

The Lobster Conservancy

Sustaining a thriving lobster fishery through science and community

Autumn 2012

Dear Volunteers and Friends of The Lobster Conservancy,

The Lobster Conservancy's mission is to strive to sustain a thriving lobster fishery through science and community. Our quarterly newsletter keeps members and volunteers informed of recent research, education and outreach activities.

Introducing *Zostera marina*



The Lobster Conservancy's new skiff, *Zostera marina*, built by Flower's Boats http://www.yachtworld.com/flowersboats/flowersboats_0.html with outboard, battery, lights, etc. added by Stetson and Pinkham <http://www.stetsonandpinkham.com/>.

Photo by Amy Brazier

I am pleased to introduce The Lobster Conservancy's new skiff and outboard. The best things about her hull are she's solid, sturdy, safe and dry! The best things about her new outboard are far greater fuel efficiency and quiet purring. I decided to name her for our only local marine flowering plant *Zostera marina* (eelgrass) because she was built by Flower's Boats.

Recent Events

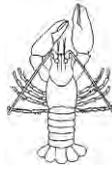
Rockweed Information Session

Many Friendship neighbors have asked me about the seaweed harvest cropping up outside their windows. Questions I've tried to answer include: „is it legal to take the seaweed from in front of my home?“ and „does it hurt the lobsters?“ Some seaweed harvest is permitted with a license. Call Marine Patrol if you have questions about a harvesting activity you witness. Lobsters use rockweed habitat as a place to feed and hide. Whether rockweed harvest has a significant impact on the lobster population on a whole most likely depends on how extensive the harvest becomes. There are no current regulations limiting how much rockweed can be taken.

To give our neighbors opportunity to learn more, The Lobster Conservancy hosted a presentation by Rockweed Coalition (www.rockweedcoalition.org) leader Dr. Robin Hadlock Seeley in June. The event was well attended, informative, and led to a lively discussion. A broad range of perspectives were presented by participants that included (1) members of the rockweed industry including harvesters and dealers, (2) scientist and regulators from the Maine Department of Marine Resources, (3) our state Senator Chris Johnson, (4) state Representative Les Fossil, and a few residents of Friendship.

I wrote to both Senator Johnson & Representative Fossil thanking them for attending the session: “We certainly got our ears full at the Rockweed information session last week! I didn't expect quite such a lively discussion. Was glad you were able to attend. For me, the take home

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message is that we had two extreme views and what needs to be done is to find a suitable middle ground. It appears that the rockweed harvest is under regulated - regardless of what any further research would show, it seems to me that some sort of limits should be put in place now. With that in mind, I think it makes sense to start a no-cut registry so that residents can convey their wishes to have the area of their shore front left alone. Even though this will not make it illegal to cut, it will allow for a sort of hand shake agreement. Meanwhile, it would also be nice to have better data on what's out there, how much is harvested and how much "fishing" pressure the "resource" and accompanying ecosystem can handle."

In response, Senator Johnson wrote: "It was a pleasure to be there. I'm doing my best to be informed. I very much agree we need to find middle ground, and seek a scientific basis for a reasonable (at least within an order of magnitude) determination of a safe level of harvesting."

Representative Fossil wrote: "It was good to meet you and begin my education on Rockweed harvesting. I think the next step should be to find out if there are any studies (probably from Atlantic Canada) that shed impartial light on this issue. I think a no-cut registry can create further confrontation unless there is good impartial scientific evidence for the beneficial effects on the resource of such a registry. What is the experience for the current registry in Cobscook Bay? Have registries been tried elsewhere? If so, what is their experience?"

We need to be sure that we are using evidence to reach conclusions - rather than using conclusions as a basis for assembling evidence. If we are not careful, we will become charter members of the latest "fear of the month club". The result of this will be yet another war over the appropriate use of resources."

ASMFC Data Meeting

The ASMFC is seeking data to include in the next American lobster stock assessment set to be completed in 2014. I attended and presented The Lobster Conservancy's data at a meeting hosted by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) at the Maine Department of Marine Resources in Boothbay Harbor. I will keep you posted on whether they decide to use our data.

