

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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1 FIRST REGULAR SESSION  
2

3 ONE HUNDRED AND TWELFTH LEGISLATURE  
4

5 Legislative Document

No. 718

6  
7 H.P. 513

House of Representatives, February 26, 1985

8 Reference to the Committee on Marine Resources suggested and ordered  
9 printed.

10 EDWIN H. PERT, Clerk

11 Presented by Representative Crowley of Stockton Springs

12 STATE OF MAINE  
13

14 IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD  
15 NINETEEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-FIVE  
16

17 AN ACT to Raise the Minimum Legal Size of  
18 Lobsters.  
19

20 Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as  
21 follows:

22 Sec. 1. 12 MRSA §6431, sub-§1-A is enacted to  
23 read:

24 1-A. Conservation measures. The minimum size re-  
25 quirement for lobsters shall be as follows.

26 A. Effective January 1, 1988, it shall be unlaw-  
27 ful to buy, sell, give away, transport, ship or  
28 possess any lobster which is less than 3 4/16  
29 inches as determined by the state lobster mea-  
30 sure. This provision shall become effective only  
31 if New Hampshire and Massachusetts have enacted  
32 into the public laws of those states a minimum  
33 size requirement for lobsters no less than 3 4/16  
34 inches, as determined in subsection 2.

1           B. Effective January 1, 1990, it shall be unlaw-  
2 ful to buy, sell, give away, transport, ship or  
3 possess any lobster which is less than 3 5/16  
4 inches as determined by the state lobster mea-  
5 sure. This provision shall become effective only  
6 if New Hampshire and Massachusetts have enacted  
7 into the public laws of those states a minimum  
8 size requirement for lobsters no less than 3 5/16  
9 inches, as determined in subsection 2.

10           Sec. 2. 12 MRSA §6431, sub-§3, as enacted by PL  
11 1977, c. 661, §5, is amended to read:

12           3. Double gauge measure; evidentiary value. The  
13 department shall provide the state double gauge lob-  
14 ster measure for sale at actual cost. The measure  
15 shall have one gauge of 3 3/16 inches and another 5  
16 inches in length. No measurement, other than by the  
17 state's double gauge lobster measure, shall be admis-  
18 sible in any court in the State.

19 Effective January 1, 1988, the state lobster measure  
20 shall conform to the minimum legal size.

21           Sec. 3. 12 MRSA §6433, sub-§1-A is enacted to  
22 read:

23           1-A. Adjustment. The commissioner shall specify  
24 by regulation the dimensions of vents in lobster  
25 traps which shall be appropriate for the minimum le-  
26 gal size in effect.

27           Sec. 4. 12 MRSA §6858, sub-§1-A is enacted to  
28 read:

29           1-A. Adjustment. Notwithstanding subsection 1,  
30 the commissioner shall specify by regulation the le-  
31 gal size of lobster meat tail sections in conformity  
32 with the minimum legal size in effect.

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STATEMENT OF FACT

2           This bill increases the minimum legal size for  
3 taking lobsters by small increments over several  
4 years beginning in 1988.

5           The Maine lobster resource is very valuable and  
6 very heavily exploited, but only 2% to 3% of females  
7 reach maturity below the present minimum legal size.  
8 The very high exploitation rate, calculated to be  
9 0.86, or 86%, means that few females over the minimum  
10 size can mature and reproduce. Scientific opinion is  
11 that this situation does not provide a sufficient re-  
12 productive base for a healthy lobster resource. Small  
13 increases in the minimum legal size would strengthen  
14 the reproductive capability of the resource and thus  
15 strengthen the lobster resource itself.

16           The value of the resource also increases as a re-  
17 sult of small increases in the minimum size. Lobsters  
18 gain 40% by weight with each moult. Fishermen are  
19 paid by landed weight. Increasing the minimum legal  
20 size would contribute to an additional moult prior to  
21 harvest, thus adding significantly to the landed val-  
22 ue of the catch. An increase of 1/16 of an inch would  
23 add \$1,000,000 to the landed value.

24           It is the intent of the Legislature that there  
25 should be a regional increase in the minimum size of  
26 lobsters concurrent with the Maine increase. This  
27 bill proposes that the initial increase would be ef-  
28 fective in January, 1988, only if Massachusetts and  
29 New Hampshire have adopted equivalent minimum lobster  
30 size restrictions. The 2nd increase in 1990 would al-  
31 so be contingent on parallel action by Massachusetts  
32 and New Hampshire.

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