

Patrice McCarron

Thank you, Governor, it's a privilege to be able to address you today, and for this esteemed panel, it's nice to be among such a diverse group of colleagues, I mostly see fishermen day-to-day. I am proud today to represent Maine's lobster industry, and I would start by saying that Maine lobstermen were conservationists long before being a conservationist became cool, so it's kinda fun to see where it's all landed, and that's been a good thing for us.

Today Maine's lobster industry is comprised of 5500 small business, which by law are owner-operators. This means that every penny of the \$300 million our Maine lobstermen earn each year stays right here in Maine. We have no out-of-state or overseas corporate headquarters in our business. Our hardworking lobstermen generate approximately \$1 billion in economic activity each year; this stimulates jobs for everybody in the coastal communities, from local restaurants and coffee shops, to trap and boat builders, and keeps these people in business. Consumers love Maine lobster, and they know that our lobster is the best in the world; they bought about 100 million pounds of Maine lobster last year alone. They know that it's harvested from the pristine waters of the gulf of Maine, and we need to make sure that the rules that protect these waters remain in place. You don't need to look far to see what happens to lobster when water quality is poor. The southern New England lobster industry has grappled with outbreaks in disease, die-offs, and more recently, a complete resource collapse.

Maine lobstermen also need local, sustainable sources of bait. We've been hard hit by federal regulations that affect our main bait source which is herring. Consequently, our industries rely more and more on baits that are imported both internationally and from freshwater sources, and these non-native baits can carry disease, they can threaten the health of our marine resource, and it's not good for our jobs; importing bait is not good for Maine jobs. But fortunately we have an alternative local bait source right here in Maine; our local alewife resource is underutilized, and we need to reopen the alewife run that is on the St. Croix River. It has historically provided a rich source of alewife to our fishermen, but today it provides hardly any, because the river has been purposely blocked due to some misperceptions that our native alewives negatively impact small mouth bass populations. This is bad policy, it hurts Maine's lobstermen, it weakens our coastal economy, and it threatens our environment.

I'd like to close by saying that Maine lobstermen are known world-wide for being excellent stewards of the resource, for supporting regulations to keep our resources sustainable, they keep our fishermen profitable, and ultimately, our coastal communities viable. So, we in the Maine lobster industry are really looking forward to working with you, to continue our heritage, and to ensure that we have a future for future generations in the lobster industry.

Thank you.