



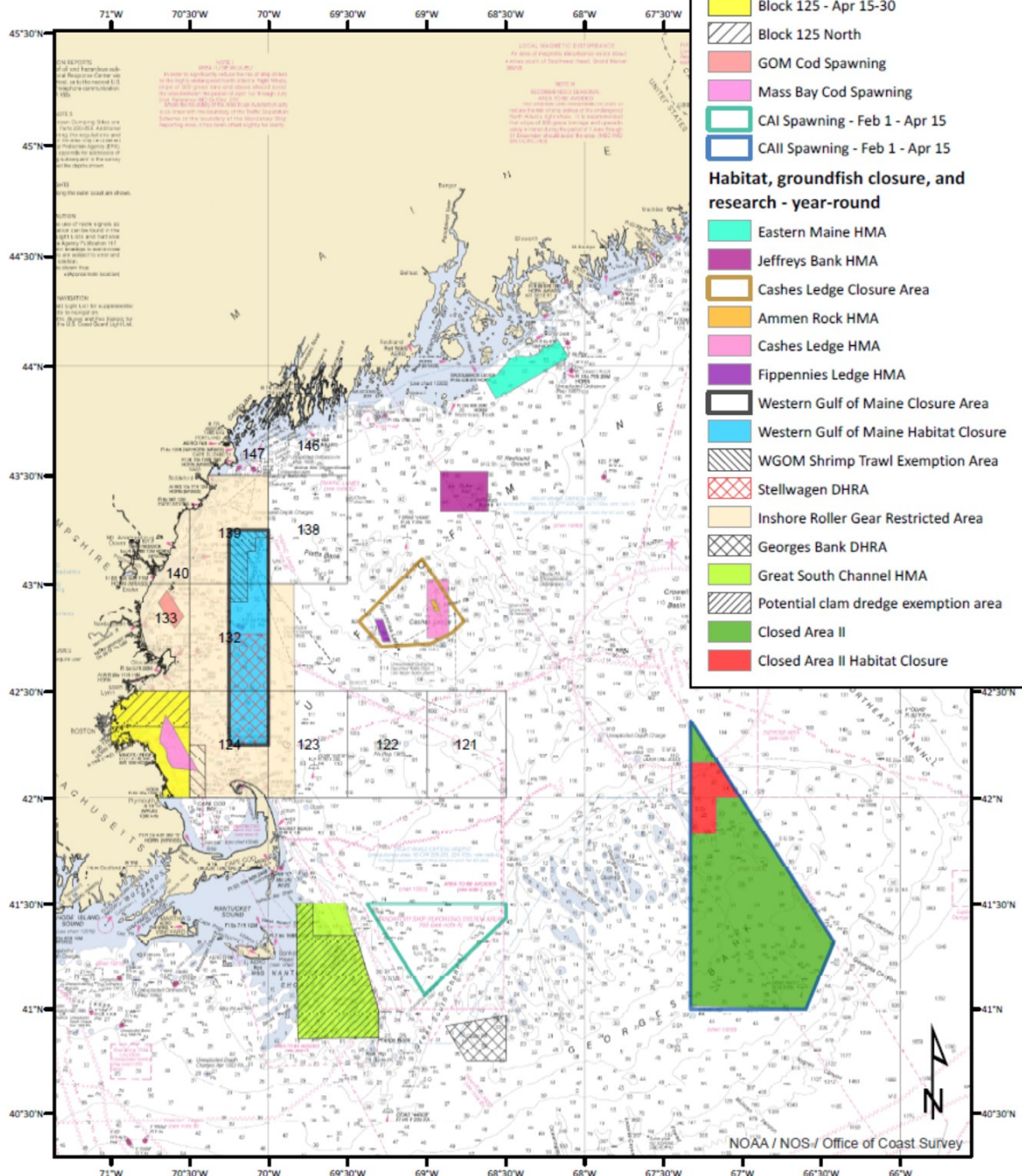
Lobster Tales

Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Association

February 2018

Omnibus Habitat Amendment 2 Measures approved by NMFS as of January 3, 2018

0 15 30 60 90 120
Nautical Miles



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EVENTS

MAINE FISHERMEN'S FORUM

March 1-3, 2018

Samoset Resort, Rockport, ME

SEAFOOD EXPO NORTH AMERICA

March 11-13, 2018

Boston Convention and Exhibition Center

WHALE TAKE REDUCTION TEAM MEETINGS

February 26, March 15-16, April 3-4

AOLA representatives will be in attendance

COMMERCIAL MARINE EXPO

Save the date: Oct. 17-18, 2018

RI Convention Center, Providence, RI

Exhibition space currently on sale.

Welcome **Alex Brewster**. Congratulations on the purchase of the F/V Kim & Jake.

Congratulations **Boston Wholesale Lobster Corp.** for being named Supplier of the Year.

REMINDERS

CAUGHT A TAGGED LOBSTER OR JONAH CRAB?

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tagging line at 774-251-9454.

Email at heidi@offshorelobster.org

Please report: Tag #, date, and location.
Carapace size (or a photo next to a gauge),
egg & vnotch status also helpful.

Lobsters are tagged with yellow tbars.
Crabs have orange knuckle or green tbars

GOM/GBK EGGER DATA COLLECTION

REMINDER: If you fish GOM/GBK please consider counting eggers for the Association's research efforts (*details page 18*)

FY 2018 TRAP TAGS

CT, MA, NH, and RI members: order from your state.

NJ, NY, DELMARVA members: order from NMFS.

ME members: Federal permit only order from NMFS, state + federal order from ME.

Tags must be affixed by June 1 and orders typically take 6-8 weeks.

INVOICES BY EMAIL

Members or Associate Members interested in receiving invoices by email instead of traditional mail, please let Heidi know.

HABITAT

NEFMC's Omnibus Habitat Amendment: NMFS recently published a Habitat Amendment decision document with implementation of new regulations expected for the start of fishing year 2018 (April 1) or shortly thereafter. NMFS approved most of the Council's recommendations, but rejected changes for eastern Georges Bank (press release on next page, map on cover). This means Closed Area II will remain status quo—closed to mobile gear fishing except scallop rotational access below 41° 50'W in some years, and limited groundfish haddock SAP and exempted fishing permit access. The CA II industry sharing agreements remain valid, primarily for possible future changes in access.

Conversely, the existing offshore closures to the west will be changed. All of Nantucket Lightship Closed Area and portions of Closed Area I will open to mobile bottom tending gear. There is also a pending scallop framework action that amends scallop rotational access in this region. AOLA staff have generated a summary of the amendment and framework changes (see page 5), which you should review closely if you fish either of these areas. We are in the process of convening a meeting with scalloping representatives to discuss limiting gear conflict, so please contact David promptly with concerns.

NEFMC's Omnibus Deep-Sea Coral Amendment: The Council recently finalized their preferred alternative for the coral amendment. They selected a closure with a landward boundary at 600 meter (328 Fa) for the continental shelf, already having selected closures for the Gulf of Maine. Lobster gear will be prohibited within the shelf closure, but allowed in the Gulf of Maine. Combined these areas total 25,000 sq. miles, in addition to the 38,000 sq. mile Mid-Atlantic coral closure (press release, page 6). AOLA staff thank Jon Shafmaster for his advocacy efforts on this issue.

Monument: The fishing industry's lawsuit is stayed until the first week in March, because the court is awaiting an announcement from the Trump Administration that could amend or remove the Atlantic Monument. However, we plan to pursue legal action, regardless of the announcement, to address the question of legal authority to designate monuments in the economic exclusive zone (EEZ). Legal action is being undertaken on industry's behalf, pro bono, by Pacific Legal Foundation.

Offshore Energy: As noted in the December issue of *Lobster Tales*, offshore wind is a growing industry along the eastern seaboard. In January, BOEM announced a Draft Proposed 2019-2014 Oil and Gas leasing program that could additionally open the Atlantic to drilling, despite stiff opposition from State and Congressional representatives (see links on page 33). NEFMC's Habitat Committee is monitoring these issues, which will help the fishing industry stay informed.

One project currently getting our attention is possible routing of a seafloor electricity transmission cable from New Brunswick to Plymouth, MA. Below is a description of the proposed route (Members: See Jan. 24 email from Heidi for a detailed chart). If you have questions or concerns, please contact Tetra Tech directly, however if you submit comments, AOLA staff would appreciate a copy.

From Nick Welz: *"We do not see our submarine cable project as being an impediment to offshore lobstering however, our marine surveys (that use towed geophysical sensors) and eventually, the cable installation must be scheduled around times when fixed gear is most dense. As of today, it seems that our survey through the NE Gulf of Maine near the Hague line and southern Jordan Basin should avoid the months from December through April. We want to hear from anyone who fishes along our route or has any questions or comments for us."*

Nicholas G. Welz, Tetra Tech Director—Submarine Cable Services | Direct 617.443.7539 | Mobile 781.789.2837
Nick.Welz@tetrattech.com | www.atlanticlink.com





NMFS Approves "Majority" of Council's Habitat Amendment *(excerpt)*

January 8, 2018, NEFMC

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has approved – with two exceptions – the New England Fishery Management Council's Omnibus Essential Fish Habitat Amendment 2 (OHA2), paving the way for sweeping change to the existing network of closed and management areas in the Gulf of Maine, Southern New England, and Georges Bank. The changes will provide better protection for both fish and habitat while eliminating closures that no longer serve their intended purpose. The final rule implementing the new regulations will not be published until later this winter, but NMFS informed the Council on January 3 of its decision to approve "the majority" of the amendment, which sets the stage for what's to come.

Two of the Council's proposed habitat management areas (HMAs) were disapproved:

- Cox Ledge in Southern New England; and
- Eastern Georges Bank, which called for the removal of Closed Area II as currently configured, replacing it with new management areas that would have allowed fishermen to access the abundant scallop resource on the Northern Edge.

