



Summer 2008

“News, research updates, and information on lobsters and the lobster industry.”

Published by the Lobster Institute

“Protecting and conserving the lobster resource, and enhancing lobstering as an industry...and a way of life.”

Lobstermen’s Town Meeting Draws Comments from Australia

Having read of the 2008 Canadian/U.S. Lobstermen’s Town Meeting in the Spring 2008 *Lobster Bulletin*, Murray Hird, Director of Industry Development in the Department of Business, Economic and Regional Development in Australia’s Northern Territory shared the following comments via email:

“Another good *Lobster Bulletin* - some comments from an interested person in far away Darwin:

Costs: I note 99.4 cpl for diesel. We are AU\$1.73 for same. A number of large cattle grazing operations here have just banded together to import fuel by the boat load in an effort to reduce costs. Given the effort of lobster fishermen and women to promote the sustainability of the industry is it unreasonable to suggest that biodiesel, being biodegradable in water, as a blend or straight B100 is a target for industry consideration? Made perhaps more attractive if it can come from a renewable source, such as algae or crop produced in such a way as not to compete with food producing resources?

Pricing mechanisms: I note a number of elements of Dutch agribusiness involve the producers taking / being offered share holdings in critical value added parts of the business so that the dividends from the value added parts contribute to overall income. As an agribusiness banker I had many discussions with farmers lamenting the profits of the bank against their seemingly poor position. My response included a number of elements including ‘Buy the bank shares – at least you get some of your money back!’ I am unaware of the level of horizontal ownership within the industry - just a thought.

As for bait: no brain waves here other than when we go crabbing, complete with our 5 pots, we have excellent results with chicken carcasses. Fish frames and heads work as well but these are not always to hand.” ☘

A summary report of the 2008 Canadian/U.S. Lobstermen’s Town Meeting is available online at www.lobsterinstitute.org/index.php?page=87

The Lobster Institute’s C.O.R.E. Initiative Receives NOAA Funding

Recognizing the fact that the lobster fishery is virtually the sole remaining viable commercial fishery in Maine and the Northeast, and that this industry has an estimated economic impact in the U.S. of \$0.7-\$1.2 billion, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has approved funding of the Lobster Health Coalition component of the Lobster Institute’s C.O.R.E. Initiative. \$178,421 in Federal funding will be available in September for the Institute to get this project underway.

According to Dr. Bob Bayer, Executive Director of the Lobster Institute and the projects principal investigator, “We must be proactive in sustaining both the lobster resource and the lobster industry, which employs thousands of citizens, many in economically depressed areas. The lobster fishery’s continued success is particularly dependent on the long-term health of the lobster and its habitat, both of which are major and continuing research priorities of the Lobster Institute through its C.O.R.E. Initiative.” Bayer noted that in Maine alone there are over 5,800 licensed commercial lobstermen, and the fishery’s landings in 2007 totaled

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Lobster College is Back

See enrollment information above.

Lobster College is back after a five-year hiatus, and you don't even need SATs to enroll! Registrations are now being accepted for this most unique learning vacation, organized by the Lobster Institute at the University of Maine and hosted by the Kenniston Hill Inn B&B in Boothbay, Maine. "Folks who join us for Lobster College will experience hands-on learning about lobsters directly from lobstermen and lobster dealers, as well as from University of Maine faculty," said Dr. Robert Bayer, executive director of the Lobster Institute.

According to Lobster College alumnus Paul Oswald from Cleveland, Ohio, "The words great and excellent

are much overused in our society. But these words must be used to describe this program. Five star all the way."

"We'll haul traps, we'll study lobster biology, and of course we'll enjoy lobster at every lunch, dinner, and then some," said Bayer. ☼



**Check out the Lobster Institute website at
www.lobsterinstitute.org,
providing the definitive site for lobster
information with nearly 200 links.**





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RESEARCH REPORT

Readers may contact the Lobster Institute for more detailed information on any of these projects.

- ❖ **Lobster Health Coalition (cont. from page 1)** - approximately 63 million pounds, valued at close to \$280,000,000. These account for about 80% of total U.S. landings. In addition, the American lobster ranked second on the U.S. seafood export list by dollar value in 2006.

The objective of the project is to form a Lobster Health Coalition with membership to include scientists and industry representatives from throughout the lobster fishing regions of the Northeast U.S. and Atlantic Canada. The Coalition will work together to collect baseline lobster health data, and encourage a logical progression of research to address lobster health issues – bringing together and building upon work already done or in progress, thus avoiding duplication and promoting efficiency. The Coalition will also unify efforts to obtain the needed funding for this research.

The Lobster Institute will work with the manager of the Maine Aquatic Animal Health Laboratory (MAAHL) at UMaine, Deborah Bouchard, who serves as co-PI for the project. Bouchard stated that the intent is to “develop a region-wide lobster health program focusing on pathogen biology and disease epidemiology - with strategies for prevalence testing, disease diagnostics, and lobster health management.” An MAAHL project begun in 2007 will serve as a model to be adapted by the Coalition for regional sampling. The Maine project, (spearheaded by Bouchard and current AVS graduate student and veterinarian, Dr. David Basti) included bacterial screening, viral testing, histology and electron microscopy of samples taken from ambient wild lobster populations. Hemolymph samples are in the process of being analyzed for physiological parameters such as bicarbonate, lactate, protease assays, ions, and electrolytes, as well as stress hormones and heat shock proteins. Hemolymph was also collected in RNA later for future viral work. Analysis of the project’s testing results will allow for targeted measures of lobster health.

