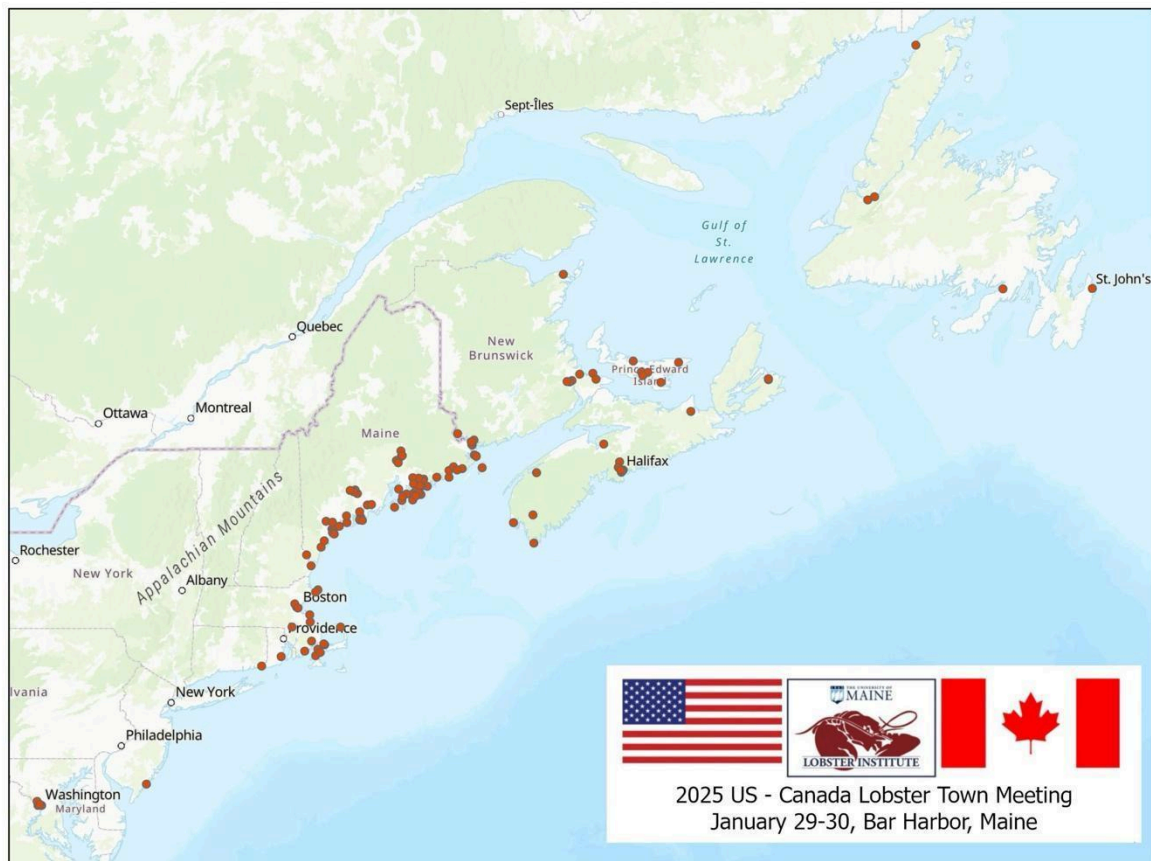


U.S.– CANADA LOBSTER TOWN MEETING

Key issues facing the lobster sector in New England and Canada

PROCEEDINGS REPORT

Bar Harbor, Maine | January 28 – 30, 2025



Map of attendees, 2025 U.S.- Canada Lobster Town Meeting, by Chris Brehme

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Town Meeting Facilitator:

Carla Guenther, Chief Scientist, Maine Center for Coastal Fisheries

Any errors or omissions in this report are the authors'

Lobster Town Meeting | Proceedings

The Lobster Town Meeting was held January 29 – 30, 2025, in Bar Harbor, Maine, USA. The meeting included four sessions that focused on (1) ecosystem change; (2) data collection in the USA and Canada; (3) comparing management approaches in the USA and Canada; (4) sector updates; and (5) trade issues. This report summarizes the panels and outlines a set of cross-cutting themes.

