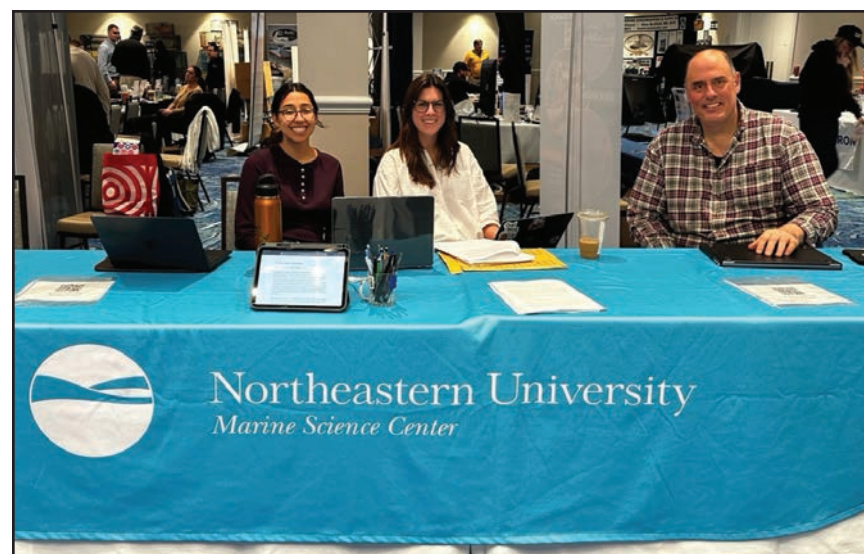
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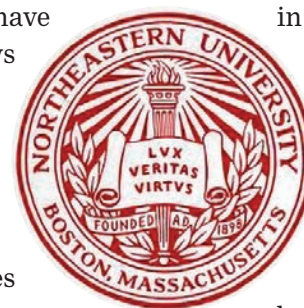
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Your voice matters — help us capture the real challenges facing lobstermen

We know there have been a lot of surveys circulating recently, and we understand that “survey fatigue” is real. That said, we hope you’ll take a few minutes to complete ours if you haven’t already. This survey was developed in collaboration with the Massachusetts Lobstermen’s Association, the Maine Coast Fishermen’s Association, and other industry partners, with the goal of directly capturing the regulatory, financial, and environmental challenges lobstermen are facing.

How these challenges are affecting not just fishing operations, but also stress levels, family life, and trust



in management are not well documented, and without your input, they may continue to be overlooked in future decisions that affect the lobster industry. The results will be shared with industry organizations and resource managers to help guide decisions that strengthen the resilience of the fishery and the communities it supports.

The survey only takes 10–15 minutes, and every response truly makes a difference. As a thank you, participants will be entered into a raffle to win \$100. Please scan the QR code to complete the survey and make sure your voice is included in this work.





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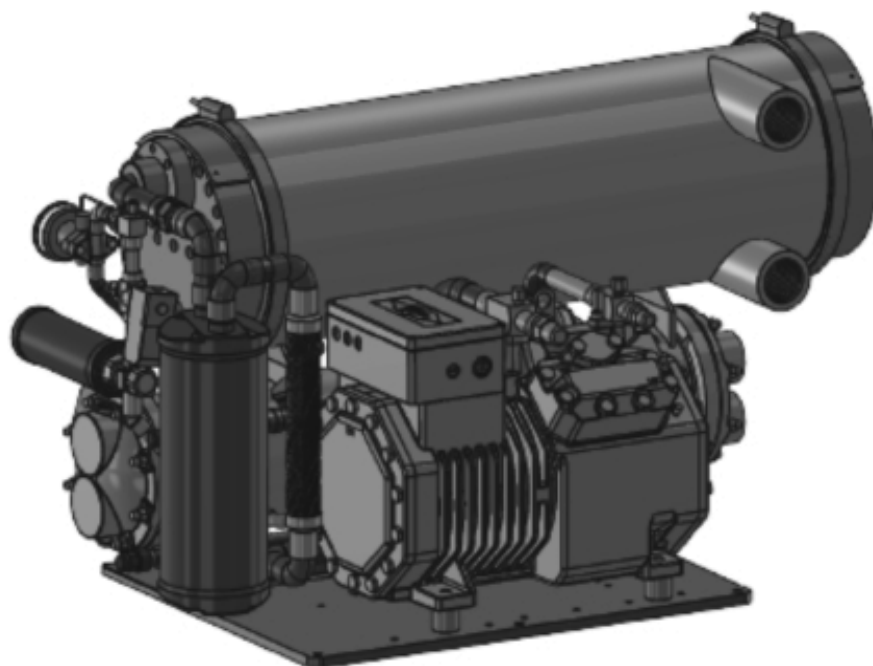
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Lobster market to reach USD 16.85B by 2032, driven by rising seafood demand and premium dining trends

