



New England Fishermen's Stewardship Association

September & October 2026

Northeast Lobsterman Protection Act Passes House, Moves to Senate

There is more encouraging news to report in Washington for New England's lobster and Jonah crab fishermen. On September 1, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 9436, the Northeast Lobsterman Protection Act of 2026, by a bipartisan vote of 219-196.

The legislation, which would extend the current regulatory framework for the American lobster and Jonah crab fisheries through 2035, has now cleared the House and moved to the U.S. Senate. This represents a significant step forward for an industry that has spent years dealing with regulatory uncertainty surrounding the North Atlantic right whale and the future of fixed-gear fisheries.

NEFSA is grateful to the members of the New England congressional delegation who supported the legislation and stood with the region's fishermen on this important issue. In particular, we want to recognize:

- Rep. Jared Golden (D-ME-02)
- Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-ME-01)
- Rep. Maggie Goodlander (D-NH-02)
- Rep. Chris Pappas (D-NH-01)

All four voted in favor of H.R. 9436 on the House floor. Their support, along with the support of members from across the country, helped move this legislation through the House. The House vote follows the bill's bipartisan approval by the House Natural Resources Committee in July, where it passed 22-13. The legislation was introduced by Representative Mike Lawler of New York and was cosponsored by Representative Jared Golden of Maine.

What the Legislation Does

H.R. 9436 would extend the existing regulatory pause on certain new regulations affecting the lobster and Jonah crab fisheries from 2028 to 2035. The additional time is important because NOAA's Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team is undertaking a process to evaluate risk reduction measures for fixed-gear fisheries.

By Dustin Delano, Chairman & Chief Strategist

As NEFSA has previously explained, much of the data being used in current modeling predates the enhanced right whale monitoring program that has been collecting new information for approximately two years. Extending the current framework provides additional time for scientists, regulators, and fishermen to continue gathering and evaluating that information.

It also allows future management decisions to incorporate additional whale monitoring, improved information about whale distribution, and advances in fishing technology and risk-reduction measures. Importantly, the legislation does NOT remove existing protections for North Atlantic right whales. Those conservation measures remain in place. Instead, the bill extends the timeline for implementing certain new regulatory requirements while additional scientific information is collected and evaluated.

For fishermen, that distinction is important. The goal is to provide a longer period in which science can develop, and the fishing industry can continue working with regulators on practical measures to reduce risk.

The Next Step: The U.S. Senate

While passage in the House is a major milestone, H.R. 9436 is not yet law. Following House passage, the legislation was transmitted to the Senate and, on September 14, was referred to the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. The Senate will now have to consider the legislation.

For the bill to become law, it must ultimately pass the Senate and then be signed by the President. That means the work is not finished. NEFSA will continue engaging with members of Congress and working to build support for the legislation as it moves



through the Senate. The Senate will be the next critical step in securing the regulatory certainty that Northeast lobster and Jonah crab fishermen need.

The House vote demonstrates that there is bipartisan congressional support for giving fishermen, scientists, and regulators additional time to develop the information necessary for responsible long-term management.

The latest from NEFSA's Director of Advocacy

By: Jason Joyce

Here's a brief update on the latest fisheries issues I've been a part of and following.

ASMFC Meeting:

NEFSA attended the ASMFC meeting to track lobster and menhaden issues. Some groups are pushing to cut the menhaden TAC again, and we're preparing to defend the quota to protect the fleet.

HR 9436: HR 9436 passed, which is a major win for Maine's and New England's lobster fleet. The bill does not include funding for data collection, but NEFSA is pushing the Senate to add passive acoustics, gliders, aerial surveys, vessel surveys, and whale-tagging tools. Recent research shows no right whales Down East. Without the original pause in whale rules, Zone A would have needlessly reduced to 50 traps.

Herring Quota: Proposed cuts to the herring quota would hurt the remaining fleet. NEFSA is pushing back.

Whale Take Reduction Timeline: An expedited Whale Take Reduction Team timeline was highlighted at all zone meetings by DMR — 31 months start to finish.

