



February 2014

# Lobster Tales

Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Association



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# LOBSTER TALES BULLETIN BOARD

## Upcoming Tradeshows

### **MAINE FISHERMEN'S FORUM**

February 27—March 1  
Samoset Resort  
Rockport, ME

### **CANADIAN/U.S. LOBSTERMEN'S TOWN MEETING**

March 21 & 22  
Regency Hotel  
Portland, ME

*Save the date:*

### **COMMERCIAL MARINE EXPO**

June 11 & 12  
State Pier  
New Bedford, MA

## **2ND ANNUAL LOBSTER INDUSTRY / TECHNICAL COMMITTEE DISCUSSION**

**SPRING 2014  
NEW BEDFORD, MA**

DATE, & TIME, TBD

AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE  
OBSERVATIONS, IDEAS, AND  
CONCERNS.

*SEE PAGE 8 FOR DETAILS.*



I recently spoke to Bonnie and recovery from her surgery is going well. She no longer needs to wear a brace and is undergoing physical therapy. If you would like to reach Bonnie, please call her cell phone—the same number she had while working with AOLA.

**For your information: NOAA Fisheries has changed the name of the Northeast Regional Office to the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) to better reflect the broad extent of the region served by the regional office.**

**NOAA doesn't expect there to be much of an impact on constituents during the transition.**

## TRANSFERABILITY/MANAGEMENT

In December, NOAA Fisheries published its interim final environmental impact statement on changes in the lobster plan to establish transferability in federal waters. This rule will establish the foundation for a transferability program, but a number of issues such as banking and ownership caps were not included in these rules and have been deferred to a subsequent federal rule.

AOLA Members reviewed the provisions (see right) in the FEIS at the January Meeting and AOLA staff submitted the below comments to NOAA. The final rule for these provisions should be published this winter. However, transferability components will not begin until NMFS's completes historical qualification in Areas 2 and OCC. Implementation is also pending NOAA's satisfaction with the ASFMC database. Our sense is that transferability will start no sooner than late FY 2014.

In late January, GARFO (NERO) announced what amounts to the first step in the next round of transferability rulemaking, a control date related to the aggregate ownership cap provision that AOLA supported as part of Addendum 22. *See next page.*

### SUMMARY OF FEIS PROVISIONS

#### Conditions of NMFS support:

- ◇ Be reasonable and administratively feasible
- ◇ Compatible with ASMFC ISFMP charter and consistent with 10 National Standards
- ◇ Consistent with other federal laws such as ESA, Marine Mammal, etc.
- ◇ Database prerequisite—all states must have access, it must be funded and staffed

#### Four Strategies considered:

1. Do nothing (status quo)
2. Commission proposal in various Addenda
3. Implement transferability in Area 3 only
4. Implement transferability in A2, A3, and OCC under opt in and most restrictive (*NMFS's Preferred Alternative*)

#### NMFS Preferred Alternative (#3):

- ◇ Opt in
- ◇ Keep history of all areas and fish under most restrictive

- ◇ 10% tax partial transfers, full transfers exempt, reduced from 20% in Addendum 14
- ◇ Apply by Autumn of each year for following year's transfers, 90 days for NMFS to rule
- ◇ Transfer in units of 10 vs. 50 in DEIS

#### What is not in the NMFS rule:

- ◇ Trap cap of 1945 vs 2000
- ◇ Trap cuts for A2 and A3
- ◇ Banking
- ◇ Single and aggregate ownership caps
- ◇ All of the above in progress by NMFS and should be in next round of rule-making

#### Likely Timeline:

- ◇ Imminent—publish rules noticed in FEIS
- ◇ Spring 2014—letter to permit holders
- ◇ Database currently being tested
- ◇ NMFS likely to implement issues not in this rule (Addendum 21, 22, etc.)

### AOLA'S TRANSFERABILITY FEIS COMMENTS—JANUARY 20, 2014

John Bullard, Regional Administrator  
Northeast Region, NOAA  
55 Great Republic Drive  
Gloucester, Mass 01930

Dear John;

I am submitting the following comments on behalf of the Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Association (AOLA) in regards the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for Effort Control Measures for the American Lobster Fishery (RIN 0648-AT31). Our Association generally supports the proposal since it will implement a process allowing our fishermen to transfer traps to scale their fishing business to meet their individual needs.

Our preferred strategy would be to implement trap transfer regulations which are identical to those adopted by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC). However, we recognize the NMFS has to meet a range of different legal constraints and laws, and therefore cannot accomplish that result in the near term. As a result, we favor Alternative 4-ITT as an optional program, which is the NMFS preferred alternative. We also favor rules whereby a permit holder opts in to the trap transfer program and then operates under the most restrictive State or Federal allocations.

As you know the Southern New England lobster stock is overfished and manage-

ment program is attempting to rebuild the stock by reducing effort on the fishery. Since the fishery takes place in both Area 2 and 3, we think it critical to have similar trap transfer regulations in both of these areas. We therefore do not support Option 3-ITT, which would limit trap transferability to Area 3 only.

We also support imposition of a 10% transfer tax on partial transfers of traps and urge NMFS to further develop transfer alternatives that mimic the provisions of various Addendums adopted by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

As a final point, we urge you to implement your regulations as soon as possible and hopefully during the 2014 fishing season.



# Northeast Region Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Northeast Regional Office, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930

For Information Contact:  
Sustainable Fisheries Division  
(978) 281 – 9315

<http://www.nero.noaa.gov/>  
Date Issued: 1/27/2014

## American Lobster Permit Holders

Establishment of a Control Date in the American Lobster Fishery

*Effective Date: January 27, 2014*

On January 27, 2014, we published a notice setting that date as the new control date for the Lobster Conservation Management Areas of the American lobster fishery. The control date was set at the request of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission). By establishing the control date, we are notifying the public that the Commission may consider an action to limit the number of permits or traps a business entity may own in the fishery. The control date should discourage speculative entry and investment in the American lobster fishery.

The control date, by itself, does not affect you at this time, but the Commission could use it as a reference point as it considers how to further limit the participation in Area 3 of the American lobster fishery or any other Lobster Conservation Management Areas. In developing a future action, the Commission may choose to use qualification criteria that do not incorporate the new control date. The Commission may also choose to take no further action to control participation in the American lobster fishery.

### *Frequently Asked Questions*

<b>When will this control date be used?</b>	The Commission has not yet initiated an action to control excess capacity in the American lobster fishery, but it may choose to do so in the future.
<b>Will this affect my access to Area 3 or any other areas?</b>	This control date, by itself, does not affect your permit or fishing privileges. If the Commission relies on it in a future action, it may or may not affect the number of permits or traps you can own. Any future effects will depend on the measures developed by the Commission and your participation history. We encourage you to participate in the development of such actions by the Commission to better understand how such measures may affect you in the future.
<b>How could it affect my access to Area 3 or any other areas?</b>	If the Commission limits participants in the fishery, you may have to give up a number of permits or traps that you own. The Commission intends the control date to discourage speculative entry into Area 3 of the American lobster fishery while the Commission develops future measures but this date may also be used for any of the other Lobster Conservation Management Areas. You need take no action at this time.
<b>What do I need to do?</b>	Find and keep all documents associated with your participation in the American lobster fishery, including dealer slips/receipts and logbook pages from trips on which you landed American lobster. The Commission may use any range of fishing years in a future action, so you should preserve all American lobster documents that you have.