Council Executive Director Tom Nies said, "Naturally we're disappointed that our proposed Closed Area II changes were not approved, but the fact that the vast majority of the amendment will be implemented is a solid endorsement of the work the Council and staff did to dramatically change the closure system off New England."

As for the disapproved measures, Nies said, "We'll be discussing NMFS's comments at our late-January meeting, and the Council may decide it wants to revisit these issues going forward."

The habitat amendment has five key purposes, which are to: (A) designate essential fish habitat (EFH) by lifestage for each species managed by the Council; (B) minimize the adverse effects of fishing on EFH to the extent practicable – a monumental undertaking that took years to carry out using the state-of-the-art Swept Area Seabed Impact model known as SASI; (C) identify other actions to encourage conservation and enhancement of habitat; (D) improve protection of habitats on which juvenile groundfish depend; and (E) improve protection of spawning groundfish.

The Council used six types of management approaches to achieve these purposes: (1) the EFH designations; (2) Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPCs); (3) Habitat Management Areas; (4) Spawning Management Areas; (5) Dedicated Habitat Research Areas; and (6) changes to ap-

proaches involving framework adjustments and monitoring.

NMFS approved: (See map on cover)

- All of the Council's EFH designations;
- All of the HAPC designations;
- Most of the Habitat Management Area measures; and
- Four Groundfish Spawning Seasonal Closures.

Also related to Habitat Management Areas, NMFS approved the Council's proposals to open up prime scallop fishing bottom in Closed Area I and the western portion of the Nantucket Lightship Area. In short, the current Closed Area I Habitat and Groundfish Closure Area designations will be removed, as will the Nantucket Lightship Habitat and Groundfish Closure designations. Instead of keeping these less-effective habitat/groundfish areas in place, the Council established a Great South Channel HMA, which will be closed to: (1) mobile bottom-tending gear throughout the area; and (2) clam dredge gear in the northeast section. NOTE: Clam dredge gear will be allowed throughout other parts of the area for one year while the Council considers refinements through a Clam Dredge Framework, which is under development. OHA2 also created a new research area for Georges.

Two new Dedicated Habitat Research Areas (DHRAs) will be established through this habitat amendment as well, each with a three-year sunset provision. One is on Stellwagen Bank within the Western Gulf of Maine Closure Area, and the second is on Georges Bank in what is the current Closed Area I South Habitat Closure Area. These areas will be the focus of coordinated research to improve understanding of the ecological effects of fishing across a range of habitats and, ultimately improve model forecasts. The Council identified a set of priority research questions that the DHRAs should address. The questions are based on four broad focus areas: (1) gear impacts; (2) habitat recovery; (3) natural disturbance; and (4) productivity.

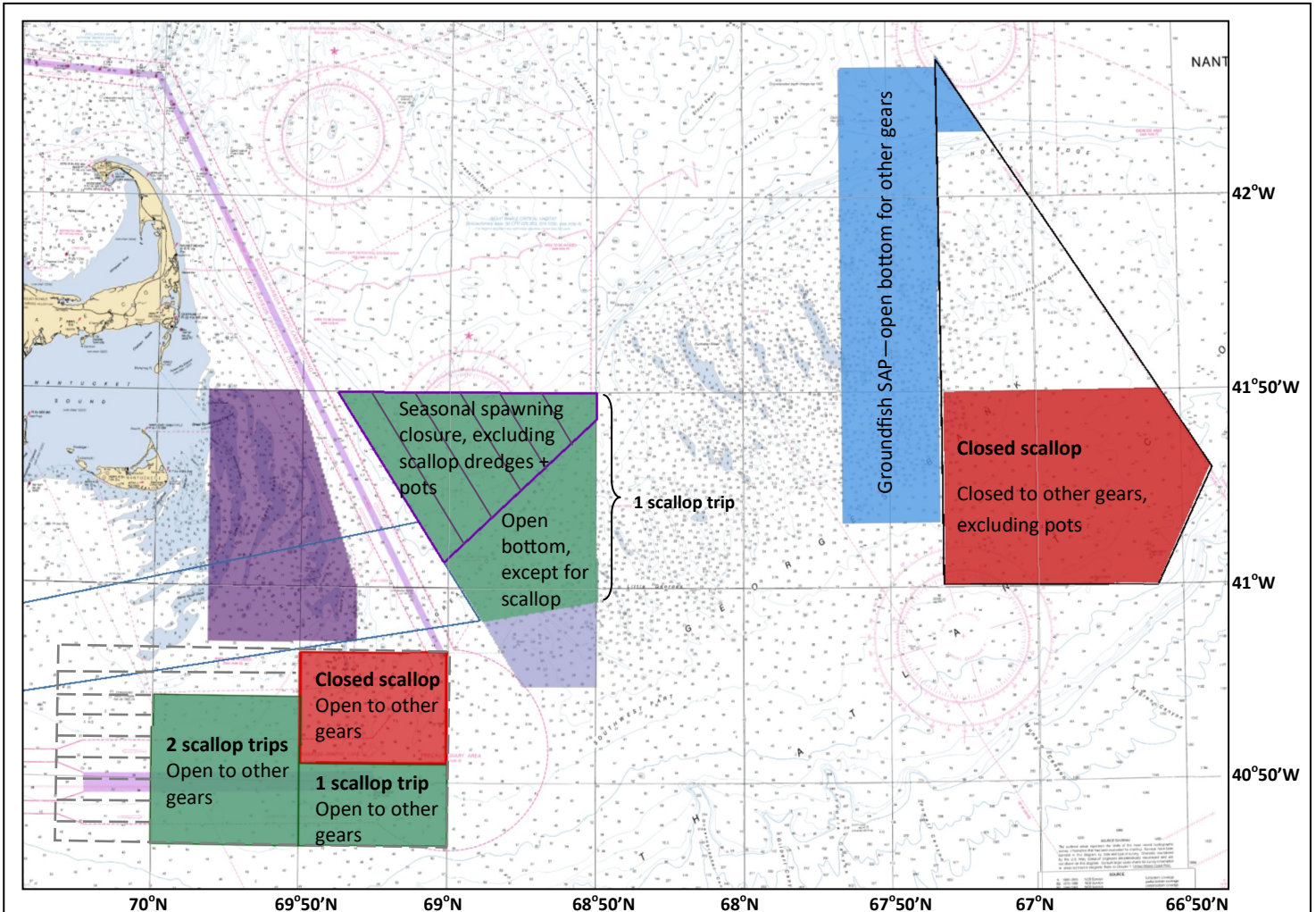
Dr. John Quinn, Council chairman, notes that the completion of this massive project is a tribute to the hard work of the technical staff that supports the Council. "This action would not have been successful without the diligent efforts of Michelle Bachman of our staff and the federal, state, and academic scientists who analyzed the alternatives," Dr. Quinn said. "We owe them our gratitude for a job well done."

See Front Cover: Map of new closures.

Habitat Final Rule and Scallop Framework 29 Provisions

Overview: Regulations will be implement simultaneously early in Fishing Year 2018. Lobster gear is exempt.

Closed Area II remains status quo, with the existing mobile gear closures and existing scallop rotational access area. Closed Area I is removed and replaced with two closures - a year-round southern habitat research area and a northern seasonal spawning closure - with open groundfish bottom in the middle. Scallop rotational area management is expanded from the middle portion to the middle and northern portions. Nantucket Lightship Access area is removed and open to all mobile fisheries, except for the scallop fleet which will have FY 2018 access to only open rotational access areas. A new nearshore Great South Channel closure replaces Nantucket Lightship.



- Retained Closed Area II with status quo regulations.
- Retained Groundfish Haddock Special Access Area (SAP) with status quo regulations.
- New Habitat Research Area, closed year round to all mobile bottom tending gear, with a 3 year sunset provision.
- New Habitat Management Area, closed to all mobile bottom tending gear, except clam dredges which have a 1 year exemption from the final implementation date.
- February 1 to April 15 groundfish spawning closure, closed to all gear capable of catching groundfish, with the exception of scallop dredges and lobster/crab pots.
- Scallop Access Areas (existing and FW 29 proposed) open all or part of FY 2018, pending timing of final regulations.
- Scallop Access Areas closed in FY 2018.
- Closed to scallop fishing in FY 2018 (remainder of old Nantucket Lightship).
- Area 2/3 overlap.



Council Takes Final Action on Deep-Sea Coral Amendment; Comments on Offshore Oil and Gas Drilling in North Atlantic *January 31, 2018, NEFMC*

The New England Fishery Management Council has taken final action on its Omnibus Deep-Sea Coral Amendment and voted to submit the document to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for review and approval.

In June of 2017, the Council adopted coral protection zones for the Gulf of Maine. Yesterday, at its meeting in Portsmouth, NH, the Council, after extensive debate, approved a 600-meter minimum depth “broad zone” for the continental slope and canyons south of Georges Bank (see map below). Once the amendment is implemented, this zone – with one exception – will be closed to all bottom-tending gear, meaning both mobile gear such as trawls and dredges and fixed gear such as traps and gillnets. The Council approved an exemption for the Atlantic deep-sea red crab pot fishery.

The 600-meter minimum depth broad zone, known as Option 6 in the Coral Amendment, was the Council’s preferred alternative for the continental slope and canyons prior to public hearings. However, the Council postponed final action last June in order to consider an additional proposal put forward by environmental groups. Known as Option 7, the new proposal covered more bottom and included shallower depths, ranging between 300 meters and 550 meters. Option 7 would have prohibited mobile bottom-tending gear but not fixed gear.