Session I - Ecosystem Change

Panelists & Chairs:

- Amalia Harrington, Assistant Professor of Marine Biology, University of Maine, Chair
- Nick Record, Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences
- Tom Shyka, Northeastern Regional Association of Coastal Ocean Observing Systems (NERACOOS)
- Mel Giffin, Prince Edward Island Fishermen's Association, PEIFA

Summary:

The session began with Nick Record providing an overview of recent oceanographic changes in the Northwest Atlantic. (This presentation was originally scheduled to be presented by Glen Gawarkiewicz from WHOI and was given by Nick in Glen's absence). He described how the Labrador Current and Gulf Stream contribute to the unique large-scale ocean circulation patterns in the Gulf of Maine (GoM), and explained how long-term warming trends are a result of changing interactions between the two currents. Northward shifts in the warm Gulf Stream have impeded the southwestward flow of the cold Labrador Current, and variable interactions between the two currents at the tail of the Great Banks create warm anomalies that propagate down the shelf into the GoM. Increased frequency of these warm anomalies has contributed to the pattern of long-term warming in the GoM that was a major focus of this session.

Both Record and Tom Shyka presented evidence for a new baseline of warmer temperatures in the GoM beginning around 2010 and the increased frequency of marine heat waves since that time, most notably the major heat wave in 2012. Shyka explained how NERACOOS observes changing surface ocean temperatures and water quality through long-term monitoring buoys, supported by bottom temperature data collected from the eMOLT program. These monitoring systems documented a trend of warmer, saltier water in 2010-2023 compared to cooler conditions in the early 2000's, but observed an influx of colder, fresher water into the GoM in 2024 (See Figure 1). Shyka reported that early data in January 2025 suggests that cooler water may continue.

Record then spoke about the ecosystem impacts of these changing oceanographic conditions. Although changes in precipitation have led to less primary productivity (the energy available to support the food web, starting with phytoplankton), there was a surge of primary production in 2023. Calanus zooplankton are a keystone of the GoM food web and an important food source for planktonic lobsters and North Atlantic right whales. Fall 2023 had the highest measure of Calanus zooplankton on record in Browns Bank. Perhaps following the Calanus, right whales were observed in 2024 at historical feeding areas where they had not been seen in over a decade.

Industry-relevant ecosystem connections may be emerging, such as cooler deep water temperatures in the spring indicating the presence of right whales in the fall. Real-time data from eMOLT sensors can also provide some warning on whether whales may be present, as low temperatures and high *Calanus* are associated with more right whales. Compiled data of lobster landings over time show a strong pattern of lobster moving north, despite different ecologies, fishing practices, and management strategies across the region. Mel Giffin tied all of this science back to lobstermen, asking the question in her introduction, “*What does this mean for industry?*”

There is both scientific and anecdotal evidence to support shifts in lobster populations and predator/prey dynamics. There are fewer lobsters in U.S. waters, with more in Quebec and Newfoundland. Giffin also talked about ecosystem changes, prompting fishermen to discuss the change in species diversity they are witnessing on the water (white shark sightings; increase in species such as cod, shrimp, red fish, striped bass, and Jonah crab; decline in mackerel). Giffin connected the warming trends and ecosystem changes presented by the first two panelists to what was being observed firsthand in the industry.

Questions arose about a recent paper predicting a pause in the warming of the GoM. Answers cautioned that this is relative; a pause in warming doesn’t mean the temperature is cooling. There is ongoing debate over if and when the Gulf Stream will weaken, and how that may slow productivity in the GoM within the next 25-40 years. Comments emphasized that governments and the industry as a whole need to be able to respond more rapidly to unpredictable changes. Attendees also mentioned the importance of building better relationships between scientists and fishermen and suggested exploring commercial diversification through alternative fisheries or markets. The session commentary stressed the need for both short-term flexibility and long-term adaptation and called for better coordination between scientists, policymakers, and industry to track changes across borders: “*the only way to figure out what’s coming when things are changing fast is by listening to what others are seeing.*”

Session II - Types of data collected in both countries from government agencies and fishery organizations

Panelists & Chairs:

- Kathleen Reardon, Maine Dept. of Marine Resources, ME DMR, Chair
- Tracy Pugh, Massachusetts Dept. of Marine Fisheries, MA DMF
- Natalie Asselin, DFO Science, Gulf Region
- Mel Giffin, Prince Edward Island Fishermen's Association, PEIFA

Summary:

This session provided an in-depth look at different approaches to measuring stock health, recruitment and mortality, and how different types of data are used to support lobster fishery management in Canada and the U.S. Kathleen Reardon began the session by describing the two categories of data used for fisheries management: fishery-dependent data (collected from commercial sources) and fishery-independent data (collected by researchers and scientists without industry involvement). She discussed how fisheries dependent data provides information on catch, fishing effort, size and number of target species, bycatch, and discards, with methods

used to collect this data including harvester logbooks, sales slips, commercial at-sea sampling, port sampling, and fishery dependent ventless traps. She also explained the methodology and goals of different types of fisheries independent data, including trawl surveys, ventless trap surveys, scuba surveys, larval surveys, and young of year/settlement surveys.

