



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Maine Receives \$2 Million Federal Grant to Develop Marine Economy Roadmap & Workforce Development Project

*Funding from the Economic Development Administration Will Help Maine Develop an Industry-led Roadmap and Action Plan for Growth and Greater Resiliency in its Marine Economy*

**Brunswick, ME** – Today, Maine’s Congressional Delegation and the federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) announced a \$2 million Economic Adjustment Assistance (EAA) award to the State of Maine to help it develop an industry-led roadmap and action plan for economic growth and greater resiliency in its marine economy. The award provides critical funding to support Maine’s Marine Economy initiative - - a three-year project that will provide strategies to match Maine’s marine-related products with global markets and develop strategies to attract investment in new markets. It will also identify new opportunities and barriers to value-added production and will seek ways to maximize efficiencies and returns across the seafood value-chain. This project will also address current and future workforce challenges in Maine’s marine resource economy.

A strong industry-led initiative, the project will be overseen by its co-applicants the Maine Technology Institute (MTI) and FocusMaine. Maine’s Congressional delegation played an indispensable role in guiding the proposal to fruition and the University of Maine, the Maine Aquaculture Innovation Center and other partners within the marine industry will play a pivotal role in its successful implementation. The effort will be co-chaired by Bill Mook of Mook Sea Farms of Walpole and Curt Brown, Marine Biologist, at Ready Seafood in Portland.

“Maine’s marine economy is an engine that has powered our state for generations, and we are committed to supporting its continued success,” **said U.S. Senators Susan Collins and Angus King, and Representatives Chellie Pingree and Jared Golden in a joint statement.** “Building on our traditions of the past, industry leaders are working to create new, sustainable opportunities that will maximize the benefits of our vast marine resources. This funding from the EDA will support those industry-led efforts to foster innovation and adaptability, and improve current and future workforce needs, which are needed now more than ever to help this vital sector weather the coronavirus pandemic and future challenges.”

“At a time where Maine’s economy is being impacted in unprecedented ways by Covid-19, this award presents an opportunity to help advance Maine’s economic development plan to sustain and grow the state’s marine economy,” said Heather Johnson, Commissioner of the Maine Department of Economic & Community Development. “This is a great example of the kind of collaboration that is needed to create a resilient, forward looking plan to sustain communities, grow jobs, and preserve our natural assets. There is no doubt in my mind that Maine will continue to stay at the forefront of the marine economy, and this vote of confidence from the EDA will further strengthen our position. I applaud the diligent efforts of all who were involved and thank our federal delegation for their support in ensuring that Maine will be prepared for emerging opportunities in this sector.”

“This funding targets critical areas of need in Maine’s marine economy,” said Maine Department of Marine Resources Commissioner Patrick Keliher. “Workforce and market development are key for the stability and growth of our state’s fishing and aquaculture industries. Improvement in supply chain efficiencies are also vital for efforts to innovate and add value. I am grateful for the support of the delegation and the collaboration among industry leaders which will benefit industries so important to Maine’s economy and identity.”

Recognized as one of the world’s richest marine ecosystems, the Gulf of Maine covers more than 5,000 miles of coastline (including islands). Maine’s marine resources have long been a mainstay of the state’s economy, particularly in rural areas. While lobster remains Maine’s predominant and most well-known export, Maine’s marine economy continues to diversify and now includes fishing, lobstering, aquaculture, life sciences, and value-added processing. Critical supply chain elements like shipping and logistics support this economy.

“MTI is keenly aware of the dire economic and environmental pressures facing the marine sector in Maine -- one of our state’s most critical industries,” said Brian Whitney, MTI’s President. “That’s why we are so encouraged by the collaborative, cross-sector effort to sustain and grow Maine’s marine economy. That effort generated a winning proposal that will focus on four primary areas: asset mapping and resource assessment, emerging opportunities to diversify and sustain the marine economy, capital attraction and market growth, and workforce development.”

The marine sector in Maine employed 15,583 workers in 2016. Most of the positions include fishermen and related shoreside workers followed by occupations within the supply chain such as processing, transportation, etc. The proposed project will identify industry workforce needs and skills gaps, build workforce curriculum and training modules, and attract new talent and young talent to the sector. This includes job-driven skills development, expansion of apprenticeships and work-and-learn training models, as well as collaborating with workforce development organizations like community and technical colleges.

“This effort has, from the start, been driven by industry leaders and committed partners in Maine’s marine economy,” said Dr. Kimberly Hamilton, President of FocusMaine. “Today’s announcement marks the culmination of more than a year of thoughtful collaboration and planning. This award complements FocusMaine’s strategy to grow good jobs in Maine’s aquaculture industry. This infusion of resources comes at an especially critical time and will strengthen Maine’s competitiveness, support Maine’s sea farmers, and build the skills and talent needed to transform our heritage marine economy into a modern engine for sustainable economic and job growth.”

***About MTI*** - MTI is a publicly financed, private, nonprofit organization created by the Legislature in 1999 to stimulate research and development activity leading to the commercialization of new products, processes and services in the state’s seven targeted technology sectors. MTI programs are either loans,

*equity investments, or grants designed to enhance the competitive position of those sectors and increase the likelihood that one or more of these sectors will support clusters of industrial activity and create quality jobs across Maine. For more information visit [www.mainetechnology.org](http://www.mainetechnology.org)*

**About FocusMaine** - *FocusMaine's mission is to strengthen and revitalize opportunity and prosperity in Maine by accelerating the creation of jobs in select signature industries. FocusMaine's programs foster business growth and business attraction and increase the skills and talent critical to its sectors. FocusMaine was founded by private-sector Maine leaders, and in partnership with industry-specific subject matter experts, advisers, and partnering organizations, is using a fact-based, disciplined approach to sector and industry development. For more information visit [www.focusmaine.org](http://www.focusmaine.org).*

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