*For small entity compliance guides, this bulletin complies with section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement and Fairness Act of 1996. This notice is authorized by the Regional Administrator of the National Marine Fisheries Service, Northeast Region.*

# HABITAT

As reported in prior issues, habitat and groundfish spawning closure areas, under the purview of the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC), may soon be changing (see Fall and Winter 2013 *Lobster Tales* for additional background information and charts). Below are status updates for the various players.

## NEFMC

The New England Fishery Management Council's (NEFMC) Habitat Omnibus Amendment 2 (HOA2) process continues to inch along. A special meeting was held in December in hopes of approving the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) document to send out for public comment, however Council members quickly realized that, despite their staff's best efforts, the voluminous document was not yet ready for public hearing. Instead, they hashed out yet more alternatives to add to the amendment and sent the staff back to work.

At the Council's regularly scheduled January meeting, staff gave a brief update on the status of the DEIS, which was said to be nearing completion. The Council has scheduled yet another special meeting, set for February 25-26, to review what should be a complete DEIS and select preferred alternatives in preparation for the public comment period.

The public will get a first view of the DEIS on February 14 when it is scheduled to be posted on the NEFMC website ahead of the February 19 Habitat Plan Development Team (PDT) meeting. AOLA staff will be reviewing the lengthy document in detail ahead of the PDT and full Council meetings. David Borden will be in attendance at the Council meeting. We will update the Membership as appropriate, however if you would like to dig into the document yourself, please contact Heidi who will be able to point you toward the relevant sections.

Assuming the Council is able to finish their work on the DEIS at the February meetings, the DEIS will go to NOAA Fisheries in March for review before the public comment period commences. Assuming that the document is approved by both the Council and NOAA, public hearings will be later this spring/summer.

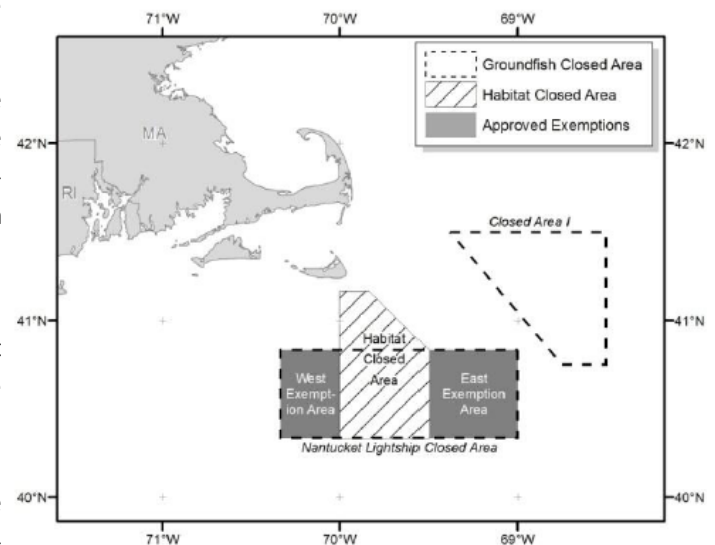
Likely the Council will take final action in early 2015. After the Council finalizes the amendment it will go back to NOAA Fisheries for rulemaking. In other words, it will still be some time before any changes to Closed Areas are finalized via the Council's Habitat Amendment process.

## SCALLOP

A draft bottom sharing agreement between lobster and scallop representatives operating in Closed Area II has been drafted and is currently under review by scallop representatives.

## NMFS

As a means to provide the groundfish fishery with flexibility to respond to restrictions in fish quota, NOAA GARFO (formerly NERO) published a final rule in December, granting sector vessels temporary access to sections of the Nantucket Lightship Closed Area (NLCA). Groundfish sector boats can now fish in the eastern and western portions of NLCA (see chart below) through the rest of the 2013 groundfish fishing year (April 30, 2014), via the sector exemption process. NMFS opted to keep CA I and CA II closed pending the Council's habitat work.



Understanding that the lobster fleet is active in the western exemption area, AOLA sent a letter to all sector managers (see next page). With the help of Bob Colbert, we will continue to communicate with sector managers and sector vessel owners to make sure gear conflict is avoided.

## MAFMC

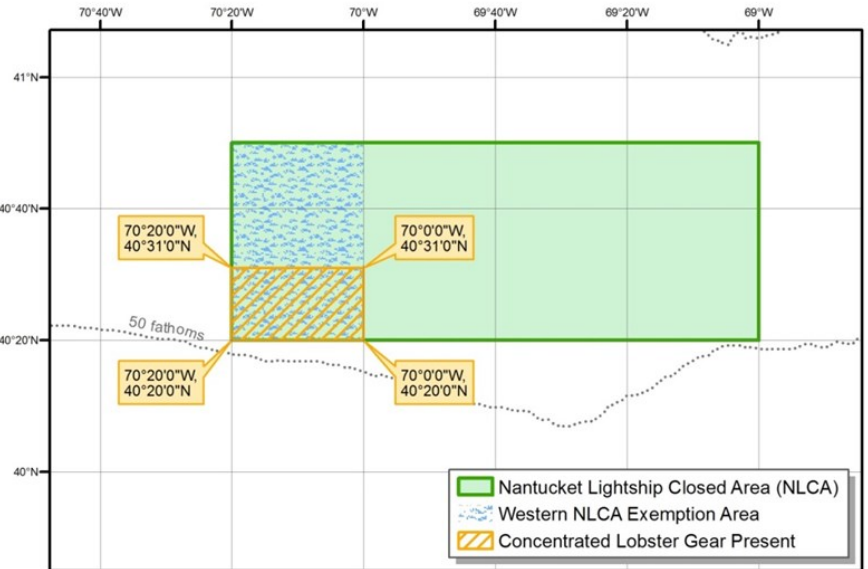
The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council is working on a Mackerel, Squid, Butterfish Amendment related to coral habitat protection in mid-Atlantic canyons (Block to the south). As is the case with NEFMC, the MAFMC does not have the authority to set regulations for the lobster fishery, however changes in mobile gear activity in the area may be of interest to our Members. We will keep an eye on this Amendment as it proceeds. It is expected to go out for public comment in March or April.

## LETTER TO SECTOR MANAGERS—JANUARY 20, 2014

Dear Sector Managers,

Please be aware that there are pockets of concentrated lobster gear in the southwest corner of the recently opened Nantucket Lightship Closed Area Western Exemption Area (see chart, prepared by William Whitmore, NMFS NERO). Lobster gear is expected to remain dense in the area throughout the winter and spring months, with 5-10 lobster vessels fishing. We ask that you alert your members who are, or plan to be, active in the area, in order to avoid gear conflict issues.

Should you have any questions, you can contact Heidi Henninger, Program Coordinator, Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Association at [heidi@offshorelobster.org](mailto:heidi@offshorelobster.org) and 603-828-9342.



## 2014 PRIORITIES

Below is a table summarizing the results of the priorities survey we conducted last fall. Approximately 70% of the membership participated. The Board reviewed these priorities at their winter meeting as a means to guide AOLA's actions in 2014. The three high priority items encompass the current focus of the staff and each were discussed in detail at the January Member Meeting (see minutes next page). An update of medium and low priority issues is provided below.

