

# Seafood

## 2025 NEW HAMPSHIRE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE STRATEGIC PLAN

**Purpose:** To understand the unique opportunities and challenges that impact economically viable seafood harvesting and/or production in New Hampshire, including wild harvested fish and shellfish aquaculture.

## What's at Stake?

New Hampshire's seafood industry is a key part of the state's economic and cultural landscape. It encompasses wild capture fisheries (i.e., groundfishing and lobstering), shellfish aquaculture, and landing and processing facilities. The industry provides Granite Staters with a healthy source of protein, job opportunities, and healthy, working waterfronts.

Over the past 20 years, this resilient and innovative industry has grappled with a myriad of challenges, as well as social, regulatory, and economic changes, that have put the existence of the seafood industry in New Hampshire at risk. Without support from the state and federal government, New Hampshire's seafood industry, associated businesses, and working waterfronts will likely disappear in the near future.

## Current Conditions

A 2022 report suggests New Hampshire's seafood economy is a small but active industry fostering over 3,083 jobs and \$170.7 million in non-imported seafood sales. Since 2010, New Hampshire's commercial seafood sector has grown and stabilized its economic impact.

However, New Hampshire's commercial fishing, aquaculture, and seafood sectors continue to be affected by economic, regulatory, and environmental factors, further compounded by systemic issues, such as deteriorating and lacking infrastructure and processing facilities, and an aging and declining workforce. While recent data indicates a stable seafood industry, there is a disconnect between that data and the reality the industry is experiencing. The overall experience is a seafood industry teetering on the cusp of viability; the commercial fishing industry is increasingly dependent on one species, American lobster; the processing sector is rapidly disappearing; and the aquaculture industry is limited by available operational space and a lack of infrastructure support.

There is not one central organization that offers holistic support of New Hampshire's seafood industry. NH Sea Grant, UNH Extension, and seafood industry members have identified four areas where support and action would significantly sustain the industry: marketing, infrastructure, governmental support, and the creation of an industry association.

### NEW HAMPSHIRE AQUACULTURE SALES, 2022

In 2022, New Hampshire aquaculturists generated **\$9.6 million** in sales.

Trout accounted for **40.4%** of aquaculture sales.

Mollusks accounted for **20.0%** of aquaculture sales.

**SOURCE:** USDA Census of Agriculture, Table 31: Aquaculture Sales.

# Challenges and Opportunities

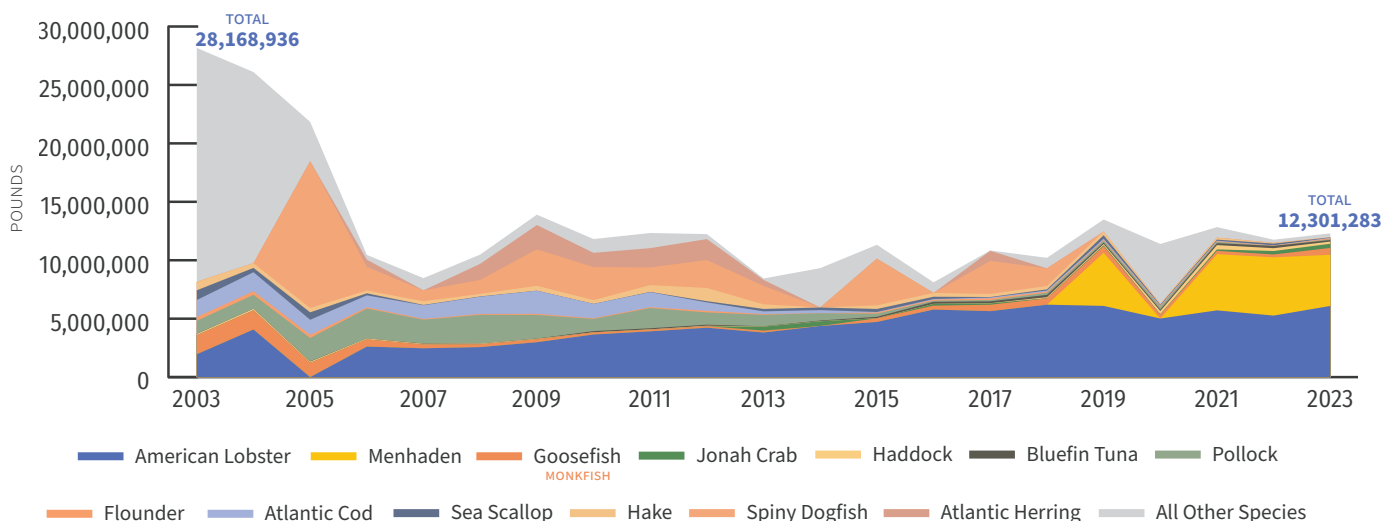
## CHALLENGES

- The seafood industry in New Hampshire is governed by many state agencies, federal agencies, and organizations. Navigating the regulations, policies, and vast information of each is time consuming and accessing assistance is difficult.
- The seafood industry is dependent on infrastructure under the management of the NH Port Authority, which is under the jurisdiction of the Pease Development Authority (PDA) board, a frustrating system plagued by financial and operational constraints.
- The commercial fishing and aquaculture sectors suffer from deteriorating state-owned and managed infrastructure and a lack of aquaculture-specific infrastructure, and need processing capacity and distribution networks.

