



THE VIEW FROM ATLANTIC AVENUE

By: Carla Guenther

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US-Canada Lobster Town Meeting

Fresh from the University of Maine Lobster Institute US-Canada Lobster Town Meeting held January 28-30 in Bar Harbor last week, I feel a sense of pride in our diverse fishing community's capacity to talk about hard things. Consistent with the established tradition of this now decades old convening, just over 200 lobster harvesters, wholesalers, processors, scientists, and managers discussed some meaty cross-border topics from climate change observations in the Gulf of Maine, lobster stock assessment tools and trends, updates regarding the proposed increase in minimum size, lobster markets and distribution, and, of course, the impending tariffs.

Together, we learned about observed changes to the Gulf Stream and a colder-than-the-las- decade slug of deep water that penetrated the eastern Gulf of Maine that seems to have slowed 2024 lobster catches by 10%. This oceanographic feature also supported a return to historic levels of *Calanus finmarchicus*, the preferred food for the critically endangered north Atlantic right whale, and drew high densities of this whale back to the Grand Manan Channel this past fall and just off of Jefferies Ledge as I type. Whether or not this slug of water is here to stay for minute or an hour is anyone's guess. Dr. Nick Record of Bigelow Labs is monitoring our NERACOOS buoy system of real time data to make predictions for 2025. Stay tuned.

As for lobster markets and trends, we learned that the persistence of the shift to earlier Maine landings ever since the 2012 warming event, has created a significant demand for lobster processing in the spring-concurrent with the Prince Edward Island season for "canner" lobsters. Processors reported that they are staffing up to maximum capacity in the spring (when dock prices are lowest), yet, in the fall, landings cannot support the operating expenses of maintaining maximum staff. It was suggested that Maine could look into a delay of harvest effort in May and June to even things out regarding timing and boat price.

As for the minimum size regulation, Maine Department of Marine Resources Commissioner Keliher stated that the inequity between Maine and New Brunswick's LFA 24 minimum size concerned Governor Mills and any change would have to include this part of Canada. This week the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission will decide how management may proceed. Regarding 25% tariffs on Canadian raw goods-check your headlines. Despite there being bilateral agreement of how critically interdependent our lobster industry is, and that a 25% tariff would have far reaching and deleterious impacts on both nations' lobster economies, there was little resolution regarding how to prepare for, or avoid them.

Do you have a question about our fisheries? Send it to info@coastalfisheries.org or call 207.367.2708. Learn more about MCCF by visiting us at www.coastalfisheries.org.

FISHERIES LOG

Prices to Harvesters in Stonington as of 2/3/2025

Lobster (hard): \$7.50/lb.
Lobster (shedder) \$8.50/lb.
Bait (pogies): \$90/box
Fuel (diesel): \$3.10/gal

Oceanographic Buoy I-01 As of 2/3/2025

44°6'10"N 68°6'44"W – Frenchboro
Top Temperature (1 meter): 39.7°F 4.28°C
Bottom Temperature (50 meters): 39.85°F 4.36°C
Source: www.neracoos.org