



PRESS RELEASE

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For more information contact:

Deirdre Gilbert

Maine Department of Marine Resources

624-6576

deirdre.gilbert@maine.gov

Jim Connors

Maine State Planning Office

287-8938

jim.connors@maine.gov

In a joint statement released today, the Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR) and the Land for Maine's Future Program (LMF) announced the selection of three new working waterfront projects along the Maine coast, preserving commercial fisheries access across those properties forever. The Board gave preliminary approval to grants from the Working Waterfront Access Pilot Program (WWAPP) to purchase "working waterfront covenants" that will restrict any future development of the land which conflicts with the commercial fisheries use. According to George Lapointe, Commissioner of the DMR and Chair of the LMF Board, "I am pleased that the WWAPP continues to attract such strong projects that meet the Program's goal of securing strategically significant working waterfront properties. With the addition of these projects, we are making real headway toward the vision of a coastline where commercial fishermen have a strong foundation from which to pursue their livelihoods, and support the coastal economy."

In its decision the Land for Maine's Future Board has approved the combined award of \$785,000 to projects in York Harbor, Pemaquid Harbor, and Goose Cove on Mount Desert Island to preserve the three properties valued at nearly \$3 million. Representative of the working waterfronts in southern, mid-coast, and Downeast sections of Maine, the projects preserve access for a combined 28 boats which support about 60 jobs in the fisheries and direct support services. Protected by the state's investment, use of these facilities could expand in the next few years by more than a third, creating an equal increase in new working waterfront jobs.

One of the recipients, the Old York Historical Society will restore and preserve the historic John Hancock Wharf on the York River for commercial lobster boat access and landings. Working waterfront in York Harbor is especially threatened for the 23 remaining fishing boats which operate there. In recent years development pressures have removed properties similar to the John Hancock Wharf from the fisheries, forcing most boats to unload at the overcrowded town dock. According to Scott Stevens, Director of Old York, "It is very gratifying that we can preserve a living part of our community's heritage by returning Hancock Wharf to its role serving the fisheries. This is a type of preservation not often possible".

The oldest fisheries cooperative in the country, Pemaquid Fishermen's Cooperative in Bristol, applied for the working waterfront access funds to "preserve fishing as a way of life in our little slice

of Maine”. The WWAPP monies will be used to invest in infrastructure improvements that stabilize and enhance revenues to the Co-op and increase membership. Adoption of modern product handling, storage, branding and marketing techniques for lobsters is also part of their plan. Co-op Manager Wayne Dighton states, “For years we have faced skyrocketing bait, fuel, and insurance costs. At the same time, we have experienced a boat glass-ceiling price for our lobsters. Our incomes as fishermen have been steadily declining. Our Co-op membership is declining and aging. Younger people in our community still have an interest in lobstering but are discouraged since it is hard to see how they can make a living doing so. We are committed to changing this situation for our children and ourselves.”

Robert and Wayne Davis of Tremont, brothers and well respected third generation fishermen on Mount Desert Island, own one of the last full service, fishermen-owned commercial wharves in this popular tourist destination. With Robert’s son Matt dedicated to lobstering as well, the family will assure that this working waterfront tradition stays in the community for commercial fishing activities. “Our lives have always been involved and intertwined in the fishing industry from the time we were young children growing up across from the wharf. It is our hope that our grandchildren have the same opportunity,” the brothers affirmed. Use of the state allocation will improve their business and pay for renovations to their wharf that will save labor, and increase earnings for all the fishermen who use the wharf now and in the future.

Funding for the Working Waterfront Access Pilot Program was created in 2005 and enhanced in 2007 when Maine voters approved two bond issues totaling \$5 million. To date the program has conserved or is working on nine working waterfront properties with a combined fair market value of over \$8 million. With significant funds still available, CEI Program Coordinators Hugh Cowperthwaite and Dick Clime urge fishermen, municipalities, and coastal conservation organizations to consider protecting important commercial fisheries (or aquaculture) access properties in their communities. Applications to the WWAPP are welcomed at any time and may meet multiple deadlines throughout this year and next. Those interested in learning more may call (207) 772-5356 and ask for the Working Waterfront Access Pilot Program or go online at www.wwapp.org.