Reardon explained that while fishery dependent data is very useful for tracking changes in the fishery, it may not reflect the actual population dynamics and stock trends, as it focuses only on commercially targeted sizes, occurs selectively where target species cluster, and changes in fishing effort allow catch to stay high even if the population declines (called hyperstability). Fishery independent data can address these data gaps and provide consistent, routine monitoring that tracks relative changes over time and provides a more accurate index of abundance. Reardon also discussed the various state and federal agencies, academic institutions, non-profits, and other groups that are responsible for fishery independent surveys in the U.S. She provided additional details on the Maine DMR lobster monitoring programs, a mix of fisheries dependent and fishery independent data, and how the various programs target different lobster life stages to provide a more comprehensive picture of lobster population dynamics.

Tracy Pugh presented on the U.S. lobster stock assessment process, which is centered around the question, “*how does the population change over time?*” She explained the timeline of the assessment workshop and peer review process, with the next peer review taking place in August 2025. She provided a detailed description of the structure of the length-based assessment model used to generate population estimates, including the different data streams used as input for the model and how different processes such as recruitment, growth, and removals (fishing and natural mortality) are included in the model. Pugh also discussed model-free indicators: simple survey indices independent of the model that are assessed by comparing recent years to the time series of data. Model-free indicators considered for the lobster fishery include spawning stock biomass, recruit abundance, proportion positive tows, number of traps fished, total stock landings, partial landings, gross CPUE, price per pound, revenue, revenue per trap, relative exploitation rate, and shell disease prevalence.

Natalie Asselin discussed lobster data collection and stock assessment approaches in Canada. She built off the presentations of Reardon and Pugh by describing the fishery dependent and independent data collected in Canada (sales slips and logbooks, at-sea sampling, trawl and scuba surveys) that cover different lobster life history stages, and how these data sources are used in Canada’s indicator-based stock assessment.

Mel Giffin’s presentation tied this all back to industry, encouraging collaboration between industry and research through a diagram showing how research can be co-constructed instead of industry-led or government/academia-led (see Figure 2). Bottom-up research takes place when questions come directly from harvesters, while top-down research occurs when government or academia comes to industry and asks for support and information. The best results occur when research is instead co-constructed, but this is often the most difficult to achieve and requires goodwill and trust between industry and scientists. She discussed current industry data collection initiatives and data sharing collaborations, emphasizing the importance of deciding who will retain ownership of the data **before** starting a collaborative project.

Major themes from this session included how surveys help build predictive models, the importance of real-time monitoring and improvements in forecasting methods, and that everyone can benefit the most when research is co-constructed. There was a focus on improving collaboration between scientists and fishermen to ensure practical data collection and application, and attendees emphasized the importance of breaking down silos and ensuring that fisheries research is more accessible to industry stakeholders.

Session III - Comparing management approaches in US and Canada

Panelists & Chairs:

- Tracy Pugh, Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, MA DMF, Chair
- Verna Docherty, DFO Policy Maritime Region Director
- Toni Kerns, Fishery Policy Director, ASMFC
- Pat Keliher, Commissioner ME DMR
- Dan McKiernan, Director MA DMF
- Dan Fleck, Brazil Rock 33/34 Lobster Association

Summary:

The session began with Verna Docherty, a representative from the Canadian DFO. Docherty spoke about the Fisheries Act, and how the Act is focused on habitat regulations. Policies were discussed, specifically the sustainable fisheries framework, and the issues around commercial fisheries licensing. It was noted that fishermen are not always interested in the policy discussions. Docherty shared about the legal duty in place to consult with Indigenous groups associated with research and policy, as well as further industry advocacy. She also spoke of the precautionary approach policy within the integrated fisheries management plan, which has implications over harvest control rules. These rules are in place to prevent overfishing, as well as rebuild currently overfished species. Harvest control tools were talked about as well, including entry trap limits, biological control of the traps, and season adjustments.

