

## Backgrounder on LD 170: An Act To Permit the Landing of Lobsters Harvested by Methods other than Conventional Traps

### What...

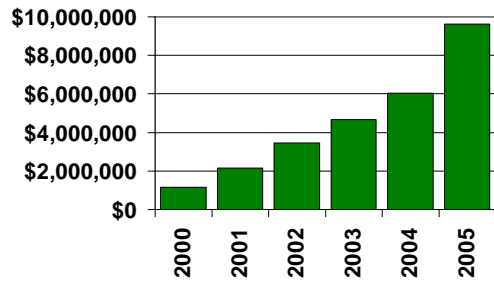
LD 170 amends Maine state law to allow incidental landings of bycatch lobsters in Maine ports by non-trap fishing vessels, in accordance with federal guidelines. Maine is the only state in New England to prohibit bycatch lobster landings. Other states comply with the federally mandated limit of 500 lobsters per fishing trip.

### Why...

**Maine's bycatch lobster law is a law of unintended consequences.** It does not prevent the netting of lobsters. Instead, it is forcing Maine's offshore groundfishing fleet, with its valuable catch, to Massachusetts.

Over the last several years, nearly \$10 million of fish from traditional Maine-based vessels has been landed in Massachusetts ports, primarily because of Maine's bycatch lobster law. **In 2005, over 150 fishing trips—worth an average of over \$20,000 per trip—were landed outside the state.** Maine's groundfish fleet and shoreside infrastructure is disappearing, threatening the diversity of our fisheries and the vitality of Maine's groundfishing communities and working waterfront.

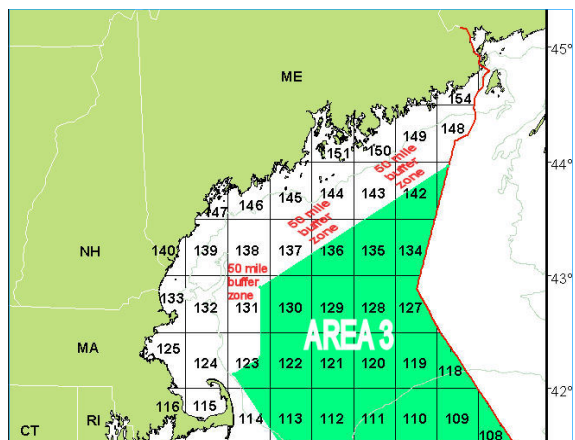
**Cumulative Value of Harvest of Maine-based Vessels Landing Outside of Maine**



### How...

- ✓ **Allow bycatch lobster to be landed in Maine according to federal guidelines.**
- ✓ **Bycatch harvesting would be prohibited within approximately 50 miles of the Maine coast, in an area called Lobster Management Area 3.** Conversely, in the trap fishery over 80% of lobsters are caught within three miles of the coast. Few Maine lobstermen set their traps in Area 3.
- ✓ **Adhere to Maine's existing lobster conservation measures.** Bycatch lobster landings would be subject to existing regulations setting minimum and maximum sizes, and a prohibition on landing V-notch lobster.
- ✓ **Mandatory monthly dealer reporting to the Department of Marine Resources of all bycatch lobster landings.**
- ✓ **The Department of Marine Resources would report to the Legislature annually on the results and effects of the law.** If unforeseen developments occurred, the Legislature could terminate the program.

#### Restricted Bycatch Harvesting Zone

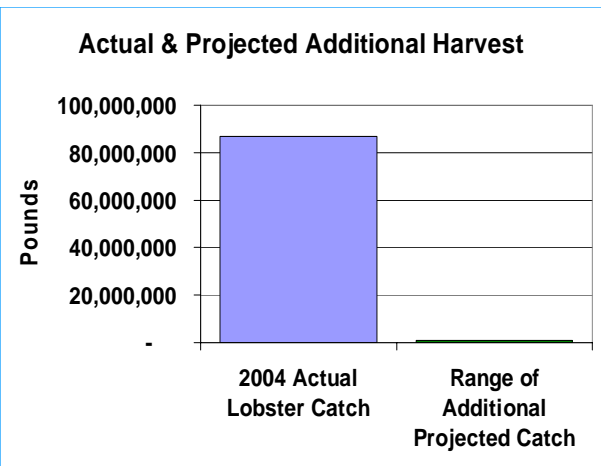
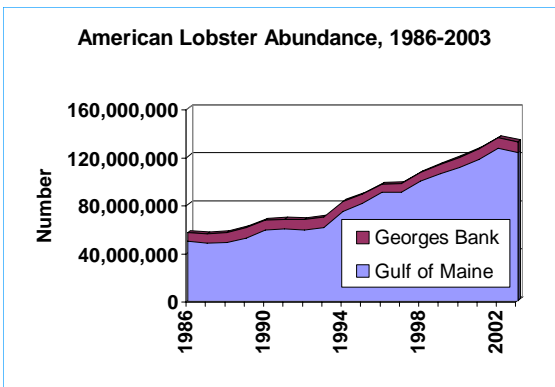


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### Status...

**Lobster abundance has never been higher.** Abundance in the offshore areas of the Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank—Area 3, the Restricted Bycatch Harvesting Zone—is **near or at a long-term high.**

Amending Maine law to comply with federal bycatch restrictions would have little impact on lobster populations. Bycatch has always been a minimal part of New England's overall lobster harvest, accounting for just 2% of the catch over the last 25 years.



Many of the lobsters that would be landed in Maine are already being harvested and landed in other New England states. The only difference is that Maine fishermen have to discard the lobsters, while fishermen from other states can keep them.

We estimate that Maine's entire groundfish fleet might land an amount equivalent to **about 1% of the total lobster harvest.** Maine, like other New England states, can allow both directed and bycatch landings of lobster.

### Benefits...

Allowing bycatch lobster landings would not harm Maine's lobster industry, but could greatly help Maine's groundfish communities, and their contributions to the state's seafood processing sector and state economy. For the sake of 500 lobsters, **our economy loses a typical fishing trip of over \$20,000 of groundfish**, along with the jobs and value added that this catch would have supported if it were legal to be landed in Maine.

The Legislature can fix this problem at **no cost to taxpayers and no harm to Maine's lobster industry**, which is valuable and well-regulated.

#### Every \$1 million of groundfish landed and processed in Maine provides

- ◆ \$1.5 million in sales for Maine groundfish processors.
- ◆ \$250,000 in purchases of ice, fuel and other items related to harvesting.
- ◆ \$250,000 in purchases from Maine-based companies of packaging, transportation services, and other items related to seafood processing.
- ◆ \$350,000 in wages paid to Maine fishermen.
- ◆ \$60,000 in wages and benefits paid to offload the catch.
- ◆ \$250,000 in wages and benefits paid to process the fish into fillets.

For more information, please visit...



[www.betterlobsterlaw.com](http://www.betterlobsterlaw.com)

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