

April 2009



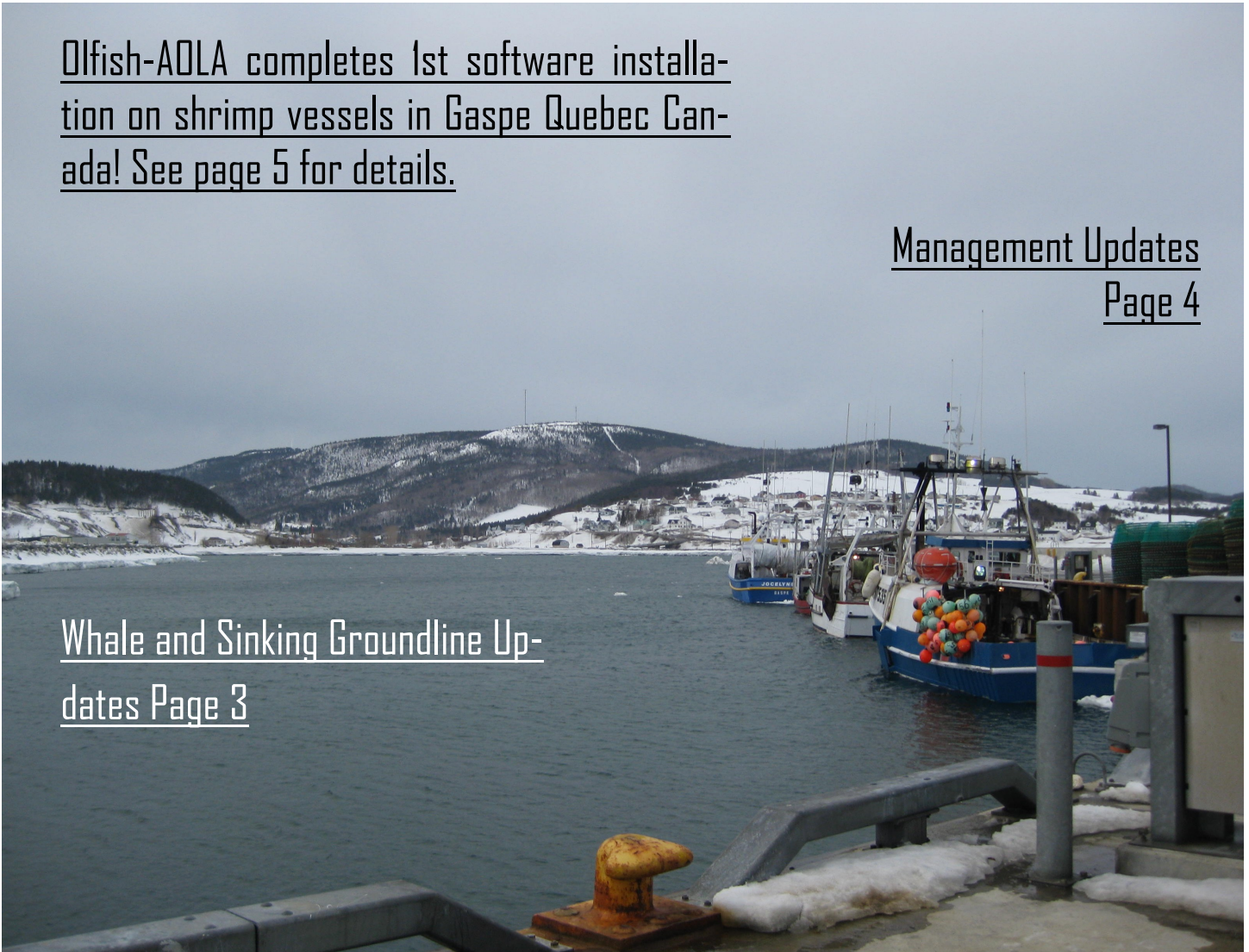
Lobster Tales

Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Association

Olfish-ADLA completes 1st software installation on shrimp vessels in Gaspé Quebec Canada! See page 5 for details.

Management Updates
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LOBSTER TALES BULLETIN BOARD

NEW

Check out our newest feature, Lobster Tales' Classified Advertisements.

They can be found immediately following our Associate Member advertisements, toward the end of the issue. We encourage everyone to use this new marketplace by submitting "wanted" or "needed" ads to Bonnie or Heidi.

→ **DON'T FORGET!**

THANK YOU! To everyone who is using iGive and/or iSearch to support AOLA through online shopping and searching. If you have yet to sign up, it's quick and easy, and AOLA will reap the benefit by receiving donations equal to 1-5% of qualified purchases. **SEE PG 12 FOR DETAILS!**

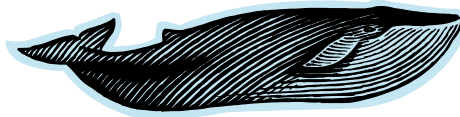
PLEASE!!

REMINDER— If you are a 2009 AOLA data surveyor and have not already collected your QUARTER 2 lobster samples please do so as soon as possible. Completed data sheets should be sent to Heidi via email, fax or "snail" mail (see back pg for contact details)

RESULTS OF THE LARGE WHALE TAKE REDUCTION TEAM BY BONNIE

Members of the Large Whale Take Reduction Team, Northeast Group, met in Providence, RI on April 1 & 2, 2009. The first day was the typical day of presentations and discussions by the environmentalists and scientists.

One interesting presentation by Dr. Richard Pace informed the industry that determining whether or not sinking groundlines are successful at protecting the whales will not be an easy task. Members of the fishing industry were quite shocked when Dr. Pace suggested that it may take up to 15 years to actually determine the effectiveness of changing-over our lines! Needless to say, that was all we needed when we later began our discussions on end lines.



The U.S. Coast Guard spoke on enforcement, explaining that as of April 7, 2009, they expected the fixed-gear fleets to have completely changed their groundlines to sinking line. I privately spoke with Coast Guard enforcement and they indicated they would likely, initially, be issuing verbal as well as some written warnings. This was our "unspoken understanding" that they were sympathetic to the cost of our lines, as well as the fact that we have not yet been funded; however, this leniency will not go on forever.

The discussion moved on to vertical lines. As always, the enviro groups felt that whales were still unsafe with lines in the water column. One individual suggested that "nothing had been done in the past 13 years since the TRT began meeting." That comment prompted the industry to shoot back that MUCH had happened, i.e., break-aways, SAMs, DAMs (which are now defunct with the passing of sinking groundlines), sinking groundlines, and most importantly, a significant rise in the population from "approximately 300 whales" to "about 400." Further, 2009 has been the most productive calving season to date with over 40 calves born!

I believe that the offshore lobster fishery is in pretty good shape as far as end lines are concerned. Area 3 has reduced traps by a significant amount, therefore, this is our best defense. Area 2

has also reduced traps due to attrition, however, the difference between *everyone else* and us is that WE are the only ones who actually *purposely* reduced traps, and know how many traps are allocated and *fished* in our area. I was able to say how many traps were initially allocated and (NMFS latest figures) how many were fished, as of the 2007 fishing year. With those figures, it was easy to determine that there was a 55% reduction in traps actually fished (trap tags purchased), from those that were allocated in 2002, and endlines were reduced by 50.5%. Further,

I calculated that there are currently only .5 endlines per square nautical mile offshore! Those numbers stunned NMFS, the scientists, and the enviros. I was quite pleased! All of a sudden, everyone else was being held to our standards!!

That sure felt good since we are always the group having to "fight it out alone." Vicki Cornish of the Ocean Conservancy put forth a motion to recognize measures due to Fishery Management Plans that help in protecting whales as acceptable measures in the TRT process. The motion passed via consensus.

Finally, in another attempt at consensus, Stormy Mayo came up with an idea to "encourage" the fishing industry to consider trying ways to fish without endlines. He suggested that instead of penalizing fishermen and trying to threaten to close areas, why not instead, offer to open areas, presently closed to lobster fishing (are there any??) to anyone willing to try fishing without endlines. He indicated that the experiment would prove "proof of concept." After considerable discussion Stormy requested a consensus agreement for his recommendation. I said that I would not agree to "proof of concept," since what may prove possible inshore may not be possible offshore. After that statement was advised, the recommendation to NMFS passed via consensus.

NMFS will now have to determine whether or not A.) there are areas closed to lobster fishing B.) if it would even possible.