Zone Council Highlights:

Escape vents are moving from 3x3 to 3x4 in all Zones. The change of the escape panel size won't be effective until July 1st, 2029.

NEFSA appreciates every member of Congress who supported H.R. 9436, and we especially thank Representatives Golden, Pingree, Goodlander, and Pappas for representing the interests of New England's fishing communities. We will continue working on behalf of our members as this important legislation moves to the Senate and will keep the industry informed as the process continues.

A \$5,000 seed fund was approved for buying unnotched females for 2027 notching and liberation.

Zone F discussed trap reduction under "other business," leading to a request to add it to the next Zone F agenda.

Zone A discussed expanding the Beals-Libby Island 4-trap area westward and raising it to 5 traps.

Zones A and D voted to send support letters for HR 9436 to Representatives Golden and Pingree.

Georges River Dredge: The Army Corps presented the Georges River Dredge Project. Lobstermen and clambers strongly opposed it, and Zone D voted to oppose the project.



Frenchboro, Maine Brothers Save Fisherman

NEFSA Administrative Assistant

By Shelley Wigglesworth,

This past August, brothers Lukas and Hayden Fortin of Frenchboro, Maine worked together to keep captain Jay Fiandaca from being dragged overboard after being caught in a trap line aboard the F/V Amanda Rose. The brothers, who are in eighth grade, spent their summer as apprentices on Jay's boat and didn't think twice about doing what they had to do to save their captain when the mishap occurred. The Town of Frenchboro commended the brothers for their quick thinking which saved a life. NEFSA also honored the boys with recognition, NEFSA memberships, and NEFSA swag.



NEFSA's 4th Annual "Save Our Fisheries" Summer Bash a Success

By Shelley Wigglesworth, NEFSA Administrative Assistant

Our 4th Annual "Save Our Fisheries" Summer Bash took place Saturday, August 15, 2026, at Cook's Lobster & Ale House on Bailey Island, Maine. Once again, this popular event was a tremendous success, and we were blown away by the outpouring of support! We would like to recognize the following sponsors for making this event happen:

Captain Sponsors: New England Marine and Industrial — <https://newenglandmarine.com> Mike Webber Enterprises Inc., Chip Johnson, Goose River Lobster, Wood Landing Lobster Company, Lobster Express, Ash Cove Lobster, Inc., Kenney Landscaping, Northeast Marine Survey, Craig and Martin Ramsay - F/V Ol' Greely,

First Mate Sponsors: Rob Williams Real Estate, Old Squaw Fisheries, Inc., F/V Sugar Daddy Lobsters, Terry Alexander - F/V Jocka, Troy & Pam Bichrest - F/V Pamela Grace, Cody Nunan-F/V Camtansea, Nicholas Oppedisano, Jeff & Amanda Conant, Glen's Lobsters, Andrew Washburn, F/V Evanolia, Engel & Völkers Casco Bay, Morse Fisheries LLC, Chris Nunan-FV Sea Wife, Mike Cota - F/V Miss K-Sea, Glen Rogers F/V Magnum, Nick & Andrew Morley-FV Locked 7 Loaded.

Crew Sponsors: F/V Nor'Easter, Protect Maine's Fishing Heritage Foundation, Machias Savings Bank, Harbor Bait Inc., American Seafood, Aaron Williams - F/V Tradition, Cushman Lobster Corporation, Wild Duck Boat Works, Wayne Clemons F/V Temptation, Brian Pennell, Sean Clemons-F/V Mean Kathleen, The Barlow Shave Parlor.

Friend of the Fleet Sponsors: Lost Boyz Fisheries, Basin Point Real Estate, Mark Wilson, Capt'n Louie's Lobster, Kristin Fletcher.