LOBSTER MARKET OVERVIEW

Lobsters, known for their rich flavor and high nutritional value, are increasingly consumed worldwide not only as a luxury seafood item but also as a versatile ingredient in dishes such as pasta, salads, and sandwiches. The market encompasses production, processing, distribution, and retailing, supported by rising global seafood consumption and growing health awareness. Consumers are shifting towards protein-rich diets, and lobsters are recognized as an excellent source of essential nutrients, including zinc, copper, phosphorus, omega-3 fatty acids, and vitamins B12 and E. The demand for lobster is expanding across food service and retail sectors, particularly in North America and Europe, where seafood culture is deeply rooted. Moreover, the Asia Pacific region, led by China and India, is emerging as a fast-growing market due to a rising middle-class population and changing dietary preferences toward premium seafood. Major market players such as Clearwater Seafoods, East Coast Seafood Group, High Liner Foods, Boston Lobster Company, and Red Lobster are focusing on sustainable sourcing, quality enhancement, and product innovation to maintain a competitive edge in this evolving market.

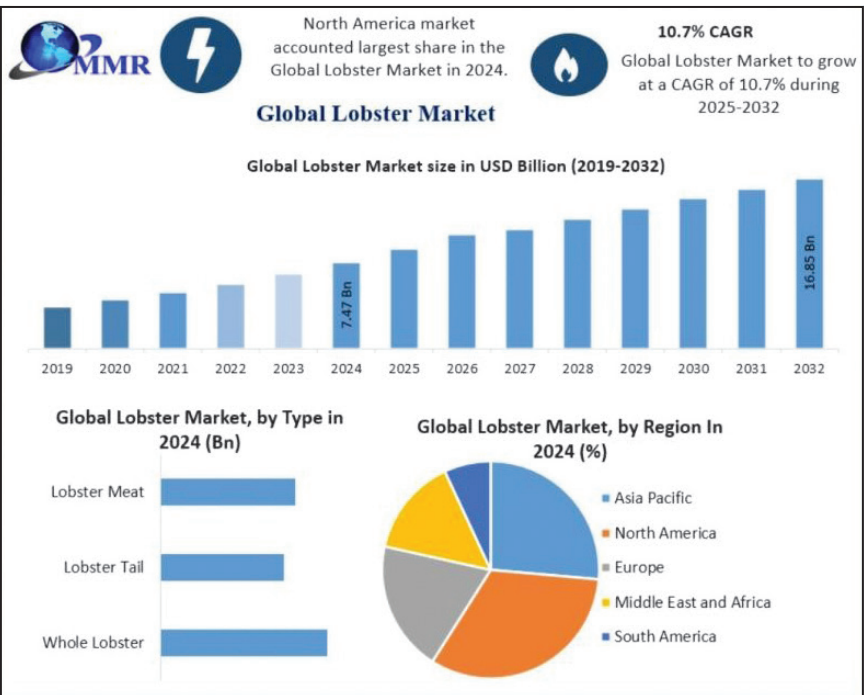
LOBSTER MARKET DYNAMICS

The lobster market growth is primarily driven by the increasing consumption of seafood and the rising demand for high-protein, low-fat food options. As global consumers become more health-conscious, the preference for seafood over red meat continues to rise, propelling the demand for lobsters. The growing popularity of ready-to-eat (RTE) and pre-packaged lobster products has further expanded the market, catering to