All in all, it was a very non-contentious meeting and I left feeling that we are in an enviable and positive position.

FUNDING FOR SINKING GROUNDLINES BY BONNIE

The answer to the most asked question is, "**No, not yet.**" Unfortunately, we are still waiting for word on whether or not, or how much funding has been allocated to the offshore industry (and a few others) for sinking groundlines.

We continue to work with Senator Reed's office, and we are cautiously optimistic, however between the issues of the budget crunch and additional stimulus funds that have been allocated, it seems to me that all of Washington is overwhelmed. I think our

Congressional Delegations are trying to work through all the challenges, but in the meantime, we are still awaiting definite word.

We are working on preparing ourselves to be ready if/when the funding opportunity becomes available, but until then, all we can do is wait, and continue working to create a fast and effective method for allocating the funds. I will keep you all posted!

ASMFC LOBSTER ADDENDUM XIV BY BONNIE

As I am sure you are aware, the Lobster Board approved Draft Addendum XIV for public hearing at their February 2009 meeting.

The Addendum focuses on Area 3 and seeks to modify the trap cap and conservation tax once Transferability is implemented in the offshore fishery.

The draft Addendum proposes a reduction in the trap cap from 2,200 to 2,000 and modi-

fies the conservation tax from a confusing 20% on transfers less than 1800 traps and 50% over 1800 traps to a more easily implemented straight 20% on all transfers. The 10% tax on the sale of a complete operation remains intact.

Few comments were received by ASMFC, and the Lobster Board will be discussing Addendum XIV at their upcoming Board meeting in Alexandria, VA on May 5th.

AREA 3 LOBSTER TRAP BUYOUT BY BONNIE

Trouble in the groundfish fishery has complicated our ability to find funding for a buyback. All of the monies that are being appropriated are being thrown at the groundfish debacle.

I've spoken to the Ocean Conservancy and they are interested in helping from a whale standpoint, but have few resources. I spoke with the Environmental Defense Fund, but they are only interested if we agree to enter into an agreement to research ITQ's for the offshore lobster fleet. My next step will be to contact PEW for some funding.

It sounds crazy, but because we are not in a "crisis, put the fire out, situation," no one is breaking down the door to help. We are not looking for tons of money, but again, because we are being pro-active instead of reactive, interest isn't great.

If all else fails I will again try our Congressional delegation. I am hoping to get a plan going before Transferability is implemented—which I think will be in 2010.

I'll keep you informed!

SKATE FMP BY BONNIE

A skate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) was in development for approximately a year and Pat Kurkul was getting anxious. The Committee finalized its recommendations and brought them forward to the Council's April meeting. The draft alternatives included TACs, TALs, and possession limits.

Since it was agreed upon early in the process to divide the skate fishery into separate wing and bait fisheries, it was deemed appropriate that all measures for both fisheries may not be exactly similar.

Both plans include possession limits, although for different amounts, and will undergo annual review to determine if current biological catch and accountability measures are acceptable. The bait fishery also has a three-season quota which was included to extend the period during which catch may be taken, likely minimizing any closures, or lessening the timing of any closures that may become necessary.

The bait skate fishing industry is confident that the FMP is crafted to adequately manage the needs of the offshore lobster fleet.



OLFISH-AOLA UPDATE BY HEIDI

Our Olfish-AOLA endeavor is going strong. We have ongoing projects with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) in Canada and the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) in the Gulf of Mexico region, are negotiating additional Gulf of Mexico projects and are looking forward to potential projects within New England.

At the end of March, I traveled to Gaspé, Quebec, Canada to install software and train 5 captains of Gulf of St. Lawrence shrimp trawlers. This study fleet will be testing our elogging solution, in coordination with DFO, through the Spring months. DFO is in the initial stages of switching the entire Canadian federal fleet from paper to electronic logging and have plans in place to start requiring electronic logs

in the 2010 fishing season. DFO will be certify 3rd party software products for use in capturing elogs. With this pilot study we are well on the way to gaining this certification!

April 13-17, Bonnie and I, as well as the lead Olfish developer, Amos Barkai, were in attendance at the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council meeting. EDF asked us down to this meeting to present our progress to date on our for-hire fishery project and to help the political push toward electronic logging mandates in the U.S. for hire recreational fleet. While at this meeting we also discussed with EDF an additional project involving the Gulf of Mexico commercial reef fish fleet. We will be discussing this project with them further via teleconference in the coming weeks.

I'm sure you've all heard about the release of money by NOAA to fund research on data collection requirements for the NE groundfish fleet, as it transitions to sector management. We are positioned well, with the groundwork in place and eager partners, to hopefully take advantage of this new money to fund a pilot test of the Olfish software solution as it relates to sector management.

All and all things are moving along quickly. We are marketing a good product and our positive reputation is growing. 2010 could be a huge year for Olfish-AOLA (knock on wood)!

See below and on the following page for Olfish photos.



March 26, 2009 Gulf of St. Lawrence shrimp vessels in dry dock (with at least 2 feet of snow on the ground). Crews have only a week or two of "warm" enough weather to prepare vessels for the April 1 opening of the season. In just over a week the entire fleet, of nearly 100 boats, is moved into the water.

OLFISH-AOLA PHOTOS BY HEIDI



April 14, 2009 Bonnie and Heidi's daughter, Addison, hard at work searching out technical equipment at a New Orleans Radio Shack.



April 16, 2009 Olrac Co-Owner and Olfish software developer, Amos Barkai, strikes a pose with the "Crazy Lobster" before a business dinner meeting.

GRANTS UPDATE BY HEIDI

We received notices in April regarding the status of three grant applications; a Sea Grant pre-proposal to investigate artificial bait, a NMFS Saltonstall-Kennedy (S-K) proposal to investigate the potential socio-economic impacts of a trap buyout, and another S-K proposal to study the connections between inshore and offshore lobster populations.

Review of our Sea Grant pre-proposal were positive and we have been asked to submit a full proposal for the June deadline. I'm currently working with our collaborators to write this proposal. If funded, we will be testing seafood processing waste products, namely clam gurry, as an alternative lobster bait for the offshore fishery.

We were 1 for 2 with S-K. While our socio-economic proposal received positive reviewer comments, this project was not funded (in this economy competition for funds is extremely tight). On the other hand, we have been awarded funding for our lobster population study. The lobster population study will run for two years and is a

collaboration with Dr. Jelle Atema of Boston University. Dr. Atema's team will do the scientific work, AOLA will provide Dr. Atema with lobsters and spearhead the project's outreach activities. The project should start in the coming months.

This project aims to use genetics (DNA) and anatomy to elucidate similarities and differences in lobster populations from different areas. The results of this study will give us insight into the reproductive connection between inshore and offshore populations (i.e. the source/sink debate). Essentially, it is a different way to answer the same kinds of questions you can answer with a migration study, except the information we learn is about where the lobsters are mating and with whom, not where the lobsters are moving to for non-breeding purposes (i.e. when foraging for food or when avoiding certain ocean conditions).

All in all, this news is quite positive and will keep me very busy!



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
NORTHEAST REGION
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930-2276

MAR - 5 2009

Dear Commercial Trap/Pot and Gillnet Fishermen:

This letter is to remind you of two changes to the regulations implementing the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (ALWTRP) that were published in the *Federal Register* on September 2, 2008 (73 FR 51228).

Beginning on April 5, 2009, the Dynamic Area Management [DAM] program will be eliminated and replaced with the broad-based sinking groundline requirement for all Atlantic trap/pot fisheries.

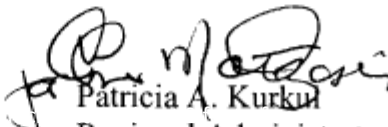
These changes are in conjunction with previously published amendments to the ALWTRP on October 1, 2007 (72 FR 57104) and April 9, 2008 (73 FR 19171). NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) sent permit letters summarizing these modifications and highlighted the effective dates shortly after publication in the *Federal Register*.

This letter also reminds you of several other measures that are currently effective. Among other measures, the following are currently in effect:

1. Expansion of additional trap/pot and gillnet fisheries (Northeast anchored float gillnet, Northeast drift gillnet, Atlantic blue crab, and Atlantic mixed species trap/pot fisheries which includes but is not limited to crab [red, Jonah, and rock], hagfish, finfish [black sea bass, scup, tautog, cod, haddock, pollock, redfish (ocean perch), and white hake], conch/whelk, and shrimp) regulated under the ALWTRP;
2. Broad-based gear modifications and marking (e.g., sinking groundline, expanded weak links on buoy lines and in gillnet panels, gillnet anchoring, surface buoy and buoy line marking) in specific times and areas;
3. Elimination of the Seasonal Area Management [SAM] program;
4. Expansion of exempted waters; and
5. Regulatory changes for the purposes of clarification and consistency (e.g. where sinking line is required for groundlines, attachment of flotation devices is prohibited).

