

# **LOBSTER INSTITUTE STRATEGIC PLAN 2006-2010**

**Approved by the Board of Advisors on 01/06/06**

## **BACKGROUND**

The Maine Lobster Institute was established in 1987 as the result of the united efforts of representatives from the Maine Lobstermen's Association, the Maine Lobster Pound Association, the Maine Import/Export Lobster Dealers and the University of Maine. Its initial charge was to "conduct research and provide information to protect, conserve, and enhance the Maine lobster resource and its environment in order to insure the continuance of a viable lobster industry that will benefit Maine people."

Almost from its inception the founders looked to expand the Institute's reach. They realized a unified approach (geographically and between sectors) would be most effective in dealing with the challenges faced by the lobster industry. The Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association became actively involved in the early stages of the Institute's development. With an increasing regional focus, the organization was renamed The Lobster Institute (Institute), and today boasts a Board of Advisors with representatives from major lobster industry associations, businesses and communities ranging from New York through the Canadian Maritime Provinces.

The Institute is headed by a part-time Executive Director appointed by the University of Maine, in consultation with the Institute's Board of Advisors. The Board of Advisors provides counsel to the Executive Director in identifying/establishing research priorities and on administrative matters relating to the Institute. They also provide assistance as necessary to Institute scientists, educators and students in carrying out their research. Further, they are charged with developing, maintaining and seeking to enhance the base funding for the Institute and its initiatives.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The Board of Advisors appointed a Strategic Planning Committee (Committee) in December of 2004 to review and revise the Institute's mission statement, values and vision statement, and to outline a five-year long-range plan to guide the Institute's activities through 2010. The Committee members are identified in Appendix A.

### Needs Assessment:

Information of the priorities of the lobstermen and others involved in the lobster industry was accounted for in developing this Strategic Plan. This information was culled from:

- input at both the 2004 and 2005 Canadian/U.S. Lobstermen's Town Meetings hosted by the Lobster Institute.
- needs assessment surveys distributed in 2004 and 2005
- ongoing dialogue with lobstermen at various formal meetings and informal gatherings

The Committee looked at literature on strategic planning and reviewed the Institute's 2002-2005 Strategic Plan. Revisions to the 2002-2005 Strategic Plan were drafted to reflect updated programming and research priorities and directions as suggested by the Needs Assessment. The draft was reviewed by the Committee in the fall of 2005. Following suggested edits, the draft was submitted to the Board of Advisors at its December meeting for its review, and put to a full vote by mail. The Lobster Institute Strategic Plan 2006-2010 was approved by the Lobster Institute's Board of Advisors on January 6, 2006.

## **CURRENT SITUATION**

### **Strengths :**

- Depth and breadth of connection to the industry via composition of the Board of Advisors – the Institute currently has 25 members volunteering their service on its Board of Advisors, with representation from the entire North Atlantic region. Additionally, most major industry associations are represented and business and community members also serve.
- Strong connection to the University of Maine – the Institute has a commitment of support from the University of Maine for use of facilities and equipment located on campus as well as financial support for a portion of staff salaries. Additionally, the Institute enjoys solid collaborative relationships with and a good reputation among University researchers.
- A positive reputation among a core of lobster researchers and industry leaders – the Institute is seen as being very involved in the lobster research community and as an entity that fosters communication among diverse industry sectors.
- Experienced Executive Director – the Lobster Institute's current Executive Director has over 25 years of experience in lobster research and has built an extensive network of contacts within the lobster fishery and the lobster research community. He has established comfort and trust levels with fishermen and others involved with the lobster industry.

### **Weaknesses:**

- Extensiveness of reputation – The Institute has strong connections with many of the principals involved with the industry and lobster researchers. Strides have been made in the last five years to broaden the awareness of the Institute and its accomplishments among a greater number of harvesters and others in the industry, as well as among members of the general public. However, this is an area still in need of focused attention in long-range planning.
- Limited resources – the amount and extent of the Institute's research and education projects is severely restricted by the financial resources of the Institute. Operational

revenues are insufficient and the growth of the Institute has been limited as a result. An endowment campaign, the C.O.R.E. Campaign, was begun during the last three years. The success of this campaign will be critical to bringing financial stability and growth to the Institute.

Working Structure of the Board of Advisors – while positions on the Board of Advisors are very representative of the lobster industry, greater involvement by individuals appointed to serve as representatives of their industry sectors is needed. A core group of dedicated individuals has shown a steady commitment, and new members have been brought on to the Board in the past year. A fresh look at responsibilities and involvement of the Board is needed to revitalize its role as the guiding force of the Institute.

### **Issues:**

Key issues that surfaced in the assessment process prior to the 2002-2005 Strategic Plan remain relevant as stated:

”The spirit of collaboration forged between industry and science, while having experienced growth in the past few years, is still fragile. This relationship needs continual nourishing in order to flourish. As a non-governmental, non-regulatory organization with solid industry backing, the Institute is in a unique position to play a key role in fostering this relationship.”

”The number of organizations becoming involved in lobster-related research is growing. This is both diluting available funding sources and accentuating the need for coordination and communication between research organizations. With this in mind, the Institute must

- reinforce its efforts to communicate information to the industry
- join in the dialogue to set lobster research priorities
- emphasize collaboration in all of its projects and programs
- re-double its efforts to become financially independent through building an adequate endowment fund.”