consumers' need for convenience and easy meal preparation. Rising disposable incomes and the trend toward luxury dining experiences are also contributing significantly, with lobster being perceived as a premium delicacy for special occasions. However, market volatility due to fluctuating lobster prices, seasonal variations in supply, and government regulations related to seafood harvesting present notable challenges. Additionally, sustainability concerns, overfishing restrictions, and the rise of vegetarianism and veganism in developed markets could limit growth potential. Despite these restraints, key players are investing in sustainable aquaculture practices and advanced cold-chain logistics to stabilize supply and improve quality standards.

LOBSTER MARKET OUTLOOK AND FUTURE TRENDS

The future outlook for the global lobster market is highly optimistic, with strong growth expected across both developed and emerging regions. Increasing globalization of food cultures and the rise of online seafood retail platforms are expanding access to premium lobster products worldwide. Technological advancements in cold storage, packaging, and transportation are enhancing product shelf life and enabling efficient global distribution. A major emerging trend is the growing demand for ready-to-cook and ready-to-eat lobster dishes, which appeal to urban consumers with busy lifestyles. Sustainability will continue to shape market dynamics, with industry leaders adopting eco-friendly fishing practices and traceability systems to meet consumer demand for responsibly sourced seafood. Additionally, the growing middle-class population in emerging economies such as China, India, and Southeast Asia presents



The Lobster Market size was valued at USD 7.47 Billion in 2024 and the total Lobster revenue is expected to grow at a CAGR of 10.7% from 2025 to 2032, reaching nearly USD 16.85 Billion.

lucrative opportunities for market expansion. The restaurant and hospitality sectors will remain key demand drivers, supported by the increasing inclusion of lobster in gourmet menus and casual dining formats alike.

KEY RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The lobster industry has witnessed several strategic advancements focused on sustainability, innovation, and market expansion. Leading companies such as Clearwater Seafoods, East Coast Seafood Group, and Thai Union Manufacturing are investing in sustainable fishing methods to ensure long-term resource availability and compliance with environmental regulations. In 2024, Boston Lobster Company expanded its distribution network in Asia to tap into the growing demand for premium seafood in China and Japan. Meanwhile, High Liner Foods and Red Lobster have introduced new product lines

featuring frozen and pre-cooked lobster meals aimed at retail consumers seeking convenience without compromising on taste and quality. The rise of e-commerce platforms and partnerships between seafood suppliers and online grocery retailers have also revolutionized the distribution landscape, allowing consumers to access fresh and frozen lobster products globally. Furthermore, the industry is seeing increased collaborations between fisheries and technology providers to enhance traceability, ensuring product authenticity and sustainability across the supply chain. These developments collectively signal a robust and innovation-driven growth trajectory for the global market through 2032.

Press release from:
MAXIMIZE MARKET
RESEARCH PVT. LTD. 10-14-2025
www.openpr.com/news/4222064/lobster-market-to-reach-usd-16-85-billion-by-2032-driven

The secret to a happy ending is knowing when to roll the credits

— Commercial Fisheries News closes out 53 years of publishing this December —



Commercial Fisheries News
Editor Brian Robbins

I wish I could claim the bit of wisdom above, but it's a quote from songwriter Patterson Hood – an excerpt from the lyrics to “A World Of Hurt” by his band Drive-By Truckers.

To me, the message is simple: you can either end a situation on your own terms or wait for it to end itself ... however that may be.

And that's why I'm writing this.

In this era of many folks being more apt to watch a quick video on their phone than read a printed piece of any length, I figure I'd better get to the heart of what I want to say sooner rather than later.

