

Derelict Lobster Gear Retrieval, Salvage & Disposal (ME)

Project Description and Requirements

PROJECT FUNDING: The Gulf of Maine Lobster Foundation (GOMLF), in collaboration with Maine DMR, received \$200,000 through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Gulf of Maine Environmental Compliance & Protection Fund 2009 for a two-year pilot project to recover, document and properly dispose of derelict fishing gear.

PROJECT SUMMARY: Volunteer fishermen will recover derelict lobster traps ("ghost gear") in a **2-year effort in 7 ports**, one port in each zone. The first winter (Feb-April 2010) will be in the eastern zones (A,B,C); the 2nd winter (Feb-April 2011) in Zones D,E,F,G. The targeted goal is 100 traps per boat, though this may be unrealistic depending on the area. Gear will be returned to its owner or recycled at a waste-to-energy plant. Recovery effort will occur in state waters during the late winter/early spring months of 2010 and 2011, when fishing effort inside is at its lowest level. This is considered a PILOT PROJECT whose goals are to assess the **presence of ghost gear**, record data about its **condition, age, and by-catch**, and work with lobstering communities to help establish systems for **future gear disposal options**.

CONCERNS ABOUT GHOST GEAR: Ghost gear has often been perceived as an issue by many in the fishing industry (causing damage to mobile gear, presenting hazards to navigation or harvesting, preventing the set of new traps, "ghost fishing", etc.), and recent federal regulations for sinking groundline may contribute to an increase in the amount of ghost gear in Maine waters. In addition to salvaging or disposing of the gear, this project will allow DMR to investigate by-catch and escape vent performance, and examine **the impact of ghost gear** on lobster and other species.

APPLICATION FORM: Interested fishermen will fill out an application form. All forms must be returned to Laura Ludwig, GOMLF, by **March 5, 2010**. The form can be found at the GOMLF website, www.gomlf.org – click on "Projects" and print form out. Mail to Laura Ludwig, GOMLF, PO Box 523, Kennebunk, Maine, 04043 or Fax to: 207-985-8099.

EXPECTATIONS: **Ten vessels will be selected from each zone** by project staff to retrieve derelict lobster gear from the seabed for two days during the allotted week, returning it all to one central location in each zone.

The DMR and GOMLF expect the captain, crew and vessel to:

- 1) Have an up-to-date Coast Guard safety certification sticker on the vessel to be used (see below).
- 2) Provide vessel ready for work at agreed-upon dates, times and places. This includes:
 - a) Being rigged for recovering and transporting a maximum load of derelict lobster traps;
 - b) Having working electronics to provide depth and location and to facilitate safe navigation;
 - c) Having adequate fuel (a stipend will be issued);
 - d) Providing adequate crew to perform work on-board and at the dock.
- 3) Provide a captain who is knowledgeable in handling derelict lobster gear.
- 4) Provide safety equipment to accommodate captain, crew and up to two scientific staff (survival suits for scientific staff will be provided).
- 5) Record basic data about all gear recovered in a logbook provided for the project.
- 6) Be flexible during the allotted timeframe to work on two days of the week, if recovery is delayed by weather.

- 7) Participate in planning meetings required to organize project (likely one meeting the week of).
- 8) Assist with the off-loading of recovered gear after returning to the designated port.

GEAR RECOVERY WORK PLAN: All recovery effort will take place in state waters (inside 3 miles), where it will impact the active lobster fishery the least. Regardless of where the participating vessel begins the day, recovered gear will be brought to the centralized collection site between 12:00noon - 2:00pm on each day of the recovery effort. Data about by-catch, "ghost fishing", and escape vent condition will be recorded by a DMR scientist on-board one boat in each area. Participating captains will record similar data in a simple logbook -- gear will be grappled or dragged up, and details about the gear will be noted in the logbook provided by project staff. Upon return to the wharf, participants will be required to assist with the off-loading and sorting of gear. Salvageable gear will be returned to its owner whenever possible. Gear that is unclaimed by its owner after one week will be hauled to the Marine Patrol Watercraft Facility in Rockland, where it will be processed according to state protocols. Unsalvageable gear will be sorted into roll-offs either as metal scrap to be sold, or "other", which will be burned in a waste-to-energy plant.

CONTRACTED RECYCLING/TRANSPORTATION SERVICES: GOMLF has contracted Corcoran Environmental Services to provide the on-site collection containers and disposal and recycling services. Local fishermen will be enlisted to haul un-claimed gear to Rockland.

PERMITS AND CERTIFICATIONS: It is a Maine State Law that lobster gear cannot be handled except by its owner without express permission of the Maine DMR. Therefore, we will secure the necessary permits from DMR which will list each of the selected voluntary participants for each day they are involved in the collection. Additionally, each voluntary participant will be **required to have a current Coast Guard Safety Inspection sticker***, and every vessel involved must be considered adequate for the work. Project staff and, if possible, a Marine Patrol officer will be present during the recovery process to assist with questions and identifying gear.

INDUSTRY STIPEND: Though no wages will be paid to vessel captains, a **boat fuel stipend** will be issued to each participating vessel (\$500/day) to help off-set costs. This stipend will be paid by GOMLF check directly to the captain at the end of the second day of work.

PROJECT STAFF:

Laura Ludwig (GOMLF), Project Director (207-263-5300), laura@gomlf.org

Carl Wilson (DMR), Primary State Contact (207-633-9538), carl.wilson@maine.gov

*Contact for Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety Exam:

Garry Moores, 207-838-4440 (mobile), 207-733-2054 (home), fvexaminer@earthlink.net