Alliance for Maine’s Marine Economy

2018 HIGHLIGHTS

Seafood has sustained Maine’s coastal communities for centuries, and today our seafood industry has several competitive advantages, including high quality products, consumer affinity for our unique Maine brand, and proximity to distribution outlets and population centers (1). Great opportunities exist in value-added products, supply chain efficiencies, and the Maine culture of ingenuity and hard work.

The Alliance for Maine’s Marine Economy (Alliance) is a network of Maine-based organizations dedicated to a vibrant economy for Maine. Our mission is to ensure that the Maine seafood, fishing, and aquaculture industries, together with the natural and innovation ecosystems on which they depend, benefit Maine people and communities.

With its diversity of industry, educational institutions and nonprofit members, the Alliance is positioned to take advantage of the significant growth potential in Maine’s seafood industry. With a $14-plus million initiative ($7 million in public funds, administered by Maine Technology Institute, plus more than $7 million in initial private investments), the Alliance is committed to ensuring the success of Maine’s seafood industry, including sustaining and growing jobs.

The Alliance is enabling new technologies, like submersible mussel rafts and growing scallops using Japanese ear-hanging methods, that boost Maine’s aquaculture industry. Top photo by Kari Paine. Bottom photo courtesy of Coastal Enterprises, Inc.

Since 2016, the $7,000,000 Alliance investment has been enhanced by $20,340,302. Leveraged funds will continue to be tracked and reported.
Blending Maritime Heritage and New Opportunities

$100,000 (matched $100,000). The historic Bremen Lobster Pound had been abandoned, and was falling into the Medomak River. Warmer waters, higher feed costs, and the need for major structural repairs had made the facility obsolete. Selectman and entrepreneur Boe Marsh and local fishermen saw an opportunity to repurpose the pound into an aquaculture venue.

Alliance-supported improvements to the pound expand activities beyond lobster to include research, aquaculture, and seafood processing/distribution. Two refurbished piers now include research space, electricity, and flowing seawater. Marsh’s business, Community Shellfish, works with UMaine to study water quality and the effects of growing shellfish inside the pounds, which Marsh describes as “a spa for oysters.”

Revamped and repurposed equipment, refrigerated storage, tanks, and loading docks add to the compound’s capacity and character. “What was valued at zero dollars by the assessor a few years ago could potentially increase in value by at least $1 million,” said Marsh. So far, six new or expanded jobs have been created, three new products developed, and the business anticipates a 35% annual sales increase. Community Shellfish is home to 20 employees, 24 lobster crews, six tuna fishermen, five menhaden fishermen, and three new aquaculturists.

Ensuring a Vibrant Lobster Industry, in Maine and for Maine

$400,000 (matched $3,460,000). Lobster is Maine’s most valuable fishery, with nearly $434 million in landings in 2017. This value translates to more than 10,000 jobs, and an estimated $1 billion in economic impact (2). Today, the lobster industry is looking for new ways to add value to the state’s signature product.

Ready Seafood is pursuing innovation and technology in the lobster value chain at their new processing plant in Saco. Alliance funds supported high pressure processing technology that increases meat yield, enables the production of raw lobster meat, and triples the shelf-life of fresh lobster. This technology enables Ready Seafood to pursue expanded markets for their highest value product. “This machine will be the cornerstone of our new facility, enabling us to process more lobster here in Maine, create new lobster products and create new full-time year round jobs,” said co-owner Brendan Ready.
Springtide Seaweed, LLC
South Gouldsboro
$180,000 (matched $817,400) for creation of a new aquaculture seaweed exchange to expand production, increase jobs, and new product development.

Cooke Aquaculture
Eastport
$500,000 (matched $1,200,000) for a salmon feed barge to maximize storage and efficient feeding.

UMaine Aquatic Animal Health Laboratory
Orono
$1,150,000 (matched $1,950,000) for a new high-level biosafety laboratory to study fish pathogens, a needed service for industry and researchers.

Blue Hill Bay Mussels, LLC
Hancock
$44,328 (matched $254,972) for commercialization of remote settlement hatchery technology for rope-grown mussels.

Opportunities for Innovation in Downeast Maine
$2 million (matched $2 million). The Alliance investment enabled expansion and improvements to the Downeast Institute (DEI), creating a research “hub” for the region. Funds were used to purchase equipment and build capacity of the only marine research facility and business incubation space of its kind east of Bar Harbor. DEI serves as the Marine Science Field Station for the University of Maine at Machias, providing diverse opportunities for students, researchers, and industry members. “Scientists and entrepreneurs find that DEI has a tremendous, relatively undeveloped coastline rich with research and development opportunities. Our new facility will leverage our location to bring talent, ideas and investment to the region,” said Dianne Tilton, DEI’s Executive Director. So far this project has facilitated five new research projects, collaborated with seven businesses, and introduced four new candidates for shellfish aquaculture: Arctic surf clams, Atlantic surf clams, razor clams, and a gold variety of blue mussels. Trials for European oyster production sites are being conducted in cooperation with A.C. Inc. in Beals.

Maine Fair Trade Lobster
Prospect Harbor
$500,000 (matched $800,000) for expansion and repurposing of an old sardine plant for lobster processing.

Georgetown Aquaculture, LLC
Georgetown
$144,000 (matched $160,000) for oyster farm start-ups to help fishermen diversify and communities maintain their cultural fishing heritage.

Opportunities for Maine
Ready Seafood is integrating research into its business model, working with UMaine to improve conditions for lobsters stored at their facility and also funding in-the-water studies of lobsters to improve population projections of Maine’s most valuable marine product. This unique industry-science collaboration will enhance understanding of the distribution and abundance of lobsters into the future.
The Alliance is tracking the economic and social outcomes of these investments, including the number of jobs created or retained; the number of newly cultured species; new production sites; new collaborations, contracts, and research projects; and new technologies, services and products developed. Additionally, we are tracking increases in the supply and quality of existing products, and expanded seafood-related revenues. As knowledge grows in the sector, Alliance members will continue to share their experiences with new or expanded infrastructure and technologies, in order to facilitate learning and adoption by others in the industry.

An invitation to all

To learn more about the Alliance, visit umaine.edu/alliance, or contact Keri Kaczor, Alliance Coordinator, Maine Sea Grant, keri.kaczor@maine.edu 207.832.0343.

NOTES: