

P. O. Box 88
Belfast, ME 04915
March 18, 2015

Marine Resource Committee
State House
Augusta, Maine

RE: LD 491 – Speaking “Neither For or Against”

Dear Marine Resource Committee,

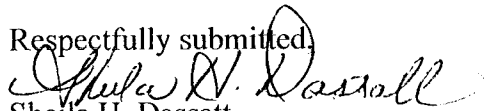
Although we feel that this bill has good merits or intentions, there are many questions that have not yet been resolved or completely thought through. This is why we have decided to take the stand of “neither for or against.”

Such key points that need to be considered are as follows:

- Budget shortfall: In these times of economic trouble, and the DMR generally having a shortfall of funds to operate effectively. Would this be adding to that short fall, making it harder to function properly?
- More reduced fees: At the current year, license fees are for 70 & older: Class I, \$66.00; Class II, \$246.00; Class III, \$363.00. If this bill passes, Class I remains \$66.00; Class II would become \$136.00; Class III would become \$203.00. Along with that, we will be dropping the age from 70 to 65 which puts us closer to the age of the majority of lobster fishermen in the State of Maine. Not only are we changing the age, but also dropping the fees of the license itself. This compounds the issue of budget shortfall.
- How do we make up for this short fall?
- Will license fees go up for others to make up for the short fall?

- Will there be an increase in tag fees?
- Will this reduce the Maine Lobster Collaborative funding?
- What about a choice such as reduced license fee with reduced trap tags, which give lobstermen a choice? With reduction of the lobster license fees, most fishermen will still be very active in the fishery. Most will be probably be fishing maximum tags allowed. If the concerns are the retirement age status, these fishermen will still be making a very good income while the burden of supporting the DMR may fall upon the **younger generation**. The majority of licensed fishermen at this present time are now approaching 65.
- Reduced license fee – Reduced trap tags: One option that might be considered is a trap limit on a reduced license fee such as 400 trap maximum. This way, the fisherman has a choice. He can reduce his effort and his license fee at the same time. One advantage of this would be: we would actually be getting trap reduction numbers that would benefit our fishery. These traps would be coming out of the water instead of being rolled over to “the enter and exit ratio” when a license is surrendered. This puts the choice “in the hands of the fishermen.

With these suggestions being brought forth, we please ask you to take them into careful consideration when you go into your work session. Thank you for your time and support for our lobster fishery.

Respectfully submitted,

Sheila H. Dassatt
Executive Director
Downeast Lobstermen's Association
dassatt711@yahoo.com
207 338-1406
207 322-1924