We would also like to extend a special shout out to Cook's for hosting, Sunburned Sharks for the music, Dirigo Septic Services for the donation of port-a-potties and cleaning stations, NEFSA board member George Prince for organizing the boat parade and soliciting many sponsors, NEFSA members Chuck and Mylissa Kapela for their generous donations of auction items and their countless hours of volunteer time, along with volunteers Jaimee Watts, Mylissa Kapela, Chuck Kapela, Anita Duffy, Bonnie Brady, Bradford Sawicki, Kim Sawicki, Dan Roberts, Ed Baxter, Rose Wills, Emily Buell, Jean Ann Williams, Jenn Van Leuvan, Jennifer Smith, Julie Kenney, Kellie Teel, Lisa Giulianelli, Lois Beardsley, Nicki Leeman, Tammy Howes, Teri Francine, & Victoria Carr and the volunteers who showed up the day of the event who may not be listed here. We appreciate you!



Congratulations Elyza Chipman winner of NEFSA's Youth Writing Contest!

Elyza Chipman was the winner of the 2026 NEFSA Youth Writing Contest. She received 4 free tickets to NEFSA's 4th annual Save Our Fisheries Summer Bash for her family and got to take home a NEFSA swag bag & read her personal story to all in attendance at the 4th Annual Save our Fisheries Summer Bash at Cooks.

Read Elyza's essay about growing up in a fishing family below:

"My name is Elyza Chipman, and I am 13 years old. I live in Seal Cove Maine on Mount Desert Island. I am a sixth-generation fisherman. I've been lobstering for as long as I can remember. I got my student license at the age of eight and now have 50 traps of my own that I fish. I also help my dad as third crew on his boat.

My dad has taught me everything I know about being on the water and working on the boat. I have learned how to rig and haul traps, paint bouts, bait and set traps, tie the buoy and traps, drive and dock a boat. He has shown me the whole process of lobstering from start to finish.

We wake up at 4:30am, pack our lunches and head to the dock to get the boat ready and pick up the rest of the crew before heading out to haul our first trap.

During the summer, I go out with him to learn even more about the job. Being a fisherman's child means helping out on the boat and on the dock. I prepare all the bait, band all the lobsters, put fuel on the boat and even help with that maintenance with the boat like the oil changes. My dad cleans the boat while I drive home.

NEFSA Joins EPA Administrator Zeldin at Wesmac Custom Boats to Discuss Tier 4 Engine Concerns

SURRY, Maine — On October 1, I had the opportunity to join EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin, Maine fishermen, boatbuilders and industry representatives at Wesmac Custom Boats in Surry to discuss the practical and financial challenges posed by federal Tier 4 marine diesel engine requirements.

The visit provided Administrator Zeldin with an opportunity to see firsthand how the larger engines and associated emissions-control equipment can affect the design, operation and economics of working lobster boats.

I thanked Administrator Zeldin for taking the time to engage directly with fishermen and boatbuilders. I also pointed to EPA's recent approval in July allowing a specific lobster boat to utilize a Tier 3 engine after determining that available Tier 4 engines could not fit the vessel while maintaining its essential operating requirements.

"An engine has to fit the boat, power it reliably and still leave fishermen with the space necessary to safely operate and earn a living," I said. "These requirements have real consequences for vessel design, safety and the economics of a fishing business." I also raised the international competitiveness of the issue. Maine

By Shelley Wigglesworth, NEFSA Administrative Assistant

Working alongside my dad has taught me responsibility, hard work and valuable skills. I know I have to be responsible because it's very dangerous to run a boat. The work on a boat involves heavy lifting and being on your feet most of the day along with long hours. School has not taught me about winds, currents, and tides like he has. I can say I've learned more being on the boat than I have in school.

Some of my favorite things about being on the boat are seeing sunrises, different animals, seeing what comes up in the traps, and going to different places on the boat that you can't get to by land. A few of my least favorite things are waking up very early, the rough seas and the sea sickness.



Being a fisherman's child is very special. I am grateful for everything my dad has taught me and the time that we get to spend together. I know the lessons he has taught me will stay with me for the rest of my life. Even on the longest and hardest days, he never gives up and that has inspired me to always do my best, never give up, and not to be afraid of hard work."

