



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, February 13, 2014

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Tarr's ventless lobster traps surveying amendment passes Senate in Supp Budget *Will provide critical information to support lobster industry*

BOSTON - Today the Massachusetts State Senate passed an amendment to a supplemental budget filed by Senate Minority Leader Bruce Tarr (R-Gloucester) that would fund a vital lobster surveying program at \$150,000.

Tarr's amendment creates a \$500,000 reserve fund to be administered by the Executive Office of Administration and Finance, of which at least \$150,000 will be made available to the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) for a ventless lobster trap survey. Any remaining money can be expended by DMF, the Department of Public Health's Bureau of Environmental Health or the Department of Public Health's state laboratory to address concerns associated with bacterial contamination of marine waters and shellfish, in particular *Vibrio parahemolyticus* (Vp), which is a naturally occurring bacterium in the cholera family and causes gastrointestinal illness in humans.

Since 2003 Massachusetts has participated in a lobster indexing project that utilizes ventless lobster traps, which has proven more accurate than other methods in assessing stocks, and which will not be possible this year without state funding.

"The information that comes from using ventless traps is critical to managing the fishery, negotiating reasonable catch allocations, and developing and implementing rebuilding strategies that make sense," said Tarr. "Without this funding, the future of our lobster industry will be at risk, and sound management will be imperiled."

Using ventless lobster traps is considered one of the most accurate methods of stock assessment due to the design of the traps. A ventless trap prevents most lobsters from escaping, including those that are undersized, so they can be caught and counted, while traditional traps and trawls allow smaller sized lobsters to escape, providing an incomplete picture as to the health of the current stock.

"While Massachusetts is currently unable to move forward with this critical research, our coastal neighbors are continuing with their programs," said Tarr. "This puts us at a distinct disadvantage, and one that's preventable."

The lobster surveying project is conducted through the partnership of the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries with harvesters in the Commonwealth's lobster fishing industry. In past years the program received funding through NOAA grants and mitigation funds from marine construction projects, but unfortunately, this year those funds did not become available.

Tarr thanked Senators Dan Wolf (D-Harwich), Thomas McGee (D-Lynn) and Mark Montigny (D-New Bedford) for co-sponsoring the amendment and Representative Sarah Peake (D-Provincetown) and Ann-Margaret Ferrante (D-Gloucester) for championing a version of the amendment in the House of Representatives. He also expressed thanks to Senate President Therese Murray (D-Plymouth) for her support on this measure.

The spending bill now awaits action by the House.

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