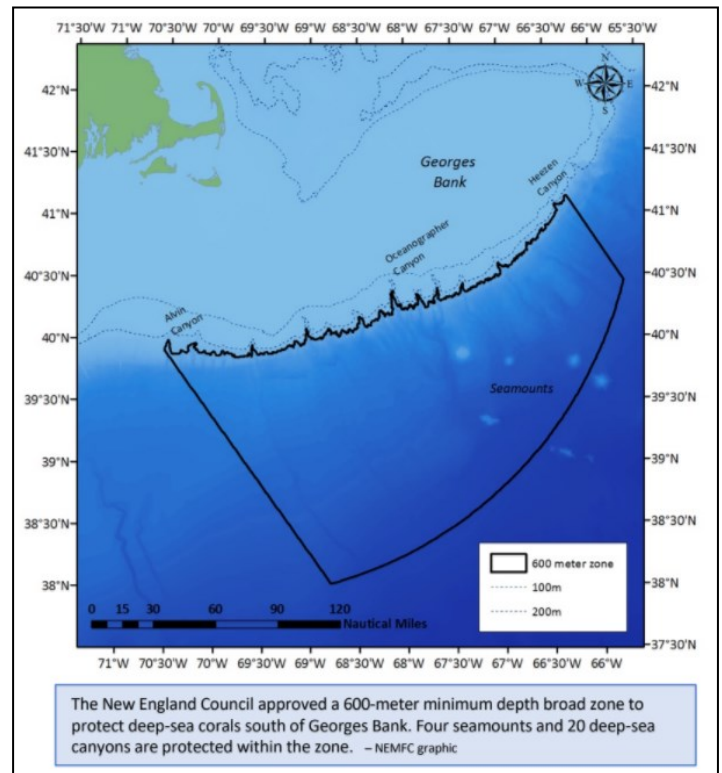
The Council’s Habitat Plan Development Team, using trawl vessel monitoring system data to identify fishing grounds, edited the Option 7 boundary to reduce economic impacts. Before making a final determination, the Council considered extensive analyses of:

programs.

- Option 6, the 600-meter minimum zone;
- Option 7 as revised, the 300-meter to 550-meter zone; and
- Option 6/7 combined with Option 7 for mobile bottom-tending gear and Option 6 for all bottom-tending gear. An exemption for the deep-sea red crab pot fishery was considered for all options.

In the end, the Council selected the 600-meter broad zone, which encompasses 25,153 square miles. This option, which also was recommended by the Habitat Committee and Advisory Panel, covers: 75% of the known coral within the zone; 75% of the areas highly or very highly suitable as habitat for soft corals; and 85% of the areas with slopes greater than 30°. It also has lower economic impacts on fishermen using mobile bottom-tending gear.

Here’s a recap of what the Council approved last June for



the Gulf of Maine:

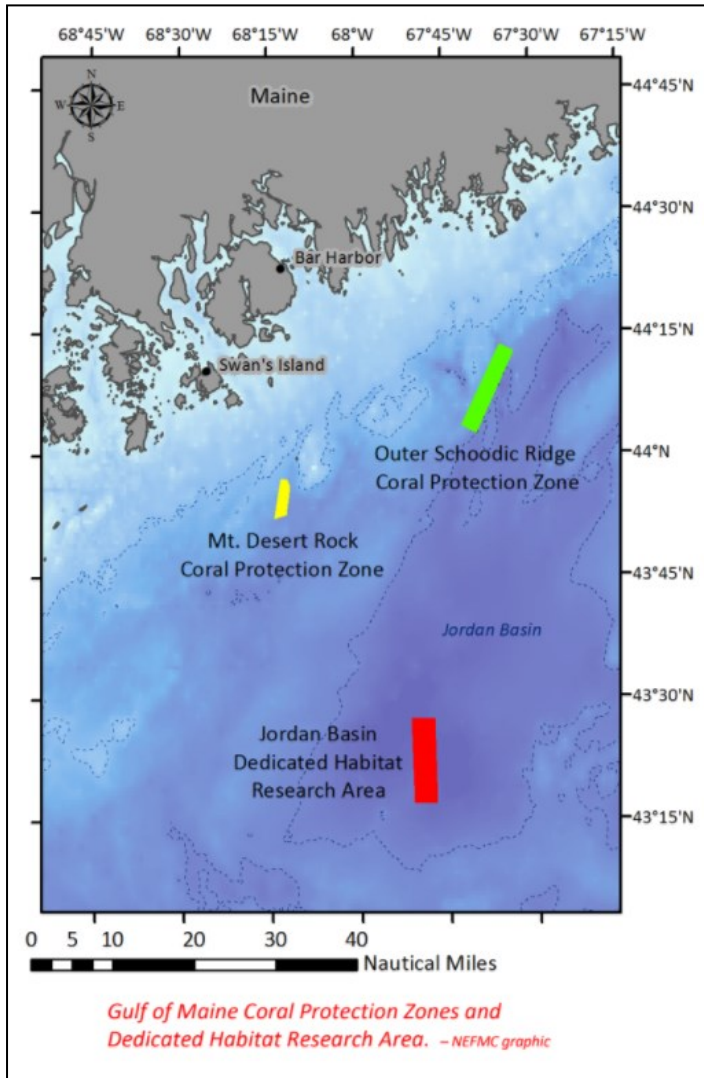
- Outer Schoodic Ridge and Mt. Desert Rock –The Council adopted a discrete coral protection zone for each of these areas where mobile bottom-tending gear (trawls and dredges) will be prohibited. Other types of fishing gear will be allowed, including lobster traps/pots.
- Jordan Basin DHRA – The Council designated a Dedicated Habitat Research Area in Jordan Basin on/around the 114 fathom bump site, which encompasses roughly 40 square miles. This designation is meant to focus attention on the coral habitats at this site. The Council believes additional research on corals and fishing gear impacts should be directed here. No fishing restrictions are proposed at this time.

The Omnibus Deep-Sea Coral Amendment also specifies that anyone conducting research activities in coral zones would be required to obtain a letter of acknowledgement from NMFS’s Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office.

Once the amendment is implemented, changes to the following provisions will be allowable through framework adjustments: (1) adding, revising, or removing coral protection zones; (2) changing fishing restrictions; and (3) adopting or changing special fishery programs.

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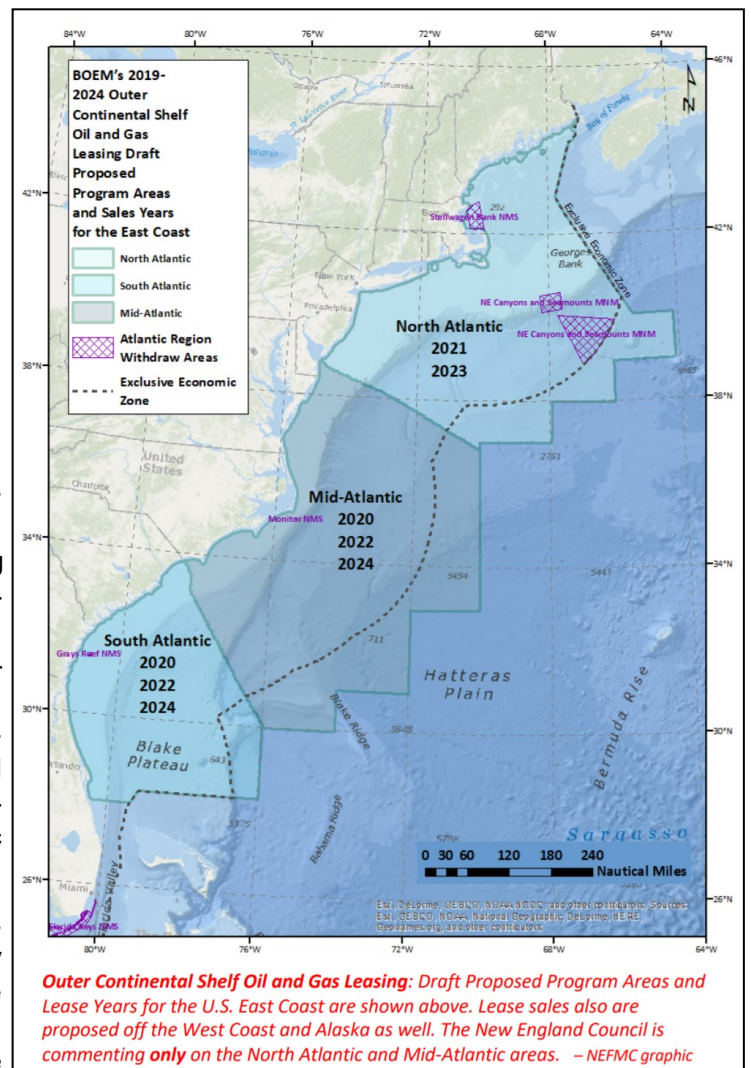
- Direct displacement of fishing activities due to survey or extraction activities in offshore environments;
- Harm to sensitive, deep-water benthic habitats, including deep-sea corals, due to extraction activities;
- Negative impacts on living marine resources due to high - decibel sounds emitted during seismic gas surveys and drilling operations, including potential harm to some of the 28 species managed by the New England Council;
- Negative impacts to nearshore fish habitats due to infrastructure development needed to support an Atlantic oil and gas industry; and
- Risks associated with leaks and spills resulting from oil and gas extraction and transport.

The Council also supported developing a report to spatially document the value of fisheries on the Northeast U.S. Continental Shelf. The report will be used when developing future comments related to both renewable and non-renewable offshore energy.

Offshore Oil and Gas Drilling

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) is soliciting comments through March 9, 2018 on its Draft National 2019-2024 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program, which includes the North and Mid-Atlantic Planning Areas. The Council agreed to send a letter to BOEM recommending exclusion of these two areas from the five-year plan because oil and gas exploration and extraction activities in the Atlantic Outer Continental Shelf involve inappropriate risks that “may harm living marine resources and the communities that depend on them.” The draft plan proposes lease sales in 2021 and 2023 for the North Atlantic area and in 2020, 2022, and 2024 for the Mid-Atlantic area.

