

Jim Wotton
Friendship

Senator Miramant, Representative McCreight, and Members of the Marine Resources Committee, My name is Jim Wotton I'm a sixth generation commercial fisherman from Friendship. I'm also Vice-chairman of Zone D and President of the Friendship Coop. I testified before you at the public hearing in opposition to LD28.

I'd like to take a minute to clear up a few things that I've heard and seen floating around on the internet.

Zone councils are comprised of elected representatives that are tasked with the duty of making decisions that are best for the zone that they represent(not the entire state), they are elected by licensed Lobstermen to represent licensed lobstermen. Zone council members DO NOT determine the exit/entry ratio for their Zone, it is done through a referendum ballot that is sent to all commercial license holders that declare that zone as their primary zone. It takes a 2/3 majority of those voting to change the ratio. The council can decide whether to conduct a referendum or not, but that is the limit of their power on that matter. Zone D has not changed the ratio (5/1) used the entire time I've been on the council, about 12 years. We have gone to counting tags, as opposed to licenses because we were not seeing the reduction in traps that we were directed to achieve (30% reduction from 1997 levels). A lot of the licenses that are not being renewed are currently latent and many of them have never been used. When license fees and promotional surcharges increase some license holders decide it is no longer worth holding on to something they will never use. Many of the latent licenses have never purchased all 800 tags that are allowed, using tags (4000/800 is still 5 to 1) as the method instead of licenses is an attempt to actually reduce effort not increase it. When we reach the goal set by DMR of a 30% reduction of 1997 levels, the ratio automatically goes to 1 to 1.

Student entry is not out of control. Yes, there are a lot of students in the program but most will not go on to become commercially licensed. In the last couple years Zone D has actually licensed as many off the waiting list as students graduating to commercial full time licenses. If I remember correctly in the last two years 7 came off the waiting list and 7 students for a total of 14 new licenses. I have two kids that chose not to complete the program, they fished through school and both had the required hours and days but decided it was not what they wanted to do. They will have to live with that decision just as everyone that made the same decision before them will. Everyone on the waiting list either had the opportunity to complete the student program or is old enough to have been eligible to buy one before it became limited entry, but they didn't. There is no age discrimination. Everyone had a chance.

We need more young people to come into the fishery. We need them to be able to buy homes and stay in our communities, send kids to our schools and ensure that our working waterfront is maintained. As opposed to someone that has had a career and just wants to semi-retire and dabble in fishing.

Enacting LD 28 would completely destroy the entry program we have now. It will no longer be an entry program it will simply be a 10 year waiting period, for now, in a year or two it will be 8, 7, 6 or whatever someone feels is "fair".

While I commend Representative Tuell for trying to gather the thoughts of those involved, a poll on Facebook was a bad idea. Very little correct information was provided in that thread by those participating. I truly hope we aren't legislating or forming opinions from the info there.

Most of the ones who have lived through this since the beginning choose not to engage the ones that are most vocal in favor of LD 28. They are not interested in arguing with someone that has no understanding of or willingness to learn the history or how we got where we are.

Thank you, Jim Wotton