Brunswick Art & Science Fair

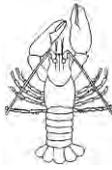
Five Rivers Arts Alliance and Cornerstones of Science co-sponsored a fun, well-attended Art & Science Festival in Brunswick on Sunday, September 9th. The Lobster Conservancy provided a marine education piece with the help of live lobsters donated by The Lobster Lady of Brunswick.



Youngsters learn about lobster senses under the Cornerstones of Science tent at the Art and Science Festival in Brunswick, Maine.

Photo by JB Kavaliauskas

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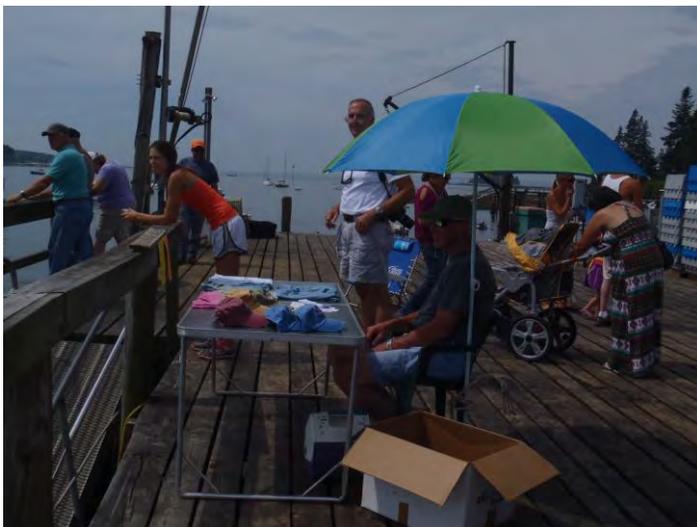
Friendship Day

As always, The Lobster Conservancy touch tank attracted much attention on Friendship Day! For me, it was the most fun ever thanks to Mark Havener who provided the critters, John Meyn who helped set up, and best of all Liga Jahnke who magically cleaned up while I released the critters (that I wasn't going to eat) afterward!



Children enjoying the touch tank on Friendship Day.

Photo by Diane Cowan



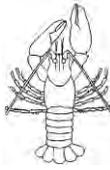
Watching the Lobster Boat Races from Fisherman's Heritage Lobster Co-op on Friendship Day.

Photo by Diane Cowan

Recent Publications & Press

While there's been lots of press concerning what's happening with the lobster market, The Lobster Conservancy remains focused on science and community. The list of publications below deals with the role of lobster biology in the current state of the industry. I've also attached a pdf file of the October Ask the Lobster Doc published in Commercial Fisheries News (check out the table where I estimate how many times lobsters molt in a lifetime!).

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View of Friendship Harbor from the Sloop Cottage on the Davis Point Loop.

Photo by Joanne Omang

http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/maine-is-troubled-by-too-many-lobsters/2012/07/20/gJQakTCsyW_story.html

<http://magblog.audubon.org/lobster-populations-boom-are-they-set-crash>

http://www.pressherald.com/opinion/lobster-stocks-will-plummet-if-safeguards-arent-put-in-place-soon_2012-06-25.html

http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/48286953/ns/us_news-environment/t/lobstermen-finding-more-odd-colors-catch/

<http://bangordailynews.com/community/lobster-conservancy-to-host-meeting/>

Lobster House on the market!



Lobster House (The Lobster Conservancy's mainland office in the center of Friendship) is for sale... and it's a bargain! Here's the listing: http://www.realtor.com/realestateandhomes-detail/6-Waldoboro-Rd_Friendship_ME_04547_M41737-70837?source=web.

Meanwhile, the mainland office has moved to the sloop cottage on the Davis Point Loop between Fisherman's Heritage Lobster Co-op and Guenther's wharf. Visitors are welcome. You may want to call first to make sure someone is there...

Enjoy Autumn!

Yours in TLC,

Diane F. Cowan, Ph.D.
Executive Director