“A successful Coalition will be a major communications channel among and between scientists and fishermen. It will be instrumental in safeguarding the lobster stock from current and rapidly emerging diseases, thus helping secure the future viability of the lobster industry,” said Bayer.

- ❖ **Determining the Health Risks of Lobster Bait to Marine Animals** – Lobster Institute Cooperative Research Associates Dr. Ian Bricknell, Deborah Bouchard, and Una McCarthy from the University of Maine have received funding from Maine’s Lobster Research, Education, and Development Board to investigate the possible microbial pathogens contained within a range of currently used lobster baits to assess the disease risks of non-indigenous fish offal based attractants. The goals of the project will be to provide a strategy for reducing the risks of inadvertent introduction of an exotic disease to Maine and provide suitable lobster bait based on the avoidance of diseased fish by-products. The project will include bacterial and viral analysis, establishing the survival profile of pathogens in a variety of baits, and investigating what happens to the pathogen load when the baits are processed. It is anticipated the project will take up to one year to complete. Results will be available in a future *Lobster Bulletin*.

- ❖ **Study to Investigate Lobster Stressors** – Lobster Institute Cooperative Research Associates Deborah Bouchard, Dr. David Basti and Dr. Ian Bricknell have received funding from Maine’s Lobster Research, Education, and Development Board for a project entitled “Tools and techniques to recognize lobster stressors throughout the supply chain and development of best management practices to reduce or eliminate stress on lobsters.” Project goals include: 1) To investigate potential indicators of stress in lobsters that may be useful in assessing their short-term well-being and offer predictability for long-term survival. (i.e. temperature, air exposure); 2) The identification of points of vulnerability in the movement of lobsters from the field to fork. (i.e. hauling, handling, storage); 3) Propose corrective strategies and best management practices for lobstermen, pound owners and distributors. Both controlled laboratory stress tests and field sampling will be used. A key component of the project is to educate lobster fishermen and pound owners about best management practices so that they will be able to recognize and take preventative measures to minimize stress in their final product. A more detailed report and results will be published in future *Lobster Bulletins*. ❧



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Pat and Herb Hodgkins Step Down as Leaders of the Maine Lobster Pound Association

Nearly 25 years ago Herb Hodgkins had a vision of pound owners throughout the State of Maine sharing their experiences and working together on issues that impacted each of them. To build an effective channel for communications and collaboration, Herb founded the Maine Lobster Pound Association (MLPA) in 1984 and went throughout the state recruiting membership. He served as the volunteer president of the MLPA for the first ten years, and from 1994 forward, Herb served as the executive director for the MLPA until his retirement this spring. Herb's wife Pat has worked hand-in-hand



Pat (r) & Herb (rc) Hodgkins receive a plaque from Bruce Portrie (lc) and Dr. Bob Bayer (l) in honor of their longtime service to the Maine Lobster Pound Association.

with him, serving as the MLPA's secretary and treasurer. On May 19, the MLPA recognized Herb and Pat's dedication at a dinner in their honor in Ellsworth, Maine. The Hodgkins were given a special plaque which read, "Without the dedicated individuals that sacrifice time and effort, organizations like the MLPA could not achieve their goals of bettering our industry through cooperation and research. Through the tireless efforts of only a handful of people the MLPA leads the way for the lobster pound industry, not only in Maine but in Canada as well. From 1984-2007 two individuals

displayed time and time again their commitment to us all. For 24 years of unselfish service to the MLPA, past and present members, with much gratitude, say to Herb and Pat Hodgkins, THANK YOU very, very much."

The plaque was presented by MLPA president, Bruce Portrie, with special remarks by Dr. Bob Bayer, Executive Director of the Lobster Institute. ☘

Are you familiar with the "Lobster Shift"?

Patrick Taylor, the etymologist of the American Heritage Dictionary, is looking for information about the origin of the use of the term "lobster shift" meaning "the night shift, especially between the hours of 10 pm and 6 am." At first glance, this expression doesn't make any sense, since most lobstermen go out in the early morning and are on shore again in the evening. He would be grateful if anyone could supply him with details about the origin of the term. Various theories have been proposed about the origin of the term, none of them having any very direct connection with lobsters. The most picturesque is that "lobstermen" was once the slang term for the typesetters who set the red banner headlines of newspapers in the early morning hours and had red hands as a result. Perhaps it referred to the arrival of last night's catch to markets in cities? Justice Robert C. McGann, who presided over the last lobster shift at the New York County Courthouse in 2003, stated that the term "derives from the early hours lobstermen keep to catch their nocturnal prey."

Anyone who has a theory is invited to contact Cathy Billings at the Lobster Institute via email at cathy.billings@umit.maine.edu. ☘