Following Docherty was Toni Kerns, the Fisheries Policy Director at the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC). The ASMFC was formed in 1942 as an interstate compact between the Atlantic coast states from Maine to Florida. Recognizing that “fish don’t care about state lines,” there were many discussions around creating a standard for multiple states, instead of treating two states as completely different environments. The Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act is designed to put these standards in place, recognizing the interjurisdictional nature of fishery resources and the necessity of the states and federal government to work together to implement regulations that ensure their conservation and sustainability. Kerns discussed the American Lobster Management Board, which is divided into seven management areas and two stock units. Kerns provided additional details regarding these interstate boards, voting regulations for each state, and the committees within these bodies, such as technology, law enforcement and policy development.

Pat Keliher, Commissioner of the Maine DMR and Chair of the ASMFC Lobster Board, spoke after Kerns. Keliher provided context to his recent motion to repeal the gauge, addressing his previous announcement about the gauge size increase. He shared how the rule was a result of a

proactive trigger that had been put into place based on several years of data to act as a warning to the fishery. Further discussion highlighted the challenges and inequities of implementing a gauge change to one country in a transboundary fishery and not the other. Keliher emphasized the need for all parties to return to the drawing board and for both countries to participate from the beginning. The import of live lobsters from Canada into the US would be impacted by the gauge size change, unless Canada mimicked the change. Furthermore, New Hampshire declared that they would not follow the gauge size increase, and the board ruled that the compliance issue from other parties would impact this policy. Keliher stated concern for the lobster industry based on the steep declines and further talked about the landings declining steeply since 2017.

Dan McKiernan, Director of MA DMF, followed and spoke of the difficulty resulting from the proposed repeal, especially as Massachusetts has already enacted the rule. He posed several rhetorical questions including, “*What conservation equivalent strategies will Maine and New Hampshire propose? What management strategies does the system have in place to manage a downturn in landings? How might the pull of a conservation strategy impact the reputation of lobster as a product? What damage has been done to the ASMFC management process through this repeal?*”. He stated that next steps are to return to the ASMFC Lobster Board to vote on a motion to repeal all or some of Addendum XXVII (by adopting Addendum XXXII “to collaborate with the lobster industry to identify alternative conservation strategies”), subsequently returning to rulemaking based on that vote.

Lastly, Dan Fleck from the Brazil Rock 33/34 Lobster Association described how the Lobster Association collaborates with the DFO and conservation organizations three times per year (pre-season, mid-season, and postseason) to discuss actions. Discussions about opening day protocol arose and safety issues with high winds.

Session IV - Sector Updates

Brief reports from:

- Owen Kenney, Champlain/Downeast Seafood
- Hugh Reynolds, Greenhead Lobster
- Kris Vascotto, Nova Scotia Seafood Alliance
- Patrice McCarron, Maine Lobstermen’s Association
- Luc LeBlanc, Maritime Fishermen's Union
- Dustin Delano, New England Fishermen’s Stewardship Association
- Kenneth LeClair, Prince Edward Island Fishermen’s Association
- Ginny Olsen, Maine Lobstering Union Local 207
- Dan Fleck, Brazil Rock 33/34 Lobster Association
- Mark Ring, Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association- Delegate Gloucester
- Hank Soule, American Offshore Lobstermen's Association
- Jack Merrill, F/V Bottom Dollar, Islesford, ME
- Jason Spingle, Fish, Food, & Allied Workers

Summary:

This panel focused on the sector updates from many different companies within the seafood industry, starting with Owen Kenney from Champlain and Downeast Seafood. Kenney discussed

the processed products that his team works with, including lobster meat. Lobster demand has continued to increase, which has created a comparative price increase, even though there has been a higher volume of lobster meat production. Following Kenney was Hugh Reynolds from Greenhead Lobster in Stonington, Maine. Reynolds brought up the shift that has been observed regarding when lobsters are being caught, noting water temperature changes and how the infrastructure is not designed to support the shift of seasons.

Kris Vascotto with the Nova Scotia Seafood Alliance was next and dug into the supply of different regions in Canada. It was noted that most regions have heavy demands, such as Quebec and Newfoundland. Demand has been pressing the supply, especially in the winter months, which has caused a price jump. In contrast, the spring months saw dips in demand, but the supply is much more abundant during this season. Demand at the time of the meeting was quite low.

Patrice McCarron from the Maine Lobstermen's Association followed Vascotto and focused on current issues in government and policy making. McCarron discussed North Atlantic right whales, offshore wind and the expected decline of lobster landings. McCarron floated the question "*what if we had a decline (in demand) and the price dropped?*" Luc Leblanc with the Maritime Fishermen's Union took a different direction with his discussion, talking more about environmental and climate issues. Leblanc also further pushed the spring season being difficult, as the water is still too frigid in May, as well as right whales becoming more of a problem as time goes on.

