

Gulf of Maine Lobster Foundation

A nonprofit organization
working to support a
healthy lobster fishery and
sustainable resources in the
Gulf of Maine.

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GULF OF MAINE LOBSTER FOUNDATION

Lobster Lines

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GOMLF Meeting of the Minds

The Gulf of Maine Lobster Foundation hosted our third Lobster Fishery Conference on the Future of the Lobster Industry in January 2010, bringing together managers and scientists to discuss current trends in the fishery, identify challenges, and explore management solutions. This meeting built on the discussions of the previous two conferences.

The presentations generated discussions for the remainder of the conference: stock assessment Area 514, lobster management Area 2 and Outer Cape Cod, marketing and Marine Stewardship Council

"It was an exceptionally useful meeting. I believe the management process has benefited from the meetings and will continue to do so."

- Bob Ross, Supervisory Fishery Management Specialist at the National Marine Fisheries Service Northeast

Topics discussed at the two-day gathering covered a broad range, opening with a general discussion of trends in the lobster industry over the past year. In 2009, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) released an updated stock assessment and peer review report for the American lobster fishery. As the report was explored in depth, talking points for the upcoming ASMFC meeting in Washington, DC were formulated.

The group also heard presentations on a recent larval transport study for the Gulf of Maine, socio-economic factors to consider in co-management, and plans for the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team.

certification, biological reference points, and the new groundfish sectors' potential impact on the lobster fishery.

Dr. Lew Incze, a professor at the University of Southern Maine, presented his recent research on larval production, transport, and connectivity patterns in the Gulf of Maine lobster population. For some management areas, it showed that local egg production contributes the majority of the settlement, whereas certain regions depend on egg production from other areas. Attendees were very interested in the high connectivity in Massachusetts Bay between egg production and settlement.



Dr. Lew Incze, Director of USM's Aquatic Systems Group and a Research Professor in the Department of Environmental Science, presents findings from the recent larval transport study of the Gulf of Maine at the Lobster Fishery Conference held in January.

Conference participants and organizers all welcomed the three-part event as it gave regional managers and scientists within the Gulf of Maine the opportunity to come to the table for open discussions. Together, they had the chance to discuss their concerns and thoughts about the future of the lobster industry in a welcoming environment. Participants were eager to join their colleagues from the other states for the think-tank talks.

GOMLF is producing a full report from the January conference. To learn more, contact Erin Pelletier at (207) 985-8088 or email erin@gomlf.org.

The Bottom Line Project to continue in 2010

At A Glance:

GOMLF Groundline Exchange Totals

Number of exchanges hosted by GOMLF to date: 11

Number of lobstermen served: 1,010

Pounds of float rope collected: 1,674,475

Funds distributed in voucher form to purchase sinking groundlines: \$2,343,300



Lobster Lines is directly distributed to over 1750 people in the lobster industry

Since the beginning of the groundline exchange program in 2006, GOMLF has collected over 1,600,000 pounds of floating groundline or tailer warps (the rope used between traps), and distributed over \$2,300,000 worth of vouchers to Maine lobstermen toward the purchase of replacement sinking groundline.

All of the funding for this project comes from federal congressional support through the National Marine Fisheries Service - Protected Resources

Division. Hundreds more Maine lobstermen are still on the Bottom Line Project waiting list, and additional groundline exchanges will be conducted in the spring of 2010. Other fixed-gear fishermen from Maine (such as gillnetters, crab, shrimp and hagfish fishermen) will also be eligible to participate in the Bottom Line Project in 2010.

For more information about this project, please contact Laura Ludwig at (207) 985-8088 or email laura@gomlf.org.

Are Groundline Regulations Sinking the Industry?

As most people know, the Maine lobster industry has been required since April 2009 to use sinking groundline between their traps when fishing multiple-trap trawls outside of the exemption line (see map). There are some lobstermen who are having fair luck with this new mandate, but in many areas, lobstermen are struggling to use the sinking groundline where they have

traditionally used floating rope.

According to many lobstermen GOMLF has interviewed, the rugged nature of the ocean floor spells "disaster" when the sink rope is used -- sinking rope is made primarily of heavy polyester, and like any fabric, it chafes or abrades when up against sharp objects: like the rocks on the bottom of the ocean.



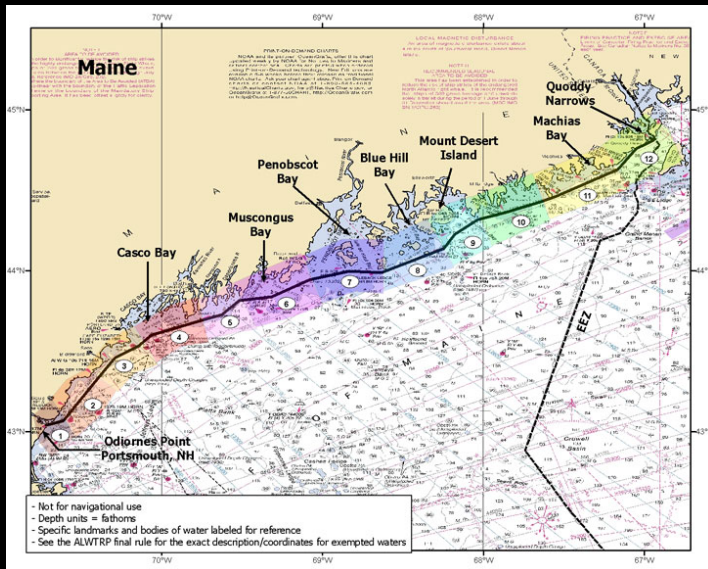
This rock being hauled up in sinking groundline is an occasional occurrence lobstermen are now faced with since the new regulations went into effect last April. - photo K. Reardon

All of this adds up to a financial hit. Sinking rope is much more expensive than floating rope -- a 1200' coil of sink rope may cost twice as much as the same length of floating rope, and even though The Bottom Line Project has assisted in the purchase of the new sink rope, already it is clear that it is not lasting as long. On top of that, when the sinking groundline abrades to the point of weakness, or simply gets hung up on rocks, the line will often part and the traps on the other end of that broken line are lost.

To try to gauge economic impact of the use of this rope, in

May 2009 GOMLF initiated a sinking groundline tracking effort. In collaboration with the Maine and Downeast Lobstermen's Associations, GOMLF developed a wheelhouse log so that participating lobstermen can voluntarily track how the sinking groundline is or is not working for them. We have collected enough preliminary information in the first six months of the project to share at the Maine Fishermen's Forum in March; final results of the tracking effort will be ready in August 2010.

Whale rule exemption line for the state of Maine



When fishing inside the heavy black line, lobstermen who rig their traps in multiples (pairs, triples, trawls) may still use floating groundline between traps. Seaward of that line, they must use sinking groundline between them.