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## Sea Grant's Long Island Sound Lobster Initiative Time-Line Reconstruction

### Background

A mail survey was administered by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection in October 1999 (and again in January 2000) to document lobster fishers' observations on the events surrounding the lobster mass mortalities and increase in the incidence of shell disease in the Long Island Sound fishery. The response rate was 10 percent (69 respondents out of a total of 697 licenses), but the information was used by the regulatory agencies and the Lobster Planning Committee to develop a strategic research and monitoring program.



*Lobstermen discussed their concerns at the NY Sea Grant/ Stony Brook University Marine Science Research Center/NYS Dept. of Env. Conservation lobster meeting held at SBU in May 2000.*

The anecdotal information obtained by the survey is also being used to reconstruct a Time-Line of key events prior to, during, and subsequent to the lobster infections and mass mortalities. This exercise was deemed high priority at the Lobster Health Symposium in 1999, since the data could be reviewed to identify clues of likely stressors and causes of the infections and mortalities. The observations that will be incorporated in the final version of the Time-Line will be derived from many sources including scientific reports, regulatory agencies' monitoring, fishers' log records, and anecdotal observations by lobster fishers.

### How Can Lobster Fishers Help

Sea Grant will initiate an additional field program to document lobster fishers' observations for 1999 and 2000. Lobster fishers will be asked to provide approximate dates, where possible, for their observations of unusual patterns. Respondents will be encouraged to consult log records to be able to identify approximate dates for specific events. All interviews will remain confidential, and the information will be used to assist the scientists to refine the Time-line. A data sheet is enclosed in the information package, and we are asking lobster fishers to complete the forms, and return them in the envelope that is provided. Sea Grant needs the full support of the lobster fishers in order to make the research initiative a success.

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**For additional information, contact:**

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## Sea Grant's Long Island Sound Lobster Initiative Summary of 1999 Time-Line

<b>August 1999</b>	3	Hypoxia events peaked in WLIS; low oxygen levels reported near Hempstead Harbor. Hypoxia zone extends from Hempstead Harbor/Greenwich/Mattituck/Guilford. Thunderstorms occurred intermittently throughout the entire month.
	15	Lobsters appear to disappear from Stamford & Greenwich, after thunderstorms; spider crabs moved into area.
<b>September 1999</b>	2	A few dead lobsters observed in traps in NW areas towards Stamford and Darien.
	3	Malathion spraying started in NYC continued intermittently for the most of the month.
	6	Water changed to milky gray coloration in some area.
	13	Deep trenches devoid of lobsters off Norwalk. Few live lobsters are reported inshore areas; barnacles covered hard-shelled lobsters.
	14	Numerous dead lobsters reported from both deep and shallow waters off Northport.
	15	Tropical Storm Floyd passed through region.
	20	Traps reported to be devoid of fouling organisms and grass. Sulphur odor emitted from traps. 80% reduction in landings off Lloyd's Neck.
	21	Absence of lobsters in waters off Greenwich & Stamford; lobsters caught in Darien.
	22	Dead lobsters observed, including sub-legals, molting, and berried. Numerous dead spider crabs and no lobsters observed in deep holes.
	26	Branford lobster run does not manifest, and lobster fishers delay setting traps.
	27	Lobsters still absent off Greenwich & Stamford, but still being caught off Darien.
	28	Reports of new shell lobsters appearing off Darien; mortality ratio estimated at 1:6 after 3 trap-days.
	29	Hard-shelled lobsters weakened, lethargic, eyes cloudy, usually dying within a few hours of being landed.
	30	Dead spider crabs reported.
<b>October 1999</b>	1	Noticeable absence of lobsters off Greenwich & Stamford, for first two weeks of the month. Vector control operations conducted intermittently, during the first two weeks.
	8	Wholesalers report lobsters dying in tanks within a few days of receipt. Absence of other marine crustaceans (crabs) in Prospect Point & Lloyd's Neck. Heavy barnacle deposits observed on traps.
	9	Dead lobsters observed by divers in the burrows off New Rochelle.
	19	Molting berried females is prevalent off Branford.
	29	Few lobsters observed in Branford, Bridgeport, Norwalk & Darien.

*Time-line details may be viewed at:* [www.seagrantsunysb.edu/LILobsters/LILobsters.htm](http://www.seagrantsunysb.edu/LILobsters/LILobsters.htm)

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