



Ask the lobster doc

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This column provides lobster health and handling information.

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Lobster resource stewardship

We certainly don't know everything about what it takes to insure that lobsters continue to survive their journey from egg to plate. However, we currently possess sufficient knowledge to know that we can do things that will serve to better protect the lobster resource. What each one of us does in our daily lives effects lobster survival because we have a serious impact on their environment. The time for action is now and the actor must be you.

This is the first in a series of articles that will focus on habitat protection, handling of bycatch lobsters (i.e., shorts, eggers, oversized), education, and activism. The impetus for this series comes from looking at what we know about lobsters' needs for a healthy coastal and marine environment and thinking about what we can do with that knowledge.

For example, 20 years ago we didn't know where to find or how to monitor lobster nursery habitats. For whatever reason, settlement and abundance of juvenile lobsters has been remarkably high throughout the Gulf of Maine in

recent years. One thing I know for certain is that if the high numbers of lobsters settling today don't survive to reach marketable size, we are unlikely to enjoy a thriving lobster fishery in years to come.

What can we do to insure the survival of these young lobsters? For starters, now that we know where juvenile lobsters settle and grow, we can protect their habitat. And, how can we do that?

On an individual level, each one of us can take better care of the marine and coastal environment. In our communities, we can get involved in local planning and strengthen local rules that protect the environment. At the state and federal level, we can keep track of pending rule changes and communicate with our legislators, senators, and congressmen to let them know where we stand on issues of importance to the lobster resource – which, I argue, includes almost all environmental legislation.

The next article will deal with what you can do as an individual while you are working in and around boats and the shoreline. ■