



New England Fishermen's Stewardship Association

May & June 2025

Why the New England Seafood Industry Must Invest in Advocacy — Now More Than Ever

By NEFSA COO Dustin Delano

The New England seafood industry is a cornerstone of our regional economy. With a value that stretches well into the billions of dollars annually—driven by the dedication of hardworking fishermen, processors, distributors, and related businesses—our industry is not just a tradition, it is a powerhouse. But with that value comes responsibility: to protect our livelihoods, our communities, and our shared future through strong, unified advocacy. Let's put things into perspective. The combined economic activity generated by commercial fishing, seafood processing, and related sectors in New England surpasses \$10 billion a year. We support tens of thousands of jobs, feed millions of Americans, and sustain coastal communities that have depended on the ocean for generations. And yet, despite this immense value, our industry is often underrepresented in the halls of power—where decisions about our future are being made daily. Now ask yourself: how much are we collectively investing in protecting this \$10+ billion industry through advocacy and policy engagement? The answer, frankly, is not enough. Compare this to Fortune 500 companies—major industries like oil, agriculture, and tech—which routinely spend tens of millions of dollars annually on lobbying and policy influence:

- The U.S. agriculture industry spends over \$140 million a year on lobbying.
- The tech sector, including Google, Amazon, and Meta, spends \$70–100 million combined annually.
- ExxonMobil alone spent \$9.6 million in 2023.

Yet the U.S. commercial fishing industry, split between regions and sectors, is investing only a small fraction of that in its own defense. Meanwhile, environmental advocacy groups, many of which actively oppose commercial fishing activities—are investing heavily to shape ocean policy in ways that often restrict or undermine our access to fisheries. Organizations like the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), Oceana, Pew Charitable Trusts, and others spend tens of millions of dollars per year advocating for closures, restrictions, and sweeping conservation measures. These groups are well-funded, well-staffed, and deeply entrenched in federal policymaking circles. Their influence is immense:

- The Pew Charitable Trusts has an annual budget of over \$350 million, with significant funding directed toward ocean conservation policies.
- Oceana alone has spent over \$40 million in recent years on campaigns directly aimed at fishing practices.
- These organizations have teams of scientists, lawyers, and lobbyists working every day to reshape fisheries policy.

Make no mistake: while some environmental goals may align with ours, many of these groups are actively pushing agendas that would limit our fishing grounds, reduce quotas, and marginalize the voices of fishermen in the policy process. If we don't counter that influence, who will? At NEFSA, we've already seen the impact that even modest, strategic advocacy can have:

- We've helped push back against overreaching federal regulations.
- We've built relationships with policymakers who now recognize the importance of balanced, science-driven fisheries management.
- We've united fishermen across gear types and regions to speak with a louder, clearer voice.

But we can't do this alone—and we can't do it on a shoestring. If every participant in our billion-dollar industry committed just 0.01% of their annual revenue to advocacy, we could build a political presence capable of matching the most powerful environmental lobbies in the country. That means:

- Securing access to sustainable fisheries.
- Ensuring working waterfronts remain viable.
- Defending our communities from harmful policies pushed by outside interests.

This isn't just a defensive strategy, it's about taking control of our narrative, our future, and our place at the table in Washington, D.C. NEFSA was founded on the principle that we are stronger together. But strength in unity must be matched by investment and action. While well-funded organizations lobby against our livelihoods, we must rise to meet that challenge—not with reaction, but with leadership. This is our moment to act. Let's match the value of what we provide with the power of our voice.

Staying the Course While Preparing for What's Next: Reflections on Addendum XXXII

By NEFSA COO Dustin Delano

On May 5, 2025, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (ASMFC) Lobster Board voted to approve Addendum XXXII to the American Lobster Fishery Management Plan. While this decision did not introduce immediate regulatory changes, it marks an important moment for all of us in the lobster industry, a moment to reflect, regroup, and refocus as we await critical science that will shape our path forward.