If you have any questions or need additional information on your trap/pot or gillnet requirements (e.g. ALWTRP regulations, outreach documents on the ALWTRP), please contact the ALWTRP coordinator, Diane Borggaard (978-282-8453), or visit the ALWTRP webpage (<http://www.nero.noaa.gov/whaletrp/>). You may also contact the industry liaison for your area: John Higgins (207-677-2316) in New England or Glenn Salvador (757-414-0128) in the Mid and South Atlantic.

Sincerely,


Patricia A. Kurkul
Regional Administrator



SAFETY ALERT



UNITED STATES COAST GUARD
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

MARINE SAFETY ALERT

Assistant Commandant for Marine Safety, Security and Stewardship

April 16, 2009
Washington, DC

Alert 01-09

Electrical Shock Hazards

Earlier this year an engineer working onboard a chemical tank ship was electrocuted. The incident occurred while several engineers were preparing to test a circuit breaker. The engineer apparently made contact with the unprotected stripped ends of a conductor plugged into a live 480 volt power supply on an electrical test bench. The investigation is currently ongoing and is examining the other circumstances surrounding the casualty. However, important safety concerns have been noted. This alert serves as a reminder to the maritime industry about the dangers of working with electrical equipment.

With respect to this casualty, the corded three-conductor power supply line being used to connect to the breaker, also called a pig tail, should not have been energized until it was connected. Further, depending on the type of equipment it was being used with, its ends should have had high voltage insulated alligator clips or it should have been wired securely into the electrical component prior to testing. Under no circumstances should the ends have been handled with the power turned on.

The Coast Guard ***strongly recommends*** that all vessel owners and operators ensure that:

1. Circuits are de-energized prior to performing any work whenever possible.
2. Employees having electrical maintenance and repair responsibilities are fully trained regarding all safety precautions needed when working with potential electrical hazards.
3. Individuals wear appropriate safety gear - insulated shoes, dry clothing, hard hat, rubber gloves, etc...
4. Appropriate supervision is provided.
5. Procedures for the use of test panels and connectors and are found in the Safety Management System or other operating manuals and readily available.
6. Safe electrical equipment inspection, maintenance and repair procedures are available and followed closely.
7. Test equipment is properly maintained according to original plans.
8. Tools used in the repair of live equipment are properly insulated.
9. Test benches are both properly insulated and grounded in the appropriate areas.
10. Flooring and other surrounding areas of test benches are properly insulated and dry.

This safety alert is provided for informational purpose only and does not relieve any domestic or international safety, operational or material requirement. Developed by the Investigating Officers at MSU Galveston and the Office of Investigations and Analysis, United States Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, DC.

SAFETY ALERT



Life Raft—Hydrostatic Release Installations

All fishing vessel owners should be aware that they are required to have their life rafts in a floatfree position with proper set up of their hydrostatic releases to ensure deployment of the raft in case of an emergency. During the last few months our dockside examiners and boarding officers have noticed a number of vessels with improperly rigged hydrostatic releases. This avoidable error could have grave consequences if not addressed prior to an underway emergency.

Take the time to check your hydrostatic releases and ensure that they are set up properly. If there are any additional questions please call the First Coast Guard District Offices at 617-223-8315 or your local Coast Guard examiner or email me at paul.m.bassick@uscg.mil

SAFETY ALERT



FREE BASIC SAFETY & SURVIVAL TRAINING FOR COMMERCIAL FISHERMEN

Provided by

Rodney Avila - Ted Williams
IMP Fishing Gear, Ltd.

Fred Matera
NESTCO

Dan O'Connor
Life Raft & Survival Equipment

David Blaney
Blaney Marine Safety

Dana Collier
Marine Safety Consultants

Kevin Coyle & Staff
Coast Guard Marine Safety Detachment

The above Coast Guard certified drill instructors, and proud sponsors, are volunteering their time to provide you with training

TRAINING from 7:30 A.M. to 2:30 P.M.
At the University of Massachusetts, SMAST Building
706 Rodney French Blvd., New Bedford, MA

*****MAY 15TH, FRIDAY*****

* Fire Fighting * Man-Overboard Procedures * Flood & Pump Operation * Use of Flares & EPIRBs *
Don Immersion Suits * Deploy Life Raft * Enter Life Raft * Coast Guard Helicopter visit

PLEASE BRING YOUR OWN IMMERSION SUIT
(Suits will be provided if you don't have one)

LUNCH WILL BE PROVIDED BY OCEAN MARINE INSURANCE AGENCY, INC.

PARKING IS AVAILABLE AT THE NRC BUILDING NEXT DOOR

A NEW IMMERSION SUIT WILL BE RAFFLED OFF
Compliments of **NEW BEDFORD HARBOR DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

OCEAN MARINE INSURANCE AGENCY, INC.
800-707-6667 oimainc.com

Call and Register with **FRAN ABREU**
Tel: (508) 979-1616 ext: 129
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**American Red Cross
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Your safety is my priority!

Your Cents Can Make a Difference !

iGive Shopping

The simplest, easiest way to donate to AOLA and help support our efforts toward continued sustainability of the offshore lobster fishery. Each time you shop online at one of the over 700 participating merchants AOLA will automatically receive a small donation from that merchant. You will also be eligible for special discounts at participating merchants when you use iGive.

It only takes 5 minutes to set up!

- 1. Go to www.iGive.com/AOLA or follow the link on the AOLA website.**
- 2. Sign up and download the iGive shopping toolbar.**
- 3. Each time you go to one of the 650+ associated online retailers a percentage of your purchase will automatically go to AOLA**



iGive Searching

Online shopping not your thing? You can still help AOLA via iGive. iSearchiGive is a Search Engine just like Google, but better, because, each time you search the internet using iSearchiGive, AOLA receives 1 penny. Think about how much you search the web—our pennies could really add up for AOLA!

Start Searching Today!

- 1. Go to iSearchiGive.com or click on the link on the AOLA website.**
- 2. Select Atlantic Offshore as your charity (this will happen automatically if you are already an iGive member)**
- 3. Start Searching!**
- 4. Make [iSearchiGive](http://iSearchiGive.com) your internet home page to maximize our profits!**



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For immediate release -- March 17, 2009

A Future With eLoran

Radionavigation is a global business with a global footprint and the U.S. Global Positioning System (GPS) has been the jewel in the crown for nearly a generation. The U.S. has established such a level of trust in its operation of GPS that governments, service providers, and users worldwide have included it in their critical infrastructure, safety-critical, and mass-market applications, and have decommissioned many other aids to navigation. In making decisions on GPS and other systems, the international community takes careful note of the U.S. Federal Radionavigation Plan (FRP): "the official source of U.S. radionavigation policy and planning".

All radionavigation systems, including GPS, have their weaknesses. On February 7, 2008, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced that it would begin implementing Enhanced Loran (eLoran), an enhanced and modernized version of Loran-C, as the U.S. national backup system. This independent, positioning, navigation, timing, and data delivery system would mitigate the safety, security, or economic effects of a loss of GPS for critical infrastructure applications, especially those that require precise time and frequency. The 2008 U.S. FRP, released by the new administration in February 2009, states that this decision was based on the findings of the U.S. Institute for Defense Analysis' Independent Assessment Team and endorsed at the March 2008 meeting of the U.S. National Space-based PNT Executive Committee.

The international community and the International Loran Association (ILA) applauded the February 2008 U.S. decision. It was well timed to take advantage of European developments that had demonstrated the exceptional value-for-money and high performance of minimally-manned eLoran stations. The U.S. DHS announcement stimulated investment decisions and eLoran development activities worldwide.

In our rapidly changing and connected world, the ILA notes that the proposal by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to terminate Loran-C within a week of the publication of the 2008 FRP only makes sense when the termination of the Loran-C program is part of the transition to an eLoran program. Additionally, it should be recognized that a significant part of the existing modernized Loran-C infrastructure can be used for an efficient transition to eLoran. If this is the intent of the OMB statement, then the ILA encourages this development and awaits a plan for its implementation.

