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

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**Two Mid-Coast Co-op's Protect Working Waterfront Properties**

The Spruce Head Fishermen's Co-op has been leasing their waterfront property and wharf for 38 years. When property owner and Co-op member Dick Waldron indicated that he would like to sell the property to the Co-op, the Co-op Board and its 60 members quickly decided that now was the time. The Co-op had passed up the opportunity to purchase the property years ago but was now determined to secure their access forever. In a closing ceremony on Monday, Dick Waldron said "We're doing the right thing. The Co-op members work hard and they deserve to own this property. I can't imagine the property being used in any other way".

The Co-op applied for and received an award of \$166,250 from the State's Working Waterfront Access Pilot Program (WWAPP) in exchange for a restrictive covenant that severely limits any future residential or recreational uses on their 0.25 acre parcel on Seal Cove in South Thomaston. The WWAPP is administered by the Land for Maine's Future Program (LMF) and the Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR). The working waterfront covenant forever protects the site for fishermen's use, and Co-op President Bob Baines said, "We have over 50 boats that fish from this property. We and all of our families depend on this piece of land for our livelihood. Mr. Waldron's heart is in the right place. It's been a long road to purchase this property and today makes it all worth it. On behalf of the Spruce Head Fishermen's Co-op, I would like to thank the many people who have been involved in this project for over three very long years. The Land for Maine's Future Program was essential to this success."

The Co-op knows that despite its historical use for fishing access for more than 38 years, the property - with 74 feet of prime shorefront, a series of floats, a building to store bait and supplies, along with ample office space - could have been sold to a buyer with a different agenda. "This project is the poster child of what the WWAPP program is all about," says Hugh Cowperthwaite, who works for Coastal Enterprises Inc. and has been instrumental in helping the Co-op apply for the funds and make its way through the program requirements.

Just up the coast a few miles, the Vinalhaven Fishermen's Co-op also closed their WWAPP project late in December and have successfully positioned themselves within the island's major anchorage, Carvers Harbor, to buy more lobster from more boats and be more successful financially. In exchange for selling a protective covenant to the state that will guarantee use of the one acre property for commercial fisheries' access in perpetuity, the Co-op membership invested their \$178,750 award in the construction of a brand new 900 square foot bait freezer and refrigeration building. As a result, their bait storage capacity has substantially increased in volume and longevity. As the number of year round lobster dealers in the Carvers Harbor area has declined

from five to three, the number of boats serviced by the Co-op has doubled. At the same time, the landings of fresh bait have been decreasing and the fishermen are relying more and more on frozen bait. The new freezer / cooler building will allow the Co-op to service more boats and provide a secure bait supply for the Vinalhaven lobstermen.

With 360 feet of prime deepwater frontage on the harbor, multiple buildings, state of the art refrigeration, two wharves and space for ample gear storage and member parking, the Co-op is one of the prime lobster buying stations in midcoast Maine. It serves as an economic engine to the island community where about half of the year-round households depend on the fisheries for their livelihood.

According to Carol Hamilton, local resident and Co-op Manager, "You can't catch lobsters without bait. The supply of bait has been an increasing problem. Although we have needed additional bait storage for some time, we did not have the money to build it. The income from the sale of the covenant has made the new building possible. The building helps provide the facilities necessary for the present generation of Vinalhaven fishermen and the covenant ensures that the facilities will be available for the future generations of Vinalhaven fishermen. It is a win-win situation."

Both Co-ops expressed their appreciation to the Department of Marine Resources and the Land for Maine's Future Program for support of this project. George Lapointe, Commissioner of the Maine Department of Marine Resources, and Chair of Land for Maine's Future Board said, "The DMR and LMF are very proud that the WWAPP has been so successful in reaching exactly those types of properties which will make the greatest contributions to Maine's fishing future. Individually and collectively, the Vinalhaven and Spruce Head projects will have tremendous impact for years to come."

Although the WWAPP has committed to protect a total of 19 commercial fishing properties from Lubec to York, the funds have all been allocated and the future of the program rests on passage of a new bond for the Land for Maine's Future Program which includes funds for working waterfront protection. There will be a natural resource bond referendum question totaling \$10 million (\$2 million dedicated to the WWAPP program) that will be decided by Maine voters at the ballot box in November 2010. Increasing interest in the program from working waterfront property owners supports estimates that there are approximately 100 commercial fishing properties in the state that remain unprotected and are critically important to much of coastal Maine's reliance on fishing for economic prosperity. For additional information on the WWAPP visit the website, [www.wwapp.org](http://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](http://www.wateraccessus.com)

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