I am retiring from my position at *Commercial Fisheries News*, effective with the December *CFN*, which goes to press in November. I made that decision earlier this year.

And, as it turns out, that will also be the final issue of *Commercial Fisheries News*.

After 53 years, it's time to roll the credits.

MY DECISION

If you're a regular *CFN* reader, you're no doubt aware of the stroke that sidelined publisher Rick Martin in July of 2021. At the time, I figured, “If we can just keep things going for a few months and give Rick a chance to get back on his feet, we'll be fine.” The thought of doing it was daunting, but we made it happen, hoping our friend and leader would soon return.

But that was not to be.

For a while, Rick was making good progress ... but then he experienced a series of health setbacks – and the ground lost was slow to be regained, if at all.

Sadly, Rick passed away in June, succumbing to an aggressive cancer that showed up out of nowhere; the fi-

nal blow in a series of way too many.

Personally, I really didn't think about the long term “What if?” questions of Rick not being able to return back in 2021 – I just needed to do what I needed to do. I preferred the fishing analogy of running back and forth from the deck (where I'd always been) to the wheelhouse, where Rick's chair sat empty – long enough to make sure we were on course.

...you can either end a situation on your own terms or wait for it to end itself ...however that may be.

But it wasn't just me: Keith Kastelec, our production wizard, made the digital magic happen, while business/office manager Leslie Carr – who had just begun a well-earned retirement before Rick got sick – spun around, rolled up her sleeves, and asked, “What needs to be done?”

The Great Spirits gave us all a break when Janet Acker came onboard to take over the engine room from Leslie in 2023 ... and in the meantime, our contributors helped fill the pages of *CFN* with quality writing.

It was a lot – and didn't leave much time left over for regular life – but it was working. We cranked out some nice-looking issues.

I was getting tired, I'll admit – but I just figured ... well ... I don't know what I figured. I figured we'd just keep going, I guess.

And then came last October, when I hit the wall. The diagnosis was three separate strains of Lyme with a side order of Babesiosis – most of it

from one cussed tick, although there was suspicion that I'd been lugging at least one form of the Lyme for a while.

That's when I realized: I couldn't get sick. Or, rather, I could get sick all I wanted – as long as I could still do what I needed to do to keep *CFN* going: sell and design ads; edit the incoming copy and lay out story pages; and do my own writing and photography, of course.

I'm proud that we've never relied on filler of any kind – but it doesn't allow for any stumbles.

The months that followed were fueled by a regime of triple antibiotics and supplements. I'd like to think that no one ever looked at the issues from this past winter and spring and had any sort of inkling that they were the work of someone basically doing shifts between desk and bed.

And it's not just me: without Keith and Janet, none of this can happen.

And it scared me.

In the meantime, there was the weirdness of the economy; the uncertainties of the future of commercial fishing (pick your worry); and slow death of print publications. It all translated into lost advertising – and that's what pays the bills. (Subscription income pays for the postage to mail the papers, if you're lucky.)

And that's when I began to think that I'd had enough.

I want you to know: Rick knew about my plans to leave *CFN* back in the spring, long before his final battle. And he and his wife Claire had only one concern: that I didn't wait too long (for my sake) to get clear.

THE OBVIOUS ... AND NOT-SO-OBVIOUS

At this point, some of you may ask (as some people have over the last year or so): “Why not just hire more

hands? Get some help?”

Here's the story: Compass Publications Inc. in Virginia – the folks who purchased *CFN* from founder Robin Alden over 30 years ago – have had their own struggles. Without getting into things too deeply, I will say this:

Nobody from Virginia has contacted me since Rick got sick over four years ago.

That's the truth.

The bottom line: it's been up to us to take care of ourselves – and that's what we've been doing ... but it gets harder and harder every month.

And so, along with whatever was going on with me, there was the obvious question of, “How much longer can *CFN* go on being what it's meant to be?”