As an international Association, the ILA believes that a U.S. decision in 2009 to transition to eLoran will have a positive effect worldwide, will build industrial capability, and will drive creativity and innovation. As numerous studies have shown, the greatest benefit option for Loran-C service providers is to transition to eLoran. The ILA stands ready to support governments, service providers, and users worldwide in that decision-making process.

Board of Directors, 2009: Langhorne Bond, President • Zachariah Conover, Vice President • Robert Lilley, Secretary • Erik Johannessen, Treasurer
G. Linn Roth, Past-President • John Beukers, Consulting Past-President Chris Bartone • Sally Basker • Marc Clerens • Seung Gi Gug
Tamotsu Ikeda • Sherman Lo • Jacques Manchard • Gerard Offermans • Charles Schue • Paul Williams • Durk van Willigen



Notes to Editors

1. The International Loran Association (ILA) advocates the use of enhanced or eLoran as a back-up for and complement to global navigation satellite systems (GNSS) in multiple navigation and timing applications as well as the integration of eLoran and GNSS systems to improve the safety and security of individuals and nations. The ILA fosters the international growth of eLoran as the most complementary, only multimodal, and most cost effective backup to GNSS systems, and promotes coordination between nations and institutions to increase cooperative activities, to establish uniform standards, and to optimize benefits to all users.

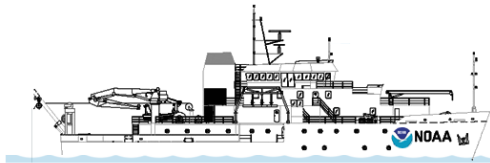
Through its annual meetings and ongoing activities, the ILA functions as an international forum for the exchange of ideas and information regarding eLoran and its integration with GNSS. The ILA also serves as a repository of information documenting those individuals and efforts that have contributed to the evolution of eLoran. The ILA began in 1971 and its members are from user, industry, and government groups throughout the world.

2. Enhanced Loran (eLoran) is a Loran system that incorporates the latest receiver, antenna, and transmission system technology to enable Loran to serve as a backup and complement to global navigation satellite systems (GNSS) for navigation and timing. This new technology provides substantially enhanced performance beyond what was possible with Loran-C, eLoran's predecessor. For example, it is now possible to obtain absolute accuracies of 8-20 meters using eLoran for harbor entrance and approach. Similarly, eLoran can function as an independent, highly accurate source of universal time coordinated (UTC). An eLoran transmission infrastructure is now being installed in the United States, and a variation of eLoran is now operational in northwest Europe. It is expected that there will be a global evolution towards eLoran, and users can anticipate integrated eLoran/GNSS receivers in the near future for a variety of applications. Users of Loran-C can continue to utilize their equipment, but will not receive the performance benefits of eLoran.
3. The U.S. Federal Radionavigation Plan is the official source of radionavigation policy and planning for the U.S. Federal Government. It includes the introduction, policies, radionavigation system user requirements, system descriptions, and operating plans for a number of radionavigation systems including the Global Positioning System and its augmentations, and Long-Range Navigation (Loran).

SPRING 2009 EMOLT NEWSLETTER

eMOLT Spring 2009 Update

Northeast Fisheries Science Center Oceanography Branch



Annual calibration check

As reported in the last newsletter, the temperature probes performed well in a controlled ice-bath conducted at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution this past year. While two of the old ONSET Tidbits showed signs of age and needed to be removed from the inventory, all VEMCO Miniloggs performed according to specs.

Cigar-shaped probes have 341 day memory limit but some now have double that

The cigar-shaped "Minilog" probe that most of you are now using has a memory limited to 341 days. However, the newer units with serial numbers beginning with "4" have double that amount. In any case, they will stop blinking when their memory runs out.

Site Maps

As you know, our primary mission is to verify the site location associated with each temperature

series. To help with this task, we have provided you with a detailed map of your sites in relation to loran lines and depth contours. We have labeled your site with its 4-digit code. We ask that you study this figure and let us know if we are in error. Note that the loran TDs are listed on the map title and the site is denoted by a purple dot in the middle of the map.

Drifter plans for 2009

Drifter deployments (to document flow patterns around the Gulf of Maine) will be made Feb through Sep 2009. Approximately two dozen new units have been funded by various institutions (UNH, UMASSD, MASS-DMF, and NOAA). A new batch of students at the Southern Maine Community College is hard at work in constructing these. If you come across any drifters while underway, please call the number posted on the PVC pipes. We want to thank several fishermen who helped recover drifters in 2008 so that we could redeploy them again in 2009. You can view the progress of these units along the coast at: <http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/drifter>.

eMOLT Phase VI: bottom currents

After successful tests of prototype current meters by about a dozen lobstermen last fall, we are planning more tests this spring that will include a digital compass as well as a tilt meter and other modifications such as the tether design. To see the latest in this development see "emolt.org".

eMOLT News Release

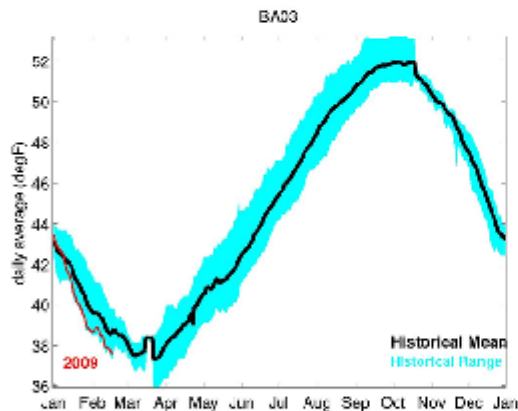
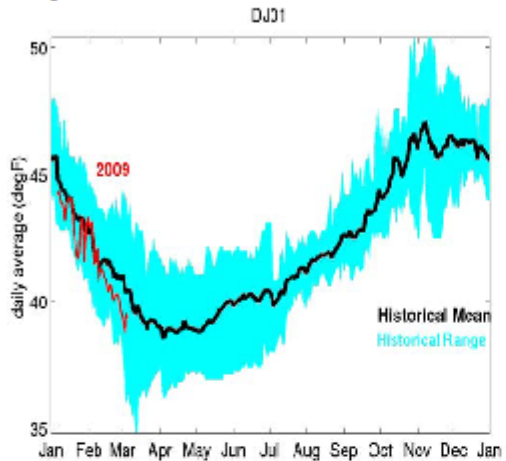
The eMOLT story was printed in hundreds of newspapers and websites around the country recently after a NOAA news release was published on 9 March 2009. See http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/press_release. With all the phone call and email response, you may still see notices in your local papers if you haven't already. It is hoped that this type of PR will result in new funding sources that would at least sustain our present operation for years to come.

Cold Start to 2009

While it is too early to generalize about 2009, the first indications are that the year is starting out on the cold side relative to the eMOLT years. Both David Johnson and Billy Anderson, located in deep water on either ends of the state of Maine, show

SPRING 2009 EMOLT NEWSLETTER

temperatures well below the mean at those sites/depths (see figures below). These two individuals have recorded a total of 60,000 and 200,000 thousand hourly observations, respectively, at multiple sites.



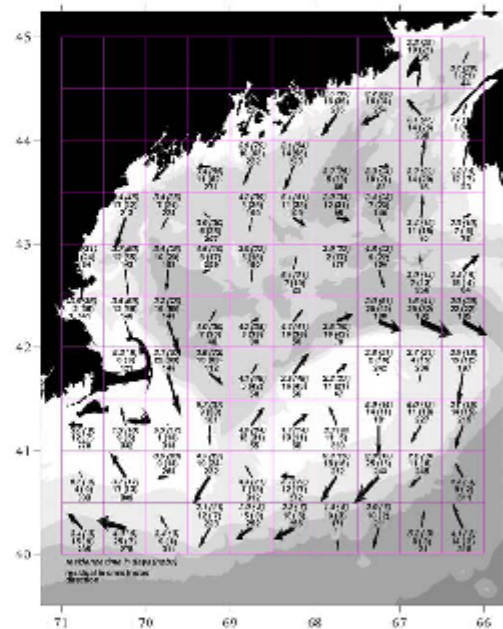
It will be interesting to see if and when the temperature rebounds to normal levels in 2009.

eMOLT Website Feedback

We are finally getting around to updating the eMOLT website so you should see changes soon. We ask that you email suggestions on how to improve the website to james.manning@noaa.gov. There are many ways to visualize eMOLT data that depend on the questions asked. What questions do you have? How do you want to see your data presented?

eMOLT Publications Available

Two eMOLT-related articles have been published in the scientific literature in the last few months. If you are interested in reading the results of either the drifter studies, temperature studies, or both, please send me an email request at james.manning@noaa.gov. Let me know if you want a hardcopy or electronic version. The articles appeared in *Continental Shelf Research* and the *Journal of Operational Oceanography*, respectively. A figure from the drifter article, presented below, describes the mean and variability of currents throughout the Gulf of Maine based on hundreds of drifter tracks. We now have statistics on mean velocity, residence times, and tidal amplitudes at all regions of the gulf.



