

Help Maine Lobsters Keep Their Cool




Natural Resources
Council of Maine
www.nrcm.org



Global Warming Threatens Maine Lobsters

It takes five to seven years for a lobster to grow to a legal size for harvesting. They grow by shedding their old shell and growing a new one to accommodate growth. This usually happens in mid- to late-summer, but warming waters in the Gulf of Maine are believed to be causing an earlier shed, which can cause problems for the usual flow to market. Global warming threatens lobsters in other ways, too.

Rising temperatures in the Gulf of Maine caused by global warming have put our ocean's ecosystem on a path that could cause serious harm to lobster populations, and that would have a dire effect on Maine's vital lobstering industry.

Coastal waters dotted with colorful lobster buoys, harbors filled with lobster boats and fishermen, locals and visitors sharing picnic tables and smiling over brilliant crimson lobster dinners—these are iconic images of the Maine coast. These scenes call to mind a way of life that has sustained generations of Maine people and millions of dollars that are essential to our economy. And it's all thanks to one of our state's most famous creatures—the lobster.

Lobstering is the largest, most valuable fishery in the state and defines many of Maine's coastal communities. Indeed, our shoreline scenery, economy, and cultural identity would be very different without *Homarus americanus*, the American lobster. Sadly, unless we take action to stop the carbon pollution that causes global warming, we could find out just how different life in Maine could be.



Maine's Lobsters: We Can't Afford to Lose Them

The lobster industry is important to Maine's economy and our way of life:

- ➔ Contributes \$339 million to Maine's economy.
- ➔ Employs 3,000 full-time lobstermen and another 2,500 part-time.
- ➔ Generates \$3-5 for wholesalers, retailer, restaurants, and other businesses, for every dollar paid to a lobsterman for a lobster.
- ➔ Supports hundreds of small, coastal communities that give Maine its unique character.
- ➔ Entices millions of tourists to visit Maine's scenic working waterfronts and picturesque seaside villages every year.
- ➔ Provides delicious lobsters that are well-loved and prized by diners around the world—a flavorful ambassador for Maine.

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- Warmer temperatures create a whole new environment of predator and prey for lobsters.
- Research has found that higher ocean temperatures require cold-blooded animals, like lobsters, to use more energy for breathing, leaving less energy for feeding, growth, energy storage, immune response and reproduction.
- Scientists expect that warming waters are driving lobsters to migrate into cooler, northern waters.
- Scientists have also seen evidence linking rising sea temperatures to a condition that makes female lobsters molt more frequently, making them more vulnerable.
- Carbon pollution acidifies ocean waters, making it harder for lobsters to get the calcium needed to harden their shells. This can leave them stressed and more susceptible to damage.

Protecting Lobsters from Power Plant Carbon Pollution



The number one source of the carbon pollution that is warming waters and making oceans acidic are **power plants**, especially coal-burning power plants outside of New England. And the best tool for reducing pollution from power plants is the **Clean Air Act**. The Clean Air Act has saved trillions of dollars in health costs and tens of thousands of

lives. Now federal Clean Air Act standards are being discussed and developed to limit carbon pollution from dirty coal plants. If we want to protect lobsters and keep Maine's climate from changing dramatically, reducing pollution from power plants through these standards is our best bet.

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Protecting the Nature of Maine



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If we continue on our current path of burning fossil fuels like oil and coal, the impact of global warming will profoundly harm Maine's lobster and tourism industries. The Natural Resources Council of Maine has made great strides in the effort to curb climate change, including leading efforts to pass climate and energy laws here in Maine that will cut pollution by increasing energy efficiency while saving Maine people and businesses money on energy costs. But we must do more.

Here's what you can do:

- Urge Senators Collins and King to support action on global warming. Visit www.nrcm.kintera.org/protectmainelobsters to send them an email today!
- Join NRCM's Action Network at www.nrcm.kintera.org/ActionCenter so your voice can help protect Maine's environment.
- Visit www.nrcm.org to learn more about global warming and what you can do about it.
- Enjoy a Maine lobster or two this summer—either at home or at one of the hundreds of Maine restaurants. Grab a bib and get crackin'!

Questions?

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Lobster logo by Marty Braun