Dustin Delano from the New England Fishermen's Stewardship Association talked about a desire for unity and collaboration within the industry. Delano said that he wants to hear the stories from the fishermen and combine it with the numbers of how sustainable fisheries are. Kenneth LeClair from the PEI Fishermen's Association followed, discussing the size of the association, how much they process, and the continuous issue of right whales. Ginny Olsen from the Maine Lobstering Union Local 207 discussed issues in the market that create unpredictability, as well as the lack of capital investment into the industry. Olsen talked about how resiliency and sustainability could be two different things to scientists and fishermen, and that we should be listening to both sides of the story.

Dan Fleck from Brazil Rock 33/34 Lobster Association discussed his hope for a rebound in lobster landings, and mentioned that high numbers of Jonah crab were creating a congestion issue. Mark Ring with the MA Lobstermen's Association talked about the season being slightly below average, as well as the summertime cold water issue. Hank Soule, a representative from American Offshore Lobstermen's Association, discussed the issues with wind turbines, ropeless fishing gear, right whales, lack of options, Jonah crab issues, and the availability of bait.

Jack Merrill from F/V Bottom Dollar mentioned that it is getting harder to find new workers in the industry, and that there is a disconnect between policy making and fishermen. Merrill mentioned that lobstermen will "grumble" about change, but will accept it if clear good intentions are at the forefront. Further complaints about offshore wind were talked about. The final speaker was Jason Spingle, representing Fish, Food, and Allied Workers. Safety was the first topic of concern, regarding small boats and setting days becoming very dangerous for these smaller vessels. Spingle projected an increase in landings, but noted that there is trouble with

exporting. Spingle also discussed seeing a rise in tuna, decrease in sea ice, or removal of sea ice, and opportunity with the massive amount of available groundfish.

Session V - Trade Issues: Short and Long-Term

Panelists & Chairs:

- Owen Kenney, Champlain Seafood/ Downeast
- Hugh Reynolds, Greenhead Lobster
- Kris Vascotto, Nova Scotia Seafood Alliance
- Spiros Tourkakis, East Coast Seafood
- Nat Richard, Lobster Processors Association
- Curt Brown, Ready Seafood, F/V Lil' More Tail
- Geoff Irvine, The Lobster Council of Canada, Chair

Summary:

The session focused on the evolving trade landscape, supply chain dynamics, and the impacts of tariffs on the lobster industry. Panelists representing different sectors of the supply chain discussed the seasonality of North Atlantic lobster landings, trade dependencies between the U.S. and Canada, and the growing influence of the Chinese market.

Owen Kenney of Champlain Seafood began the session by highlighting the seasonality of lobster supply and trade, noting the increasing concentration of lobster landings in the spring and the industry's limited infrastructure to manage high seasonal yields. Hugh Reynolds of Greenhead Lobster emphasized the disparities in U.S.-E.U. trade agreements, warning that imposing unfair trade barriers could result in retaliatory tariffs. He stated that a 25% tariff on imports would be equal to roughly \$300 million. Kris Vascotto of Nova Scotia Seafood Alliance provided a Canadian perspective, predicting a strong spring supply and outlining potential long-term trade risks, including market redirection and handling challenges (see Figure 3). Vascotto provided further examples of how disruptive tariffs would be on the market explaining how it would either increase price in export markets or decrease the price to harvesters. Spiros Tourkakis of East Coast Seafood spoke first of gratitude for the Lobster Institute and everyone who made this meeting possible. He then urged everyone to look at the big picture, recognizing that you cannot separate trade from harvest and that there are many factors that impact what happens in the lobster trade. He urged taking actions now for long-term sustainability of the industry. He remarked on how evolving market preferences and processing trends could further shift industry dynamics, cautioning that tariff disputes are more about leverage than product value. Participants raised concerns over the impact of tariffs on U.S. fishers and processors, as well as the risk of market consolidation.

A central theme that emerged during the session was the deep interdependence between the U.S. and Canadian lobster industries, coupled with increasing market volatility driven by international trade policies. Both sides seemed to agree that tariffs would be detrimental to both sides, each pleading with one another to not enforce them. While both countries compete for market share, their industries are structurally intertwined, particularly in processing and export logistics. Several panelists stressed that the U.S. lacks sufficient processing capacity and remains reliant on Canadian facilities, while Canadians rely on the U.S. supply in the offseason, making trade

cooperation essential. This was further complicated by the issues of gauge size increase enforcement and import/export processing.