March 16, 2009

ST. SIMONS ISLAND, Ga. — The biologists had been in the plane for hours, flying back and forth over the calm ocean. They had seen dolphins, leatherback turtles, a flock of water birds called gannets and even a basking shark — but not what they were looking for.

Then Millie Brower, who was peering with intense concentration through a bubblelike window fitted into the plane's fuselage, announced "nine o'clock, about a mile off." The plane made a stomach-churning lurch as the pilots banked left and began to circle. And there, below, were a right whale mother and her new calf, barely breaking the surface, lolling in the swells.

The researchers, from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Georgia Wildlife Trust, are part of an intense effort to monitor North Atlantic right whales, one of the most endangered, and closely watched, species on earth. As a database check eventually disclosed, the whale was Diablo, who was born in these waters eight years ago. Her calf — at a guess 2 weeks old and a bouncing 12 feet and 2 tons — was the 38th born this year, a record that would be surpassed just weeks later, with a report from NOAA on the birth of a 39th calf. The previous record was 31, set in 2001.

"It's a bumper year for calves," Richard Merrick, an oceanographer for NOAA's fisheries service, said in an interview. "That's a good sign."

Actually, it's one of so many good signs that researchers are beginning to hope that for the first time in centuries things are looking up for the

right whale. They say the species offers proof that simple conservation steps can have a big impact, even for species driven to the edge of oblivion.

North Atlantic right whales, which can grow up to 55 feet long and weigh up to 70 tons, were the "right" whales for 18th- and 19th-century whalers because they are rich in oil and baleen, move slowly, keep close to shore and float when they die.

They were long ago hunted to extinction in European waters, and by 1900 perhaps only 100 or so remained in their North American range, from feeding grounds off Maritime Canada and New England to winter calving grounds off the Southeastern coast.

Since then, the species' numbers have crept up, but very slowly. NOAA estimates that there are about 325, though scientists in and out of the agency suspect there may be more, perhaps as many as 400. It has been illegal to hunt the right whale since 1935, when the League of Nations put them under protection. Even so, researchers despaired of ever seeing a healthy right whale population here as long as ship strikes still maimed and killed them and fishing gear strangled them.

But "over the last four or five months there's been a tremendous amount of good news," said Tony LaCasse, a spokesman for the New England Aquarium, a center of right whale research. For example:

◇Recent changes in shipping lanes, some compulsory and others voluntary, seem to be reducing collisions between whales and vessels.

◇The Bush administration agreed last year to lower speed limits for large



Audio Slide Show

"In 2008 not a single North Atlantic Right Whale was killed by human hands"

Cornelia Dean NY Times (audio slide show)



Digital Readers—click on the images below to be view this articles associated multimedia items.

Paper Readers— you can find the multimedia content at: http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/17/science/17whal.html?_r=3&pagewanted=1

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vessels in coastal waters where right whales congregate.

◆ Fishing authorities in the United States are beginning to impose gear restrictions designed to reduce the chances whales and other marine mammals will be entangled in fishing lines. Canada is considering similar steps.

◆ In December, researchers from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration spotted an unusually large aggregation of right whales in the Gulf of Maine. A month later, a right whale turned up in the Azores, a first since the early 20th century.

◆ And last year, probably for the first time since the 1600s, not one North Atlantic right whale died at human hands.

“We are seeing signs of recovery,” Dr. Merrick said. He and others warn that it is far too soon to say the whales are out of danger. Calving seasons are known for their ups and downs. A single whale in the Azores does not prove the species is recolonizing its old haunts. Not everyone embraces the new shipping regulations. And so far this year, five whales have turned up entangled with fishing gear. Rescuers removed all or almost all of the gear from the five, including one whale freed last week after being successfully sedated for the process, a first.

Efforts to protect the whales are costly. Surveying alone costs hundreds of thousands of dollars a year, said Barb Zoodsma, a NOAA biologist who coordinates survey efforts in the Southeast. In 2003, three researchers and a pilot died when their plane went down off Amelia Island, Florida.

“It’s a very expensive endeavor, and

we are very cognizant of that fact,” Ms. Zoodsma said. Some wonder if it is worth it. “We have been pressured by some folks on the outside to say this is a lost cause,” said Greg Silber, who coordinates whale recovery efforts for NOAA, which is charged with protecting marine mammals and endangered species like the right whale.

The whales are so few and distinct in appearance that researchers identify them not just by number but by nickname. The whales are identifiable by patterns of growths on their skin called callosities. These callosities are colonized by pale, licelike creatures in patterns discernable even at a distance.

When survey teams spot a right whale, they can enter its description in [an online database](#) maintained by the aquarium and accessible to researchers around the world.

[Sightings offer important clues](#) to the movements and habits of the creatures. When the pod of whales was sighted in December, in the Jordan Basin, about 70 miles south of Bar Harbor, the individual whales were well known. But no one had seen them hang out in the basin before. Now, researchers think it may be a previously unknown wintering ground or even a place where whales mate.

When researchers learn where whales are, they can work to keep shippers out of the way. That is what happened in July, when shipping lanes that cross Stellwagen Bank, a national marine sanctuary north of Cape Cod, were moved slightly to the north. “One of the sanctuary staff had documented where the whale sightings were,” Mr. LaCasse said. The lanes now run through a less frequented area. And the sanctuary

sends thank-you notes to ships that steer clear of the whales.

A similar change occurred off Saint John, New Brunswick, a hub for shipping oil into the Maritime Provinces. Lanes going into the city were moved a few years ago, after negotiations with the International Maritime Organization. Voluntary lane changes are in effect in places like Boston, Dr. Silber said. “The measured economic impact to mariners was minimal,” he said. But the changes brought “huge benefits” to the animals.

“Compliance appears to be quite high,” he said, adding, “We are optimistic.”

Moira Brown, a senior scientist at the aquarium, said researchers working with Canadian officials designated “an area to be avoided” south of New Brunswick where right whales congregate in summer. “Compliance there has been very good,” Dr. Brown said.

But entanglements with fishing gear continue to be a big problem.

When the researchers spotted Diablo, for example, she had something white on her fluke and, for a few anxious moments, they thought she might be snagged on fishing gear. Instead, like an estimated 80 percent to 85 percent of adult right whales, she carried a [scar](#) from a previous entanglement.

Entanglements can be lethal for the whales, Ms. Zoodsma said, especially if lines get caught in whales’ mouths or around their flippers. NOAA trains people to disentangle them, she said, but “when you have a 40-ton animal in a stressful situation” the work can be unpleasant and dangerous. And it is labor intensive. Last week’s effort

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to sedate and free an entangled whale involved a spotter plane, four boats and multiple attempts, she said. That is why preventing entanglements "is a first priority," Ms. Zoodsma said. New efforts center on new gear, like lines that lie along the ocean floor or marker buoys that sit at the bottom until a fishing boat finds them electronically and signals them to bob to the surface.

Dr. Brown said the United States was taking a first step in this direction with regulations going into effect this spring. She said discussions were under way with fishing authorities in Canada. Meanwhile, researchers continue efforts to discover as much as they can about where the animals spend their time, what they eat and

what natural factors may affect their health. One of their most unusual efforts involved dogs trained to sniff whale scat, which the animals usually produce at the surface. The samples the dogs helped collect offered valuable information about what the whales were eating and where they were feeding. They can also offer hormone clues about whether females are pregnant. Researchers want this information because despite this year's baby boom, right whales are not reproducing as they should. The scientists want to know if the problem is impaired fertility, spontaneous [miscarriage](#) or some other issue.