The New England Council previously submitted oil and gas development comments to BOEM and Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke on June 29, 2017 and August 15, 2017. In the August letter and reiterated in this next letter, the Council broke down its concerns into five categories, which involve the following:





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Fishermen's View

Seafood Market & Restaurant



Local fishermen Bob and Denny Colbert have fished out of the Sandwich Marina for over thirty years. In August 2015, the two brothers obtained an adjacent piece of land on the Cape Cod Canal and constructed a boat-to-table seafood market and restaurant, which opened in August of 2016. With a focus on fresh, locally-sourced seafood coupled with stunning views of the canal and marina, the brothers hope to give guests a truly unique dining experience -- Fishermen's View!

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LOBSTER/JONAH CRAB MANAGEMENT

Earlier this month, the Commission's Lobster Board approved Addenda XXVI/III—data collection improvements for lobster and Jonah crab management plans—with the following provisions (press release, below).

- 100% trip-based reporting for all state water lobstermen via paper or electronic means. States not currently at 100% (Maine) have up to 5 years to implement. State license holders landing less than 1,000 lbs. annually of lobster and Jonah crab combined can report via monthly aggregate reports.
- The following additional gear data elements added to the minimum requirements for state reporting: # of traps per trawl and total # of buoy lines in the water.
- The following additional spatial reporting elements added to state reports: LCMA and 10 minute square(s)/state statistical area(s) fished. The Board made it clear the intent was not to require a new catch report for every 10 minute square fished in each trip, rather, a list

of all areas fished during the trip would suffice.

- ASMFC will undertake a one year pilot project to evaluate the feasibility and utility of electronic tracking technologies for these fisheries. David Borden will be part of the pilot's oversight subcommittee.
- The Board recommended the following complementary federal measures: Establish reporting requirements for lobster-only federal permit holders (i.e. 100% VTR coverage), improve the VTR data elements reported by lobster/Jonah crab fisheries, implement a targeted biological sampling program for these species.

The Board also approved the terms of reference for the lobster stock assessment to be completed by the summer of 2020, and reviewed recommendations from the Southern New England workgroup (memo, next page).

Work continues by the Plan Development Team and Technical Committee on Addendum XXVII, which aims to bolster stock resiliency in GOM/GBK.



American Lobster Board Approves Addenda XXVI/III to the American Lobster/Jonah Crab FMPs FEBRUARY 8, 2018 ASMFC

The Commission's American Lobster Management Board (Board) approved American Lobster Addendum XXVI/Jonah Crab Addendum III (Addenda) to the American Lobster and Jonah Crab Fishery Management Plans (FMPs). The Addenda improves the spatial resolution of harvester data collection, expands the required harvester reporting data elements, establishes a timeline for increased harvester reporting in the American lobster and Jonah crab fisheries, and prioritizes the development of electronic harvester reporting. In addition, the Addenda includes recommendations for improved reporting and biological sampling in federal waters.

The Addenda responds to two concerns: 1) the current requirements for harvester reporting are insufficient to respond to external management actions; and 2) while the American lobster and Jonah crab fisheries continue to expand offshore, most of the biological sampling occurs inshore or nearshore. In particular, the Board expressed con-

cern the spatial resolution of harvester data is too coarse to respond to finer-scale management issues. As a result, the Addenda improves the spatial resolution of data by requiring fishermen to report via 10 minute squares, which further divide the existing statistical areas. In addition, the addenda establishes a one year pilot program to explore electronic tracking devices in the fishery which would address the special resolution and enforcement concerns. The addenda requires additional data elements in harvester reports including number of traps per trawl and number of buoy lines in order to collect information on gear configurations. Finally, the Addenda establishes a deadline that, within five years, states are required to implement 100% harvester reporting, with the prioritization of electronic harvester reporting development during that time. In the interim, jurisdictions not at 100% harvester reporting should redistribute the current effort associated with harvester reporting to focus on active, as opposed to latent,

permit holders.

The Addenda also improves the biological sampling requirements by establishing a baseline of ten sampling trips per year in the American lobster/Jonah crab fishery and encourages states with more than 10% of coastwide landings in either the American lobster or Jonah crab fisheries to conduct additional sampling trips.

Finally, the Addenda provide three recommendations for actions in federal waters. Specifically, a harvester reporting requirement be established for federal lobster permits in order to collect information from the growing offshore fishery; a fixed-gear VTR form be created to improve data collection in the American lobster and Jonah crab fisheries; and a biological sampling program be established in federal waters in order to address current data gaps in the assessment. These recommendations will be forwarded to NOAA Fisheries.



Memorandum: SNE Workgroup to the American Lobster Management Board

JANUARY 26, 2018 ASMFC

The Southern New England (SNE) Workgroup met via conference call on January 22nd to discuss the goals and objectives by which the SNE lobster stock is managed. This discussion was prompted by the American Lobster Management Board's (Board's) discussion at the October 2017 meeting regarding future management of the SNE stock and concern that it may not be possible to rebuild the SNE stock to historic levels. As a result, the Board tasked the SNE Workgroup with reviewing the applicability of the goals and objectives in Amendment 3 and subsequent addenda. This memo summarizes the discussion of the SNE Workgroup and outlines potential objectives for Board consideration.

SNE Workgroup Members on Call

- Dan McKiernan (MA-Board)
- David Borden (RI-Board)
- Mark Alexander (CT-Board)
- Jay McNamee (RI-Board)
- Colleen Giannini (CT-TC)
- Kim McKown (NY-TC)
- Lanny Dellinger (RI-AP)
- Grant Moore (MA-AP)
- Megan Ware (ASMFC)

Review of Current Purpose, Goals, and Objectives: The SNE Workgroup began by reviewing the current purpose, goals, and objectives contained in Amendment 3 (a copy of these can be found in Appendix 1 of this memo). While the Workgroup found that some of these objectives are still pertinent, such as "ensuring that changes in geographic exploitation patterns do not undermine success of ASMFC management program", other objectives such as "minimizing the risk of stock depletion and recruitment failure" may no longer be germane given the Board's concern over the ability to rebuild the SNE stock. Overall, the SNE Workgroup concluded that the goals and objectives by which the lobster stock is managed may need to be updated to address current issues in the

fishery, including climate change, expansion of a multi-crustacean fishery with Jonah crab, and latent effort. Specifically, members of the Workgroup commented that the goals and objectives in Amendment 3 were developed with the idea that stock health could be managed by dialing up or down regulations; however, today it is clear that changes in stock condition are caused by factors beyond the management measures put in place. This applies to both SNE, where environmental changes have contributed to a stock collapse, and Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank (GOM/GBK), where stock abundance has exponentially increased under a relatively constant management plan. In addition, the Workgroup concluded that while it is valuable to have a set of overarching goals for the lobster fishery, it may also be appropriate to have further refined goals specific to the two biological stocks (SNE vs. GOM/GBK).

Potential Goals and Objectives for Board Consideration: Given the Workgroup's conclusion that the goals and objectives in Amendment 3 may need to be updated to address current issues in the fishery, the group brainstormed potential objectives for Board consideration. The objectives are divided between those that apply to the entire lobster fishery, and those that apply to SNE. At present, these objectives are intended to be additive to Amendment 3 to address stock changes and current management issues. Further discussion is warranted to determine if any goals/objectives currently included in Amendment 3 are no longer applicable to either biological stock.

Objectives Applicable to Entire Lobster Fishery

- Evaluate the differential spatial dynamics between inshore and offshore stocks and fisheries.
- Adopt and/or maintain programs in each management unit to reduce

latent effort and manage active effort as a means of protecting and enhancing the lobster resource and reducing interactions with protected species.

- Promote consistency of regulations and regulatory timelines between states and NOAA Fisheries, where possible, to ensure cohesive and effective management of each management unit.
- Promote adequate and effective sampling of harvest, discard, and biological data throughout the lobster stock, particularly in offshore waters.
- Investigate further stock connectivity within, and between, the GOM/GBK and SNE stocks, particularly as it relates to environmental changes, to inform the appropriate scale for management of the species.
- In light of dramatic changes in stock condition in both GOM/GBK and SNE, promote further research of the species, including studies on growth and maturity, mating and reproductive success, and recruitment, particularly offshore. The TC should be consulted to add the most relevant research initiatives, and this list should be updated on a regular cycle.

Objectives Focused on the SNE Stock

- Given the apparent negative impacts of climate change on the SNE stock, enhance the protection of spawning stock biomass for lobster, where practical, in order to add resiliency to the remaining population by providing the potential for good recruitment if and when environmental conditions are conducive.

Scale the SNE fishery to the diminished size of the SNE resource, *SNE*

WHALES

Right whales are in trouble and this could cause problems for fixed gear fisheries. There were 17 known deaths in 2017 and, so far in 2018, one reported death and no documented births. The governments of the U.S. and Canada are working together to respond, as reported in the December issue of *Lobster Tales*.

Actions since December include, NMFS's reopening of ESA section 7 biological opinions for Atlantic fisheries other than the lobster fishery (lobster "BiOp" reopened last October) and formation of Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team (TRT) gear feasibility subgroups (see next pages). AOLA staff and members attended a Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute organized workshop on ropeless fishing that sets the stage for the TRT work. Further, NMFS is convening independent experts to evaluate the effectiveness of prior TRT regulations (sink rope, trawling up, etc.), and, at the urging of the fishing industry and the State of Maine, evaluate the impacts of illegal fishing and enforcement deficiencies.

Also at NMFS, gear experts have been tasked with expeditiously working through the analysis of a backlog of gear removed from entangled right whales. AOLA's David Borden and Grant Moore recently visited NMFS's gear ware-

house and were able to view the collected gear. Additionally, NMFS has now declared unusual mortality events for right, minke, and humpback whales (see page 17 and see page 33 for links to whale related media coverage).

In February, the ASMFC's Policy Board voted to create a subcommittee to guide the staff's involvement in whale issues. David will be on that subcommittee. ASMFC's Law Enforcement Committee was tasked with reporting on the enforceability of ropeless fishing.