At the same time, tariff policies, particularly between the U.S., Canada, and China, were identified as a major source of instability. The Chinese market has become a dominant force in shaping pricing and demand, leading to concerns about over-reliance on a single export destination. Tariff inequities between Canada and the U.S. in key markets were also highlighted as an ongoing competitive disadvantage for American lobster exporters.

Another key issue raised was the potential for shifts in supply chains due to evolving regulations and political leverage. Discussions suggested that a redirection of Canadian lobster exports away from U.S. markets could result in lower U.S. wharf prices, with implications for local fishing economies. Panelists acknowledged that while free trade is an industry goal, economic and geopolitical uncertainties require a more adaptive and cooperative approach between the two nations.

The session underscored the need for better communication and collaboration. Development of proactive trade strategies, industry cooperation, and engagement with policymakers is necessary to ensure long-term sustainability and resilience in the lobster sector.

Cross-cutting themes

Uncertainty, shared challenges, and the need for flexibility

An underlying and cross-cutting theme of the 2025 U.S. - Canada Lobster Town Hall was a sense of uncertainty about the future of the lobster industry. Whether biological, political, or social, the unpredictability of potential changes taking effect and the skepticism of causes and effects of actual changes created a space of uncertainty for all involved.

From an ecosystem perspective, scientists are trying to understand the interactions of the Gulf Stream and Labrador Current and what that means for the biological sustainability of lobsters and the marine ecosystem as a whole. Additionally, record high numbers of *Calanus finmarchicus* (plankton) over the last few years could be a link to North Atlantic right whales returning to historical feeding areas where they have not been observed in over a decade. Though direct causation is uncertain, increased North Atlantic right whale activity has significant implications for fishermen. Lastly, fishermen shared observations of species shifting to different regions. The cause and effect of this observation was uncertain, though a general lack of confidence in the U.S. government's ability to maneuver quickly to meet potential new fisheries was expressed.

Politically, uncertainty was widespread as the U.S. was reckoning with impending changes from a new administration. . At the time of the Town Hall, an official decision had not been reached on the Trump Administration's proposed 25% tariff on all Canadian goods. Parties across sectors in both the U.S. and Canada expressed fear and concern about this decision and its potential implications to the industry, especially as a significant amount of lobster caught in the U.S. is

processed in Canada. Fishermen from both Canada and the U.S. suggested that both countries should build a coalition to share the interests of the lobster fishery in Washington, D.C. Additional uncertainty around potential North Atlantic right whale regulations and offshore wind impacts was present.

From a social context, a lingering sense of distrust of management and science from some industry members contributed to high levels of uncertainty. The recent motion by Maine management to not comply with the gauge increase outlined in Addendum XXVII was met with support by some and opposition from others. Additionally, there was a sense of mistrust of information between some scientists and fishermen as the scientific reports did not always align with what fishermen are observing. There are several possible reasons for this, but combating this mistrust by sharing more “facts” was ineffective as both parties felt they were “right”. This sentiment contributes to greater uncertainty around whose information is “correct” and who can be trusted. Industry members also expressed concern for the next generation of lobster harvesters. With the uncertainty about the resource as well as the political and social dynamics, it’s difficult to enter the fishery in addition to planning for the future.

Leveraging diverse knowledge types to develop co-constructed understanding

In order to create positive outcomes for fishermen and researchers alike, it is crucial to engage and leverage the diverse knowledge types to develop co-constructed understanding. This was evident at the U.S.-Canada Lobster Town Hall because of who was at the table, who shared the microphone, and the goals of everyone involved - to keep the lobster population stable in order to sustain a viable fishery.

The town hall provided the space for multiple perspectives to gather insight in a particularly uncertain time. Attendees varied at this meeting including Canadian and American fishermen, The Lobster Institute (affiliated with UMaine), Maine Center for Coastal Fisheries, SeaGrant representatives, economists, retailers, and gear manufacturers, further instilling construction of knowledge and better insights into the dynamic nature of the industry. Throughout the meeting, sentiments referenced collaboration and an effort to not withhold information that could allow for the United States and Canadian lobster industry to thrive. This information includes and is not limited to migration patterns, regulatory changes, well-being of fishermen, as well as international trade and tariffs. Presence of student researchers allowed for first hand accountability on what the industry is identifying as their needs, further instilling that the research conducted is as actionable and relevant as possible.

