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Record landings and unprecedented shore prices highlight 2021 lobster season

By Charlotte MacAulay
charlotte@peicanada.com

The preliminary lobster landing from 2021 is one success story for the PEI fishing industry, said Prince Edward Island Fishermen's Association president Bobby Jenkins.

The combined landings in LFA 24, LFA 26A and LFA 25 total 47.1 million pounds, a record number.

"The bread and butter of our industry here on PEI is the lobster," Mr Jenkins said. "Everything else revolves around that."

He points to unprecedented shore prices as another success.

Lobster fisher and PEI Marketing Board chair Charlie McGeoghegan agrees.

"Depending on the buyer they ranged from \$9 to \$10 a pound for canners last year and most finished off the season around \$11," he said.

Though the season did start off with \$8.50 on a lot of wharves, he said the change amounted to almost double from the previous year.

"Considering expenses were almost quadruple of what they were a few years ago it was definitely needed," Mr McGeoghegan added.

Looking ahead to this coming season there are several signs pointing to another banner year.

Record prices in Southwest Nova Scotia right now are \$17 to \$18 per pound. That coupled with low inventory is some cause for optimism.

"Most of the processors I have talked to, most of their product is gone, so that is nice to see," Mr McGeoghegan said.

The demand from both Asia and the US is strong. One reason is a decrease in catches in Maine.

See page 10

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From page 9 - Record landings

For the second year catches have dropped dramatically leaving a hole in the US market that needs to be filled.

The Marketing Board just returned from the Boston Seafood Show where demand for product was "off the charts."

"From what we are hearing a lot of the lobster is sold before we even go out on the water," Mr McGeoghegan said.

Mr Jenkins said there may be some adjustments as to when fishers will get out on the water this year.

DFO turned down the hard date of April 26 for opening the spring lobster fishery, a proposal voted on by fishers in PEI, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick back in December.

At the time Mike Dixon, co-chair of the LFA 26A Lobster Advisory Committee, said fishers were concerned that three of the last five years, with the season extending into July, fishing lobster beyond June 30 when they are in their stages of molt and reproduction was counterproductive.

Even though DFO did not agree to an early setting day it has implemented, for the first time in history, a flexibility date, Mr Jenkins said.

"Which means we could possibly go on the 27th of April this year," he said, explaining there is a 72-hour window before April 30 where fishers have to look at

how weather may affect opening day.

"There will be weather calls taken before the 27th and harbour reps will decide depending on weather, if they want to use the 27th or leave it until the 30th," he explained.

While the pandemic played havoc with the 2020 lobster season in the form of restricted access to wharfs, market slow-downs and a two-week delay in opening, Mr Jenkins said 2021 was almost back to normal.

"I'm hoping we go into 2022 with the same kind of results we had in 2021 in regards to Covid," he said.

With regard to other species Mr Jenkins said 751 tuna, at an average weight of 229 kg, were caught this past season. The total catch works out to 98.5 per cent of the quota.

In the halibut fishery 94 per cent of the quota was caught. There were four regular openings and one reallocation opening for halibut fishing.

Concerning herring, the western areas (16C&E) landed 93 per cent and 16G in the east landed 35.8 per cent.

Mr Jenkins said the low catch in the east is in part due to fewer boats fishing.

With mackerel, there were 4,000 metric tonnes of quota allocated which was all landed during the two openings throughout the year.

Snow crab total allowable catch for PEI in 2021 was 36,056 t and it was caught thanks to good weather conditions during the season.

It was a good year, the season went on time, and the weather was good for landing the catches.

There is a yet-to-be-determined increase in quota for the coming snow crab season pending the outcome of a stock assessment carried out by DFO in February.

Both Mr Jenkins and Mr McGeoghegan are hopeful for a safe and prosperous season on the water for the approximately 4,200 commercial fishers.

Shark attacks on tuna catches increased in 2021

By Charlotte MacAulay

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The crew of the Dawn and Jana, Bobby and Cory Jenkins, along with a tuna buyer examine the damage to a tuna done by a shark near the end of the season last fall. Submitted photo

The last catch of the season was a bit of a battle for Bobby Jenkins, not only with the tuna he had on the line, but also with a shark determined to get a share of the bluefin.

"We knew something was happening, but we didn't realize what until we got the tuna up close to the boat and we saw the bites," the Annandale fisher said.

They landed the fish and sold it, but there was certainly some lost revenue.

Curtis MacKenzie, chair of the Tuna Advisory Board, said shark attacks were not unheard of before in the waters off PEI, but 2022 has been a bigger problem than in past years.

There is no official count yet, but anecdotally there have been at least five tuna come into PEI wharves with shark bites.

"Probably the last five years there has been one or two here and there," Mr MacKenzie said. "It's not just PEI either, it is happening in the whole Gulf and down the Nova Scotia shore too."

Buyers aren't rejecting the catches and salvage as much of the meat as possible, he said.

"Obviously you are going to have less meat and the bigger wound that is open on a fish, the

Russian invasion of Ukraine could benefit Canadian seafood exports

By Charlotte MacAulay

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Some sanctions on Russian products could have an effect on demand for PEI snow crab and lobster.

As Russia continues to wage war on Ukraine more and more countries are banning Russian seafood, said Lobster Fishers of PEI Marketing Board chair Charlie McGeoghegan.

Russia has 60 per cent of the world's snow crab quota.

"Buyers will be looking for other means of getting snow crab and when they can't get enough that will help the lobster fishers too because (buyers) will need lobster to fill that void," he said.

"That was something we didn't really foresee with everything going on in the world today. It could turn out good for Canadian exporters."


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more water damage you are going to get," Mr MacKenzie said.

"It isn't a total loss, but it is a big hit on the fisherman's return," he added.

The DFO license doesn't allow fishers to drop a damaged fish and use the tag for another potential catch. That is something Mr MacKenzie said they are in talks with the federal department about.

"There has been no real outcome yet, but we are going to stick at it because the last thing we want is people that only have two or three tags a year losing out on a tag because they are following the rules," he said.

As for why the shark population seems to be increasing in fishing areas, Mr Jenkins said there is no definitive answer, but there are some factors that can be taken under consideration.

"We have been told that sharks are temperature-driven and food-driven," he said.

The fact that waters are warming and the seal population remains high could be two reasons sharks are sticking around the lucrative fishing areas.

"We have a lot of tuna being caught here and when you are swimming a tuna behind a boat I imagine it looks like a pretty easy meal to a shark," Mr Jenkins said.



The last catch of the season for Annandale fisher Bobby Jenkins had a lot of damage from a shark bite that happened while he had the bluefin on the line.

Submitted photo

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As is the annual tradition friends and family came out to watch the lobster boats sail out of the Tignish Harbour on the opening day of the 2021 spring lobster season.

Melissa Heald photo

To All Island Fishers

I wish you all the best in the 2022 Season!

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay,
P.C., M.P.,
M.P. for Cardigan



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In hopes of promoting the recreational winter perch fishery, for the past two years Richards Bait and Tackle, an Alberton-based business, has teamed up with Experience PEI to offer all-equipped guided fish tours at Doyles Pond. This year, for Islander Day, they also hosted a learn-to-fish event on the pond for families. Submitted photo

Winter perch fishery a success in West Prince

By Melissa Heald
melissa@peicanada.com

Doyles Pond in West Prince has proven to be the solution to a recreational winter perch fishery in PEI.

"There was somebody out there every weekend, for sure, and even through the week," said David Richards, co-owner of Richards Bait and Tackle and a

key organizer in trying to make this recreation fishery a success. "The pond was really used a lot."

In hopes of promoting the fishery, for the past two years the Alberton-based business has teamed up with Experience PEI to offer all-equipped guided fish tours on the pond. This year, for Islander Day, they also hosted a learn-to-fish event for families.