The environmental NGO community filed two lawsuits, following through on their 60 day notices of intent to sue. The first lawsuit asks that the judiciary find NMFS out of compliance with the Endangered Species and Marine Mammal Protection Acts; the second lawsuit makes the same requests, while additionally requesting emergency action to limit entanglement risks.

In Canada, new snow crab regulations were announced for the fishing season that starts this spring. The regulations focus on limiting floating rope and marking gear, with additional fisheries and shipping regulations expected shortly. The Canadian government also issued fines to vessels that exceeded last year's mandatory speed restrictions.

Fishing Industry Letter to NMFS Re: ALWTRT workgroups - December 22, 2017

Dear John,

This letter responds to your request to form work groups to address recent incidences of large whale deaths in U.S. and Canadian waters. The Maine Lobstermen's Association, Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association, Garden State Seafood Coalition, and Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Association convened to discuss industry nominations for the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team (TRT) work groups. Collectively our organizations represent fixed gear fisheries with over 8,000 license holders valued at over \$700,000,000 annually.

Regarding process, rather than two narrowly focused groups we recommend NMFS form only one group to address the larger question of what industry can do to reduce whale entanglements and continue to make a living. Weak rope and ropeless fishing are only two potential solutions to this problem. A single group process acknowledges the importance of industry participation by accommodating the time and cost constraints of running sea-based small businesses. We appreciate the urgency of the situation and feel a single group process will be more efficient, limit duplicative briefings, and streamline the process.

Given the focus on feasible solutions, we believe the work group will be most effective if industry participation is maximized. The fishing industry representatives we have nominated have strong operational, safety, and gear expertise. However, we further suggest inviting non-TRT participation with a focus on gear technology, safety, manufacturing feasibility, and whale/gear interactions. These could include independent experts with backgrounds in entanglement and rope breaking physics, an OSHA representative to address safe working loads, a gear design expert, and a rope manufacturer. It is important that all ideas, perspectives, and practical strategies be explored and developed.

While we support, in principle, a feasibility analysis, and have provided nominees below, the industry needs surety that any operational changes and investments will translate into real benefits for whales. Specifically, we note:

U.S. fishermen should not be asked to consider additional gear modifications until Canada has equivalent conservation measures in place. U.S. fishermen cannot be held accountable for entanglements that occur outside U.S. waters.

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

Continued... The work group will be challenged to find new solutions and will have difficulty assessing the conservation benefit of proposed gear modification because fundamental questions about fishery entanglements are poorly understood. We still do not understand how whales become entangled, which portion of the gear is most dangerous, how different configurations affect entanglement risk and outcome, or under what circumstances whales are able to break free from gear. NMFS has not been able to determine the conservation benefit of current gear modifications, and specifically whether trawling up into longer, heavy strings presents more or less severe outcomes to whales.

NMFS should provide the work group with a detailed report of all incidents of right, humpback, and minke whale deaths, serious injuries, stranding, disentanglements, vessel strikes, harassments, and disentanglements in the last 18 months. As part of this report, NMFS must complete its analysis of the gear removed from whales to aid the group in understanding the nature of current gear entanglements and any changes in trends in gear removed from whales.

We also do not have a good understanding of the proportion of entanglements in U.S. waters that come from illegally configured gear versus gear that comports with current regulations. As part of this process, NMFS must address the lack of enforcement in federal waters, and aid the states' enforcement agencies to address non-compliant gear in nearshore federal waters. With all due respect, neither the U.S. Coast Guard nor NOAA Enforcement can haul gear in offshore areas, which promotes non-compliance with the current whale regulations, particularly regarding the total amount of gear set. It is imperative to achieve full compliance with current regulations before additional measures are contemplated. Lack of enforcement compromises both lobster management regulations and the safety of whales.

Below are our recommendations for a single gear feasibility work group. We generally limited this list to TRT members where possible, but as noted above, we strongly encourage the Agency to include experts to fully inform all aspects of feasibility.

Maine:

- Patrice McCarron, ME Lobstermen's Assn., TRT
- Erin Summers, ME DMR, TRT
- John Williams, veteran lobsterman, TRT
- Dwight Carver, veteran lobsterman, TRT
- John Tripp, veteran lobsterman, TRT (to replace Steve Robbins)

New Hampshire:

- Bobby Nudd, veteran lobsterman, TRT

- Cheri Patterson, New Hampshire F&G, TRT

Massachusetts:

- Arthur "Sooky" Sawyer, veteran lobsterman, MA Lobstermen's Assn., MA Marine Fisheries Commissioner, TRT
- Mike Lane, veteran lobsterman, MA Lobstermen's Assn., TRT alternate
- Grant Moore, veteran offshore lobsterman, ASMFC LCMT 3 Chair, Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Assn.
- Bob Glenn, Chief Assessment Scientist, MA DMF, TRT

Rhode Island:

- David Borden, ASMFC Lobster Board, Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Assn., TRT

Mid-Atlantic:

- Greg DiDomenico, Garden State Seafood Association, TRT
- Sonny Gwin, veteran fixed gear fisherman, MAFMC, TRT
- Kevin Wark, offshore monkfish fisherman

Other experts to consider:

- Physicist or Engineer with entanglement and/or breaking strength physics expertise;
- OSHA Representative with safe working load and/or gear expertise;
- Gear specialists who has worked on breaking strength and safe working loads, such as Glenn Salvador;
- Fishing gear technologist who has experience developing new gear, such as Ron Smolowitz;
- Rope manufacturer to help understand rope and breaking dynamics, as well as manufacturing limitations.

If you have any questions, please contact David Borden of the Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Association.

Sincerely,

Patrice McCarron, Executive Director
Maine Lobstermen's Association

Beth Casoni, Executive Director
Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association

Greg DiDomenico, Executive Director
Garden State Seafood Association

David Borden, Executive Director
Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Association



Convening Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team Subgroups

JANUARY 26, 2018 NOAA NMFS

First, I would like to thank you for the outpouring of interest in participating on the whale release rope/gear marking and ropeless fishing feasibility subgroups. We particularly appreciated a letter to John Bullard from the Maine, Massachusetts, Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Associations and Garden State Seafood Association, requesting that we meet as one group, rather than two, and offering a list of 15 industry participants. Had we accepted these and all other volunteers, we would have had 30 or more participants on each subgroup.

Partly in response to this letter and other input we have received, we expanded our feasibility subgroup size to 15-16 participants from our original goal of 10-12. We included fishermen with operational, safety, and gear expertise on both groups. And there is much overlap on the two groups,

management councils and the Commission

- Because the purpose of these subgroups is to brainstorm about feasibility and challenges, more than half of the subgroup members are, or represent, fishermen.
- We have included TRT members that have right and humpback whale expertise.
- We have included TRT members that are affiliated with conservation organizations.
- In addition to subgroup members, we expect to also bring in topic experts, including gear manufacturers, scientists, etc.

Each subgroup as proposed is relatively small -- but we

Subgroup 1: Whale Release Rope and Gear Marking (blue = only on one subgroup)	Subgroup 2: Ropeless Fishing
<p>Bill McLellan (UNC Wilmington) Amy Knowlton (New England Aquarium) Caroline Good (Duke University) Megan Ware (ASMFC) Bob Glenn (MA DMF) Erin Summers (ME DMR) Cheri Patterson (NH Fish and Game) Terry Alexander (NEFMC and ME gillnet/rawl) Nick Muto (MA lobster, gillnet) Patrice McCarron (ME Lobster Association) John Williams (ME lobster) John Haviland (MA lobster) Dave Borden (RI, Offshore Lobster Assoc.) Sonny Gwin (MD, pot (lobster, bsb, conch)) Charlie Phillips (SAFMC, black sea bass pots)</p>	<p>Jooke Robbins (Center for Coastal Studies) Scott Kraus (New England Aquarium, Consortium) Brian Sharp (International Fund for Animal Welfare) Megan Ware (ASMFC) Bob Glenn (MA DMF) Erin Summers (ME DMR) Cheri Patterson (NH Fish and Game) Terry Alexander (NEFMC and ME gillnet/rawl) Nick Muto (MA lobster, gillnet) Patrice McCarron (ME Lobster Association) John Williams (ME lobster) John Haviland (MA lobster) Bobby Nudd (NH Lobster Association) Peter Brodeur (RI Lobster) Dave Borden (RI, Offshore Lobster Assoc.) Charlie Phillips (SAFMC, black sea bass pots)</p>

particularly for industry participants, so while we will design the meetings to separate the topics, we believe we have addressed the industry letter's concerns about duplicative briefings and streamlining goals.

A couple of points to further explain the rationale used in creating these subgroups:

- We have included TRT members that either represent, or work closely with industry organizations, scientific organizations, and related teams or working. We have included TRT members that use pots for lobster, crabs, and black sea bass, or gillnets.
- We have included TRT members that conduct whale bycatch reduction gear research.
- We have included TRT members affiliated with fishery

believe their reach is far. And TRT members not assigned to a subgroup are welcome to attend the meetings and be available to collaborate with subgroup members during regularly scheduled breaks we will hold to allow subgroup participants to reach out to their membership in person or by phone for additional insights or expertise.

We are finalizing the Terms of Reference further describing the subgroups' work, which we will share with the full team soon. Much of the work will be done between meetings, directed by the subgroups' brainstorming and supported by NOAA staff as needed. And remember, these are not decision-making meetings. Rather, these are opportunities to analyze from all angles the feasibility of ALWTRT ideas that remain on the table from past ALWTRT efforts. The resulting analyses and reviews will be reported early next winter to the entire Take Reduction Team.



2016-2018 Whale Unusual Mortality Event along the Atlantic Coast (Excerpt)

NOAA NMFS

MINKE: Since January 2017, elevated minke whale (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*) mortalities have occurred along the Atlantic coast from Maine through South Carolina. A table of stranding numbers by state is below. While minke whales are protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the species is not listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

Full or partial necropsy examinations were conducted on over 60% of the whales. Preliminary findings in several of the whales have shown evidence of human interactions or infectious disease. These findings are not consistent across all of the whales examined, so more research is needed.