The Institute has embraced these challenges in the past few years, primarily through three new initiatives

- the Canadian/U.S. Lobstermen’s Town Meeting
- the Lobster Health Coalition.
- the C.O.R.E. Campaign

These fledgling efforts must be strengthened in the coming years, in order to establish the Institute as a leader in coordinating and unifying lobster research region-wide

## **GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

**GOAL 1. SERVICE AND SUPPORT TO THE LOBSTER INDUSTRY** – To identify practical problems of concern to the industry and to conduct and/or provide for research and educational outreach linking industry experts with academic resources to seek innovative solutions.

## **Objectives**

- 1 a.** To seek input from lobstermen and industry members through as many avenues as possible, including but not limited to:
  - regular meetings of the Institute’s Board of Advisors
  - staff and Board attendance at significant industry meetings and forums
  - continuing to host the annual Canadian/U.S. Lobstermen’s Town Meeting
  - engaging in informal dialogue with individual lobstermen, pound owner, dealers, and other industry members as well as industry associations
  - regular needs assessment surveys to provide long range planning guidance to the Institute.
- 1 b.** To create a Program Committee of the Board of Advisors which will work with staff to compile a list of research/service priorities for the Institute to be submitted to the Board for their approval.
- 1 c.** To coordinate and/or participate in as many research/service projects each year as financially possible and as time permits, and to ensure that selected projects address the Institute’s priorities as developed by the Program Committee.
- 1 d.** To continue to update the list of “Cooperating Researchers” to serve as collaborators with the Lobster Institute in its research/education projects.
- 1 e.** To continue to build a research endowment (separate from the operational endowment) to provide a pool of readily available funds to:
  - address immediate research needs of the industry as they arise
  - allow the Institute to offer research and educational project grants to qualified organizations whose proposals match the Institute’s priorities.
- 1 f.** To continue to improve the Institute’s use of the Internet as an information tool for the lobster industry.

**GOAL 2. COOPERATION** – To strengthen and expand our collaboration with lobstermen and all sectors of the lobster industry, including lobster researchers and management agencies, in order to better pursue our mission and as a means to encourage industry unity.

## **Objectives**

- 2 a.** To continue the Canadian/U.S. Lobstermen’s Town Meeting as a forum that encourages dialogue between fishermen from the Canadian Maritimes and Northeastern U.S.
- 2 b.** To continue to pursue partnerships with business and scientists, both inside and outside of Maine, on all research and educational projects.

- 2 c. To build the Lobster Health Coalition to foster the integration of lobster research in the region and work towards developing a regional mechanism for listing active research projects and their subsequent findings.

**GOAL 3. CONSERVATION** – To take an active role in ensuring the health and abundance of the lobster resource and preservation of its habitat in order to sustain the lobster fishery.

**Objectives**

**3a** To articulate the need for accuracy and availability of data needed to adequately assess lobster stocks using the latest and/or emerging scientific models.

**3b** To create a proactive health monitoring program and network of volunteers to implement the program.

**3c.** To continue research related to lobster health issues.

**3d** To develop educational materials relaying the industries conservation measures and their importance in sustaining the resource.

**GOAL 4. COMMUNICATION & PUBLIC RELATIONS**– To be recognized as an entity that: 1) builds relationships by bringing all interested parties together to work toward the common goal of helping to ensure a strong and healthy lobster industry; and that 2) serves as a central clearinghouse for lobster information and a major channel for communication among harvesters, dealers, pound owners, processors, scientists, and resource managers in the North Atlantic region and throughout the world.

**Objectives**

**4 a.** To continue to heighten the awareness among harvesters of the purpose of the Institute and the availability of its services.

**4 b.** To bolster the reputation of the Lobster Institute, among scientists and the industry as a whole, as a valuable collaborator and contributor to lobster research .

**4 c.** To improve existing and pursue new avenues of communicating Institute and industry news, accomplishments, and challenges to the industry and to the general public.

**4 d.** To increase the Institute’s participation in federal, regional, state, and other committees that deal with issues surrounding lobster research and/or make recommendations/publish reports that impact the lobster industry.

**GOAL 5. GOVERNANCE** – To maintain an appropriate organizational structure, with a Board of Advisors that is broadly representative and fully engaged; rigorous program assessment to ensure alignment with the Strategic Plan; and management policies that foster participation of Board, staff, and constituents in goal-setting, decision-making and ongoing planning.

**Objectives**

- 5 a.** To regularly evaluate and ensure Board diversity to guarantee appropriate geographic and sector representation and a commitment to the Institute.
- 5 b.** To introduce a committee structure to the Board of Advisors to concentrate efforts of qualified and interested members on specific aspects of Institute guidance and governance.
- 5 c.** To produce an annual “Plan of Work” that establishes action plans for the Institute to follow in working towards obtaining the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan within available resources.

**GOAL 6. FINANCIAL STABILITY** – To ensure the financial stability of the Institute by generating sources of revenue adequate to support the operations of the Institute and its programming priorities.

**Objectives**

- 6 a.** Aggressively pursue current income generating programs and seek out new revenue sources.
- 6 b.** Continue to pursue grant funding for priority research and educational outreach.
- 6 c.** Ensure that suggested Institute programs and projects address goals and objective outlined in its Strategic Plan and can be managed within available resources.
- 6 c.** Continue building the operational endowment fund, through the C.O.R.E. Campaign, to a level that can support day-to-day activities of the Institute.
- 6 d.** Continue to build the program endowment fund, through the C.O.R.E. Campaign, to a level that can support the Institute’s research and project priorities.