



P R E S S R E L E A S E

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Owners and Town Benefit from Owls Head Wharf Preservation

The Department of Marine Resources has purchased a protective covenant on the Ship to Shore Lobster Wharf in Owls' Head with support from the Land for Maine's Future Program. This action is another step in safeguarding the state's working harbors under the Working Waterfront Protection Program.

Rodney and Anna Mason's decision to preserve their lobster buying station in Owls Head had much to do with Rodney's desire to re-connect with the lobster business. Except for a short period of employment as a plant engineer out of state, he has lobstered in Casco and Penobscot Bays part-time since the age of twelve. When the Ship to Shore Lobster Wharf in Owls Head Harbor was offered for sale in 2008, Rodney and Anna made the decision to buy the property and its lobster wholesale business with an eye toward an eventual transition away from other careers and a return to the tough demands of the working waterfront.

Since 1966 the property has also provided a deeded town right-of-way to deep water in the harbor. On any given day during the fishing season, you are likely to see multiple lobster boats sharing float and pier berths with recreational boats, not an easy arrangement. Owls Head selectmen and the Masons are discussing extension of the agreement which should benefit both parties if a deal can be struck. The town would benefit if it can forego the costs of locating and building an alternative access pier. The Masons hope the increased public foot traffic past their office will enhance retail sales of lobsters. Owls Head Selectman Dick Carver commented, "Continuation of the shared agreement will be beneficial for the town because we have little alternative for public access. I'm happy the Masons bought the wharf. They're hardworking people and an asset to the community".

To help defray the purchase price of the property, the Masons applied for and recently received a Working Waterfront Access Pilot Program (WWAPP) award of \$226,250 in exchange for selling a restrictive covenant on the property that would keep it in the commercial fisheries forever. With a quarter acre of land, 190 feet of frontage, a large 14,200 square foot wharf, two sizable buildings, boat fueling capability, floats and hoists, the property is one of two important seafood buying stations in the harbor. The wharf supports about 30 lobster boats and 45 fishermen, buying their catch and selling them the fuel and bait they need to fish. The covenant, which is attached to the property deed, guarantees that the lobster boats will not be displaced by sport craft as they have been in other nearby Maine harbors. "Although commercial boat landings will

always be the primary priority of this wharf, diversifying the business model is necessary for the survival of the wharf”, believe Rodney and Anna Mason. “However, the first order of business is to preserve the property for generations as a significant piece of Maine’s Working Waterfront.”

The Maine Department of Marine Resources and the Land for Maine’s Future Program have joint responsibility for the WWAPP. Maine voters approved two bonds in 2005 and 2007 which allocated a total of \$5 million to protect the working waterfront. To date, nineteen important commercial fisheries properties ranging from York Harbor to Johnson’s Bay in Lubec have been allocated funds to purchase restrictive covenants on their use.

George Lapointe, Commissioner of the Department of Marine Resources and Chair of the Land for Maine’s Future Board, believes that the WWAPP, the first program of its kind in the nation, is progressing through its Pilot Scale phase to a more mature, effective preservation tool for working waterfronts. “Every project has its unique challenges, but the experience we have gained to date has served us well in bringing a suite of diverse properties successfully into the Program. Ship to Shore Lobster is a great addition to this group, and I know the Masons will put their all into expanding this working waterfront business to its full potential”, stated Commissioner Lapointe.

Voters will once again be asked to decide on the November 2010 ballot whether \$2 million as part of a larger Land for Maine’s Future bond should target the preservation of additional commercial fisheries properties. Increasing interest in the program from working waterfront property owners supports estimates that up to 100 important working waterfront access properties are still at risk from alternative development and are crucial to much of coastal Maine’s reliance on fishing for economic prosperity. For additional information on the WWAPP visit the website, www.wwapp.org

The WWAPP program and the Working Waterfront Tax Law have put Maine on the map as leaders in the nation for preserving and protecting working waterfronts. Maine will be hosting a national conference titled “Working Waterways and Waterfronts National Symposium on Water Access” in September 2010 in Portland. The WWAPP program and other programs and tools in use around the nation will be highlighted at the conference. For more information please visit the website www.wateraccessus.com