May all Island Fishers have a Safe and Prosperous Fishing Season

Government Members Office



Doyles Pond, on Route 12 in western PEI, has turned out to be the ideal location for winter perch fishing. PEI opened a permanent recreational winter perch fishery there in 2022. It is the only location on PEI to offer the winter fishery. Submitted photo

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- Winter perch -

"People are really getting out, enjoying winter as it is, especially with Covid, it's kept us down for so long, so to actually get out and do something was really nice," Mr Richards said.

Numerous attempts were previously made to create a recreational winter perch fishery on the Island.

In 2010, the Forests, Fish and Wildlife Division of the Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action was approached to determine if the fishery would be viable in the province.

"We obtained a scientific collection license from DFO (Department of Fisheries and Oceans) to carry out a pilot study in two locations: Queens County and one in West Prince County," said Jill Edwards, senior communications officer for the Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action, in an email. "There was poor ice conditions and no perch were caught."

Efforts were once again made in 2018 with one additional site in West Prince, but again with limited success.

However, the third time was a charm and in 2021 a request was made to the province to give Doyles Pond a try.

"Once again, a scientific collection license was obtained for this pilot study and the same two original sites in Queens County," Ms Edwards explained. "There was limited success in the Queens County locations, but good success at Doyles."

Mr Richards said the locations in Queens County just might not have been ideal.

"Some were hard to access," he said. "One was called DeRoche Pond and you pretty much had to Skidoo into it."

With Doyles being located on Route 12 in western PEI, people

can basically drive up to the pond, get out of their car and 'you're fishing', Mr Richard said.

Ms Edwards said the scientific collection license is a good way for the department to see if something will work, but it was onerous that people had to register and Fish and Wildlife had to submit those names to DFO on a weekly basis.

Permits for the fishery were free and 309 people signed up.

"People were also required to keep a log book so we could see how many perch were caught and what other incidental catches might be," Ms Edwards added.

With excellent community support regarding the fishery at Doyles Pond and based on results of the 2021 trial, for 2022 the province asked DFO to open a recreational fishery there. It is the only site in PEI for this fishery in winter.

"From what I understand, there was good participation and success in the 2022 winter fishery," Ms Edwards said.

Much of the success is attributed to the people who took part in the fishery.

"The public really pulled up their socks, filled out the log books and showed the perch were there. They could sustain the amount of fish we were catching," Mr Richards said. "It never hurt the population at all - there were a lot of fish around and there still are."

No registration was needed for the 2022 perch season, which runs from January 1 - March 31, but a valid angling license for 2021-22 was required.

"When you brought your license last spring, it covers the winter fishery now," he added.

An avid angler himself, Mr Richards said he is glad a permanent recreational winter perch fishery has been established on PEI.



The pier at Northport is vacant right now but it will soon be filled with lobster fishing boats as the 2022 spring lobster season gets underway. While poaching can occasionally be an issue, rates of charges and convictions have been decreasing over the last few years. Jillian Trainor photo

Lobster poaching on a downward trend

By Jillian Trainor

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As fishers prepare for the start of the 2022 spring lobster season, the vice president of the Western Gulf Fishermen's Association (WGFA) has noticed rates of reported lobster poaching have decreased over the last several years.

"We used to have the co-management program (with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans) for years," said Shelton Barlow. "There must have been 10 wardens hired in the program to try and get it straightened out."

While poaching is the term commonly used, it's not used in fishing regulations. If a person is convicted, the charges would be for infractions such as: possession of undersized lobster, possession of egg-bearing female lobsters, fishing outside the season or fishing without a license. An individual can also be charged with multiple offences, meaning the number of charges doesn't necessarily reflect the number of offenders.

Data from DFO shows there were 37 convictions in 2017; 26 convictions in 2018; 23 convictions in 2019, and 16 convictions in 2020. The data for 2021 isn't available yet, but it would likely include some offences from 2020 that were processed in 2021.

The reasons for poaching aren't always clear. The price of fuel is always one of the biggest concerns, and while prices have drastically increased over the last month, it's not the only reason someone might poach lobster.

