

An Historical Look at the



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The Lobster Institute was established as the result of the united efforts of the Maine Lobstermen's Association, the Maine Lobster Pound Association, the Maine Import/Export Lobster Dealers and the University of Maine – Maine Sea Grant.

Organizational efforts began in 1985, and were spearheaded by Edward Blackmore, President of the Maine Lobstermen's Association; Robert Brown, Executive Director of the Maine Import/Export Lobster Dealers, David Dow of the University of Maine/Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program; Herbert Hodgkins, President of the Maine Lobster Pound Association; and Joseph Vachon, Maine Lobstermen's Association delegate. The plan was to create an independent body, linking those in the lobster industry with scientists at the University of Maine, which would identify lobster industry challenges, and focus research and educational efforts to solve them.

University of Maine President Dale Lick approved the concept in 1986 and formation of the Maine Lobster Institute was authorized by the University of Maine Board of Trustees on July 20, 1987. Its initial charge was to "conduct research and provide information to protect, conserve, and enhance the Maine lobster resource and its environment in order to insure the continuance of a viable lobster industry that will benefit Maine people."

The Institute is headed by a part-time Executive Director appointed by the University of Maine in consultation with the Institute's Board of Advisors. The Board of Advisors provides counsel to the Executive Director in identifying/establishing research and programming priorities and on administrative matters relating to the Institute. They also provide assistance as necessary to Institute scientists, educators and students in carrying out their research. Further, they are charged with developing, maintaining and seeking to enhance the base funding for the Institute and its initiatives.

David Dow was named the first Executive Director of the Maine Lobster Institute and Edward Blackmore was elected as the first Chairman of the Board of Advisors. According to Blackmore, "The idea behind the Institute is to get more people involved in lobster problem solving, and to keep them talking to one another. We all need each other and Lord knows there's plenty for all of us to do."

Almost from its inception the founders looked to expand the Institute's reach. They realized a unified approach (geographically and between sectors) would be most effective in dealing with the challenges faced by the lobster industry. In the fall of 1987, the Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association became actively involved in the early stages of the Institute's development. Due to its increasing regional focus, in 1989 the word "Maine" was dropped from its title, and the organization was renamed The Lobster Institute.

Today's Lobster Institute boasts a Board of Advisors with representatives from major lobster industry associations and businesses, as well as researchers and community members ranging

from New York through the Canadian Maritime Provinces.

Dr. Robert Bayer is the current Executive Director, having replaced David Dow in 1995. It was at this time that the Lobster Institute shifted its direct affiliation with Maine Sea Grant to the Maine Agricultural and Forest Experiment Station.

Edward Blackmore retired after ten years of service as chairman of the Lobster Institute's Board of Advisors. William Adler, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association, assumed the chairmanship in 1997, a post he still holds today.

The Lobster Institute has a long list of accomplishments in the areas of research, communications, outreach and educational programming, including such highlights as:

- Developing a cure for gaffkemia
- Organizing the first International Lobster Congress and the first Canadian/U.S. Lobstermen's Town Meeting
- Initiating a Lobster Health Coalition
- Spearheading value-added product development
- Creating uses for lobster processing by-products
- Maintaining a comprehensive Web site with an extensive Lobster Library
- Publishing the quarterly *Lobster Bulletin*

The Lobster Institute is still guided by its founding principles of cooperation, communication, and a commitment to conservation. Today, its mission statement reads,

The Lobster Institute, with guidance and involvement from fishermen and all constituents within the lobster industry, and with both a community and global perspective, conducts and provides for research and educational outreach focused on protecting, conserving, and enhancing the lobster resource and lobstering as an industry...and as a way of life.