This is where we come to Patterson Hood's phrase about knowing when to roll the credits ... and however sad the news of *CFN*'s end may be to read about, believe me – it's far better that we do this with some control over the situation, rather than wait for the inevitable to do it for us.

That definitely won't be a happy ending.

If *CFN* was an airplane, ending with the December issue would feel as though we'd landed with the level of grace and dignity this publication deserves.

Continuing on as we are? That's a guaranteed nosedive into a cornfield, one way or the other.

I hope that you all – readers and advertisers alike – will stay with us through the December issue of *Commercial Fisheries News*. I promise you these last couple of *CFN*s will be good ones.

Commercial Fisheries News
Editor's Note – Brian Robbins



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AD#1 (5/25) **FOR SALE** – 1979 JC Lobster Boat. 320 Turbo Cat Diesel. Federally Documented, Fiberglass Hull (Blue), 28.2 ft long, 11 ft wide. Being sold "As Is". On land in Scituate, MA. Asking \$10,000. All offers presented. Christopher N. Carroll 617-471-8448 | Squantolaw@verizon.net

AD#2 (8/25) **FOR SALE** – Turnkey O.C. Lobster Business. 1981 31' BHM Volvo 63P–370 HP. OC State permit w/270 tags+10%, endorsements, 400+ traps, fisheries gear, trailers, cooler. \$150,000 or BRO. Steve 978-257-1062

AD#3 (10/25) **FOR SALE** – 1980 Bob Rich 40 wooden lobster boat. 471 Detroit diesel, twin disc gear, hydro-slave pot hauler w/ diverter valve for other fisheries. Two 75gal fuel tanks (fiberglass) under deck, full cabin, GPS, Furuno depth sounder, VHF radio, MA coastal Area 1 lobster permit, 800 trap. Federal Area 1 lobster permit w/endorsements (ground-fish/dogfish) 800 pot limit. 140 wire lobster traps, some never used (brand new) 60-70 buoys, extra ropes, safety equipment, sea anchor, 12' fiberglass skiff misc.; lobster related equipment, spare propeller (never used) trap related repair equipment. \$65,000. firm. Bill @ 781-834-7418

AD#4 (10/25) **SEEKING** – Area 2 MA lobster tags – 774-271-0601

AD#5 (5/25) **FOR SALE** – New Storm-line Floatation Bibs (Med) \$125, Mustang Floatation Jacket (L) \$125. Call 508-246-4009

AD#6 (9/25) **FOR SALE** – MALMA 1 Lobster Permit-800 Trap Allocation. 18 ft FG Open Boat W/Trailer. Boat Needs Work. \$20,000 For Both. Call Benny 978-578-8882

AD#7 (9/25) **FOR SALE** – 5.25' – 7' gill-nets for sale, all in new to good condition, \$150.00/panel. Small mesh webs: sizes 5.75, 6", 6.5, and 7" all 25 meshes deep \$50.00/each. 401-812-8165

AD#8 (7/25) **FOR SALE** – 500 36" traps, rope, buoys, gear, bait bags. Full setup. \$45.00 & up. Kevin- 508-951-6400

AD#9 (8/25) **FOR SALE** – Area 1 Commercial Lobster Permit–800 trap allocation. \$18,000. OBO Text Mike- 781-854-6522 / Call 781-665-5318 (no calls after 6PM)

AD#10 (10/25) **FOR SALE** – OCLMA permit for 645 tags. Serious inquiries only. 774-313-6287 joneSeven@aol.com

AD#11 (7/25) **FOR SALE** – MA Coastal Area 1 Lobster License 800 trap tags potential. \$20,000 /30 ft. Novi Lobster/ Leymen 6 cylinder 135 hp diesel engine 1992 \$19,000 /. 700 older traps, rope, buoys, Mooring 300lb mushroom w/ chain \$5000. \$44,000 for whole business. Boat moored -Nahant & currently fishing 200 traps. Text Brian Mahoney 781-715-4732

AD#12 (10/25) **ATLANTIC TRAP** – Traps & Fishing Supplies: Lobster, Crab, Eel, Scup, Conch, Sea Bass. Trap kits, heads, trays. Text/ Call Ryan: 508-762-2880

AD#13 (10/25) **FOR SALE** – Approximately 100 standup gillnets. Most 12 x 6.5". Some

brand new condition. \$5,000 takes all. Email KLD898@pm.me for details.