Gear Conflict	HIGH
Management/Transferability	HIGH
Closed Areas	HIGH
Associate Members Recruitment	MED/HIGH
Communicating w/Membership	MED/HIGH
2014 Stock Assessment	MEDIUM
Whales	MEDIUM
Co-Management/Data Collection	MEDIUM
Attending Meetings	MEDIUM
Habitat	MED/LOW
Enforcement	MED/LOW
V-Notch	LOW
MSC/Sustainability Certification	LOW
Wind Farms/Ocean Planning	LOW

Associate Member recruitment continues to be a focus of the Board and staff. We refined our campaign procedures in 2013 with much success, resulting in our highest Associate Member income in recent history. That being said, we can always use help from our members. If you do business with a company that doesn't currently support AOLA, whether in the marine industry or not (examples: grocer, hardware store, etc.), please consider

asking for their support. We are most successful when our Members speak directly to potential sponsors. If you haven't already, please take the "companies you do business with" survey that Heidi emailed to Members in early February.

Communication with Membership – Staff plan to continue with emailed memos on a regular, as needed, basis in addition to shorter email alerts and reminders. We feel this approach is working well, but please let us know if you have other suggestions. Also, feel free to call either of us with comments, questions, or concerns.

Stock Assessment & Whales – These items are on our radar for summer 2014, when both the stock assessment and the whale vertical line rule will be published. In the interim, we will continue to monitor progress by relevant agencies. Additionally, Heidi's working with the Commission to set up an industry/scientist meeting similar to the meeting held at MA DMF last year (see story on page 8).

Data Collection – As presented in the December AOLA newsletter, the AOLA data survey will continue in 2014, however the membership has some decisions to make about how, and if, we will merge this effort with the "On Deck Data" program administered by the CFRF. This is something we will need to address this spring/summer.

Low Priority Items – We will continue to keep our eyes and ears open to any and all issues that are relevant to members, and will notify you if we feel something requires the Association's attention. Conversely, please bring to the Board and/or staff's attention issues as you see fit.

## AOLA MEETING MINUTES—JANUARY 16, 2014

**Attendance:** David Spencer, Bro Cote, Todd Ellis, Brandon Dill, Bruce Medeiros, Charlie Raymond, Norbert Stamps, and David Borden.

**Agenda:** Meeting materials are contained in the attached packet. Reference page numbers in the summary below.

### **Summary of Conclusions of the meeting:**

**Jonah Crab:** The group endorsed the proposal by David Borden, subject to it including a tolerance for undersize crabs. The minimum size discussed at the meeting was 5 inches with a tolerance of up to 10%. Minimum size and tolerance will continue to be developed in the next month and circulated to all members for review and comment.

**Habitat Amendment:** NE Council has delayed final approval of the Omnibus Habitat Amendment until February or March, after which point the document will be sent to public hearing in the summer months.

**Nantucket Lightship:** AOLA will send a letter to all of the groundfish Sectors, pointing out the high concentration of crab gear in area, and ask that they avoid fishing in the area. A similar letter will be sent to the leadership of the scallop organizations.

**CA II:** General discussion of the issue and need to finalize an understanding with scallop industry. Agreement would only be needed if the scallop industry eventually gains access to Closed Area II.

Background: A subcommittee of AOLA (David Borden, Grant, and Bro) met with a small group of scallop owners in late December.

A number of options were discussed to avoid gear conflicts in the area, most of which were not viable. The scallop representatives communicated that they could live with the provisions of the groundfish/lobster understanding provided they got access to the area by March 1. To date NMFS has been either unwilling or unable to meet that timeline. The AOLA subcommittee decided to develop a draft agreement that mimics the groundfish understanding, but includes a provision that accelerates the allocation of scallop access days. The key contingency is that the scallop industry wants access starting on March 1 to maximize yield from the area. The members present reviewed the draft understanding and endorsed the agreement subject to it being circulated to the members for final review. Members have until January 25 to offer additional comment on the draft agreement and should direct comments to either David or Heidi. Unless we hear objections by that date, the draft understand will be circulated to the representatives of the scallop industry for their review and comment. Any changes will be brought back to the membership.

**Federal FEIS:** NMFS published its interim final environmental impact on changes in the federal lobster plan. The changes relate to new trap transfer provisions for Area 2, 3, and Outer Cape. The group reviewed the provision in the FEIS, specifically the preferred alternative which is included in the meeting material page 17. A number of issues such as banking, ownership caps, etc. were not included in these rules and have been deferred to a subsequent federal rule. These include most of the provision of ASMFC Addendums 21 and 22. The comment period on this rule is January 21. No action was taken on the issue

Submitted by David Borden 1-17-14

## JONAH CRABS

Below is an update on the status of work to develop a management plan for Jonah crab. See the December 2013 edition of *Lobster Tales* for a more comprehensive accounting of the background on this issue.

The Fisheries Improvement Plan (FIP) Committee convened by the Gulf of Maine Research Institute (GMRI) and sponsored by Delhaize has reviewed a first draft of the Jonah crab document, which includes all of the Association's recommendations to date.

This Committee originally intended to present its findings and recommendations at the winter meeting of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC), which was held earlier

this month. However, sections of the document still need to be completed or updated, which relate to the proposed minimum size, need for a tolerance, and characterization of processing capacity. Rather than submit an incomplete document the FIP committee decided to postpone any presentation until the ASMFC's spring meeting in May.

David, as well a number or AOLA Members and Associate Members, are participating in this Committee and Heidi is assisting with research and data gathering. AOLA staff will continue to work on the issue and provide updates to members as they become available.

## INDUSTRY/TC MEETING

Lobstermen will once again have the opportunity to meet with the scientists working on the 2014 lobster stock assessment. As was the case last year, AOLA is working with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to organize an opportunity for industry members to participate in a dialogue with lobster scientists.

This year's meeting will be held the evening before the spring convening of the ASMFC's lobster stock assessment commitment, date to be determined. Participants will be able to exchange ideas, comments, and questions on issues relevant to lobster science and the stock assessment via a facilitated discussion. This meeting is not meant to be a critic of management.

An initial list of topics to be covered is provided below. This list is meant to be a stepping off point for discussion; any and all other comments, concerns, questions, and ideas are welcome.

Stay tuned for a confirmed date, time, and location (likely New Bedford, MA) for this meeting.

### AGENDA ITEMS:

- ◇ **Soft lobsters** – In 2013 lobstermen encountered soft lobsters that took an unusually long time to harden. Could this be a result of changing ocean acidification?
- ◇ **Juveniles/settlement** - As we discussed last year, that timing and location of juvenile lobster abundance continues to evolve, especially in SNE. I'm sure lobstermen will want to update scientists regarding what they are seeing. Conversely, lobstermen will likely be interested in settlement findings by scientists
- ◇ **SNE** - general discussion of the resource and fishery
- ◇ **Climate change/Ecosystem considerations** - How are environmental considerations and predator/prey interactions being addressed in the stock assessment? Lobstermen will likely want to share what they are seeing related to changes in long standing patterns, such as proliferation of crabs, dogfish and sea bass, changes in the timing of lobster molting and reproduction, and how these changes are impacting the fishery.
- ◇ **Closed Areas** - Is there any way we can monitor changes in lobster distribution as they might relate to changes in mobile gear closure areas?
- ◇ **Data Collection** - How can we work collaboratively, with limited resources, to improve the data we have about the lobster resource and fishery.

