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**Climate Change Threat to Lobsters Spells Big Trouble for Maine:
*Lobstering, tourism, conservation interests launch campaign to protect
iconic Maine species from carbon pollution threat***

Portland, ME – At the Maine Lobster Company, just days before the Fourth of July holiday, a diverse group representing Maine’s lobstering, tourism, conservation, and education interests gathered to launch an awareness campaign about the threat lobsters face from carbon pollution that is changing the climate.

Carbon pollution from burning coal, oil, and gas in power plants, vehicles, and other places, is warming and acidifying our ocean waters, and threatening Maine’s lobsters. Because the lobster industry and lobsters themselves are so important to Maine’s way of life, identity, tourism economy, and coastal communities, federal action to reduce carbon pollution is essential.

Scientists—and lobstermen—have been noticing the warning signs from climate change for several years, although we don’t yet know precisely how bad the impacts might be.

“Warming ocean temperatures could shift suitable lobster habitat north,” said Dr. Rick Wahle, Research Professor at the University of Maine Darling Marine Center. “On the one hand, warming may open new habitat that was historically too cold. On the other hand, warmer waters may threaten Maine’s lobster population by introducing predators or competitors from the south, and through other negative biological impacts. In addition, the oceans absorb a significant amount of carbon, making the water acidic. Acidic seas may harm lobsters’ ability to form adequate shells, although more research is needed on these effects.”

Last year, warm ocean temperatures in the spring (the warmest temperatures in a decade) were a key factor in the excessive early production in softer shell lobsters that led to the collapse of lobster prices in Maine. Prices fell to the lowest in nearly 20 years. Although this was good news for consumers, it was very hard on lobstermen trying to earn a living.

According to the Maine Lobsterman’s Association, in 2012 Maine landed about \$340 million worth of lobster, providing \$1 billion in economic activity to the state economy. According to the Maine Lobster Promotion Council, the fishery includes more than 5,900 licensed lobster harvesters, and supports businesses such as processors, dealers, marine outfitters, boat makers, and retailer.

“At Ready Seafood, the environment is our number one concern,” said John Ready, Co-owner, Ready Seafood Company. “With warmer ocean temperatures, lobsters are more likely to stay in deeper waters. We want to ensure that we protect the Maine families and businesses that rely on Maine’s lobster fishery.”

Reducing carbon emissions that drives climate change and warms and acidifies Maine waters will help ensure the health of Maine’s oceans and therefore Maine’s lobster industry. Lobsters are one of Maine’s most iconic species, making protecting it particularly important to Maine’s identity. The lobster industry supports hundreds of coastal communities that give Maine its unique character.

“Maine lobster is a nationally recognized brand and an iconic seafood item,” said Marianne LaCroix, Acting Executive Director, Maine Lobster Promotion Council. “Maine fishermen have had strict resource management regulations in place for more than 140 years, helping to ensure a strong lobster fishery today that provides a livelihood for thousands of Maine fishermen, businesses, and coastal communities. It's important to protect the marine environment to ensure that the fishery remains strong for future generations.”

“Lobster is the iconic Maine seafood voraciously enjoyed in all restaurant venues by visitors and citizens alike, said Dick Grotton, president and CEO of the Maine Restaurant Association. “Lobster is critical to the restaurant industry, the harvesters, dealers, processors, and indeed to the economy of our beautiful State of Maine.”

Last week, President Obama announced a plan to reduce carbon pollution from dirty power plants, the largest source of the climate-changing pollution nationally. The plan has gained support from many areas, but already faces enormous opposition from the coal industry and other corporate fossil fuel interests.

“The fact that carbon pollution hurts Maine lobsters should be a concern to all Mainers,” said Emmie Theberge, Clean Energy Outreach Coordinator of the Natural Resources Council of Maine. “The problems will only get worse until we take action at the national level to reduce carbon pollution. Today we continue to urge Senators Collins and King to provide whatever support they can to reduce dangerous carbon pollution, especially from power plants. Maine’s future depends on it.”