"It's not a fuel, it's other things, life," Mr Barlow said. "Somebody might have a bad year, you never know. You don't know the circumstances of someone's life."

To help prevent fishing out of season, the WGFA drags the ocean before and after the spring and fall lobster seasons to located any gear that's been left behind. Globally, ghost gear is one of the leading causes of debris in a marine environment, and can have damaging impacts on fish stocks such as lobster,

marine mammals, and marine habitats. Through the Ghost Gear Program, run by the federal government, over 1,250 tonnes of ghost gear was removed from Canadian waters since 2020.

"The fisherman can't take the gear in when he finds it," Mr Barlow said. "He has to report it to DFO and they come and pick it up. You get to the area and put a marker on it and call them."

If a someone is suspected of poaching lobster, the best option is to report it to DFO. When allegations are reported, fishery officers gather all the necessary information, collect evidence where it's warranted, conduct interviews and analysis to support investigations of non-compliance with the

Fisheries Act and its associated regulations. Various enforcement actions could be taken as a result, including charges.

Anyone who witnesses suspicious fishing activities is encouraged to contact their nearest DFO office. Another option for those wishing to remain anonymous is reaching out to Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477), but they can also submit a tip online, or text TIP190 and a message to 274637 (crimes).

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Uncertainty about opening day after DFO decision

By Josh Lewis

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The Department of Fisheries and Oceans has notified LFA 26A lobster fishers the season could open any day during a 72-hour period in late April depending on the conditions, starting this spring.

The ruling comes after a December vote in 26A, the south side from Victoria to East Point, in favour of opening a few days early to avoid pushing the season into early July, when lobsters begin to molt.

Of 192 fishers who returned the questionnaire, 65 per cent voted in favour of an April 26 opening compared to 35 per cent for the traditional date of April 30. A little over half of all lobster fishers in 26A participated.

Charlie McGeoghegan, chair of the PEI Lobster Marketing Board, said he would prefer to have a hard date set for opening.

"If the date is the 30th and everybody's ready for that and

then they start two days earlier, there'll be scrambling from some guys I would think," said the Pinette lobster fisher.

He said the best fishers can do is be tentatively ready a few days earlier and wait to see what date DFO sets.

Mr McGeoghegan said in past years when the start date was delayed by poor weather, such as 2021, some fishers wrapped up early because of the molting process beginning.

"They want to stay away from July fishing. That was the thought behind it, to move in that direction."

DFO said the decision will depend on factors like channel dredging, ice conditions, buoy installation and of course, the weather.

"DFO will monitor and assess the situation at the various wharves a few weeks before the scheduled opening," followed by conference calls in the days before to get updates on the situation, said the statement sent to fishers.

Rising fuel, bait prices could eat into profit margins

By Josh Lewis

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Lobster fishers have had to contend with the rising costs of doing business for years, but this season presents a set of circumstances perhaps without compare.

Fuel prices are higher than they've ever been on PEI and that will have a direct impact on fishers, especially the ones who sail further out from shore.

Depending on where you look, diesel prices last week were more than 70 cents higher than during the height of the 2021 lobster season. Regular prices were about 40 cents higher, according to Stats Canada.

Throw in rising bait prices driven by quotas and feeding predators, and insurance costs, and it could take a sizable bite out of profit margins.

"It's going to be different from last year for sure. The cost of everything is going up," said Naufrage lobster fisherman Lucas Lesperance. "Even for anyone travelling to the wharf in the morning, it's costing the captains and the crew more money. The price of fuel goes up but everything else stays the same."

He hopes those pressures will create a strong price throughout the season.

Mr Lesperance said seals are becoming more of a nuisance than ever, chowing down on bait species like herring and mackerel. A seal hunt would certainly help, he said.

On top of that, shark sightings near the Island were common last summer.

"It's the same old story, they're not here to lose weight," he said. "They're changing their migration paths and here they are."