## DATA COLLECTION EFFORTS

The Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation (CFRF) held a fleet meeting in January. At the meeting, participants shared their ideas about improving the data collection program. Given the fleet's feedback and feedback gathered from the Steering Committee in December (see December *Lobster Tales*) the following elements will be added to the data collection protocol:

- Shell hardness
- Disposition (kept or discarded)
- Severity of shell disease
- Jonah crab data collection

The CFRF staff are hard at work finding ways to continue the pilot project beyond Spring 2014. As it stands, the pilot will likely be granted a one year, non-funded, extension from NOAA Fisheries. CFRF has enough money remaining to continue with the fleet for another year (spring 2014—spring 2015), assuming NOAA grants the administrative extension. However, without additional funding the CFRF cannot expand the number of boats participating in the research fleet. Additional funding sources are being actively sought.

To date, the CFRF project has involved six Area 3 vessels reporting biological data since June. The offshore research fleet has sampled 11,257 lobsters and collected samples in eight statistical areas encompassing all three stock areas. Lobsters measured have ranged in size from 20-200 millimeters carapace length. These and the inshore data have been sent to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

As a comparison, in 2013 we had only 3 samplers participate in the AOLA data survey, sampling 1,925 lobsters from 4 statistical areas, encompassing two stock areas. This compares to an average of 7 participants covering 6-7 statistical areas and 3,956 lobsters annually over the prior four years of the AOLA survey.

As I've stated in the past, it is important to continue the AOLA program until the CFRF project has some permanence, however it appears to be too burdensome for most members to participate in both programs. Therefore, we need to start thinking critically about the AOLA program in light of the CFRF research fleet. Should we merge the efforts? Should we take the lessons learned from the CFRF pilot and run with them via an AOLA program? Should we advocate for expansion of the CFRF program as an industry funded effort? Should we find ways to keep both programs operating? Etc... The staff and Board will be working on these and related questions and present ideas to the membership later this year. If you have thoughts on the matter, let Heidi know.

## SPRING BOTTOM TRAWL SURVEY

NOAA Fisheries' Spring bottom trawl survey on the R/V Bigelow is quickly approaching. As usual, the survey will start in the Mid-Atlantic and work north, tentative dates provided below.

**MEMBERS—Please look at the sampling station details sent via email and let Heidi know of any sites near your gear.**

Leg 1—March 4/5 to March 21

Hudson Canyon to Norfolk and back via shoal waters

Leg 2—March 25 to April 4

Hudson to ~Welker Canyon and associated shoal waters

Leg 3—April 8 to April 25

Georges Bank— counterclockwise from the SW

Leg 4—April 29 to May 10

Gulf of Maine

## OLRAC

Bill Palombo has been spearheading the Board's interaction with Olrac Director, Amos Barkai. Bill and Amos had a series of discussions in December and agreed to continue our partnership for another year, with focus on the scallop project and strategic advancement of fisheries electronic reporting and monitoring tools in the US. Bill will be spearheading these effort; staff time and other expenses will be kept at a minimum.

The decision to continue with Olrac was not made lightly. In the end, the Board felt it best to continue in a limited capacity, as there will be little to no cost to the Association to do so, with a reasonable potential for long term profit. Continuation will keep AOLA involved with the scallop industry project, provide some income in 2014 and potentially much greater income in future years. It will also allow time to see if building interest in "Elogs" in US fisheries can be converted into a solid market for Olrac.

## OBSERVERS

### OBSERVER COVERAGE TO COLLECT LOBSTER DATA

I've been working closely with staff at the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) to discuss observer coverage on lobster vessels in FY 2014. As it stands, it is extremely unlikely that we will see any comprehensive federally funded data collection in the lobster fishery in FY 2014 or anytime soon for that matter. Once again, the Area 3 lobster fishery's position as a federal fishery managed primarily by State agencies (i.e. the Commission) continues to put us on the bottom of the priority list for a limited pool of money. That being said, NEFSC staff have express a willingness to think out of the box, this includes directing flexible observer days toward documenting phenomena seen by lobstermen (e.g. small juveniles offshore) and continuing to support industry's efforts to collect their own data, as a low cost alternative to sending out federal sea samplers.

### BYCATCH COVERAGE

As those of you that fish in the Gulf of Maine know, in the past few years NOAA has ramped up observation of groundfish bycatch in lobster gear. The number one mandate of the observer program is bycatch data collection via the standardized bycatch reporting methodology (SBRM). SBRM collects data to inform federal fishery management plans (not lobster), but does so on all gear types capable of interacting with federally managed species (lobster pots included). As it stands, the scientists at the NEFSC have some flexibility to assign observer seadays to different SBRM data collection needs, and recently they have focused some days on Gulf of Maine groundfish bycatch in pot fisheries. I continue to express my concern about how focused this effort

has been, because it has unduly burdened a small subset of the fleet. My concerns are being heard and I'm hoping this will become evident in the assignment of 2014 seadays. We won't know until March; the delay in Congressional appropriations delayed decision making. Yet, there is a possibility that NEFSC will continue this effort in FY 2014. If that is the case, I will continue to work to spread out the coverage to the extent possible, however all federally permitted vessels are required to carry an observer if asked. The silver lining here: observers assigned via SBRM don't focus just on bycatch, rather they collect lots of data relevant to lobster management, albeit from only a small portion of the fishery.

If you are asked to take an observer, please make sure you get insurance documentation from the observer company and speak to your insurance agent to make sure you have sufficient coverage. Bill Hart of Smithwick and Mariners brought to our attention that MRAG Americas, while properly covered, was not providing vessel owners with insurance information. If you are a Smithwick and Mariner customer please reference the letter from Bill for further details.

### CHANGES TO OBSERVER FUNDING

Working through both New England and Mid-Atlantic Councils is an omnibus amendment to dictate how industry/NMFS observer cost sharing programs will work. This will not directly affect lobster, again because we are managed by the Commission, but AOLA staff will keep an eye on the issue as it may have implications for acceptance of industry data collection as an alternative to federal sea samplers.

## EPA CLEAN WATER REGULATIONS

Below is a letter AOLA sent in January to our Members' Congressional delegations and regional fisheries managers, asking for their support of the Commercial Vessel Discharge Reform Act of 2013. If Congress doesn't act, commercial fishing vessel will be subject to additional EPA clean water regulations as of December, 2014. These regulations would require commercial fishermen to obtain a discharge permit in order to discharge a variety of effluent generated during normal fishing practices.

We will be monitoring the progress of this bill and working with our Congressional delegation as needed to further secure their support. See Representative LoBiondo's press release next page. Questions? Call Heidi.

The Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Association (AOLA) asks that you support Representative LoBiondo's proposed legislation, the "Commercial Vessel Discharges Reform Act of 2013" (HR 3464). This Act serves to make permanent the commercial fishing vessel exemption to the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, an exemption that has been in place since the original legislation was enacted in 2008. If no action is taken, commercial fishing vessels of all sizes will need to abide by the provisions of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act as of December 18, 2014. Yet, in what appears to be an arbitrary distinction, 13,000,000 recreational vessels will not be subject to the provisions; recreational vessels were granted a permanent exemption by Congress in 2007 (HR 2550).

