

# On the job

## Gail Atkinson

Co-owner/Operator/Captain

*Nellie Row*



This was our first full season with an all-female crew. Kathryn Moore (co-owner/first mate/deck boss) and I ran the boat with just the two of us for the last half of last season.

It wasn't really a deliberate choice to form an all-female crew. We knew Annie Featherstone (deckhand) wanted to fish with us this season and we agreed to take her. Sophie Martel (deckhand) and I worked together on *Bluenose II* as first and second mates. She said she had always wanted to try commercial lobster fishing, so we gave her the opportunity.

We usually leave the wharf anywhere from 2:00 to 4:30 AM depending on how far offshore we're fishing, and return that same night. The day ranges from 13 to 20 hours depending on steaming times. Our lobster season runs from the last Monday of November until the last day of May. In the summer and fall we fish commercially for mackerel. Of course, there's much work to do on land overhauling gear and maintaining the boat. It keeps us busy year round.

Over the years, I'd have to say finding, and keeping, good crew is one of the more difficult aspects of running a successful commercial fishing business. Of course, for me, as Captain, finding and staying on the lobsters is my main focus. As I'm attempting to do that, I have the safety of my crew paramount on my mind.

Advice? Well, you have to love it. If you're not passionate about it, and go at it half-heartedly, it will be reflected in your results. Keep your wits about you at all times on land and at sea, try to maintain your perspective. You will have good seasons and not-so-good seasons and you need to be able to ride them out financially and emotionally. Ultimately, commercial fishing has got to be one of the most rewarding of careers. |nrm

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