

Marianne LaCroix
Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative

Senator Miramont, Representative McCreight and members of the Marine Resources Committee -- my name is Marianne LaCroix. I am the executive director of the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative and I am here to testify in support of LD 338.

The Collaborative is charged with promoting Maine Lobster and identifying market areas that will provide the greatest return on investment for the industry. Over the past 7 years, the Collaborative has focused on increasing demand for Maine Lobster in the United States, targeting wholesale, retail, foodservice and consumer buyers. We bring together the voices of hundreds of local fishermen, dealers and processors to provide one powerful voice for the industry.

The Collaborative developed methods of measuring success that provide meaningful results to the industry. We evaluate marketing metrics to determine general awareness and understanding of Maine Lobster and use additional tools to gauge action towards purchase as a result of our programs. We have generated over 9 billion media impressions by placing over 370 stories across top tier consumer and trade publications. Over 350,000 people have visited our online dealer directory to find a Maine Lobster supplier. 43% of seafood wholesalers are more likely to buy Maine Lobster because they have seen our advertisements. More than 580,000 consumers are more likely to buy Maine Lobster as a result of our 2020 consumer ad campaign. In a recent promotion with a supermarket chain, lobster sales increased 79% during the course of the promotion. These results show that our marketing tactics are reaching potential buyers with the right messages at the right times.

The Maine Lobster industry is facing grave threats in the coming years, with new regulations on the fishery and competition for ocean bottom from various interests. The Collaborative's role is to ensure that buyers maintain confidence in the Maine Lobster brand. Our tactics include media training for industry spokespeople, message development, evaluating consumer sentiment, developing and distributing educational content and providing media outreach.

New regulations to protect right whales are top of mind for people in the lobster industry, including us. The Collaborative created a website to provide the fishery's perspective on the issue. It includes fact sheets, video content and media coverage to educate interested parties. We surveyed consumers to determine their awareness of the issue and found that the majority of people are unaware of any connection between right whales and Maine Lobster. More importantly, the survey showed that awareness of the issue isn't impacting their purchase decisions. With this information, we created a targeted communications approach that tells the fishery's perspective through social media content and distributed these assets to fishermen and dealers so that they have the tools to spread consistent and effective messages.

Moving forward, we will continue to work to increase demand for Maine Lobster through a creative public relations campaign, innovative social media outreach and targeted digital advertising. We have planned a new product innovation project to add more value to under-utilized parts of the lobster and a consumer research project to determine the optimal target audience by geography, demographics and behavioral traits.

Maine Lobster is competing in a marketplace where branded and commodity products are vying for attention. The Collaborative provides broad marketing support for the thousands of fishermen and hundreds of dealers and processors that rely on Maine Lobster.

The board of the directors for the Maine Lobstermen's Association and the Lobster Advisory Council both voted unanimously to support LD 338.

I urge your support of LD 338 and will answer any questions you might have. Thank you.