

GULF OF MAINE LOBSTER FOUNDATION



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For Immediate Release

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Out of State Yacht Clubs Support Maine Trap Recovery Program

On August 11, 2010, at a dinner at Morris Yachts in Northeast Harbor, the Gulf of Maine Lobster Foundation was presented with checks for more than \$6,000 from a group of yacht clubs to support the GOMLF Derelict Lobster Gear Retrieval, Salvage & Disposal program. The occasion was a dinner for the New York Yacht Club's Annual Cruise, attended by nearly 400 sailors.

The New York Yacht Club initiated the gift as an expression of its appreciation of the lobster industry and lobstermen of Maine. Commodore Bob Johnstone of The Northeast Harbor Fleet was instrumental in getting further participation in the gift from sailors from Down East Race Week, the Kollegewidgwok Yacht Club of Blue Hill, The Northeast Harbor Fleet and the Eastern Yacht Club of Marblehead, Massachusetts.

Laura Ludwig, Project Director for GOMLF, and Islesford lobsterman Bruce Fernald, a participant in the gear recovery project, were present to receive the contribution. Ludwig stated that this support from recreational boaters, working together with commercial fishermen to retrieve lost gear, was an unprecedented collaboration. Johnstone and New York Yacht Club Commodore David Elwell joined them in expressing hope that similar cooperative efforts would emerge in the future.

Sailboats are among the many vessels along the Maine coast that tangle with lobster gear, resulting in lost traps and added expense for lobstermen. GOMLF's two-year gear recovery program, primarily funded through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, hires lobstermen to retrieve lost, submerged traps (many of which are no longer useable) by towing grapples across the ocean bottom in winter, in heavily fished and traversed areas after active traps have been pulled for the season.

During the 2010 gear recovery effort, more than 1,000 traps were recovered by 27 fishing vessels from the three eastern-most lobster zones. GOMLF will recover gear in the four remaining lobster zones during the Winter 2011 program, and the yacht club contribution will allow GOMLF to hire six additional boats to work in Downeast areas frequented by the sailing fleet.

The Gulf of Maine Lobster Foundation, a non-profit lobster industry organization, is prepared to expand the "ghost trap" program to other waters and welcomes tax-deductible contributions from the recreational boating community to support work in their areas. For more information, contact laura@gomlf.org or call 207-985-8088.