Expanding on who was at the table, one great example of leveraging diverse knowledge types to develop co-constructed understanding was the section on data collection. According to the panelists, data is collected both through fisheries-dependent and fisheries-independent research, leveraging the knowledge of the science community and the fishing industry to benefit the overall goals of lobster population conservation. From this panel, it was clear that the science community is reliant on the lobstermen for local and ecological knowledge of the fishery, and fishermen are often the mode of collecting data. It was equally apparent that the lobster industry relies on the science community for information such as stock assessments or population data, leveraging their local knowledge into the policy realm, and making meaning from information

that they help to collect. In this way, these diverse knowledge types are able to work together with the same goals in mind.

Need for collaboration, co-learning, and communication across borders

The habitat of the American Lobster (*Homarus americanus*) across both, the U.S. and Canada, is being impacted by ecosystem changes. Large scale oceanographic changes such as an increase in variability of the Gulf Stream in recent years, increasing frequency and intensity of marine heat waves, and long-term warming trends affect the entire range of lobster habitat causing a northward trend in the geographic center of landings. Additionally, an increase in predators such as Atlantic cod, striped bass and, (anecdotally, Jonah crab), a decrease in bait species such as menhaden, and the presence of right whales impacts on conservation all have fishery wide implications. The U.S. and Canada are bound together by the lobster fishery and must work together for its long-term success by improving collaboration, co-learning, and communication across their borders. Ecosystems and environmental change do not recognize political boundaries, and therefore affect all parties involved.

Though there are key differences in data collection, management, and trade of the resource between Canada and the U.S. (as well as differences between states/provinces), their goals are the same: a sustainable fishery managed by a combination of fishery dependent and independent data to model the sustainability of the stock. Establishing consistent data collection and models across borders could help establish better collaboration between and across industry, academic institutions, non-profits, and agency partners. It is important to establish an agreement prior to beginning this work on who owns the data being collected and the structure in place (top-down vs bottom-up).

Despite major differences in management structures between the federal regulation of the Canadian lobster fishery (DFO) and the interstate compact agreement of the US fishery (ASMFC), both sides can agree that lack of communication over an issue like gauge size could have confounding implications for the trade of lobsters across national and state borders. This communication is further complicated by the effects of any potential tariffs exchanged between the two nations.

The free trade of lobsters across borders is essential for the market to continue to be successful. Additional costs associated would likely fall on harvesters, which could be catastrophic to many. Both sides agreed adamantly that adding tariffs would be detrimental. The U.S. and Canada are the biggest importers and exporters of each other's lobsters, depending on the season. Supply and demand shifts significantly with the season. Continued collaboration among organizations is essential to maintain this relationship moving forward as the environment shifts.

2024 – Colder and Fresher Water

Buoy M
820 ft (250 m)

