



## THE MASSACHUSETTS LOBSTER INDUSTRY 2012 IT'S FISHERMEN, MARKETS & SUPPORT INDUSTRIES

There are 1206 lobster permits issued by the state for commercial lobster fishing in state waters.

This number has actually been declining from a high of over 1800 due to a very successful state program that allows license transfers to new participants and yet also through attrition reduces the total number of licenses issued. The state's permit transfer program was one of the first in the New England lobster fishery and is a model now being examined by other states.

There are an additional 174 permits issued by the state to land lobsters caught in federal waters.

There are approximately 9,360 recreational lobster permits issued to catch lobsters in state waters. These permits are issued to individuals to use traps or dive for lobsters.

There are 52 ports in Massachusetts that have commercial lobster trap fishermen.

In 2012 over 14.5 million pounds of lobsters were landed in Massachusetts by commercial fishermen. Of that figure, approximately 8 million pounds came from near shore state waters (within 3 miles of land).

This total generated a gross income of \$53,359,827.00 for the lobster fishermen who reported landings.

This income also generated approximately \$250,000,000 for the economy through lobster fishermen to marine suppliers, bait dealers, lobster dealers (wholesalers, retailers & restaurants), trap and rope manufacturers, fuel sales, boat and engine builders, banks and insurance companies. This figure does not include personal expenses and expenditures of individual fishermen's families or company employees.

The Massachusetts lobster fishery is this states' most valuable state waters single species marine resource and fishery. Only the State of Maine exceeds the Commonwealth in the entire United States in the size and value of its American Lobster (*Homarus Americanus*) fishery.

In the states' territorial waters, approximately 300,000 traps are fished by commercial lobstermen. Another 86,948 traps are fished by Massachusetts fishermen just outside the states' waters using federal licenses. These numbers represent a relatively stable number of traps fished over the past 5 or 6 years. By comparison, however, Maine has approximately 6,500 licenses and reportedly over 5 million traps.

The Massachusetts lobster trap fishery is conducted by individual, small, owner-operated operations rather than large corporate enterprises.

On the average, operating ratios (gross revenue to expenses) are in the 50% category (\$1.00 of every \$2.00 is needed to pay for the costs of operating).

Boston and Massachusetts based lobster dealers in general are the chief suppliers of the American Lobster to the world market. The majority of all lobsters come through these dealers. This includes lobsters from Maine and Canadian sources because of the transportation network that exists in Boston and is not as extensive in Maine and maritime Canada. At certain times of the year Massachusetts lobsters are a vital source of the world supply and therefore contribute lobster not only for the local needs and tourist businesses here in Massachusetts, but also supply the rest of the United States, European and Asian markets. At other times it's a combination of Massachusetts and Maine product that is the major world supply. In the winter months it is primarily Canadian product coming to Boston and then out again that supplies the world demand.

The average lobster trap costs \$60 per unit and the rope for that trap averages \$8. Buoys can range from \$5 per buoy to as high as \$25. Most fishermen use the less expensive model. Buoy loss is a major problem with boats and ships breaking off the buoys. The loss of from one to twenty traps is possible if buoys are lost. Storms, such as the infamous "No-name Storm" (The Perfect Storm), a major Nor'easter in March 2001 and the December 2003 Nor'easter / snow storm caused major losses of lobster gear and severe financial hardships for fishing families. There is no insurance available for this equipment.

Most vessels used in the Massachusetts inshore lobster fishery cost between \$10,000 and \$200,000 each. Area banks hold the mortgages on these vessels. These vessels range from close-to-shore "outboard boats" in the 18-25 foot size to 45 foot diesel powered boats and have from one to as many as three men aboard. All are considered "day-boat" operations in that they return to port each day.

Offshore lobster fishing is also an industry in Massachusetts. There are less boats in this sector and their catches are landed generally in ports on Cape Cod, New Bedford-Westport, Boston and Gloucester. These tend to be bigger boat operations with more crew members and fish with traps in the Georges Bank and offshore Canyons mostly beyond 100 miles at sea. Their trips are overnight and average 3 or 4 days at a time. Their totals are included in the Massachusetts statistics if they use Massachusetts ports.

The lobster bait industry is also a major multi-million dollar industry here in Massachusetts. Without bait, lobstermen are "dead-in-the-water"; no bait – no lobster. It is estimated that the New England lobster industry uses over 110,000 metric tons of bait each year. Many of these suppliers are here in Massachusetts. Massachusetts fishermen use about 20% of the total tonnage. The bait industry supplies mostly herring, menhaden, skate and "cuttings" from fish processing plants that provide flounder, cod and haddock for the food market.

\*Additional details, as well as many of these statistics, are available in the *Massachusetts Lobster Fishery Statistics, 2012, Mass. Division of Marine Fisheries.*



<http://www.mass.gov/agr/cqp/sectors/lobster/index.htm>