HUMPBACK: Since January 2016, elevated humpback whale mortalities have occurred along the Atlantic coast from Maine through Florida. A table of stranding numbers by state is below.

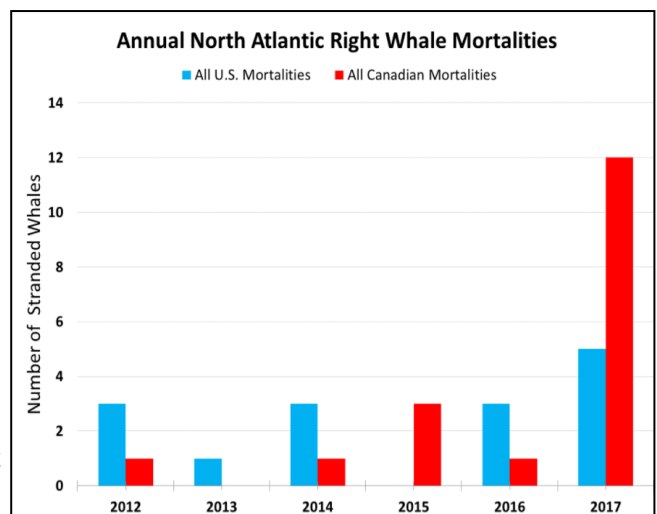
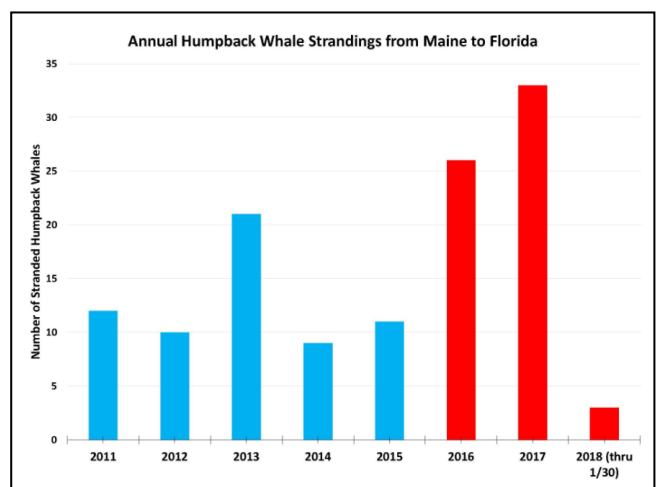
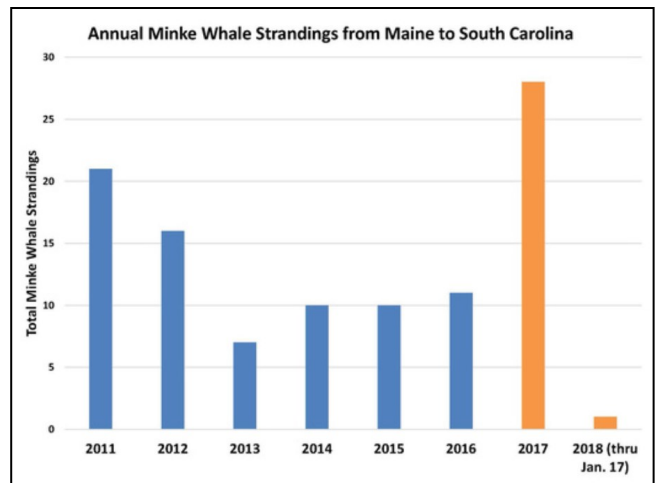
Partial or full necropsy examinations were conducted on approximately half of the whales. Of the whales examined at necropsy about 50% had evidence of human interaction, either ship strike or entanglement. A portion of the whales have shown evidence of pre-mortem vessel strike; however, this finding is not consistent across all of the whales examined so more research is needed.

RIGHT: Since June 7, 2017, elevated North Atlantic right whale (*Eubalaena glacialis*) mortalities have occurred primarily in Canada. A total of 16 confirmed dead stranded whales (12 in Canada; 4 in the U.S.), and five live whale entanglements in Canada have been documented to date. An additional whale stranded in the U.S. in April of this year prior to the start of the UME bringing the annual total to 17 confirmed dead stranded whales (12 in Canada; 5 in the U.S.).

The 2017 annual North Atlantic right mortalities includes one stranding in the U.S. in April 2017 prior to the UME. Note: Graph represents confirmed mortalities that were reported in each country and does not always reflect the location of the injury or death of the animal. Carcasses may drift across national boundaries, therefore a carcass may be sighted or reported in one country even though the mortality occurred elsewhere. Species or stocks that migrate across national boundaries often carry their illnesses, injuries, or exposures to toxins with them. For mortality determinations in these species, transboundary collaboration is critical in determining the causes of injury, illness, and mortality through in-depth review of the data from each animal.

Full necropsy examinations have been conducted on 11 of the 17 whales and final results from the examinations are pending. Results from necropsies from 6 of the Canadian whales can be found here.

ALL: As part of the UME investigation process, an independent team of scientists (Investigative Team) is being assembled to coordinate with the Working Group on Marine Mammal Unusual Mortality Events to review the data collected, sample future whales that strand and to determine the next steps for the investigation.



RESEARCH UPDATES

Jonah Crab Maturity: The results of MA DMF and AOLA's maturity research were presented to industry during MA Lobstermen's Association Weekend. If you were unable to attend, check out the December issue of *Lobster Tales* for a summary of the findings. The results of this work will now be available to the Jonah Crab Technical Committee for use in the eventual formation of a stock assessment model for the species.

Jonah Crab Tagging: Jonah crab tagging continues throughout the region. More than 26,000 tags have been deployed, with plans for 40,000 tags total. Recapture reports have been steady, but number below 1,000 (return rate of under 3%). We would like a return rate in the double digits, so please take the time to document and call in hauls of tagged crabs.

While it is hard to reach conclusions this early into the project and with limited recaptures, females seem to move more than male crabs. The longer females were at large (time between tagging and recapture), the further away from the tagging location they were hauled. This was not consistently the case for male crabs, some of which have been recaptured multiple times in the same trawl.

PLEASE CONTACT HEIDI WITH RECAPTURES. You can call, text, mail or email. You can send photos of animals, logsheets, plotters, etc. Whichever method is easiest for you and your crew works for us. (See contact details on page 2). If possible, release the animal with tag intact. Next cash

raffle will be drawn July 1 from reports called in between last July's raffle and June 30, 2018.

Lobster Tagging: Efforts to tag lobsters in the Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank also continue. We have tagged more than 7,000 animals as part of past and present work, with plans for 15,000-20,000 tagged lobsters total in this region, with hopes to expand into SNE. Recaptures number under 300 (~4% return rate) and have been consistent from some crews, but not others. This project could provide important information about lobster stock boundaries and inshore/offshore migrations, so please consider contacting Heidi with recaptures. There are also cash raffles for lobster recapture reports, the next being drawn this summer.

Heidi has been invited to present project data to date to the American Lobster Stock Assessment Committee in May at the first data workshop for the 2020 stock assessment.

Related to the lobster tagging project, as another means to track lobsters, we mailed out directions and data sheets to GOM/GB members last fall asking crews to count the number of eggers in 2-4 trawls per trip during most trips between November 2017 and November 2018. If you haven't already, please consider starting this effort now. Data sheets can be mailed, texted, or emailed to Heidi.

Growth: I would be remiss if I didn't remind you of the importance of reporting the size of recaptured animals—carapace width for crabs, cara-

pace length for lobsters—preferably using a metric gauge or calipers. Reporting size helps us understand growth rates. Since it is very difficult to age crustaceans, size is used as a correlate in the stock assessment, with assumptions built in about growth rates and size at known ages. As the ocean warms, those assumptions need to be re-evaluated to keep the stock assessment accurate. Plus, recapture reports with accurate size information and/or photo of animal next to a gauge (see below) qualify for higher value raffle prizes.

Thanks to the F/V Timothy Michael crew for recently taking out the project's tagging technician. Thanks to the crews of the F/Vs Carol Coles and Gladys Elaine for being the first to send in egger counts. Thanks to the crews of the F/Vs Rachel Leah and Direction for consistently reporting tagged lobster and crab recaptures. Everyone's participation is greatly appreciated and necessary for the success of AOLA's research program.



Photo Credit: K. Reardon, MEDMR



NOAA Names Michael Pentony to Lead Greater Atlantic Region

JANUARY 11, 2018 NOAA NMFS

Today, NOAA Fisheries announced that Mr. Michael Pentony is the new Regional Administrator for NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office in Gloucester, Massachusetts. He will assume his new duties on January 22, 2018. Mr. Pentony has been with the agency since 2002, serving in a series of positions including as the Assistant Regional Administrator for the Sustainable Fisheries Division since 2014. He succeeds retiring Regional Administrator John Bullard who had been in the position since 2012.

“I am extremely pleased to announce this appointment,” said NOAA Fisheries’ director Chris Oliver. “Michael’s deep experience in every aspect of sustainable fisheries management, both commercial and recreational, positions him perfectly for this job. He is going to hit the ground running.”

In his new role, Mr. Pentony will head the agency’s regional office, which has responsibility for managing approximately 100,000 square miles of the Northwest Atlantic, the large marine ecosystem from Maine to Cape Hatteras and the Great Lakes. To do that, the office works closely with two fishery management councils, the states, the fishing industry, and other stakeholders to manage federal commercial and recreational fisheries, marine mammals, habitat, and much more. As Administrator, he will also oversee critical aspects of international fisheries conservation and management in the region.

