



MAINE

Lobstermen's Association, Inc.

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In Support of

LD 1561 Resolve, Regarding the Percentage of a Lobster and Crab Fishing Licensee's Lobster Traps That May Be Fished in a Lobster Management Zone Listed on the License as a Secondary Zone

April 17, 2025

Senator Tepler, Representative Hepler, and members of the Marine Resources Committee, the Maine Lobstermen's Association (MLA) submits this testimony in support of LD 1561 to direct Maine Department of Marine Resources to solicit feedback from the lobster zone councils regarding the proportion of lobster traps that may be fished in a secondary zone.

The MLA is a strong supporter of Maine's zone council process which has been in place since the late 1990's. The zone councils were established to give lobstermen a voice in the management of their local fishing areas, recognizing the diversity of Maine's lobster fishery along the coast. The system works because lobstermen elect their local zone council members and are invested in ensuring the sustainability of the both the lobster resource and their local fishery.

The regulations requiring lobstermen to fish the majority of traps in their home zone, and to tag traps fished in secondary zones, ensure that lobstermen maintain control of their local areas. For the zone council system to work, the majority of gear fished in a zone must be fished by local fishermen. They must not be at risk of being crowded out or outnumbered by lobstermen from other zones. This is very important because lobster abundance has increased significantly, first in the mid-coast Maine region and then Downeast. The zone council system prevents lobstermen from targeting lobster hotspots with all of their gear, limiting the amount of fishing pressure in areas where the stock is most productive. It has become an important conservation tool.

The Gulf of Maine, the lobster resource, and the fishery itself have experienced significant changes since the zone council system was first implemented. Zone Councils have served the industry well, but it is important to re-evaluate elements of the system to ensure that it continues to support the present-day, and future, Maine lobster fishery. These conversations should start with the zone councils.

The MLA urges you to support LD 1561. Thank you for your consideration.