



Press Release

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For immediate release

For more information contact:

Deirdre Gilbert

Maine Department of Marine Resources
624-6576

deirdre.gilbert@maine.gov

Jim Connors

State Planning Office
287-8938

jim.connors@maine.gov

Working Waterfront Protection Extends to Mt. Desert Island Family

The Working Waterfront Access Pilot Program has provided Wayne and Robert Davis of Tremont on Mt. Desert Island the ability to protect their property for future generations of fishermen. The Davis family accessed \$265,000 from the Working Waterfront Access Pilot Program to place a permanent covenant on their property which is “the last family owned, full service fishing wharf on the island,” according to co-owner Wayne Davis.

With 0.6 acres of land, 420 feet of rocky shoreline, a 3,200-square-foot wharf and associated storage and maintenance buildings, the Davis property has allowed four generations of family fishermen to supply lobsters, scallops and other seafood to local buyers. The rapid pace of development for new summer homes and the climbing property values of deep water frontage in this popular resort area have threatened that way of life.

The Davis family’s story is common. Maine fishermen earn less today for their fish and shellfish than they have in the past, while their business expenses continue to increase. If fishing heritage families can no longer make a decent living at their work, they are likely to choose to sell their land for alternative development, cutting off their property from working waterfront access forever.

Operated jointly by the Maine Department of Marine Resources and the Land for Maine’s Future Program, the Working Waterfront Access Pilot Program works to protect working waterfronts along the entire Maine coast.

“This program is another way to make critical investments in the future well-being of Maine families and the health of our coastal communities,” said Governor

Baldacci. “Working waterfronts define the character of Maine’s coast for residents and visitors alike, and are critical to our heritage and economy.”

Agreeing with the Governor, Commissioner George Lapointe stated that: “The Davis Wharf represents an excellent example of Maine’s multi-generational fishing families and their sincere desire to preserve access for future generations. We are very appreciative of their efforts and the time they have put into making this project a success.”

In addition to the program funds, owners of protected working waterfront can apply for property tax reductions from their local tax assessor that can be as high as 40-50 percent of the taxes applied toward the land portion of the property valuation.

The Davises are now able to protect their property in perpetuity while eliminating their mortgage debt. With the award, they also plan to build a new ramp and float access into deeper water.

Earlier in the decade, studies by Coastal Enterprises Inc. and the Island Institute recognized and quantified the trend of disappearing waterfront access for commercial fishermen. Out of this awareness came legislation that created the first Working Waterfront Access Bond Issue in 2005 and a simultaneous passage of the Current Use Tax Law which provides property tax relief to commercial access properties. A second bond issue was approved by Maine voters in 2007. These monies have protected 14 important commercial fishing properties with a fair market value of more than \$13 million, and more applications are forthcoming.

While demand for the program is increasing, current funds are only able to support five or six more projects. By 2050 the Maine State Planning Office predicts that much of the state coastline will be classified as suburban/urban putting the remaining commercial fishing access properties at risk.

The Legislature is considering proposals for a new Land for Maine’s Future Bond to send out to voters including additional funds to protecting the state’s working waterfronts. These funds, if approved by Maine voters, would continue to preserve working waterfront access.

Through the Working Waterfront Access Pilot Program, the Davis family is able to provide for young fifth generation lobsterman, Ryan Davis, age 4, who will have a guaranteed place to fish when he comes of age. “You have got to look to the future, and the lobster business is being pressed hard right now,” said Wayne

Davis. “This is about preservation. Now we can carry on like the Davis family has for 60 years.”

For additional information on the Working Waterfront Access Pilot Program visit the website, www.wwapp.org.

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