In their book "The Urban Whale" ([Harvard University](#) Press,

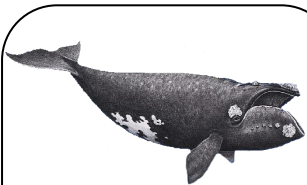
2007), Scott D. Kraus and Rosalind M. Rolland, scientists at the aquarium, say they believe the last North American right whale deliberately hunted by people was a calf swimming with its mother off Palm Beach, Fla., in 1935.

But people will continue to kill right whales. Ship strikes "are still going to happen," Dr. Merrick said. "To totally eliminate them would mean we would have to eliminate shipping."

In the end, Ms. Zoodsma said, the value of a species is something "each individual has to sort that out for themselves." But if right whales were to vanish, she said, "it would be a tremendous loss for future generations."



NOAA research vessel hits right whale by D. Fraser



NEXT TRT Meeting

"NOAA investigates how to protect right whales from NOAA!" (Just Joking)

April 22, 2009

A federal research vessel, heading back to port Sunday afternoon, hit a right whale near Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary.

The 50 foot-long National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration research vessel Auk was travelling at about 22 miles per hour when it hit the whale at 12:30 p.m., said NOAA spokesman David Miller.

The Auk had three crewmen posted as lookouts on an area outside the bridge, as well as the captain and a mate on the bridge. The whale was below the surface and was spotted by the crew just 10 feet before they hit it, Miller said.

The boat and the whale were outside the boundaries of the Stellwagen sanctuary, approximately 7 miles east of Scituate, said sanctuary superintendent Craig MacDonald. It is the first time any research vessel working for the sanctuary has ever

hit a whale in the 15 years since the Stellwagen preserve was created, MacDonald said.

MacDonald said the ship was conducting research on humpback whale feeding for the sanctuary. The ship remained at the scene for 45 minutes observing the right whale, which had been hit on one of the flukes.

"It didn't appear to be having any problems," Miller said. NOAA law enforcement branch is conducting an investigation.

The Atlantic right whale is the most endangered great whale species in the world. There are an estimated 300 to 350 of them in the world.

When three or more right whales are spotted in an area a marine advisory is issued and boats are required to slow down to about 11.5 miles per hour. No marine advisory had been issued on Sunday.



Research on lobster health is paramount to understanding the causes and consequences of shell disease in the American lobster, *Homarus americanus*. In 2006, the United States Congress appropriated \$3 million to establish a cooperative research program—*The New England Lobster Research Initiative*—to study shell disease. The goal of this program is to describe the disease agent and how it works, and to determine the extent and severity of the disease in New England waters. This initiative combines the strengths of 11 institutions, two state agencies, and over 35 scientists and graduate students. A unique feature of this program is the “100 Lobster Study” in which some of the world’s foremost crustacean disease researchers are working with material from the same 100 lobsters. Expectations are that this collaborative approach will allow for groundbreaking analysis of a complex problem. This article gives a brief overview of the program which started in March 2007 and concludes in 2009.

Several researchers are looking for changes in the structure of the exoskeleton that would make the lobster vulnerable to shell disease. Michael Tlusty (New England Aquarium) and his group of researchers are examining the hypothesis that diet and water temperatures affect the structure of the shell. Joseph Kunkel (University of Massachusetts, Amherst) and his team are looking at detailed shell morphology and chemistry under the hypothesis that climate change induced ocean acidification is altering the chemistry at the interface of the shell and seawater, ultimately weakening the shell.

Hans Laufer (University of Connecticut), and his colleagues hypothesize that chemicals known as alkylphenols may inhibit the shell hardening process after molting, perhaps by interfering with calcium binding in the chitin matrix that forms the exoskele-

ton. Alkylphenols are organic compounds that result from the breakdown of hard plastics. They are also found in detergents, paints and lubricants that enter the ocean through wastewater and septic system effluent, as well as road run-off. Similarly, Lawrence LeBlanc, Deanna Prince and their research partners at the University of Maine, Orono) are examining whether other environmental contaminants may contribute to lobster shell disease by determining if specific organic and trace metal contaminants such as nickel, chromium and arsenic consistently co-occur with shell diseased lobsters. Bassem Allam (Stony Brook University) and his team of researchers are assessing immune response capability and the microbial community associated with shells from lobsters with and without epizootic shell disease. In their study, they are comparing lobsters from western Long Island Sound (LIS) where disease prevalence is low with those from eastern LIS where disease prevalence is high. Both populations are being compared to reference lobsters from Maine. Results show striking differences between animals from the diseased and healthy lobster populations with respect to immune system response and microbe activity on the shells. Work is continuing to better characterize the composition of the microbial community living on the outside of healthy and diseased lobsters, and to explore the defense factors associated with the lobster’s shells. Tim Verslycke and his associates at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution are investigating the relationships between lobster shell disease and expression of genes related to the hormone and immune systems, molting, energetic and xenobiotic metabolism, and shell formation.

Jelle Atema, (Boston University) and his colleagues are investigating whether healthy lobsters avoid lobsters with shell disease, and whether females prefer to mate with

lobsters from their own population. Such selective mating might have consequences for genetic structure of lobster populations. Preliminary results suggest genetic differences among lobsters within close proximity, a finding consistent with selective mating due to behavioral barriers.

Three research teams are trying to identify which pathogens degrade the shell. Andrei Chistoserdov, (Louisiana State University) and his collaborators are evaluating the bacterial interaction with the shells in lobsters, crabs and shrimp, all of which suffer from some form of shell disease. The question is whether they are all affected by the same bacteria. The bacteria *Aquimarina* is a strong candidate.

Furthermore, Patrick Gillevet, (George Mason University) is applying a molecular technique called pyrosequencing to identify bacterial communities on the shell.

Jeffrey Shields, (Virginia Institute of Marine Science) and his lab are examining how shell disease affects mortality and molting. He is also managing the *100 Lobster Study* and putting together the database of results from the studies thirty-nine collaborators. All the researchers are getting pieces of the same 100 lobsters, some with, some without shell disease, from the same location in Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island. Hopes are that the intensive parallel analyses of blood, shell, and tissue from the same lobsters will point to the causative agent of shell disease.

Preliminary results suggest that many of the factors studied contribute to the disease. However, it is most likely that in the wild multiple interacting agents are causing the shell disease epizootic. For more details about the projects and updated results visit http://seagrant.gso.uri.edu/fisheries/lobster_initiative/updates.html



NOAA

NOAA Receives \$830 Million Through Recovery Act

March 3 2009

The Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration will receive \$830 million in funds as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The agency will use the funds, equivalent to 20 percent of NOAA's 2008 budget, for projects that protect life and property and conserve and protect natural resources.

The act provides \$230 million for habitat restoration, navigation projects, vessel maintenance, and other activities. An additional \$430 million will be dedicated for construction and repair of NOAA facilities, ships and equipment, improvements for weather forecasting and satellite development. A total of \$170 million will also be directed for climate modeling activities, including supercomputing procurement and research into climate change.

"Whether providing grants for habitat

restoration or issuing contracts for construction and repair of our facilities, these funds will create jobs while advancing our vital mission to the American people," said [Mary Glackin](#), deputy under secretary for oceans and atmosphere. "We will ensure that the Recovery Act funding is used as effectively as possible and in a manner that will allow for maximum transparency and accountability."

Department of Commerce agencies receiving one-time funds through the act are required to submit a plan to Congress with specifics on how allocations will be spent within 60 days of the legislation being enacted. Once completed, NOAA's plan will be available to the public at the Department of Commerce and NOAA Web sites. Requests and applications for funding will be accepted when instructions and rules are posted for specific projects.

The [American Recovery and Reinvest-](#)

[ment Act of 2009](#) was signed into law by President Obama on Feb. 17, 2009. It is an unprecedented effort to jumpstart our economy, create or save millions of jobs, and put a down payment on addressing long-neglected challenges so our country can thrive in the 21st century. The Act is an extraordinary response to promote economic recovery and growth, and includes measures to modernize our nation's infrastructure, enhance energy independence, expand educational opportunities, preserve and improve affordable health care, provide tax relief, and protect those in greatest need.

NOAA understands and predicts changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and conserves and manages our coastal and marine resources.

KENNEBEC JOURNAL

Lobster as eco-scourge By Matthew Stone

AUGUSTA -- The abundance of lobsters off Maine's coast might be essential to the state's economy. But the presence of lobsters without many other species amounts to a "socioeconomic time bomb," a University of Maine marine biologist said Thursday.

