

May 2024 Newsletter  
New Hampshire Commercial Fishermen's Association

Hello to All,

It sure has been a tough start to spring but it will get here one inch at a time. There's still a variety of issues that need attention or updates so here we go.

**ASFMC Lobster Management / Gauge Increase** – At a public hearing meeting at the Urban Forestry Center this past Monday (5/6/24) it was discussed about the equivalency measures between the U.S. and Canada when the gauge increase goes into effect on 1/1/25. Basically it is to be determined that Canada won't be able to ship lobsters smaller than the U.S. gauge after 1/1/25. They will have to cull their Canadian lobsters to match our new U.S. gauge. There were comments on resistance to the gauge increase but Cheri Paterson, NH Fish & Game stated that the gauge increase aspect of the amendment was already approved by ASFMC. There will be a vent size increase in 2026 and another 1/16 " gauge increase in 2027.

**Opinion – I do not think that the proposed gauge and vent increases will produce the desired results to increase the lobster resource and only cause economic disruption across the board. While it might be too late to stop the 1/16" increase in 2025 the vent increase in 2026 and another 1/16" gauge increase in 2027 is unnecessary. Something must be done !!!**

**Offshore Wind** – The Bureau of Energy Management (BOEM) has issued its Wind Energy Areas (WEAs) to be leased in the Gulf of Maine. In looking at these areas (2 in mid coast Maine and 6 in southern Gulf of Maine) it appears with some logic that the transmission cables associated with the wind turbines will be traveling into Maine or the Cape, Salem, Plymouth, MA areas and not New Hampshire. No guarantees but it looks to be the logical path. A comment might be in order with the fact that this association was very active in its public comments to BOEM against the development of wind farms in the GOM but if they were destined to be our comments suggested to leave NH fishing grounds out of consideration. In looking at the proposed lease areas we protected our fishing areas.

**Opinion - This Association has been tracking offshore wind development for over 3 years and participating in the process along with alerting fishermen to also participate. Because it has advanced to its present condition there is now an effort to stop them all together. Unless you have a direct line to the White**

**House** it appears to be to late and it's a steep expensive uphill climb with remote possibilities to stop them. The current Washington administration has dictated that offshore wind will be part of the US carbon free energy plan. We won't stop monitoring offshore wind development and we urge everyone to do the same.

**Licensing of Commercial Fishing Operators** – Last month I mentioned discussion on requiring all fishing vessel operators on vessels **less** than 200 GRT ( which would be everyone) to acquire / hold a US Coast Guard merchant mariner license. I have been trying to get further information about this discussion that took place at the National Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety Advisory Committee meeting this past April 9-11. 2024 but as of yet have gotten no details. More to follow.

**Fisheries and Politics-** These two words are like “fire” and “water” when brought together and many fishermen despise that politics are a factor in their business. Unfortunately and without doubt the two words do mix for whatever the side of the coin you want to look at. More and more it is happening so the truth to the issue is that we must play more of a part in recognizing the mix whether on a national, state or local level. This association has stayed away from aligning itself politically but has had the ear of elected officials who listen and respect our opinion or perspective. Coming this year is going to be the election of a new Governor of New Hampshire. This association has had great relationships with current and past governors and it behoves us to continue that pattern. In looking at the candidates this year the former Mayor of Manchester, Joyce Craig is running along with former state senator, Chuck Morse and former state attorney general and former congressional senator Kelly Ayotte. I don't think Joyce Craig knows the bow from the stern. Chuck Morse helped the industry on the diving for lobsters bill and Kelly Ayotte helped the fishing industry many times as NH attorney general and even better as a US senator. We stuck our nose out for the first time this year to endorse Kelly Ayotte. We tried to engage Chuck Morse early on for a conversation but he never replied. Between Kelly or Chuck, they are good candidates from a fishing industry perspective.

**Scholarship Program** – While we have announced this program regularly every year we have had no applicants. This year we have had two applicants that will be reviewed. I will send these applications out to some respected members pf the association and pending their review make an award within a short time.

**2024 Trap Clean- up.** – It was another good year for the trap clean -up with over 106 participants between Rye and Hampton collecting just under 10 tons of fishing gear debris through the course of the event. Even more impressive is that all participants accomplished this from 8:00 am to 1:30 pm. We should be proud of the effort that has occurred for over 30 years and great to see the amount of increasing participants. Congratulations to all.

**Association Status** – On occasion it requires some review of what the New Hampshire Commercial Fishermen's Association is and how it functions.

- 1) It is a all volunteer organization with no paid staff or positions.
- 2) It functions to represent concerns and issues of the New Hampshire Commercial Fishing Industry.
- 3) We have no status as a corporation, LLC, or 501 C organization and function in the simplest and most effective manner to accomplish our goal.
- 4) Membership is \$50.00 / year which is without doubt a prudent membership fee in comparison to other similar organizations.
- 5) Our expenses are minimal because of our volunteer status and while we would hope to have more revenue to do more things we do not want to financially burden our members.
- 6) We currently have approximately \$5500.00 as available funds which are monitored by a separate treasurer of the association.
- 7) Spending of these funds are scattered to other pro-advocate fishing organizations or reimbursement to members who have has out of pocket expenses related to association matters.
- 8) We do not have an internet sight or internet presence but if anyone of our members have the capacity to put the association in that media we would welcome that opportunity.
- 9) In the past we have had a board of directors represented through each NH harbor. Through time that has evaporated but must be renewed and hope there would be interest from fishermen to participate. I have tried to maintain the thoughts and position of the New Hampshire commercial industry but it's time to gather a new board of directors. It requires a lot of time and effort to do so. We have had trouble with a getting a regular meeting place which is difficult but I will try and gather a location and meeting date. More to follow.
- 10) We have been effective on countless matters and are respected in our position on issues of importance to our industry.

**Personal Note** – Many are aware of Geno Marconi's paid administrative leave at the Div. of Ports and Harbors. The reason for that action was made by the Pease Development Board of Directors for reasons only known by them and related to civil matters conducted by the attorney general's office. There is no reason to comment on them because we don't know but I have heard that for some reason my name has been inferenced by exactly who I don't know or any reason but to start a rumor. Let it be known to anyone who is passing the rumor that I **WAS NOT PART** of any effort to have anything to do with his administrative leave and if you have any guts to make those accusations you can at least contact me anytime to substantiate your accusations. My number is 603-234-7038 or my e-mail address.

Sorry to end on such a note of anger but it upsets me when individuals make statements or start rumors that are false.

I've gone on long enough. With everyone gearing up for the season – good luck and be safe. As always I welcome any replies, suggestions or comments.

Thanks,

Erik