



Maine Lobstering Union

Local 207



150 Bar Harbor Rd, Trenton, ME 04506

Testimony of Virginia Olsen, Executive Liaison and Political Director of the Maine Lobstering Union

Thank you for providing the opportunity to represent Maine's Lobster Industry and the coastal communities we call home.

My name is Virginia Olsen, and I am a 5th-generation lobster fisherman from the Lobster Capital of our nation, Stonington, Maine. I now work for the IAM Union as an organizer and business representative for the Maine Lobstering Union.

Maine fishermen live every day under the USMCA trade agreement. The Grey Zone, a contested 277 square miles of ocean, near Machias Seal Island and North Rock in the Gulf of Maine, has been and continues to be a source of contention between USA and Canadian fishermen, enforcement, and politicians.

Since 2002, Canada has allowed summer lobster fishing in this contested area. Both countries are left to struggle with the management, enforcement, and harvest of these marine resources. Fishermen are also faced with a lack of on-the-water enforcement from Canada, compared to more consistent US enforcement based on compliance.

80% of Maine lobster is shipped to Canada for processing. Stronger Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) is needed so that consumers are aware of both the origin and processing facilities responsible for their lobster.

The Maine Lobstering Union believes that a bilateral committee is needed to discuss the ongoing issues between both countries about the Grey Zone, conservation, seasons, and enforcement. I ask that you include fishermen from both sides of the border on this committee. The committee should be broad-based and include lobster dealers, processors, as well as regulators. The current Canada-USA Steering Committee lacks any harvester involvement and relies only on NOAA from the USA. I feel we need to bridge the gap between what harvesters are seeing daily on the water to the observations by scientists; until we do, the lack of trust will continue. Thank you for your time.

Virginia Olsen

If you have any questions, please call, text, or email: 207-240-0556, volsen@district4.net