Lobsters have flourished in the Gulf of Maine since the 1940s as the ranks of fish species that traditionally preyed on the crustaceans have diminished, said Robert Steneck, who delivered the University of Maine at Augusta's annual biology lecture.

"This has become a wonderful situation for the last remaining predator, which is the lobster fisherman," Steneck told an audience of more than 80 UMA students and professors. "They're doing everything right. The problem is no one is looking at the ecosystem as a whole."

The Gulf of Maine, to begin with, is not host to a wide diversity of species, he said. And as the lobster populations boomed, the area's limited biodiversity has faded.

Maine's coast has "the highest (lobster) population density on the planet -- and that's a problem," Steneck said.

That makes the state's lobster stocks susceptible to the spread of disease, which could ravage the lobster population, he said.

Growing lobster populations do not necessarily indicate healthy ecosystems, Steneck said.

"What makes somebody think an ecosystem is healthy is the economic value we're getting from it," he said. "Lobsters have done a lot for Mainer."

And their disappearance would hurt the state's 7,000 lobstermen and the industries that support them.

In 1998, a disease that infected lobster in Long Island Sound wiped out 80 percent of the stock. "This is the problem with our ecosystem having become a domesticated ecosystem," he said.

Steneck recommended fishermen and other "ecosystem managers" act with a mind toward supporting biodiversity.

The Maine Lobstermen's Association emphasizes techniques that preserve lobster populations. Attempts to reach the organization were unsuccessful Thursday.

Matthew Stone -- 623-3811, ext. 435
mstone@centralmaine.com

Jacksonville – March 4th, 2009

I am pleased to report that the Commercial Fishing Industry Vessel Safety Advisory Committee has passed a motion asking the US Coast Guard to require the wearing of a personal flotation device by the crew while the (fishing) gear is in use. This motion was passed during the advisory committee meeting where commercial fishing industry stakeholders and USCG representatives held public hearings this week.

NIOSH (CDC) presented combined regional data for a specific time period indicating that of the all fatal falls overboard(N=74), a personal flotation device was not worn by any

of the victims. Many members of the CFIVSAC had received similar data at their previous meeting in New Orleans last May. Although it is unclear if the USCG will act swiftly, the message from the committee will weigh heavily within the USCG and will provide other boating safety advocates a long awaited push towards making mandatory wear of personal flotation devices a reality under certain high risk circumstances.

Given the wide variety of PFD designs including compact inflatables available today, finding a design to suit the user is easier than ever, if you are a recreational boater. Later this year in May, the Personal Flotation Device Manufacturers Association (PFDMA)

will be meeting in Tampa to discuss standards and obtain input from the National Safe Boating Counsel. Given that commercial fishermen will be seeking new and different PFD designs for working environments, the USCG office of Life Saving Standards will again be challenged to relax some standards to give way to innovation and concerns expressed at the hearing by commercial fishermen regarding entanglement and comfort issues.

Although the motion of the CFIVSAC did not specify an 'approved' PFD, many insiders question if the USCG can promulgate regulations that do not include 'approved' as part of the language.

The Boston Globe

Make a dangerous job safer By Globe Editorial

March 21, 2009

COMMERCIAL fishing is by far the country's most dangerous occupation. Taking 112 lives per 100,000 workers each year, it easily outstrips the second worst killer, logging, which kills 86. Fishing would be less deadly if the Coast Guard could mandate safety examinations of fishing vessels before they leave the dock, but fiercely independent fishermen have resisted attempts at this. It is high time for the industry and the Coast Guard to sit down and agree on a safety program that could save lives without creating costly or cumbersome hurdles.

A bill granting the Coast Guard the explicit authority to do mandatory dockside examinations was attached to the service's budget authorization last year. It passed the House overwhelmingly, but the Senate never approved similar legislation, leaving the safety provision high and dry. Under the House proposal, Coast Guard officers could examine fishing vessels at least twice in each five-year period.

The bill would also require a training program for the operators of fishing boats, though it would allow some credit for past experience. The bill calls for two grant programs, one for the training and another for research on fishing safety.

The Coast Guard already conducts voluntary dockside examinations, issuing safety decals for vessels that pass them. In New England, many operators choose to undergo these tests: The National Marine Fisheries Service requires the decals on any vessels carrying its observers for compliance with rules affecting the groundfish, scalloping, and herring fisheries.



Nationally, however, just a small fraction of all vessels undergo examinations. Opposition is especially strong in Alaska, where Mark Vinsel, executive director of

United Fishermen of Alaska, complains that mandatory examinations inconvenience the operators of boats docked in small ports lacking access by either road or air.

Vinsel notes that in Alaska, fatalities among crabfishing crews fell after fishery management rules changed to a "catch-share" system. This allows boat operators more discretion in deciding when to go out, sparing them the risk of severe weather. Similar changes in fishery management are gaining a foothold in New England as well.

Congress last legislated fishing safety rules in 1988. That law includes ambiguous language that some believe already gives the Coast Guard the authority to do mandatory dockside examinations. Since there is resistance to the examinations, however, the Coast Guard is justified in asking for more explicit power. If the service's officers are going to be seen as bad guys, the least Congress can do is leave no doubt that vessel examiners have the law clearly on their side.

March 25, 2009

Key House lawmakers are eyeing a new system of ocean "zoning" as one way to safeguard marine resources as they seek to expand offshore energy development.

Senior Natural Resources Committee members said yesterday that any new energy legislation this year should include requirements for the government to develop comprehensive plans for the ocean -- plans that could designate certain areas of the sea for energy development and set aside others for special protection.

At issue is how to deal with expanding demands for energy development in the outer continental shelf (OCS). After Congress lifted a moratorium on offshore drilling last year, some lawmakers want to put a new system of zoning, or "marine spatial planning," in place before developers rush to site oil, wind or wave energy development offshore.

"In order to make responsible energy development decisions in the OCS, we need to know not only where the greatest energy resources are, but also where the most critical fisheries and marine mammal habitats are, where other important ecologically sensitive areas are located, and the current uses of the ocean areas in question," said Del. Madeleine Bordallo (D-Guam), chairwoman of the Oceans and Wildlife Subcommittee.

If successful, advocates say the plans could identify and protect special marine resources while providing more certainty to energy developers who want to work offshore. Otherwise, energy development companies could go through years of planning and development for an area where regulators or the public later decide they do not want any development.

Rep. Jim Costa (D-Calif.), chairman of the Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee, said energy legislation should include a "comprehensive planning process" that brings stakeholders together to site areas for oil and gas drilling, wind energy and wave energy. "I believe there are large resources out there that we can

develop cleanly and safely, and for the benefit of all Americans," Costa said. "But I also believe there are areas that are not appropriate for oil and gas development."

The two subcommittees vetted the idea at a hearing yesterday that also marked the 20th anniversary of the Exxon Valdez oil spill. Bordallo said the plans could help safeguard key marine resources as new offshore development begins -- noting that reinstating the moratorium on offshore drilling is not an option, given the administration's plans to make drilling part of a broader energy strategy.

Natural Resources Chairman Nick Rahall (D-W.Va.) also noted a need for planning, telling reporters there is a need to delineate areas that will not be open to leasing, while reiterating that there will not be an effort to fully reinstate offshore drilling bans.

Efforts to create maps and plans for development in the sea could prove complicated. Republicans on the panel questioned whether the zoning would work. "Is it really a good idea to zone before we know where all the oil and gas is?" said Rep. Louie Gohmert (R-Texas).

Some states where officials are already trying to develop plans for states waters have run into problems in their attempts to chart critical fisheries, marine mammal habitats and energy resources. Ian Bowles, secretary of Massachusetts's executive office of energy and environmental affairs, said the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration does not currently have all of the information needed to create the plans.

"There are big data gaps," Bowles said. "NOAA doesn't do this for a living."

But marine experts said that with federal assistance and directives the plans should be able to be developed. For example, Australia developed a massive plan for marine waters around the Great Barrier Reef in a manner of two years.

"Dealing with the ocean is just a different kind of animal than zoning on land, and

it's going to require a different kind of dexterity," said Thomas Kitsos of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative. "But it's doable and would provide certainty."

Bowles recommended that some of the revenues from offshore energy development should go toward funding development of the plans. And Kitsos called for a White House ocean adviser to oversee the process.

The hearing came as Rep. Lois Capps (D-Calif.) introduced a bill yesterday that would give money to states to survey their coastlines for suitable sites for renewable energy.