If the existing exemption is allowed to expire, approximately 80,000 additional vessels (commercial fishing vessels of all sizes and other commercial vessels less than 79 feet) will be required to obtain general permits under the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) in order to legally discharge effluent, such as deck wash and fish hold water, generated during normal vessel operations. Vessel owners who don't obtain permits will be subjected to daily fines. While a single permit may not seem overtly onerous, it represents yet another administrative hoop the domestic fishing fleet will need to jump through simply to do their job, further discouraging economic growth in an already struggling small business sector. Further, the NPDES regulations define a long list of discharges that are prohibited or must be minimized on vessels permitted under the program. While admittedly, some of these prohibitions make good sense, many others are not practically and frankly excessively burdensome.

AOLA staunchly supports sustainability in fisheries, but regulations must be balanced and practical. The proposed Commercial Vessel Discharges Reform Act of 2013 presents such a pragmatic approach. This Act proposes to prohibit hazardous discharges of rubbish, sewage, ballast water, and other hazardous substances, while allowing for incidental discharges generated during normal

commercial fishing operation without subjecting tens of thousands of fishermen to the burden of yet another permit. By the EPA's own admission to Congress, the Agency does not have the resources to administer additional permits. The proposed Act also requires best practices for limiting discharges and gives the Coast Guard authority to define these best practices for both recreational and commercial fishing vessels, ensuring equity.

As a representative of small businesses in your state, AOLA urges you to support the Commercial Vessel Discharge Reform Act of 2013 (HR 3464) to assist our beleaguered working waterfronts and help fishermen to continue to provide sustainable, domestic seafood for our nation.

cc:

Senator Shaheen  
 Senator Ayotte  
 Congresswoman Shea Porter  
 Senator Warren  
 Senator Markey  
 Congressman Keating  
 Congressman Tierney  
 Congressman Lynch  
 Senator Reed  
 Senator Whitehouse  
 Congressman Cicilline  
 Congressman Langevin  
 Senator Menendez  
 Senator Booker

Bob Beal, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission  
 Chris Moore, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
 Tom Nies, New England Fishery Management Council  
 John Bullard, NOAA Fisheries Northeast Regional Office

## LoBiondo's Permanent Moratorium on Fines for Incidental Discharges... Approved by House Committee

February 13, 2014—U.S. Congressman Frank A. LoBiondo (NJ-02), a senior member of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, today applauded passage by the Committee of his language to place a permanent moratorium from Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), state regulations and fines governing incidental discharges on commercial fishing vessels and all other commercial vessels less than 79 feet. The "Commercial Vessel Discharges Reform Act of 2013" as introduced by LoBiondo in November was included in H.R. 4005, the "Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Act."

"Starting this December, commercial fishermen, charter and tour boat operators, and owners of other commercial vessels less than 79 feet will have to apply for and receive individual permits from the EPA to discharge from their vessels such things as deck wash, bilge water, and the condensation from air conditioning units. Vessels that operate without these permits could be subject to citizen lawsuits and daily

fines that exceed \$32,000 per violation," said LoBiondo. "South Jersey has the second biggest fishing port on the East Coast with the Port of Cape May, supporting thousands of jobs up and down the Jersey Shore. The fines that are scheduled to be levied against our commercial fishermen for incidental charges will be devastating to local South Jersey businesses and our economy."

In 2006, a federal court in California ruled that the EPA had to regulate the release of ballast water, bilge water, deck wash, rain water runoff and other incidental discharges from vessels under the Clean Water Act. Over 28 states have added additional and often contradictory regulations on top of the federal standard.

According to Jeff Reichle, president of Lund's Fisheries in Cape May, "the exemption avoids an unnecessary burden and potential serious fines on the U.S. fishing fleet while not reducing EPA's duties to protect our waters from serious pollutants."

While chair of the House Coast Guard & Maritime Transportation Subcommittee, LoBiondo secured the current temporary moratorium expiring in December 2014 in the hopes of brokering a permanent solution to establish a single, nationwide standard for ballast water and incidental discharges. Recognizing current political realities, LoBiondo is seeking a permanent moratorium to this issue. Commercial vessels (except fishing) over 79 feet will still need to comply with the EPA standards and all recreational vessels, regardless of size, are permanently exempt from the regulations.

Kevin Wark, owner and operator of the Fishing Vessel Dana Christine in Barnegat Light added, "For small vessel owner/operators like myself, and the thousands in the U.S. fleet, this legislation represents a common sense approach without compromising my business or clean oceans."

The "Coast Guard & Maritime Transportation Act" (H.R. 4005) now moves to the full House for consideration.

### FISHERIES FINANCIAL SERVICES

Below is information about loan opportunities available to fishermen via NOAA Fisheries.

**OBJECTIVES:** Provides direct loans for certain fisheries costs. Vessel financing available for the purchase of used vessels or the reconstruction of vessels (limited to reconstructions that do not add to fishing capacity). Refinancing available for existing debt obligations. FFP loans are not issued for purposes which could contribute to over capitalization of the fishing industry. Finance or refinance fisheries shore side facilities or Aqua cultural facilities. Provides Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) financing (at the request of a Fishery Management Council). IFQ financing available at this time to first time purchasers and small vessel operators in the Halibut Sablefish fisheries. Provides long term fishery buy back financing (at the request of a Fishery

Management Council or Governor) to purchase and retire fishing permits and/or fishing vessels in overcapitalized fisheries.

**USES:** Direct loans for up to 80 percent of actual cost, for reconstruction or reconditioning of fishing vessels, renovation, repair or construction of fisheries shore side facilities, (including aquaculture facilities) and financing and refinancing the cost of certain IFQs. Maximum maturity up to 25 years. Funds from this program are not used for purposes which contribute to over capitalization of the fishing industry.

**ELIGIBILITY:** Applicant must possess the ability, experience, financial resources, and other qualifications necessary to operate successfully and repay the debt. Ben-

eficiary eligibility: Commercial fishermen, processors or distributors of fishery products.

**TERM:** Maximum term is 25 years. Financing based on the economic useful life of the asset financed. See the following for information on how assistance is awarded/released: Funds are released or reimbursed as agreed upon in the Standard Terms and Conditions required for each grant.

#### HOW DO I GET MORE INFORMATION?

Contact your regional Financial Services Branch and discuss your project:

Northeast Financial Services Branch  
Gloucester, MA (978) 281-9154

# SAFETY ALERT



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

## **MARINE SAFETY ALERT**

*Inspections and Compliance Directorate*

December 31, 2013  
Washington, DC

Alert 10-13

### **Attention on Deck! Commercial Fishing Vessels**

According to U. S. Bureau of Labor statistics, in 2012 commercial fishing was the second most dangerous occupation in the country, with over 117 fatalities per 100,000 workers.<sup>i</sup> This alert serves to remind commercial fishing vessel owners, operators, and crew members of the dangers associated with working around moving deck machinery, rigging, and equipment.

