

Island  **Ad-Vantages**  **THE WEEKLY PACKET**

THE VIEW FROM ATLANTIC AVENUE

By: Bobbi Billings, Administrative Director

May 18, 2023

A Native's View on Fishing as a Way of Life: Have a Backup Plan

This community and many like ours once were able to fish a diversity of species, and because of that we've enjoyed a long time resilient ecology and economy. Today as I look around, I see how we are 90% dependent on one single species – lobster, and this puts us all in a very precarious place. I come from five generations of fishermen and fisherwomen. I have seen my family fish the different species throughout the years and seasons. It used to be that in the course of one year, my great-grandfather would fish for lobster August – October; scallops November – January; shrimp in February and March; groundfish April - July. That is no longer the case. If my grandfather were still alive today, he would be fishing only for lobster.

Things have changed a lot in this community since I was young. In the off-season winter months when the lobsters have moved 3 miles offshore, only a handful of fishermen have federal licenses and can fish for them. This past season, less than a dozen lobstermen became scallopers and none harvest shrimp any longer. There are also no more groundfish fishermen in this area relying on this species for their livelihoods. The work we do to maintain our community-based fisheries may seem complex and often difficult to explain, but I try to sum it up best by doing this simple exercise with people: take a moment to look outside the windows and truly look at what makes this community what it is, include all of the working boats in this harbor, and everyone who supplies seafood, works on a boat, runs a restaurant, offers childcare, and all of our villagers. Let's work together to make sure we hold on to our diverse species and fisheries so we have a backup plan that protects our fishing way of life and the community that depends on it when lobsters aren't so dominant anymore.

Do you have a question about our fisheries? Send it to info@coastalfisheries.org or call 207.367.2708.

Prices to Harvesters

Lobsters (select): \$7/lb.
Lobster (hard): \$6/lb.
Lobster (shedder) \$5/lb.
Bait (herring): \$99/bu.
Fuel (diesel): \$4.30/gal.

Disclaimer: these figures were collected on 5/15 in Stonington

Oceanographic Buoy I-01

44°6'10"N 68°6'44"W - Frenchboro
Bottom Temperature (50 meters): 6.33°C
(43.39°F)

Source: www.neracoos.org