



Press Release

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For immediate release

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Working Waterfront Access Protected in Five Coastal Communities

Five new Working Waterfront Access Pilot Program (WWAPP) projects were given preliminary approval by the Land for Maine's Future (LMF) Board at their recent meeting according to a joint announcement by the Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR) and the Land for Maine's Future Program. A total of \$950,250 were allocated among the following applicants: The Wharf on Johnson's Bay in Lubec (\$341,500), The Fishermen's Heritage Co-op in Friendship (\$182,000), Tonry Cove Seafood in Edgecomb (\$145,750), The North End Lobster Co-op on Westport Island (\$135,250), and Potts Harbor Lobster/Bibbers Wharf in Harpswell (\$145,750). These funds from the WWAPP will purchase a "working waterfront covenant" on each property that will restrict any future development of the land that would conflict with fisheries uses. DMR Commissioner George Lapointe, who is also Chairman of the LMF Board, pointed out that when commercial fisheries properties are transferred to residential or other forms of commercial development they are lost forever as access points for Maine's commercial fishermen. Commissioner Lapointe emphasized the continuing need to protect Maine's maritime heritage by preserving fishing access, "Maine's marine fisheries are a vital part of the State's economy and the heritage of many coastal towns."

In its decision the LMF Board recognized that these properties are important to the state's economy and to the welfare of their host towns. Together these five fishing facilities serve about 115 commercial lobster and scallop boats and their crews as well as 120 harvesters of clams, periwinkles, oysters, and mussels, and their skiffs. Over 300 fishing families rely on these access points for their livelihood.

The Wharf on Johnson's Bay was a former sardine factory that has served fishermen as a wharf buying station since 1908. The current owners have invested in the renovations of the buildings and wharf to allow them to land lobsters, Jonah crabs, scallops, periwinkles, clams, mussels, and urchins from numerous fishermen. The allocation will allow them to further upgrade the property and start processing crabmeat on site while transporting their seafood directly to markets in southern New England.

The Fishermen's Heritage Lobster Co-op is the second major wharf in Friendship Harbor to apply for protection of their commercial fishing access. The Co-op buys lobster from as many as 40 boats in a community which is economically dependent upon the sea for its livelihood. With their award Co-op members want to completely replace a bait storage building and repair the pilings and cross timbers on the wharf below.

Richard and Amber Tonry own a family property where they and other harvesters fish and grow shellfish from the Damariscotta River estuary. With high property taxes, debt service on their boat, and costs of property maintenance, they feel that they will be forced to sell their 5 acre, 375 foot shoreline to a residential buyer. This award will allow them to continue fishing and provide commercial access to 6 other boats in an estuary where alternative sites are disappearing.

Except for a public boat launch without a pier, the Town of Westport Island has no other commercial fisheries access properties other than the North End Lobster Co-op. A former recreational marina, the property was purchased by Co-op members in 2002 and transitioned to a lobster landing and buying station. The price of that purchase has limited the Co-op's ability to re-invest in much needed business improvements. With the WWAPP money they will pay down their debt, freeing them to invest in infrastructure upgrades and alternative marketing plans.

Ash Point Cove at the end of Harpswell Neck juts into Casco Bay and is a prime location for a lobster wharf and buying station. Located on this peninsula, Bibber's Wharf has been a working property for nearly 40 years. The WWAPP award will allow Potts Harbor Lobster Co. to finance the purchase of the Bibber's property and expand their business. In this way the fisheries access from this site will be preserved for future generations of lobstermen.

Funding for the WWAPP comes from bond issues approved by Maine voters in 2005 and 2007 providing \$5 million to preserve commercial fishing access to the coast of Maine. To date the program has spent over \$4.2 M in state bond funds to secure commercial fishing access to 19 properties with a combined fair market value of \$17.3 M that handle \$40.4 M in annual landings, and support over 1000 fishing families.

Continuation of the Working Waterfront Access Pilot Program and preservation of additional access points for commercial fishermen will depend on voter approval of a \$2 bond referendum scheduled for the fall of 2010. Although no new WWAPP project applications are being accepted, inquiries are welcome to learn about the opportunities should funding be renewed. WWAPP coordinators Dick Clime and Hugh Cowperthwaite urge fishermen, commercial fisheries property owners, coastal municipalities and conservation groups to consider protecting important commercial fisheries (including clamming and aquaculture) access properties in their communities. To learn more call (207) 772-5356 in Portland (For York and Cumberland Counties) or 207-882-7552 in Wiscasset (for Sagadahoc, Lincoln, Knox, Hancock, and Washington Counties) and ask for the Working Waterfront Access Pilot Program or go online at www.wwapp.org.