Bristol Bay and the Arctic

Energy development plans are of particular concern to commercial fishers working in Alaska's Bristol Bay, a rich fishing ground where the Minerals Management Service has scheduled a lease sale for 2011. Fishers in the area want it to be set aside and no energy development allowed.

"I'm terrified," Keith Colburn, a commercial crab fisher in the Bristol Bay and star of the Discovery Channel series "Deadliest Catch," told the panel yesterday. "I've seen the crab stock completely disappear with the exploration and seismic testing, and that's just stage one."

A group of other Bristol Bay fishers traveled to Washington, D.C., this week to ask lawmakers to take the area out of the drilling program and place special protections for the region.

The bay is not the only Arctic region under scrutiny. Nearly 70 House Democrats -- including several committee chairmen -- asked President Obama yesterday to implement "science-based precautionary management" for Arctic regions they say are threatened by oil and gas development and climate change.

The lawmakers, including Rahall and Energy and Commerce Chairman Henry Waxman (D-Calif.), sent a letter yesterday expressing concern with development regions including the Beaufort and Chukchi seas and the Teshekpuk Lake

CONTINUED from last page:

region of the National Petroleum Reserve -Alaska.

Comprehensive bill?

Yesterday's hearing was the committee's sixth this year on offshore energy policy. But Rahall told reporters that he is not

certain the hearings will lead to comprehensive legislation from his panel.

"It is not definitely headed toward a piece of legislation. Rather we want to be prepared if asked by the Obama administration or our own leadership, to offer our proposals for an energy bill, than we

want to be prepared to do that," he said.

Rahall said his committee does not plan to add measures to the energy and climate bill that Energy and Commerce Chairman Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) plans to mark up by Memorial Day.

Obama admin hands offshore aquaculture oversight to NOAA By A. WINTER

The Obama administration will develop federal aquaculture regulations, including a system that could permit offshore fish farming in the ocean waters for the first time, Commerce Secretary Gary Locke said today.

Locke addressed a Senate hearing as another Cabinet agency, the Interior Department, turned away from a controversial Bush administration proposal that would have expedited a permitting system for offshore aquaculture under the Minerals Management Service. He said the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration will oversee the preparation of the Obama administration's fish-farming guidelines.

In its [final rule \(pdf\)](#) for offshore renewable energy projects, released yesterday, Interior said it would not authorize aquaculture projects. The move is a reversal from the Bush administration's proposal, which would have opened the door for the government to fast-track offshore fish farms.

The new rule passes oversight of any deepwater fish farms to Commerce's NOAA and the National Marine Fisheries Service. But Locke made it clear today that the administration is not giving up on efforts to advance aquaculture that started under the Bush administration, although his department may take a different course.

"As wild fish stocks decline, it is important to be able to have more aquaculture," Locke told the Senate Appropriations panel overseeing funding for his department. "NOAA needs to engage in a program to set up criteria and rules in which safe aquaculture can be provided. We intend to pursue this and help provide those guidelines."

In remarks to reporters after the hearing, Locke said the government must develop guidelines and policies for all aquaculture, including offshore fish farms. "It has to be done carefully, especially given the concerns of consumers for safe seafood," Locke said.

The Bush administration made several attempts, starting in 2005, to create a permitting system to expand U.S. aquaculture to as far as 200 miles offshore. The proposals did not gain traction on Capitol Hill, because lawmakers said they feared there were not enough safeguards to protect wild fish.

The issue surfaced again earlier this year when a federal fisheries council in the Gulf of Mexico voted to open its waters to offshore fish farms -- a proposal that must go through NOAA for final approval.

Locke and NOAA Administrator Jane Lubchenco have indicated that if they move forward with new regulations, they intend to have more safeguards. Lubchenco said at her confirmation hearing that scientists and policymakers have not yet identified the "right conditions under which aquaculture is sustainable."

Bush's failed bid for offshore permits
The Bush administration's last attempt to advance offshore fish farms came in a 405-page proposal for renewable energy that the administration put forward last July. The rules govern the leasing of ocean tracts in federal waters for wind projects and hydropower projects that would harness waves and currents.

Bush's MMS tucked in a provision that would have also allowed "alternate" uses of offshore facilities -- including deep

ocean ports or aquaculture.

House Democrats and environmental groups maligned Bush's proposal, saying MMS lacks authority and expertise for such permitting. They blasted the provision as an indirect way for the Bush administration to advance an agenda for offshore aquaculture that it had failed to move through Congress.

The Obama administration's final rule, slated for publication in the *Federal Register* on April 29, clearly states that any efforts to develop offshore fish farms should come in their own regulations.

"We wish to clarify that this rule does not authorize aquaculture operations," the rule states. "A different agency would be responsible for permitting and managing actual aquaculture activity ... in the event that legislation is enacted that regulates OCS aquaculture, we will reassess this issue and ensure coordination will be accomplished with all relevant agencies."

Environmental groups applauded the change. Food and Water Watch attorney Zach Corrigan said the rules -- the first time Obama's Interior said "clearly and definitely" that offshore fish farms were not a part of the plan -- were a major improvement.

National Marine Fisheries Service spokeswoman Monica Allen said the agency is just beginning to analyze the new Interior rule but plans to move forward with its own offshore fish farm proposal.

"Concerning offshore aquaculture, it is one of a number of important issues that the new administration is reviewing," Allen said.

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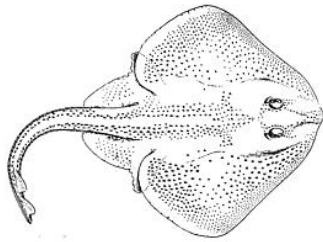
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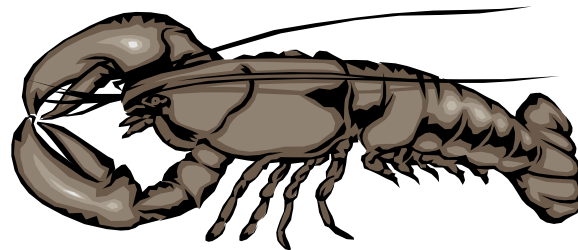
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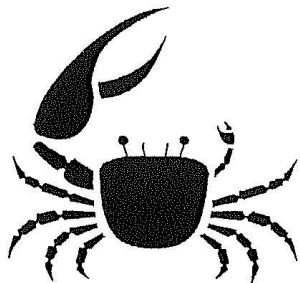


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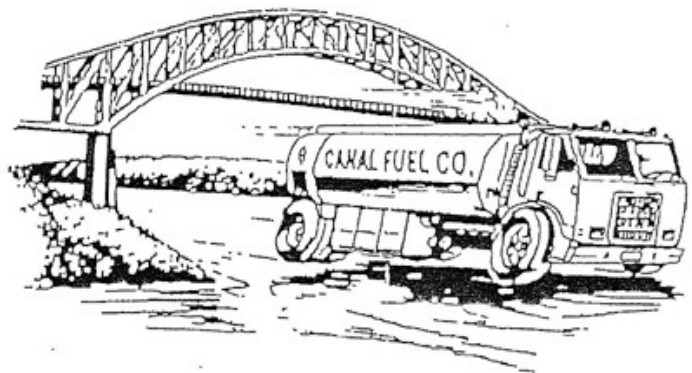
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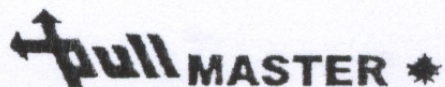
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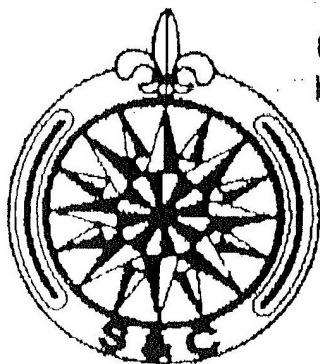
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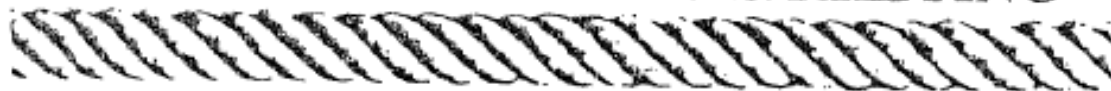


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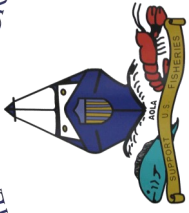
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