He has a lot of bait still in the freezer that he fished last summer and fall. That's always an option for lobster fishers, but it's far more expensive to do that now with the fuel prices.

Charlie McGeoghegan, chair of the PEI Lobster Marketing Board, said lower quotas on mackerel and herring last year were a problem, in combination with seals eating bait, and he's tried to get that across to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

"DFO's basing the quota on the stock, but what's affecting the stock is the seals, we want to see something done with them to protect our bait industry."

He said he's heard rumblings the new DFO minister, Joyce Murray, does see this as an issue so he's hopeful something will happen.

"The seals are 800 to 1,000 pounds each and they'd be



Mackerel bait was hard to come by last year due to seals eating them as well as DFO quotas. Rachel Peters Photography photo

eating 60 to 80 pounds of fish a day. We're talking hundreds of thousands of these seals."

In fact, having more sharks around could be a plus because they eat seals, he said.

The cost of bait, having gone up from 30 to 40 cents a pound 10 years ago as high as \$2 now, doesn't help.

In terms of fuel prices, Mr McGeoghegan said this will be especially hard on the fishers who burn as much as 400 litres a day.

"It should put lobster prices

up because it definitely costs more to go get them. If you look at other industries, that's usually how they work."

In that sense, early returns from Nova Scotia are promising. In zones there with the season already underway, the price has been between \$17 and \$18 per pound, which Mr McGeoghegan said would be a record for this time of year.

There's also nothing in storage from last year which bodes well for prices, he said.



Two Atlantic Aqua Farms boats, the Grace C and The Baby, tied up at Georgetown on 2021 setting day.

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A strong industry means good business for lobster trap builder

By Melissa Heald

melissa@peicanada.com

Marvin Gavin has been making custom lobster traps for 20 years.

But before creating his business, Marvin's Lobster Traps, Mr Gavin remembers building traps as a child alongside his father.

"We had a lobster license and we always built traps in the winter for ourselves," he said. "He taught me everything about how to build a trap."

Years later, Mr Gavin was fishing tuna in Nova Scotia and while talking to some fishermen he asked if they would be interested in him making them new traps.

"They said yes and that's how my business got started," Mr Gavin said, adding those fishermen are still his customers today.

Located on Route 12 just outside Tignish, Mr Gavin's operation includes a sawmill he built himself in order to cut the lumber he uses for the traps.

"It just kept growing and growing," Mr Gavin said, referring to his business.

With the spring lobster season approaching in the Maritimes, it's a busy time of the year as fishers begin calling in orders for new traps.

"I'm busy year-round, but now with the season getting close, my phone is ringing and ringing," Mr Gavin said.

However, the allure of the strong lobster industry can impact Mr Gavin's access to labour as more and more potential workers opt to go fishing rather than getting paid to make traps.

When he has enough help, the Marvin's Lobster Traps operation can produce about 150 traps in four days.

"If it's just me and another fella, it takes us maybe eight days," Mr Gavin estimates his business produces between 5,000 to 7,000 traps a year.

Besides building the traps, Mr Gavin is busy on the road delivering his stock to fishers across the Maritimes. He also plans to attend an upcoming trade show in Moncton, bringing over 100 traps with him that were sold well in advance of the



Marvin Gavin of the Tignish area has been custom-building traps for lobster fishers across the Maritimes for the past 20 years.

Melissa Heald photo

event.

Things haven't always been this busy for Mr Gavin though. There was a time when he would stop making traps to go west during the winter to work.

"The price of lobster was really low, so fishermen weren't buying anything. Their gear was in pretty good shape and if they weren't making a lot of money, they just weren't buying anything," he said.

But with the lobster industry rebounding, things have "improved dramatically."

"I came home from out west in 2012, I've been flat out ever since," Mr Gavin said. "It's been improving every year."

There are many different

designs when it comes to lobster traps.

"There's what they call American traps, there's double enders, there's round and square traps, whatever the fishers prefer," he said. "That's why I say custom-made meaning we'll make whatever you want to your specs."