By Dustin Delano, NEFSA Chairman and Chief Strategist

fishermen compete directly in the seafood marketplace with Canadian harvesters operating under a different marine emissions regulatory framework. Environmental regulations should account for the competitive consequences of imposing substantial additional costs on U.S. fishermen when foreign competitors harvesting the same resources and selling into the same markets may not face equivalent requirements.

For me, the October 1 discussion reinforced the importance of having regulators understand the practical realities facing New England's commercial fishing fleet. Environmental objectives are important, but regulations also need to recognize the unique design, safety and economic circumstances of working fishing vessels.

I appreciate Administrator Zeldin and the EPA officials who came to Maine, listened directly to fishermen and boatbuilders, and showed a willingness to continue examining options for a durable solution. These conversations are important, and I look forward to continuing the dialogue as we work toward a regulatory approach that protects both our environment and the ability of American fishermen to make a living

2nd Annual NEFSA Kids Fair-A Day to Remember

By Shelley Wigglesworth, NEFSA Administrative Assistant

Our 2nd annual NEFSA Kids Fair was held Sunday, August 23, 2026, at Atwood Lobster Company in Spruce Head, Maine. Despite the dreary weather, we had a great turn out, with a boatload of free fun for all! Highlights included: fish print art, dunk tank, balloon animals, bounce house, race car appearance, South Thomaston firetruck display, cornhole, face painting & temporary tattoos, Free NEFSA tee-shirts and promotional items for kids, free promotion-

al items for adults, NEFSA swag for sale, food by Cousins Lobster, and the much-anticipated highlight of the day, the lobster crate races! Special thanks to Jaimee Watts for her help organizing the Kid's Fair and lobster crate races, going above and beyond to make it all happen and run smoothly, and to Shannon Kinney for her emcee skills during the races!



Lobster Crate Race Winners

1st Place: Lev Keepert, age 12, Damariscotta, ME-247 crates.

2nd Place: Blake Monroe, age 13, Owls Head, ME 160 crates.

3rd Place: Thomas Harjula, age 8, South Thomaston, ME, 110 crates.

Tyleigh Tripp, age 8, Spruce Head, ME, 98 crates.

Crate race winners received Sea Dogs Tickets from Cheney Insurance Company, Gift Certificates to Mid-Coast Sports Exchange, Fishing Poles & Tackle Boxes from Atlantic Marine Supply, & Swag and bait bags full of goodies from Brooks Trap Mill! Special thanks to all the donors and sponsors, and all who attended! We hope to see you next year!



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NEFSA Business Members, please send your Logos

If you are a NEFSA business member and have not yet sent your business logo (or boat photo if you are an independent fisherman business member without a logo), please do so we can add it to our “dedicated business members section” of the NEFSA website. All business members on the page must be current with membership, with a 30 day grace period to renew.

To find out if your business logo is listed, please check out the “dedicated business members section” at the bottom of the NEFSA home page, here: <https://nefishermen.org/>. To check on your membership status, please reach out to Shelley at: shelley.wigglesworth@nefishermen.org or 207-536-1015.

NEFSA Social Media Growth

We now have 29K NEFSA FaceBook followers and counting! Thank you for making us one of the fastest growing fishing advocacy groups out there! We appreciate you! Be sure to like and follow us on all NEFSA social media pages!

FaceBook: <https://www.facebook.com/fishermensteward/>
Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/nefsa/>
X: <https://x.com/fishstewardship>

The NEFSA Seafood Directory is Live

By Shelley Wigglesworth, NEFSA Administrative Assistant

The NEFSA Seafood Directory is our newly launched addition to the NEFSA website where you can access trusted seafood dealers near you, who are also NEFSA members.

By purchasing from NEFSA seafood distributors, you are not only supporting the NEFSA & the American commercial fisheries, you are actively playing a role in strengthening local businesses & the local economy, while helping to preserve a way of life that is worth saving. Commercial fishermen feed the world and help us all live better.

To be included in the NEFSA Seafood Directory, you must be a current NEFSA business member in good standing. Become a member here: <https://nefishermen.org/membership/>

Visit the NEFSA Seafood Directory here:
<https://nefishermen.org/seafood-directory/>

