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MAINE COMMUNITIES AND LOBSTERMEN JOIN TOGETHER AT CRITICAL TIME FOR MAINE'S LOBSTER INDUSTRY

Augusta, ME – Local Maine businesses and residents in communities across the state have joined together with Maine lobstermen in a variety of creative ways to support Maine's vital lobster industry – and the efforts already are showing results. The active community support from Maine neighbors, businesses and residents comes as the Maine Lobster Council (MLC) continues an aggressive lobster promotion campaign it launched in October.

The MLC's campaign to promote Maine lobster, and the accompanying promotion activities taking place throughout Maine, come at a critical time for the industry, which is facing unprecedented economic challenges.

A variety of lobster promotion activities will continue in November. Promotion efforts coordinated by MLC have to date included active consumer outreach, print and radio advertising, a Maine radio-based marketing and education campaign, and multiple promotions designed to increase sales of Maine lobster.

"A community-wide effort like this is a Maine tradition," said Dane Somers, Executive Director of the Maine Lobster Council. "We think that part of the reason so many people have donated time and resources to help promote Maine lobster has a lot to do with Maine's history. Maine lobster plays a vital role not only in our state's economy, but as a central part of our state's heritage. Neighbors helping neighbors is a longstanding tradition in Maine, and it has been incredibly encouraging to see the response around the state."

The community and business efforts are not coordinated by MLC, but were developed independently as word spread about the lobster industry's current situation.

Maine's lobster industry is internationally recognized, and the industry directly supports over 10,000 Maine families, noted Somers. A healthy lobster industry also ensures the continued well being of Maine's vital working waterfronts – a strong driver of jobs, tourism and other economic benefits.

Due to the sizeable economic impact the lobster industry has in Maine, businesses not usually associated with lobster fishing have joined in active efforts to support lobster fishermen in their community and throughout the state. Over four dozen Maine radio stations, as one prime example, have joined the MLC's lobster promotion initiative, and have aired the MLC's lobster promotion Public Service Announcements at no charge throughout the state. The PSAs are scheduled to air through late November, and complement well the paid radio advertisement also developed by MLC, likewise being aired throughout Maine.

The campaign also features print ads placed in media outlets throughout the state. Radio and print outlets are supporting the lobster industry by providing discounted rates or special promotions.

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Outlets ranging from local weekly papers to national newswires also are playing an important role in the coordinated effort. Recent Maine Lobster promotion efforts have received coverage by the Associated Press in numerous outlets throughout the country, as well as in state dailies including *Portland Press Herald*, *Bangor Daily News*, and *The Ellsworth American*.

Maine businesses and communities have contributed resources to the effort, as well, donating everything from lobster events to ad space.

- Downeast Toyota in Bangor has promoted Maine lobster in its automotive advertising, while a full-scale community lobster bake was spearheaded by Heidi Stevens, co-owner of By George Jewelers in Rockland.
- Lobster appreciation events in the coastal Maine communities of Georgetown, Rockland, Stonington and Boothbay Harbor have resulted in the sale of over 10,000 lobsters, with additional lobster bakes and promotional plans in the works in other communities.
- Maine state representative Leila Percy of Phippsburg wrote and recorded a lobster jingle featured in the PSA campaign.
- Major markets are stepping up to the plate. Hannaford, Shaw's and Wegmans supermarkets are featuring Maine lobster promotions in their stores in New England and New York.
- Restaurants, including the Weathervane seafood chain, Gritty McDuff's Brewing Company and DiMillo's Floating Restaurant in Portland, also have launched lobster promotion efforts and advertising campaigns.

The current price of lobster means lobster is an excellent value, and restaurants and grocers across the state have shown their support by going out of their way to promote Maine lobster on their menus.

"This is an ideal time for diners to enjoy a luxury item – fresh lobster from Maine – at a value," said Somers. "Maine Lobster is the best lobster in the world, particularly during this time of year, and is something people can enjoy right now at the peak of the harvest."

Maine government plans are also underway to ensure the long-term health of the iconic Maine industry. Governor John Baldacci on October 24th signed an Executive Order establishing a Task Force on the Economic Sustainability of Maine's Lobster Industry. The task force is charged with making a comprehensive review of the Maine's lobster industry, and with recommending strategies to maintain the viability of the lobster industry in Maine.

"We're in a tough spot right now, but Maine's lobster industry is built on the hard work and dedication of exceptional people," added Somers. "Lobster fishing has always been an integral part of our history here. It's great that so many Mainers have joined together so quickly to make sure that Maine Lobster continues to be a strong part of our state's future."

About the Maine Lobster Council

The Maine Lobster Council (MLC) markets and promotes the sale of Maine Lobster in local, regional, national and world markets year-round. The Council encourages education and training of all customers — including wholesale, retail and foodservice, and end-consumers — about how to handle, prepare, serve, promote, and sell Maine Lobster. For additional information, visit www.lobsterfrommaine.com.

Photographs and additional media information are available for download at www.frontburnerpr.com/mlpc.

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