Although the increased cost of lumber and other supplies needed to make the traps meant Mr Gavin had to hike his prices last summer, he said overall Covid-19 hasn't negatively impacted his business too much. In fact, in the last two years he's actually seen his sales increase.

"I don't know why," he said. "The price of lobster went up. Everything went up. The catches went up and the last two to three years, I don't know if it's coincidence, the pandemic hitting at the same time or

what, but I've been very busy."

From his father building lobster traps to his father's father crafting boats, woodworking has been a long tradition in Mr Gavin's family.

"I really like doing it," he said, adding his grandfather on his mother's side also worked with wood. "I like working with wood. It was just something I've always liked doing."

Mr Gavin hopes his son will one day take over the business, keeping the family woodworking tradition going.

"He's been working with me since he was nine or 10-years old," he said. His son is now 21.

"My father taught him when he was a kid and he's really good at making the traps," Mr Gavin concluded.

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Captain Josh Clory and the crew of All Jack'd Up returned to the wharf in Georgetown for a second load of traps on setting day 2021.

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Oyster fishers fare a bit better in year two of pandemic

By Jillian Trainor

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Oyster producers and growers are doing better during the second year of the pandemic, but they still face complications and obstacles surrounding Covid-19.

“Our biggest week of the year is about a week or two before Christmas, and the Omicron restrictions were just hitting in that week,” said Martin O’Brien, of Cascumpec Bay Oyster Company, based out of Coleman.

“At the start of the week we were having normal, big Christmas orders, and by the end of the week we were having cancellations, reduced orders and everything else. We really lost steam and the holidays were a lot less busy than usual.”

Mr O’Brien said January was also a quiet month, but things have been good since the start of February, and the company looks forward to a good year.

A lot of the business for oyster producers and growers is selling to pubs and restaurants, usually cocktail oysters. These oysters are a little smaller, usually between two-and-a-half and three-inches in length. During the pandemic, these businesses either closed completely, or switched to take-out only, which greatly impacted the fishers.

“When the pandemic first started, our business dropped severely. We went down maybe 30 to 35 per cent. Everything was



Wyatt Jeffery, co-owner and operator of Five Star Shellfish, believes oyster fishers will fare out better this year but he's unsure of pricing. The cost of processing and shipping has increased over the last few years which is concerning if fishers can no longer make a living in the industry.

Jillian Trainor photo

just smoked,” Wyatt Jeffery, co-

owner and operator of Five Star Fisheries, based out of Milligan’s Wharf, said.

“This winter it was not too bad. It was up maybe 75 to 80 per cent of what we’re used to. The cultured oysters for us, slowed down a lot. But this winter it was a lot better. Our standards markets were really good this year.”


While demand for oysters has gone up, the same can’t be said for prices, something Leslie Hardy of Leslie Hardy and Sons Ltd is concerned about.

“It would be so nice if we could get more for certain qualities of oysters in the marketplace so we can pay the fishermen a little more,” he said. “I’m not talking about the cultivated oysters, I’m talking about wild oysters (from the public fishery).”

Mr Hardy said the province helped growers and producers last year, but he would like to see government do something to help the public fishery this year. The help he’s referring to is the \$2.5 million investment in the Oyster Enhancement Fund project. This spread about four million oysters to various rivers in the province and was financed


and administered in collaboration with ACOA, PEI Aquaculture Alliance, PEI Shellfish Association and provincial Department of Fisheries.

One of the concerns producers and growers have as they prepare to harvest oysters currently growing under the ice is the cost of shipping. Gas prices immediately increased after Rus-




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Leslie Hardy, of Leslie Hardy and Sons Ltd in East Bideford, said the second year of Covid-19 was better than the first year because it was hard to know what the world was facing at that time. Things are going better this year, and while it's not completely back to business as usual, it's definitely an improvement.

Jillian Trainor photo

sia began its invasion of Ukraine on February 24, causing concerns over what that will mean for the industry.