A recent marine casualty resulting in the death of a crew member highlights the need to remain ever-vigilant to unsafe practices and conditions. In this instance, the crew member was standing in a hazardous location on the vessel's working deck, near the stern between a section of interior bulwark and a large-diameter trawl wire which was supporting the weight of at least 1,400 pounds of deployed fishing gear. As the load on the wire increased and the direction of the load path shifted due to the sea state and the vessel's motion, the wire suddenly became tauged against the vessel's bulwark where the crew member had been standing. As a result, the crew member was trapped in between and suffered fatal injuries. Although the investigation of this casualty is not complete and other causal factors may be discovered, initial findings indicate that failure to follow shipboard safety procedures and failure to recognize a dangerous situation may have contributed to this casualty.

The Coast Guard **strongly recommends** that owners, operators, and crew members of commercial fishing vessels implement the following, common-sense safety measures:

- Develop and post safety plans that include identification of "pinch points" and other dangerous locations on deck;
- Regularly conduct onboard safety training emphasizing on-deck hazards and other potential dangers;
- Remain ever-vigilant to the changing nature of potential dangers in the presence of moving deck machinery, rigging, and equipment;
- Follow vessel safety procedures and avoid placing oneself in peril!

This alert is for informational purposes only and does not relieve any domestic or international safety, operational, or material requirement. Developed by the Fifth Coast Guard District, Portsmouth, VA. Questions may be addressed to LCDR Ken Morton, (757) 398-6284, or may be forwarded to [D05-DG-Prevention-DPI-PFB-Staff@uscg.mil](mailto:D05-DG-Prevention-DPI-PFB-Staff@uscg.mil).

<sup>i</sup> U. S. Bureau of Labor 2012 Census of Occupational Injuries: <http://www.bls.gov/iif/oshcfoi1.htm#rates>. The national occupational fatality rate is 3.2 deaths per 100,000 workers; logging is the most dangerous occupation with 128 deaths per 100,000 workers.

# SAFETY ALERT



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

## **MARINE SAFETY ALERT**

*Inspections and Compliance Directorate*

December 31, 2013

Alert 11-13

Washington, DC

### **Entanglement Accidents**

A recent marine casualty involving a severe injury to a crewmember aboard an inspected passenger vessel reminds us that these hazards happen in any segment of the maritime industry. Moving, rotating, and reciprocating machinery may include (but are not limited to) rotating or spinning shafts, fan blades, fan or serpentine belts, gearing, hydraulic ram assemblies, couplings, arms, linkages, windlasses, drums, blocks, booms, and sheaves, etc.. In this instance, a crewmember's hair became entangled with a rotating propeller shaft as the crewmember was on watch and conducting rounds. The crew member sustained life-threatening injuries and is permanently disfigured. Although the investigation of this casualty is not complete, initial observations serve to remind all vessel owner / operators, and crew members of the hazards onboard vessels of all types.



The Coast Guard **strongly recommends** that vessel owner /operators evaluate their vessels for the presence of moving, rotating, reciprocating or articulating machinery hazards, and implement documented common-sense policies, procedures, and safety measures:

- ✓ Never wear loose fitting clothing, jewelry or personal gear in the vicinity of such equipment.
- ✓ Keep long hair tied back to avoid entanglement;
- ✓ Install and maintain guards and protective equipment to prevent personnel contact;
- ✓ Post appropriate hazard signs;
- ✓ Never energize machinery unless certain that all personnel are well clear;
- ✓ Follow proper lock-out tag-out procedures when working near or on such equipment, and ensure it has been verified that local or remote motor controls have been tagged-out or disabled and completely de-energized;
- ✓ Develop procedural safeguards that eliminate, as far as practicable, personnel's need to be in proximity to hazardous machinery when in operation;
- ✓ Regularly conduct onboard safety training to emphasize safety procedures and the hazards of machinery, include deck and engine department, cargo equipment, and tools;
- ✓ Always be vigilant for new risks and dangers presented to your crews and passengers.



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# SAFETY ALERT

## FISHING PARTNERSHIP



SUPPORT SERVICES

## Commercial Fishermen Safety and Survival Training

We will be offering two types of trainings this season. Basic Safety at Sea training is a full day training for commercial fishermen. Drill Conductor training is a full day training for those who have completed the Basic course within the past year.

**February 20** – Basic – New Bedford at UMASS Dartmouth SMAST

**February 21** – Drill Conductor - New Bedford at UMASS Dartmouth SMAST

**March 6** – Basic – Sandwich at Pilot House / Sandwich Marina

**March 7** – Drill Conductor – Sandwich at USCG Station

**March 20** – Basic – Boston at UMASS Boston

**March 21** – Drill Conductor – Boston at UMASS Boston

**April 3** – Basic – Marshfield at Marshfield Yacht Club / Marina

**April 4** – Drill Conductor – Marshfield at Marshfield Yacht Club / Marina

**April 16** – Basic – Chatham at Old Stage Harbor

**April 17** – Drill Conductor – Chatham at Old Stage Harbor

**May 15** – Basic – Gloucester at Coast Guard Station

**May 16** – Drill Conductor – Gloucester at Coast Guard Station

**June 5** – Basic – New Bedford at UMASS Dartmouth SMAST

**Call 1-888-282-8816 or check out our website for more  
information and to register for one of the trainings.**

[fishingpartnership.org](http://fishingpartnership.org)

[ In association with the Massachusetts Fishermen's Partnership ]

# SAFETY ALERT

## U.S. Coast Guard to Test Automatic Identification System (AIS) Aids to Navigation (ATON)

USCG Special Notice

In the near future, the U.S. Coast Guard and other authorized agencies and organizations (i.e., U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Marine Exchange of Alaska) will begin **transmitting AIS ATON messages and marine safety information via AIS for testing and evaluation**. The exact content, location, and times of these broadcasts will be announced in future Local Notices to Mariners.

**AIS** is an internationally adopted radio

communication protocol that enables the autonomous and continuous exchange of navigation safety related messages amongst vessels, lifeboats, aircraft, shore stations, and aids to navigation (AIS ATON).

**AIS ATON stations** broadcast their presence, identity (9-digit Marine Mobile Service Identity (MMSI) number), position, and status at least every three minutes or as needed. These broadcasts can originate from an AIS station located on an existing physical aid to navigation (Real AIS ATON)

or from another location (i.e., AIS Base Station).

An AIS Base Station signal broadcasted to coincide with an existing physical aid to navigation is known as a Synthetic AIS ATON. An electronically charted, but non-existent as a physical aid to navigation, is identified as a Virtual AIS ATON.

Mariners capable of receiving and displaying these test AIS messages are encouraged to provide feedback and report any anomalies to the USCG NAVCEN

## GSSI Ecolabel Benchmarking Process Moving Forward

February 4, 2014: Saving Seafood

The GSSI is funded by the German government, 20 leading international seafood companies, Darden, Sodexo, 8 major global retailers, and industry groups including NFI and the Seafish authority.

The goal is to develop a benchmarking standard for seafood industry ecolabels based on at a minimum the FAO Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification and the FAO Guidelines for Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries.

The GSSI Benchmarking Framework will include "Key Performance Areas" on Aquaculture and Fishery standards and on Governance and Procedures. Each Key Performance Area will be broken down into a set of Benchmarking Indicators to which relative performance of certification programs can be measured.

GSSI has set up three expert working groups on Aquaculture, Marine Capture Fisheries, and Process.

The working groups will present an overview of their work at a meeting in conjunc-

tion with the Boston Seafood Show. The future of GSSI benchmarking received a boost when Walmart - which has not participated in the GSSI process - determined that for its purchasing policies, Alaska's RFM certification system was equivalent to the system of the Marine Stewardship Council. Other major users, such as Sodexo, have also made this determination.