The most significant takeaway from Addendum XXXII is what wasn't included. Proposed increases to the vent and gauge sizes, previously introduced under Addendum XXVII, have now been formally removed. This was a hard-fought outcome driven by lobstermen across New England who made clear that unnecessary regulatory changes, especially those that reduce economic viability without proven conservation benefit—are unacceptable. The board listened, and for now, the gear modifications are off the table. This decision also reflects a collective understanding that before we consider any new measures, we must first ground ourselves in the best available science. The next benchmark stock assessment, set for later in 2025, will offer a clearer picture of the health of the lobster resource.

Until then, it would be premature to introduce sweeping changes that may not be warranted. This is no time to disengage. If anything, it's more important than ever that we stay organized and

proactive. In Maine, lobstermen are preparing for a more dynamic schedule of Zone Council meetings. These meetings provide an essential forum for discussing local concerns, strengthening our ability to respond to regional trends, and keeping the industry united and informed. These aren't just check-the-box meetings, they're vital to preserving our voice and values in fisheries management.

In New Hampshire and Massachusetts, fishermen are also gearing up for renewed conversations, particularly around the issue of resilience. From changing ocean conditions to shifting market demands, our fishery faces a wide array of pressures. Building resilience means more than adapting—it means leading the discussion about how our communities, businesses, and way of life can thrive in uncertain times. The passage of Addendum XXXII may feel like a pause, but it is in fact a strategic breath space to prepare. Our focus now must be to engage at every level: locally, at the zone and state level, and nationally through forums like the ASMFC and our federal partners. As always, the New England Fishermen's Stewardship remains committed to making sure our industry has a seat at the table, grounded in truth, tradition, and the tireless work ethic of the men and women who make this fishery possible. We've held the line. Let's keep showing up and steering the future of our fisheries together.

A Summer to Look Forward To

As summer approaches, all of us at NEFSA are excited to share a packed calendar of events happening up and down the coast—from Gloucester to Northeast Harbor, Bailey Island, and yes—even Spruce Head, Maine, this year. We've put together a variety of gatherings that highlight the people, places, and traditions that make our coastal communities so special.

Our Youth Membership Celebration Fair at Atwood Lobster Co. in Spruce Head, Maine, is on June 22nd, from 12-4PM, and includes fun activities for all ages. We are planning bounce houses, a dunk tank, and even a survival suit competition being hosted by the Fishing Partnership Support Services. With cornhole, some cool cars to see, art projects, and plenty of food available, this event should be a lot of fun and a great opportunity to catch up with NEFSA in a new location this year. This event is open to all, free to attend for NEFSA youth members, and carries a suggested donation of \$10 for all other attendees. Not a member yet? It's never too late to join at www.nefishermen.org

Our exclusive 3rd annual NEFSA at the Nor'easter event on July 18th is shaping up to be another elegant evening with fun and friends. As this event is by invitation only with limited seating, please reach out as soon as possible if you would like to be added to the mailing list for that.

For those of you planning to join us on Bailey Island on August 23rd, we're especially excited to announce the return of the Save Our Fisheries fundraiser at Cooks Lobster and Ale House, and we're thrilled to share that Nashville's Grand Ole Opry "Josie

By: NEFSA Director of Development Dustin Colson

Award" 2024 recipient Lexi and the Wild Heart will be returning to help us celebrate and support this important cause.

We encourage you to visit our website (www.nefishermen.org) to check out the details around what's planned so far. We're updating the schedule regularly, so be sure to check back often to stay up to date. If you're interested in sponsoring an event or getting involved in another way, I'd love to hear from you. You can reach me directly at fundraiser@fishermenstewardship.org.

Thank you for being part of our community, we can't wait to see you out there this summer.



Restoring American Seafood: A Turning Point for U.S. Fisheries

By NEFSA COO Dustin Delano

This April, President Donald Trump issued Executive Order 14276: Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness, a bold and much-needed directive that sets a new tone for the future of U.S. fisheries. By prioritizing American-harvested seafood, reducing regulatory burdens, and advancing cooperative science, this Executive Order is a resounding affirmation of the values and struggles of the U.S. commercial fishing fleet—especially here in New England. For too long, federal fisheries management has operated at arm's length from the people who live and work on the water.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), under NOAA, has often been seen as disconnected from the realities we face every day. That's why this Executive Order represents more than a policy shift—it's an extraordinary opportunity to realign our nation's seafood strategy with the voices and expertise of America's fishermen. The EO rightly calls for a return to common sense management based on real-world experience. It recognizes that the people best equipped to inform sustainable fisheries policy are the harvesters themselves. We welcome the emphasis on field-informed leadership, and we strongly urge NOAA to act immediately to build direct partnerships with commercial fishing representatives. These collaborations are essential for designing and implementing the priority actions identified in the order. Real trust can only be built through transparency and cooperation, not top-down mandates.