AD#14 (5/25) **FOR SALE** – 80 new 3ft yellow traps, shrimp mesh, reinforced corners, bumpers. \$100 each. Call 351-231-2069

AD#15 (5/25) **FOR SALE** – 1989 Privateer Renegade 24.5 ft w/ trailer. New Mercury 350, 7.5 hrs. Full electronics, traps, rope, gear. \$23,500.00 OBRO Dan: 508-367-5240

AD#16 (5/25) **FOR SALE** – 45' Lobster Boat (Fiberglass/Wood). Detroit 8-71. Excellent condition. \$75,000. Fred 774-930-0499

AD#17 (9/25) **FOR SALE** – Hartco clip gun-\$300.00. Nile air-nipper HD \$150.00 Spenex Hog-ring gun-\$200.00 or all 3 for \$500. Twin Kahlenberg Airhorn D1-\$250.00 Galvanized long-line ground fish cable-2 spools - 7x7 3/32", 20,000 ft. New. \$400.00 for both. Call Bill @ 508-264-1076 Please no texts.

AD#18 (6/25) **FOR SALE** – 22' Siso Lobster Boat w/ 150hp Evinrude. Needs work. Bunk trailer included. \$8,000 or B.O. Robert: 617-846-3714 (home) / 617-650-3842 (cell)

AD#19 (6/25) **FOR SALE** – 150 3ft traps w/ 7/16 ground-lines (need work) \$10 ea. 100 4ft lobster traps \$20 ea. Located in Huma-rock. Call: 978-815-1734

AD#20 (7/25) **FOR SALE** – Complete MA outer cape cod lobster outfit: state permit w/270 tags & all gear, 31' BHM w/Volvo diesel, mooring in Chatham harbor, skiff, walk-in bait cooler, trap building tools, dogfish & mackerel gear, & more, can transfer immediately. \$150k or bro Steve 978-257-1062

AD#21 (7/25) **FOR SALE** – Captain Wanted for Lobster/Gillnet boat. Well maintained boat, single boat owner, fair settlement. Email for more details: Lobstercapt@pm.me

AD#22 (8/25) **FOR SALE** – 59 traps some 30+ & some bigger-line-buoys \$5.00 each or bro. Call Robert @ 5:00 pm 617-846-3714 or 617-650-3842

AD#23 (10/25) **FOR SALE** – Federal Area 1 Lobster Permit w/ 800 trap allocation. \$19,000. Call/text Ed @ 781 534-3794 before 7PM.

AD#24 (9/25) **FOR SALE** – Fishing/Marine Equipment-new complete raw water pump for a duetz 10:15 engine \$3,000.00. New Propeller 32x30, left-hand, 5-blade, high-nibral, fits 2.5" shaft \$6,000.00 Cutlass Bearing 2.5" shaft \$100.00. Danforth Anchors- 22 lb., 3 available-\$30 each- Sea Strainer Basket 3"- \$100.00. Gillnets Standup-good condition-\$50.00 each. Call 617-694-4802 - Leave a message.

AD#25 (9/25) **WANTED** – Massachusetts black seabass pot permit. Call Connor @ 508-221-2696

AD#26 (9/25) **FOR SALE** – Aluminum fuel tank 20W X 19H X 57"L – \$100.00. Aluminum rack for Dodge 1500 P/U – \$75.00. 4 40lb Danforth anchors – \$150.00 each. 12" monk/skate webs light green – \$60.00. 12" gillnets in good condition – \$175.00 panel -frames – \$120.00 panel. Call 401-842-8165

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