"It's going to make a big differ-

ence," Mr Hardy said. "Some people travel a long way to fish. Transportation costs are really taking a big soar with Midland, they haul all our product, and

they have to jump the prices up."

Mr O'Brien said there is also an issue in the fact the cost of packaging has steadily increased over the last decade. This has meant the company has had to become more creative in trying to reduce its cost of operations.

"I'm working with companies that pay the shipping instead of me, so we probably have half our customers where I'm not the one actually paying," he said. "They either have their own trucks, or it's normal practice in their business. That's helping to take pres-

sure off me. It's mitigating it to have my customers a little more self-dependent on the shipping."

So far, conditions look good for the coming season, but price will always be a concern.

"I think we're going to have a little better year, but I don't know

about the price," Mr Jeffery said.

"If the sales are good, if we get the price up a little bit, we'll be able to pay a little more for the oysters. The fishermen, you have to keep them happy, if you don't they'll quit fishing and go elsewhere."

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Mark MacNeill pulls his boat, Megan Rebecca, away from the wharf in Murray Harbour. He was on his way to the fishing grounds to set his last load of traps on opening day in 2021.

Heather Moore photo

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Julio Sanchez was honoured to receive recognition recently from the Eastern PEI Chamber of Commerce. The owner of Julio's Seafood Market, a St Peter's Bay business that opened in May 2021 was awarded the New Business of the Year Award at the 2022 Excellence Awards. Presenting the award was Clint Myers from CBDC. Martina MacDonald, Executive Director Rural Action Centre was also on hand to congratulate Mr Sanchez. Charlotte MacAulay photo



Julio Sanchez, owner of Julio's Seafood Market discovered a two-tone, half male half female lobster in his stock at the St Peter's Bay shop last year. He returned the unusual specimen to the sea. Submitted photo

New fish market in St Peter's Bay off to a successful start

By Charlotte MacAulay
charlotte@peicanada.com

When Julio Sanchez took his first trip to PEI the tug to put down roots was strong. In May of 2021 the St Peter's Bay resident opened Julio's Sea-

food Market at St Peter's Landing and with a very successful first season under his belt he looks forward to opening again in a couple of months.

Before moving to PEI Mr Sanchez lived in Toronto where he knew his dream to own a house

and, yes, a chicken coop, would be out of reach in the city. But when he came to PEI on vacation he realized it was the place for him.

"It took a couple of years but in 2016 I was able to buy a house and six months after that I made a chicken coop," he said.

The St Peter's Bay resident soon realized his new-found community had much more to offer. Within a short time he was knee-deep in volunteering with both the St Peter's and Area Development Corporation and the Wild Blueberry Festival.

With his eye on the community he was inspired to look at the possibility of opening a market.

He saw an opportunity and approached Mickey Rose of MR Seafoods with the idea of that business setting up shop in St Peter's.

Mr Rose offered another suggestion.

"He turned it around and said 'if you are interested I will help you,'" Mr Sanchez said.

Mr Sanchez then worked for MR Seafoods both on the food trucks in various communities across the Island and in the retail shop in Charlottetown.

"He gave me the opportunity to learn the business inside out," Mr Sanchez said.

That experience gave him the confidence to open his own business.

Julio's Seafood Market is open from May to mid-October and carries a wide variety of fresh local seafood including live and cooked lobster, scallops, tuna and halibut, oyster hake and mussels. "Ninety-nine per cent of what we sell is local," Mr Sanchez said.

Products from other local entrepreneurs are also available.

Mr Sanchez realized early on

the importance of businesses working together in promoting one another.

He points to implementing a 'weekly vendor' event featuring the various partnerships he has with companies such as Maritime Madness and Souris Sauces as a popular way of promotion.

During the first season locals and tourists alike became fast

supporters, said Mr Sanchez.

He strives to make it a customer experience as opposed to a transaction.

Mr Sanchez was the 2022 recipient of the Eastern PEI Chamber of Commerce New Business of the Year Award.

He said he was thrilled and honoured to be recognized by the local business community.

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