In their latest newsletter, GSSI detailed who will be the chair and vice-chair of the different working groups. In each case, they tried to pair an NGO with an industry partner. Aquaculture will be chaired by Iain Stone, of Lyons Seafood, and the vice-chair will be Anton Immink, from the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership. Marine fisheries will be chaired by Randy Erickson, of the Wild Salmon Center, and the vice chair is Gregg Jeffers, from Gortons.

The Process group - which is working on how certification schemes will get benchmarked by GSSI, is chaired by Tom Pickrell, of Seafish, and Patrick Mallet of ISEAL alliance, and the vice chair is Mike Kraft, from Bumble Bee.

Finally, GSSI announced that WWF has come on board as a member of the steering committee. WWF is perhaps the key player in the global fisheries ecosystem movement - and although in the past they have been committed to the MSC - which they helped found, in recent years they have broadened their perspective to embrace a number of partnerships with industry players that go beyond simply asking their partners to use MSC approved sourcing.

In order for the GSSI to succeed, they will need to have WWF at least a neutral party, and the fact that after initially rejecting the need for GSSI, WWF has now come on board is a big step forward.

It is part of the recognition that a true formal global framework on seafood sustainability is needed that goes beyond the boundaries or promotion of any single scheme. Only in this fashion can governments formally use the benchmark, and can the benchmarks get incorporated - as the Global Gap has been for agriculture, and GFSI for food safety - into a wide range of purchasing programs.

## "Missing" Right Whales Spotted in Cape Cod Bay

January 13, 2014 BY: RICH ELDRED, The Cape Codder

It's not quite the swallows returning to Capistrano, but the right whales are back in Cape Cod Bay.

But unlike the swallows, which always arrive at the same time, the whales are early.

"They've probably been here for a fairly long time already," noted Dr. Stormy Mayo, director of Right Whale Habitat Studies at the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies. "That's the first time we did an aerial survey to pin down what's going on."

So what's going on? Sunday afternoon, when the Center made the aerial track across the Bay, they spotted 12 endangered North Atlantic right whales, 2.4-percent of the entire world's population, cavorting about.

"That's a big deal," Mayo said. "I think we're in a time of change. What's happened particularly over the last four years, is Cape Cod Bay is more and more important to right whales. So much that half of the entire population has come into the Bay over the last four years. Considering we're not out there all the time it's probably more than that."

The estimated world population is about 510 whales, confined to the North Atlantic, primarily on this side.

There were reports that the whales were not at their normal summer feeding grounds in the Gulf of Maine so it was good to see them back in the Bay.

"This leads me to believe the whales now prefer Cape Cod Bay to other habitats," Mayo observed.

Why that is so is harder to say. It could be climate shifts, water temperature variations; almost certainly it is connected to the abundance of food in the Bay. Right whales feed mostly on copepods (tiny shrimp-like crustaceans in the plankton) that they filter out of the water with their baleen. Previous work at the Center has determined right whales begin feeding when the density of zooplankton reaches 3,750 organisms per cubic meter of water.

"Probably 10 of the whales were feeding with their mouths wide open," Mayo said. "Up to the last four years we have not seen many whales here in January and not many feeding. We've been conducting studies for many years and in the first twenty years of the study the animals seemed to follow a fairly regular pattern and you didn't see numbers of ten or more animals till mid-March."

The whales usually spend the winter off the coast of Georgia,

where mothers often give birth.

"The last four years we're seeing them off the beaches before we even get up to fly. This year I saw them in October," Mayo noted.

This indicates Cape Cod Bay has become a crucial habitat for a critically endangered species.

"You can see the results more than the causes," Mayo reiterated. "So you can say the plankton is particularly rich over the last four or five years. And there's a change in location in the Bay. The whales are mostly focused on the eastern half of the Bay and last year was the first time in 27 years we saw aggregations of whales on the western side of the Bay. So Cape Cod Bay is one of the real mother lodes of right whales in the wintertime. How come this habitat more than any other?"

Usually the whales hang around as long as the abundant plankton does, drifting in and out of the Bay until early spring. Then they'll swim out around Race Point and head 30 to 50 miles East of the Cape following the food. Later in the summer they favor the northern Gulf of Maine, in the Bay of Fundy.

"There were not many whales seen last year, except in Cape Cod Bay," Mayo said.

The Center has extensive records on the individual whales, which they can identify from photos.

"We'll see some we don't know much about and we'll see some we've seen before," Mayo predicted.

They try to do a flight every seven days, crisscrossing the Bay in a grid but that is weather dependent.

"If we could do it the way we want we'd be looking every five days but that still leaves big gaps. Tagging has been pretty much suspended in the Atlantic, the whales are so rare, and the tags seemed to develop raised areas on the backs. We don't need to add any physiological stress to the animals since they are not reproducing as fast as they can and numbers are reduced by ship strikes and entanglements."

The center also studies copepod abundance, using their research vessel the Shearwater, to take samples from January to May. They estimate that for a whale to "break even" where the energy expended feeding equals the caloric intake, the plankton density has to be 6,600 animals per cubic meter.

Right whales used to be more evenly spread about the Atlantic but they were hunted from North Africa to the Bay of Biscay to

**CONTINUED NEXT PAGE**

## NOAA Fisheries Working to Improve Fisheries Data Quality

December 19, 2013 NOAA FISHERIES Northeast Regional Office

NOAA Fisheries today announced that it is undertaking a coordinated effort to improve the quality, usefulness, timeliness, and delivery of data collected from the fishing industry used in its science and management. The Gulf of Maine Research Institute (GMRI), Portland, Maine, in partnership with the School for Marine Science and Technology (SMAST), Dartmouth, Massachusetts, will help NOAA Fisheries by conducting a survey of external data users and others interested in contributing to improving our data systems.

NOAA Fisheries collects a variety of information from fishing vessels and seafood dealers such as fishing location, gear type used, area fished, landings, bycatch, ex-vessel price, operational costs, and catch sampling, which is used for management and scientific tasks including estimating fish stock abundance and setting fishing quotas.

"We created our existing data reporting and monitoring systems over many years to support fishery management measures as they were developed," said John Bullard, regional administrator, Northeast, NOAA Fisheries. "But as management plans and requirements have evolved, we've seen an increased demand for finer scale and more timely information. We recognize that our data systems need to improve to accommodate that demand."

This fall, NOAA Fisheries established an internal working group to begin to explore what improvements can be made to existing data collection and management systems. With the help of the GMRI and SMAST, NOAA Fisheries hopes to learn more about data needs from various user groups and explore better ways to compile and deliver that data.

Bill Karp, science and research director, NOAA Fisheries' Northeast Fisheries Science Center, said that working with external

partners and the fishing industry is key to improving information gathered on the fisheries. "These data underlie everything from abundance estimates to quota setting and management. It is critical that what we use is accurate, current, and available as quickly as possible," he said.

Over the next several months, interviews will be conducted throughout the region with NOAA Fisheries scientists and managers, state fishery management agencies, regional fishery management councils and commissions, vessel operators, dealers, commercial fishing organizations, non-governmental organizations, and academic institutions.