Mr. Pentony has extensive experience leading the development and implementation of the fishery management plans and regulations established by the Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Councils and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. In his role as the region’s lead for sustainable fisheries management, he oversaw all aspects of 14 management plans targeting 42 spe-

cies valued at nearly \$1.6 billion annually. Prior to taking the Assistant Regional Administrator position in 2014, Mr. Pentony served for 12 years as a team supervisor in the sustainable fisheries division.

“Under Michael’s leadership, the region’s sustainable fisheries team worked hard to meet the needs of fishermen and fishing communities from Maine to North Carolina. In doing so, they have implemented successful, innovative approaches to protecting and restoring stocks, habitat, and marine mammals. They also paved the way for an expansion of the aquaculture industry in the region by working hard to break through barriers to that industry,” said Oliver.

Before joining NOAA Fisheries in 2002, Mr. Pentony worked for five years as a policy analyst for the New England Fishery Management Council, primarily on issues related to habitat, marine protected areas, and the deep-sea red crab fishery.

He has a Bachelor of Science in Engineering from Duke University in North Carolina, and a Master’s of Environmental Management from the Nicholas School of the Environment at Duke University. Between college and graduate school, Mr. Pentony served for six years as an officer in the United States Air Force as an engineering project manager on a variety of military satellite and launch vehicle programs.

Michael grew up in the town of Point Pleasant, New Jersey, where he spent his summers fishing for bluefish and fluke at the Manasquan Inlet. He currently lives in New Hampshire with his family including his wife and daughter. In his free time he enjoys traveling with his family, cheering on his daughter at swim meets, cycling the back roads of New Hampshire, and trying to learn to play the bass guitar.

Workgroup, continued from page 13...

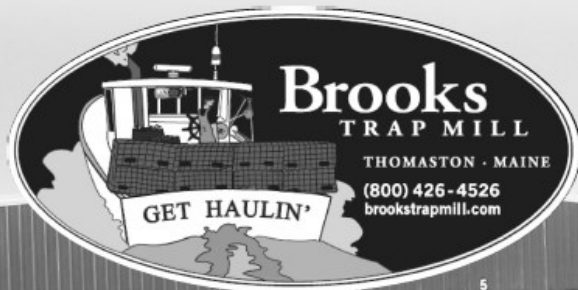
while preserving a viable mixed lobster/ crab fishery.

- Manage the SNE lobster stock in the context of the current multi-species fishery for lobster and crab, ensuring compatible management of all species.
- In light of climate change, evaluate the reference points for SNE based on the current state of the environment, recognizing the effects of changes in habitat availability, predation, stock size, and

temperature, which may limit rebuilding of the stock.

Steps Moving Forward: Moving forward from this discussion, there are several things for the Board to consider. Changes to the goals and objectives in Amendment 3 will require an Amendment. As a result, the Board needs to consider its desire to undertake such action, keeping in mind the ongoing benchmark stock assessment, pending action on Draft Addendum XXVI, the development of Draft Addendum XXVII, and discussions regarding

protected resources. In addition, if the Board is considering changes to the goals and objectives in Amendment 3, it may be pertinent to include representatives from the GOM/GBK stocks in the discussion. Members of the SNE Workgroup did discuss the potential applicability of a Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) to understand what management measures are most robust to climate change and, while there is no formal recommendation from the Workgroup regarding a MSE, this is another consideration for the Board.



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NEWS *briefs*

BLACK SEA BASS

In February, both the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council decided to reallocate recreational black sea bass allocations to reflect shifts in the species distribution. Moving forward, regional allocations will be calculated using a combination of history allocations and current locations of exploitable biomass. In this way, the fishery can fluctuate annually coastwide as the biomass shifts. In the short-term, this means more quota for northern states.

These measures apply to the recreational fishery only at this time, but they do provide an example for how commercial quotas for sea bass and other species could be distributed equitably to states by balancing historical landings with recent shifts in biomass.

SKATE

In January, the New England Fishery Management Council unanimously decided to initiate a framework action to consider alternatives to better utilize skate wing total allowable landings and keep the fishery open as long as possible. This action was in response to a request from industry that the Council make skate wing fishery adjustments a priority for 2018 in order to address the “race for fish” in recent years. The Council and NMFS are expected to take action in time to have new measures for the FY 2018 winter trimester.

This action won't directly affect the bait fishery, because of action taken last year and officially finalized by NMFS this month, which separates the fishery segments' provisions.

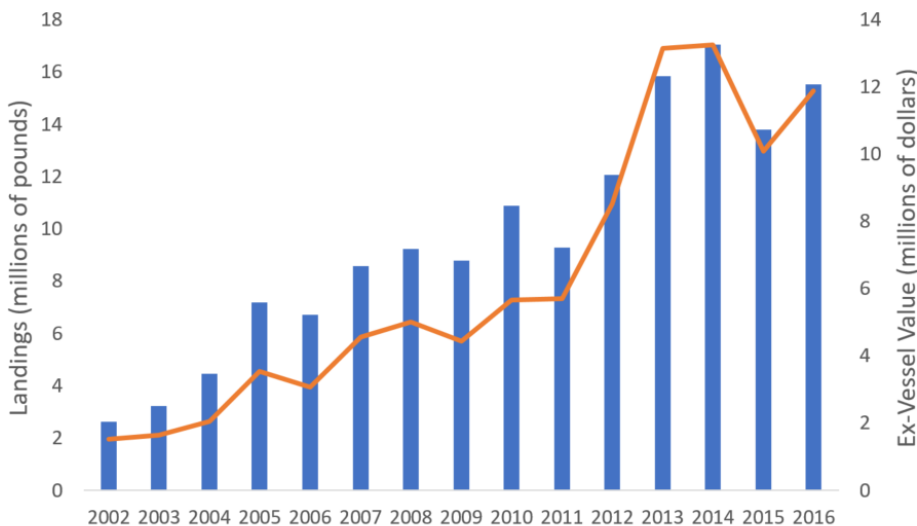
MA DMF's South shore office has moved to 836 South Rodney French Boulevard, New Bedford, MA 02744. The entrance to the walk-in permitting office is located on the right side of the building. Phone numbers are unchanged.

NOAA Spring Bottom Trawl Survey is scheduled to start in the Mid-Atlantic in early March. AOLA and MLA will be coordinating with the survey team this year to avoid gear conflict. A full station list was recently sent to members. As a reminder, the survey takes two months and is conducted in four legs moving from south to north.

FY 2018 Trap Tag ordering has begun in some states. See page 2 for a reminder of the process in each jurisdiction and remember that tags take up to eight weeks to arrive. New tags should be affixed by June 1, 2018.

Jonah Crab Landings and Ex-Vessel Value

Source: ACCSP Data Warehouse



Jonah Crab Fishery Update

Landings and ex-vessel prices continued at high levels through 2016 (most recent data available). However, landings in 2015 and 2016 were below the 2013/2014 peak. Since 2013, coastwide average boat price has remained relatively steady between 75-80 cents per pound.

Blue bars are landings in millions of pounds

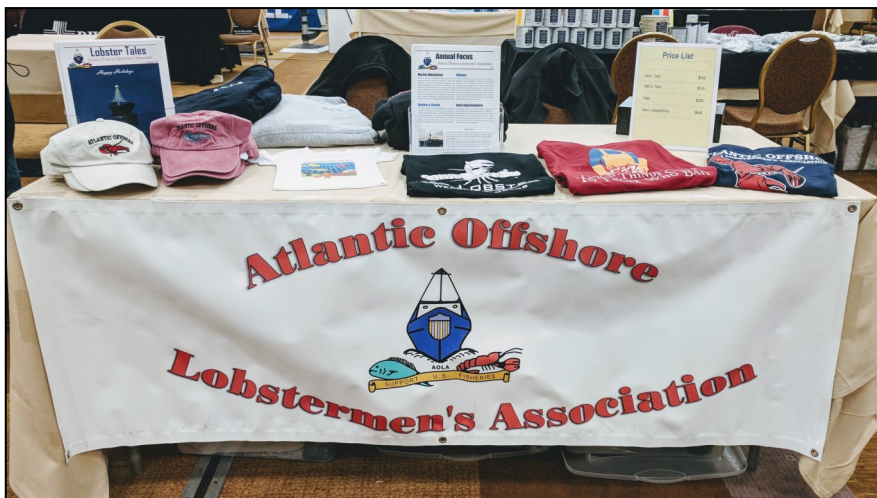
Orange line is price in millions of dollars.

Association NEWS

Congratulations and thank you to the 2018 Board of Directors as elected via online ballot by Association members.

- ◇ Grant Moore - President
- ◇ Jon Shafmaster - Vice President
- ◇ Norbert Stamps - Vice President
- ◇ Bill Palombo - Treasurer
- ◇ Eric Burcaw - At Large
- ◇ Marc Palombo - At Large
- ◇ Lars Vinjerud - At Large
- ◇ Jon Williams - At Large

MLA Weekend 2018



Thanks to Board Members Grant Moore and Norbert Stamps for staffing the AOLA table at January's MA Lobstermen's Association Annual Weekend and Tradeshow. Anyone who couldn't make it to the show, but is interested in AOLA merchandise or learning more about AOLA membership should contact Heidi Henninger.

As always, we greatly appreciate the support received from Beth Cassoni and the rest of MA Lobstermen's Association, ensuring AOLA can participate in this event annually.



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AOLA STAFF

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 Heidi Henninger, Program Coord.

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- ❖ Cordage & Twine
- ❖ Mooring Equipment
- ❖ Boarding Ladders
- ❖ Polysteel Rope- Esterpro Sinking, Hydropro
- ❖ Leadline
- ❖ Wire Rope - FC Galv, IWRC, Dyform
- ❖ HiFlyers 12', 14' & 15' XHD
- ❖ Golf & Batting Cage Netting



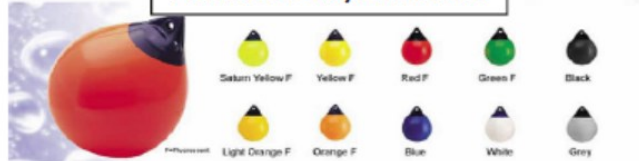
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SAFETY

Coast Guard pilot praises preparation of rescued crew

FEB. 15, CAPE COD TIMES

A Coast Guard pilot who helped save four men from a sinking fishing boat off Martha's Vineyard on Wednesday night said decisive action by the rescued crew members played a pivotal role in their survival.

