



PORTLAND FISH EXCHANGE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Economist Says Lobster Bycatch Ban Accelerating Destruction of Maine's Groundfishing Industry

A study conducted by a prominent Maine economist validates Maine fishermen's description of the importance of bycatch lobster, and found that Maine's prohibition on bycatch lobster landings costs the state hundreds of jobs and million of dollars in taxes, wages, and economic activity.

Dr. Charles Lawton said, "The lobster bycatch ban is accelerating the destruction of Maine's groundfishing industry."

The report, issued by Planning Decisions Inc. of South Portland, said the loss of Maine fishing boats to Massachusetts translates directly into lost sales and lost jobs in Maine.

According to the report, Maine lost 355 jobs, \$30 million in economic activity, and \$1 million in taxes from 2000-2005, and the exodus to Massachusetts is accelerating.

Removing the lobster bycatch ban "would have minimal impact on the lobster industry," Lawton said.

Ironically, the loss of the groundfishing industry in Maine comes at a time when the future of fishing is bright, according to the report. "Recently enacted federal regulations designed to protect the groundfish resource of the Northeast will allow groundfish stocks to double within the next decade, creating potential annual sales of \$300 million to \$400 million compared to today's total of approximately \$70 million," the report said.

In an effort to stem further losses of Maine jobs, the Portland Fish Exchange is promoting legislation to reform the State's bycatch lobster policy. The legislative bill is titled LD170: An Act To Permit the Landing of Lobsters Harvested by Methods other than Conventional Traps.

The economic study, and more information about lobster bycatch and LD170, is available via the Exchange's web sites www.pfex.org and www.betterlobsterlaw.com.

The Portland Fish Exchange is the nation's only publicly owned non-profit seafood auction. The Exchange is charged with providing a fair, open and transparent marketplace for buyers and sellers of wholesale seafood, and promoting a sustainable seafood industry in New England. Approximately 90% of Maine's groundfish catch is sold on the Exchange.

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