## OPPORTUNITIES

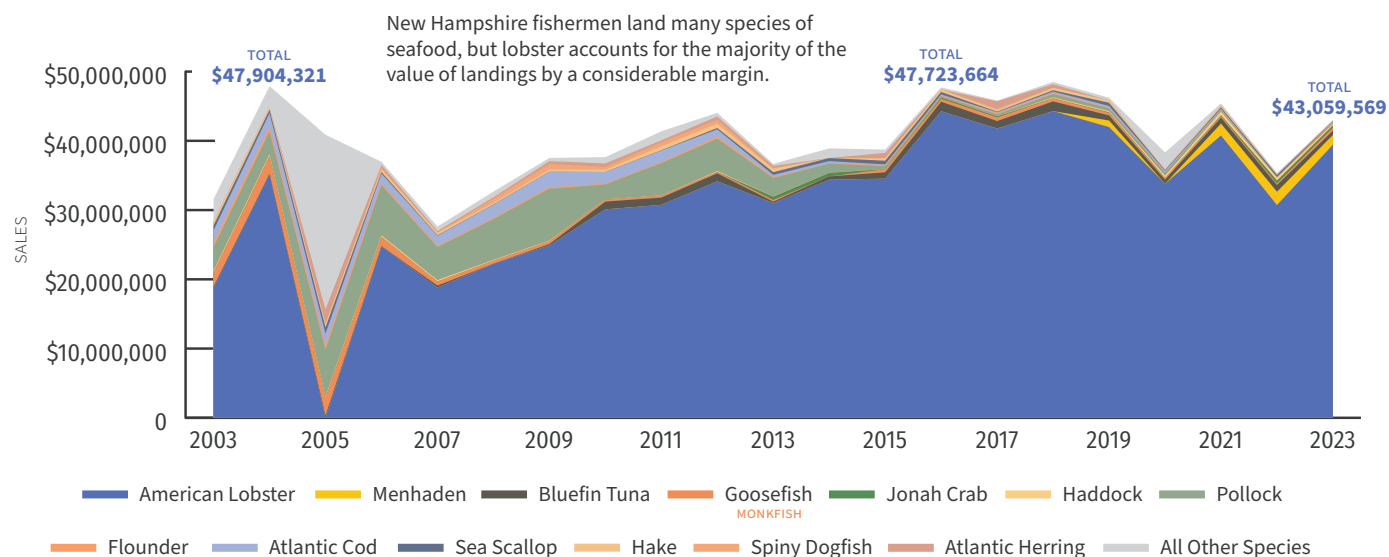
- There are three active seafood industry organizations in the state: the NH Commercial Fishermen’s Association, the NH Oyster Farmers Initiative, and the New England Young Fishermen’s Alliance. All advocate for the needs and concerns of their respective members, including navigating regulations, infrastructure, shared ocean use, planning, and workforce development and can offer new and experienced industry members guidance or opportunities for success.
- The Seafood Infrastructure Working Group was formed by NH Sea Grant and UNH Extension in response to the deterioration of integral state-owned infrastructure in Portsmouth, Hampton, and Rye harbors and a complete lack of infrastructure for aquaculture in Little Bay. The Working Group is prioritizing and exploring external funding for infrastructure improvements and acquisitions, as well as consumer education.
- There is increasing interest in place-based branding throughout New Hampshire; this could be capitalized on to expand consumer awareness and education about the nutritional and environmental benefits of local seafood, similar to the past NH Fresh and Local brand.

**NEW HAMPSHIRE COMMERCIAL FISHERIES LANDINGS, BY POUNDS, 2003-2023**



SOURCE: Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program. Note: live pounds are used here.

## NEW HAMPSHIRE COMMERCIAL FISHERIES LANDINGS, BY SALES, 2003-2023



**SOURCE:** Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program. Adjusted for inflation to 2024 dollars using producer price indices.

## Recommendations

- Appoint and fund a seafood industry liaison in the state government.** Appoint and fund a seafood industry liaison position or program within a state government agency. This liaison would help fishermen and seafood producers access information and could be modeled after the State Conservation Committee role within the NH Department of Agriculture, Markets, and Food.
- Advocate for a seat on the Pease Development Authority (PDA) board.** Advocate for a governor-appointed board seat for a seafood industry member to represent coastal/ocean uses in New Hampshire on the PDA board.
- Allocate state budget funding for seafood industry infrastructure.** Allocate appropriate funding in the state budget to maintain existing and build new infrastructure for the fishing and aquaculture sectors (e.g., moorings, docks, landings, refrigeration, storage, and post production). PDA does not maintain a reserve budget for emergency infrastructure needs and has not obtained adequate funding for upgrades.
- Launch and fund a consumer marketing initiative for local seafood.** Launch, and fund if needed, a consumer marketing initiative for New Hampshire seafood to inspire consumer demand for local seafood and increase consumer value for sourcing local seafood over non-local. This initiative could be in partnership with other marketing initiatives or organizations, such as Seacoast Eat Local or NH Eats Local Month.
- Fund research to collect the “real data” as the local seafood industry sees it.** Fund industry-supported research to reconcile the data sets collected by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and other federal entities with “the real data” as the seafood industry sees it (e.g., demographics of the seafood industry, data without large corporation statistics included, and how different populations access seafood in New Hampshire).

# Authors

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**New Hampshire**  
*Department of Agriculture,  
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**NH FOOD  
ALLIANCE**

This brief was developed through a participatory process led by the NH Food Alliance, a program of the University of New Hampshire. The brief content is comprised of the opinions, perspectives, and information gathered by the authors and participants, and does not necessarily represent those of the NH Department of Agriculture, Markets, and Food or the NH Food Alliance.

For more information, including references and opportunities to get involved, visit the 2025 NH Food and Agriculture Strategic Plan web page on [nhfoodalliance.org](https://nhfoodalliance.org) or scan the QR code on the inside front cover of the print version.