"Their ability to identify the emergency and get themselves ready was tremendous in aiding our ability to help them out," Coast Guard Cmdr. Brian McLaughlin said of the fishermen Thursday. McLaughlin is second in command at Air Station Cape Cod.

The captain of the vessel Sea Star radioed the Coast Guard at around 6:20pm Wednesday, saying the boat was taking on water and listing heavily, and crew members were putting on their immersion suits, according to a statement from the federal agency.

McLaughlin and three other officers were conducting a helicopter training flight at the time and responded to the boat about 18 miles off Martha's Vineyard, he said. When they arrived at the scene just before 7pm, about 60 percent of the boat was underwater and crew members were driving it forward in an attempt to keep it from sinking completely.

The water temperature was 37 degrees, seas were at 5 feet and the wind was up to 25 knots, according to the Coast Guard statement. "It was very cold and very windy," McLaughlin said. "The fact that the boat was sinking and moving made it a little hectic, to say the least."

According to McLaughlin, crew members stayed calm. "The four crew had survival suits on and were standing on the starboard side, waiting for us. They were actually doing really well," he said, adding that "for any rescue like this, the crew has to help themselves, and these guys were on top of it."

As co-pilot, McLaughlin said, he talked the crew members through the rescue over the radio, while flight mechanic Jeremy Reed operated a hoist that lowered rescue swimmer Justin Munk down to them with a sling. Lt. Joshua Rice piloted the helicopter, he said.

But after the first two men were pulled to safety, the boat's engine died, McLaughlin said. He instructed the remaining two crew members to jump off the boat into the water and to link arms. As rescuers pulled them out of the water, the boat sank. "As soon as the engines died and it lost propulsion, it just went right under," he said of the boat.

The entire rescue took about 15 minutes, he said. Aboard the helicopter, the mood

was celebratory. "When we got them into the cabin they were high-fiving and hugging like they had just won a football game," McLaughlin said of the crew. "They were in very good spirits and very good condition."

Crew members were taken back to Air Station Cape Cod and were deemed in good health, according to the Coast Guard statement.

McLaughlin stressed the important role that preparation played in the rescue.

"I talked to the captain of the ship, and he said they did regular safety and emergency drills donning their survival suits," he said. "They knew how to put them on and they maintained them well."

"The most important things the crew did was activate their EPIRB (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon) and don their immersion suits," Scott Backholm, a command duty officer at Sector Southeastern New England, said in the statement.

The Sea Star sank, and a marine bulletin was issued Wednesday to alert mariners of the potential hazard, according to the statement. The bulletin was no longer active Thursday because debris had cleared, a Coast Guard spokesman said.

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SAFETY

Update: Life Jacket/PFD Project with Commercial Lobstermen in ME and MA

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This has been a very busy and exciting year. An overview of the project so far:

- 181 lobstermen from Maine and Massachusetts agreed to trial life jackets while working, and to provide feedback on comfort and workability.
- Life jackets in the study were a diverse range of styles and types, from buoyancy aids to offshore life jackets. Lobstermen chose nine different models to be tested.
- Participation in the study has been extraordinary, with a recruitment rate of 90.5% and a study completion rate of ---88.4%.
- An additional 262 lobstermen participated in a telephone survey, and 205 (77.5%) indicated that yes, they would like new types of life jackets.
- 530 lobstermen have shared their challenges and solutions to wearing life jackets since the project began.
- Manufacturers have received design feedback and have indicated they are already changing designs and creating new design plans to respond to the needs identified.

Lobstermen have indicated that a life jacket should be: Comfortable, flat/not bulky, with no straps or buckles to snag, easy to clean, easy to use, bright in color, and for many – integrated into something already worn.

We anticipated that one or two life jacket designs would be considerably more popular and address most of the barriers to regular use. Instead, we found that personal choice featured strongly in the results. While the ratings of all nine life jackets were generally favorable, what is clearly most important is finding what you can, and will, wear comfortably while working. The best life jacket is a life jacket that you will wear consistently.

Over this coming year, we will be sharing information with lobstermen about life jackets and survival systems, and increasing access to a range of life jackets at events, and dockside.

We hope this project will ultimately increase your ability to find something that you are comfortable wearing while working, and increase your chances of survival at sea.

Thank you to everyone who has helped us with this project! We look forward to working with you further.

Sincerely,

Julie Sorensen, Rebecca Weil, Jessica Echard
and the life jacket team



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Lobsters

- * [Gulf of Maine lobster population past its peak, study says, and bit drop is due](#), Portland Press Herald, Jan. 22
- * [Feeling the heat in the NW Atlantic, rising bottom temps will drive lobsters father north, offshore](#), WHOI, Jan. 22
- * [New study: Industry conservation ethic proves critical to Gulf of Maine lobster fishery](#), PhysOrg, Jan. 22
- * [State disputes study that predicts sharp decline in Gulf of Maine lobsters](#), Portland Press Herald, Jan. 26
- * [All Maine lobstermen will have to report fishing details...](#), Portland Press Herald, Feb. 8
- * [Another country bans boiling live lobster as scientists debate whether they feel pain](#), Wash. Post, Jan. 13
- * [Cousens to step down as \[Maine\] Lobstermen's Association head after 27 years](#), VillageSoup, Feb. 13

Ocean Energy

- * [New England fishermen worry that wind turbines could impact their catch](#), Boston Globe, Dec. 26
- * [Trump proposes massive expansion of offshore drilling](#), The Hill, Jan. 4
- * [New England reps' bill would prohibit offshore drilling](#), The News Tribune, Jan. 11
- * [Senators from 12 states seek offshore drilling exemptions like Florida's](#), Reuters, Jan. 11
- * [Environmentalists, fishermen and states oppose Trump's offshore drilling plan](#), SouthCoast Today, Feb. 11
- * [SMAST meeting brings fishing, offshore wind in same room](#), SouthCoast Today, Feb. 12
- * [A nearly invisible oil spill threatens some of Asia's richest fisheries](#), The New York Times, Feb. 12
- * [Commercial fishermen question wind farm video](#), SouthCoast Today, Feb. 15

Whales

- * [Here's why 12 right whales died in Canadian waters—and why more will die if nothing is done](#), TheStar, Dec. 27
- * [Conservation groups sue to force greater protection for North Atlantic right whale](#), Portland Press Herald, Jan. 18
- * [Speeding ships, missing calves increase anxiety over right whales](#), Portland Press Herald, Jan. 21
- * [New snow crab fishing rules rein in use of ropes to protect North Atlantic right whales](#), CBCNews, Jan. 23
- * [First dead right whale of 2018 found off Virginia](#), Cape Cod Times, Jan. 26
- * [Local group seeks lawsuit to aid right whales](#), Boston Globe, Feb. 9
- * [How listening to right whales could prevent more deaths of the imperiled species](#), BDN, Feb. 15
- * [To protect right whales, scientists propose major changes for lobstermen](#), Boston Globe, Feb. 20

Safety/Health

- * [Fishing is a deadly business, but many fishermen won't wear life preservers](#), Boston Globe, Dec. 26
- * [Opioids in New Bedford's fishing industry](#), RI NPR, Feb. 7

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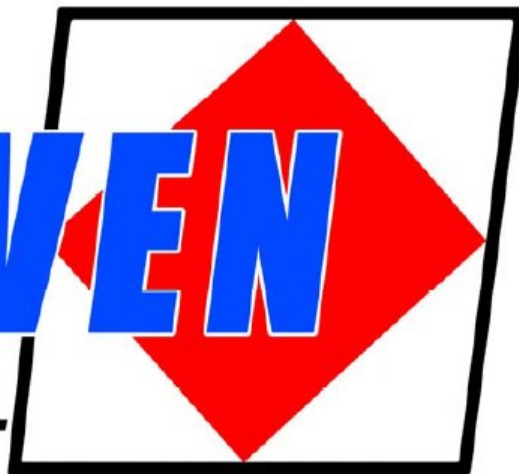
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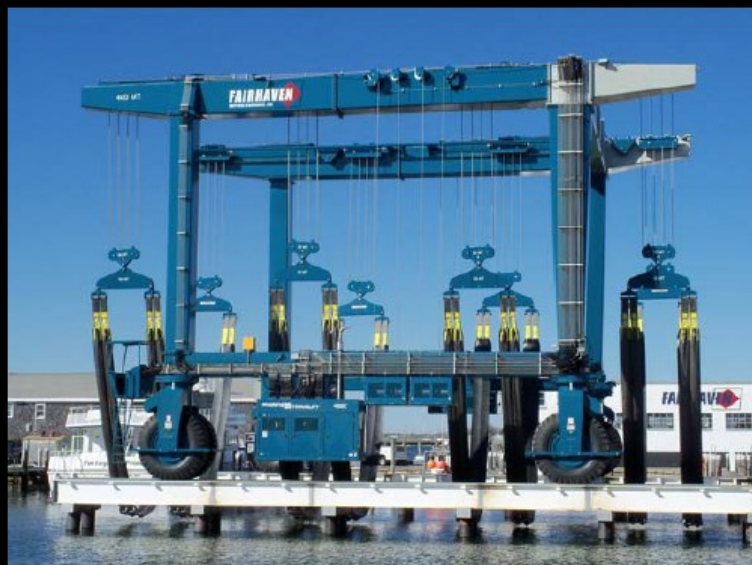
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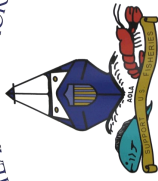


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