"Through our outreach, we want to emphasize to fishermen and dealers that understanding how they collect, report, and use information is central to improving NOAA's data system. Ultimately, timely and accurate data will help them with their own business planning and fishery operations," said Jonathan Labaree, GMRI's Director of Community Initiatives. "Along with collecting information from data users, we hope to explore new monitoring and data collection models for the fishing and seafood industries that are developed with their input and tested in the real-world environment."

As various aspects of this review effort are completed, results will be shared publicly via NOAA Fisheries and the Gulf of Maine Research Institute websites. <http://www.nero.noaa.gov/>, <http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/> and <http://www.gmri.org/>.

NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. Visit us at <http://www.noaa.gov> or on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/noaa>.

## *CONTINUED*: "Missing" Whales

Iceland and now only strays from the Gulf of Maine population are occasionally seen off of Europe.

There is also a South Atlantic right whale, there are about 15,000 of them,, and an extremely rare Pacific right whale, perhaps as few as 50, off of the sparsely populated Russian coast, "probably a different species" Mayo noted.

"Cape Cod Bay may be becoming one of the mating grounds," Mayo speculated.

He has students working on whale energetics as well as the social aspects of their time in the Bay, male and female groupings,

mothers and their calves.

"We have better access to right whales than anyone so we contribute huge amounts of photographic information and general knowledge," Mayo said. "If it's like last year the numbers will rise and fall through March and we'll see them numbers increase into the heart of the season March to April but it's always exciting because we don't know the answer but that's typical of natural science."

## Data From the Deep

February 4, 2014 BY: ROBERT GOLD, SouthCoast Today

The mysteries of the deep have long intrigued oceanographers and researchers.

A new device created locally could help shed more light on some of these mysteries, its developers and area scientists said.

For more than a decade, the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, working with other researchers and oceanographers, has installed an array of measuring devices on lobster traps.

Temperature gauges, salinity sensors, acoustic listening devices and cameras have been installed, said Jim Manning, who oversees the lobster trap program at the science center in Woods Hole, which is part of the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration.

Current meters, in use for the past few years, help gauge current speeds up to hundreds of feet underwater, Manning said. The various devices help monitor and research the effects of weather patterns, tides, river runoffs and its impact on various fisheries, including lobster.

"Fishermen are very interested in the results. They've been wondering what's going on down there forever," Manning said.

Starting last year, researchers started

testing out a new device, with technology developed by North Falmouth-based Lowell Instruments. The data logger measures temperature, current speed and direction and can help test whether computer modeling software is accurately predicting the deep currents, Manning said.

"They would provide the data to test the (computer) models, especially down in the deeper waters," Manning said.

Manning started working with University of Rhode Island scientist Vitalii Sheremet more than half a decade ago. Sheremet developed a device with a streamlined appearance that gives information about currents.

"They measure flow based on the tilt of this instrument," Manning said. Previously, more complicated devices were used to do this. "There were a lot of moving parts that more easily got fouled" by growth such as algae, Manning said.

In 2012, Sheremet teamed up with Nick Lowell, the founder of Lowell Instruments, and the collaboration has yielded results.

Lowell's data loggers and Sheremet's technology are placed within PVC pipes and attached to lobster traps.

Sheremet, an associate marine research scientist at the university, said about 50 have been used so far, including some in

Nantucket Sound, and another 50 are expected to be tested in various ocean waters this year.

"They are more precise and more accurate," Sheremet said of the newest model of his device, which includes the data loggers developed by Lowell.

These also can record more measurements for a longer period of time.

Lowell, who started his business in 2012, said the lower-cost technology of his data loggers should be able to help more people do underwater research in more places.

"This really lets you validate that your models are accurate by putting a bunch out," he said.

With such an expansive variety of ocean environments, Manning said the various data collectors, including the data logger developed by Lowell Instruments, are gathering a long-term reservoir of information. This data can help gauge things such as sedimentary erosion, the condition of aquaculture beds and assessing the potential for harnessing tidal energy and other issues.

"We are trying to keep a long-term record," he said, to archive and share with other ocean researchers.

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For more information, or to join, contact: Heidi Henninger, ADLA Program Coordinator at [heidi@offshorelobster.org](mailto:heidi@offshorelobster.org) or 603-828-9342.

**Thank You Associate Members for your continued support!**

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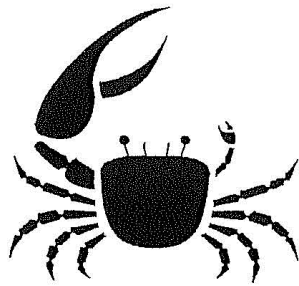
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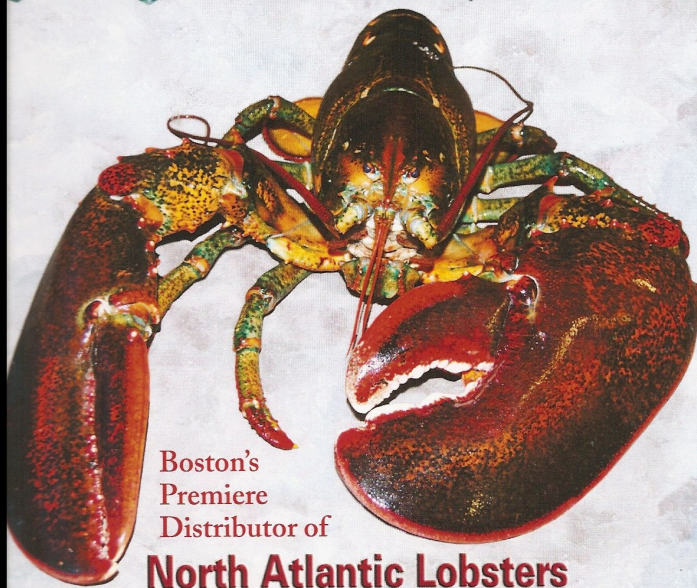
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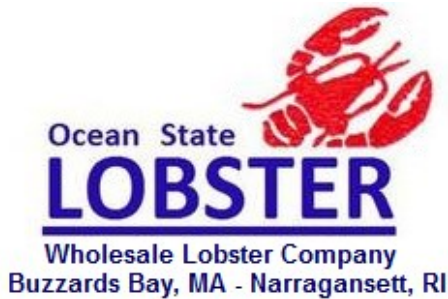
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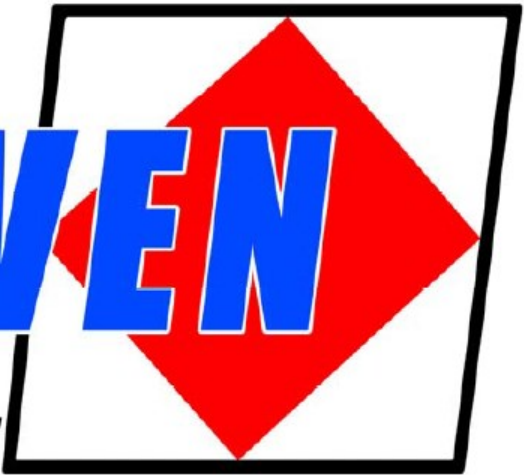
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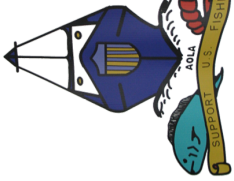
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