

First Overseas Conference Travel Fund Report

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11th International Conference and Workshop on Lobster Biology and Management

Portland, Maine, USA. 5-9th June 2017

I would like to sincerely thank the New Zealand Marine Sciences Society for their generous contribution, which allowed me to attend and present at the 11th International Conference and Workshop on Lobster Biology and Management in Portland, Maine. The conference occurs every three years and represents the forefront of lobster research, attracting a variety of interdisciplinary researchers, commercial industry representatives and policy makers. The 2017 conference attracted close to 300 international attendees and hosted 20 sessions which ranged in scope from climate change to fisheries management, from reproductive biology to disease and parasite research, and from aquaculture to population genetics. The range of presentations offered invaluable scope and context for my own PhD research which broadly aims to improve our understanding of the distribution, density and reproductive ecology of scampi (a commercially important New Zealand deep-sea lobster species) and apply this information experimentally to help reduce bycatch and environmental damage during scampi harvests.

At the conference I gave an oral presentation summarising findings from the first completed chapter of my PhD; 'Estimating the size at the onset of maturity for New Zealand scampi *Metanephrops challengeri*'. I received positive feedback from a variety of international leaders in the fields of reproductive ecology and lobster biology which was really exciting. They also helped provide insight into which environmental variables may be affecting size at maturity within different New Zealand fisheries management areas. Their feedback has helped inform a paper which I recently submitted to the conference proceedings.

Portland, Maine is the lobster capital of America with a thriving port and an incredibly picturesque archipelago. It was great to meet with local lobster fishers to discuss the practical aspects of lobster fisheries and management and how these relate to academic and theoretical research. My week in Portland also allowed me to network with a number of experts in relevant fields whose knowledge I will be drawing on as my PhD progresses.

Aside from the conference, the food and scenery in Portland, Maine is excellent! I was also fortunate enough to partake in a short road-trip through California, Arizona, Utah and Nevada to experience some of the natural wonders and craziness of America. I am incredibly grateful for the NZMSS support.