Equally important is the Executive Order's promotion of pro-America seafood marketing. For decades, American fishermen have been forced to compete against imports produced under far lower environmental and labor standards. Prioritizing U.S.-harvested seafood not only boosts our economy but restores pride and integrity to the American seafood brand. We also applaud the administration's clear focus on cutting red tape.

A public comment period on deregulation efforts is expected soon, and NEFSA urges all fishermen and stakeholders to engage in the process. This is our chance to remove outdated, ineffective regulations that hinder our ability to fish responsibly and profitably. President Trump's EO 14276 is a breath of fresh air for working waterfronts across the country. If NOAA and NMFS are serious about restoring confidence in federal fisheries management, they must treat this order as a call to fundamentally rebuild their relationship with the fishing industry, starting by listening to those of us who are most affected by their decisions. The time to act is now. The American commercial fishing industry has waited long enough.



Upcoming Fisheries Meetings:

MAINE DMR

*June 16, 2025: Zone C Lobster Council Meeting, 5PM, Stonington Town Hall, 32 Main Street, Stonington.

*June 18, 2025: Commercial Fishing Safety Council Meeting, 5-7PM, Webinar.

*June 25, 2025: Aquaculture Public Hearing, Quahog Bay Conservancy, 1PM. Brunswick Town Hall, 85 Union Street, Brunswick.

*June 26, 2025: Aquaculture Advisory Council Quarter 3 Meeting, 11AM - 2 PM, DMR Augusta Building Room 118, Augusta or Webinar.

FMI: <https://www.maine.gov/dmr/meetings>

NEW ENGLAND FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

*June 24-26: New England Fishery Management Council, Hilton Garden Inn, Freeport, ME

FMI: <https://www.nefmc.org/calendar/june-2024-council-meeting>

ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

*June 17, 2025: Atlantic Menhaden ERP Work Group, 1-5PM, Webinar.

*June 18, 2025: Atlantic Menhaden Stock Assessment Subcommittee, 9AM-12PM, Webinar.

*June 26, 2025: Sector Separation PDT/FMAT, 9AM-12PM, Webinar.

<https://asmfc.org/events/>

MID-ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

*June 24-25, 2025: Peer Review Meeting/Management Track Assessments, 9AM-5PM

*June 30, 2025: Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Advisory Panel, 3-6PM, Webinar.

FMI: <https://www.mafmc.org/council-event>





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Welcome to our latest business members:

**Hamilton Marine
 Maine Lobster Now
 Swan's Island Fishermen's
 Co-op**

**Delmarva Fisheries Association
 New England Marine & Industrial
 Portland Fish Exchange**

**Aaron Larrabbe
 Bean Maine Lobster
 Cynthia and David Niquette
 of Kent's Wharf**

NEFSA's Reach:

By NEFSA AA Shelley Wigglesworth

Our membership base continues to grow! We appreciate the commitment so many of you have made to NEFSA. These efforts of banding together and standing together in unity by joining, supporting and donating to NEFSA are allowing us to be heard, seen, and recognized as one of the most influential fishing advocacy groups around, and we are not limited to New England. We have NEFSA members across the USA, in the Northern and Southern states and spanning the East and West Coast, as well members in Hawaii, Alaska, Canada, and the UK. Our vast platform has enabled us to bring attention to the threats the American fisheries face and how that touches all of us. Since our founding just 2 short years ago, we have had a seat at the table at important meetings allowing us to advocate for the American fisheries in not just the New England states, but at our nation's capital, throughout the USA, England, and Canada. We have been featured and sighted in local, national and world media outlets on both television and radio, online, and in newspapers and magazines. Fishermen, and people who care about the American commercial fisheries, uniting in the good fight is working and paying off, Thank you.