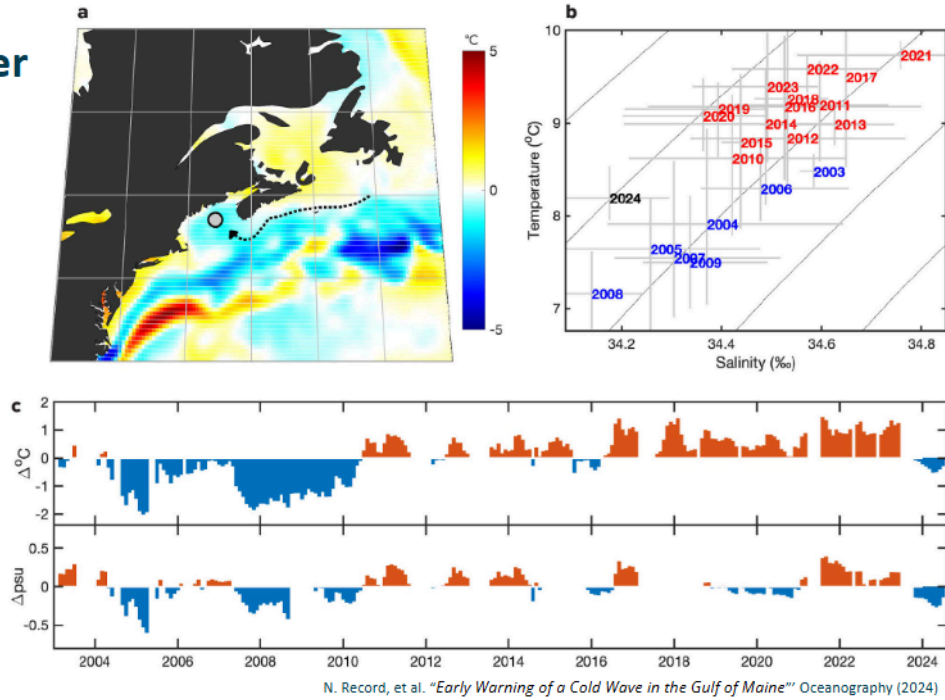


Figure 1. Tom Shyka, NERACOOOS

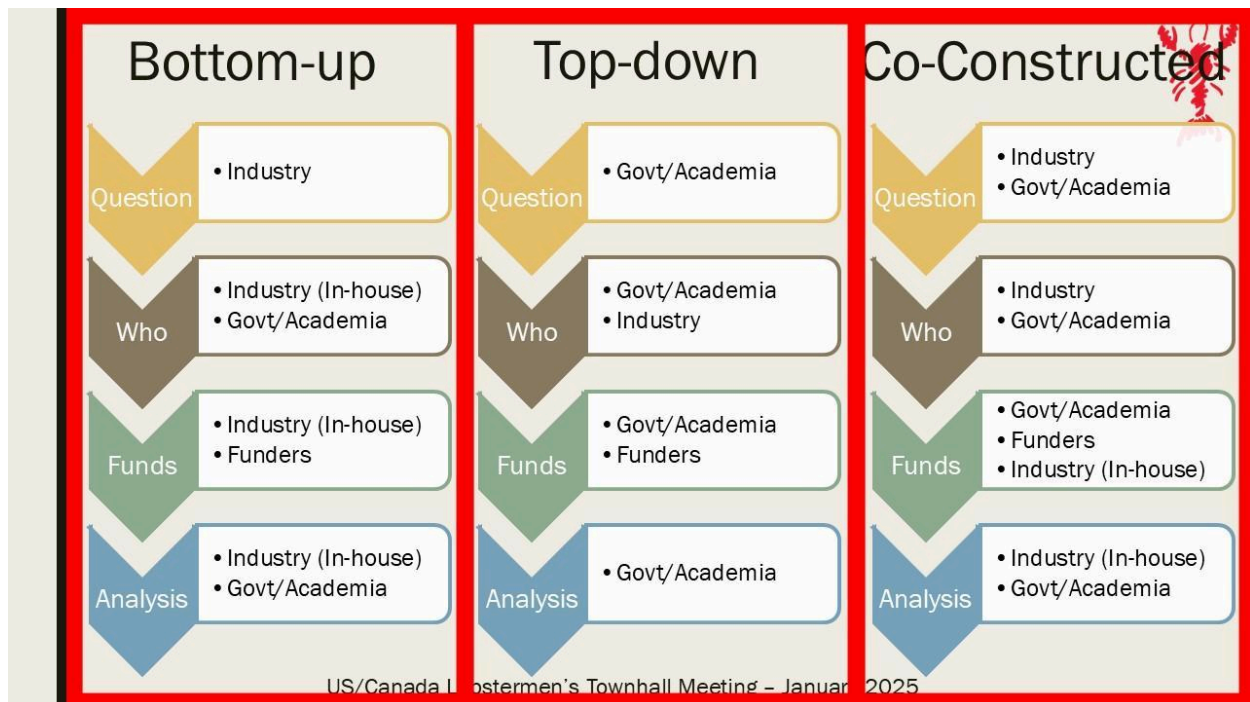


Figure 2. Mel Giffin, PEI Fishermen's Association

Comparative Live Exports - Amounts

- Canada is US live exporters BIGGEST market – CDN processors rely on this product
- US is NS second biggest export market – both US processors and Exporters rely on this product
- NB/PEI/QC/NL move another ~ 8,000 mt to the US
- China comes is a strong second – but preferentially accesses Canada directly

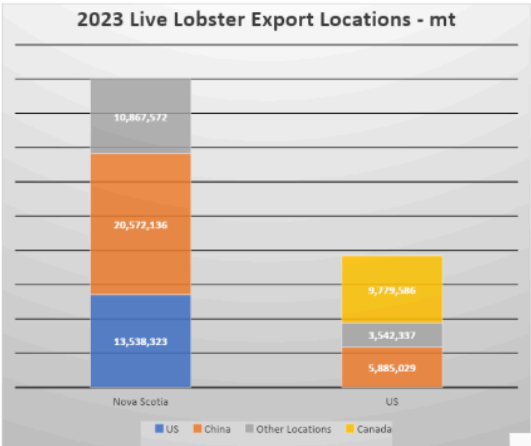


Figure 3. Kris Vascotto, Nova Scotia Seafood Alliance

Thanks to all the Sponsors of the 2025 US – Canada Lobster Town Meeting!

