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Eastern Maine Skipper's Program DISHS students present research on green crab population in local waters

By ANNE BERLEANT
ELLSWORTH—The issue was the recent explosion of green crabs in Maine's coastal waters. The challenge was how to turn around its negative impact on the local fishing industry.

Teams from six schools in the Eastern Maine Skippers Program, presented their research, findings and possible solutions to a panel of judges on May 28 at The Grand in Ellsworth. All of them recognized that finding the means to turn green crabs into a financially viable market was key.

"That's the hurdle that everyone's facing," Department of Marine Resources Deputy Commissioner Meredith Mendelson said after the presentations. "If anyone develops an answer to green crabs, it's going to be the kids."

George Stevens Academy students earned first place for their research on transforming green crabs into compost.

"The students worked on multiple revisions of their final presentation," said Buzz Moore, GSA's Assistant Head of School. "The end result was outstanding." He noted that the students had worked especially hard after being dissatisfied with their performance at the Fishermen's Forum this past winter.

Deer Isle-Stonington High School students presented findings that included the size of the green crab population in their local fishing waters, their effect on lobster mortality and the possibility of using them as lobster bait.

"Deer Isle-Stonington did a really fantastic job, looking at a number of issues," said Mendelson, who judged the teams' scientific process and use of data. She gave high marks overall to DISHS and GSA for their research hypotheses and "analysis of outcomes."

She was joined on the judges' panel by representatives from the fields of science, education, business and, naturally, fishing.

The Eastern Maine Skippers Program has now completed its second year of educating the next generation of fishermen and contributors to fisheries management. The program was created in 2012 by Penobscot East Resource Center and DISHS, with the goal of teaching students how to navigate not only fishing waters but government and industry organizations that regulate fishing.

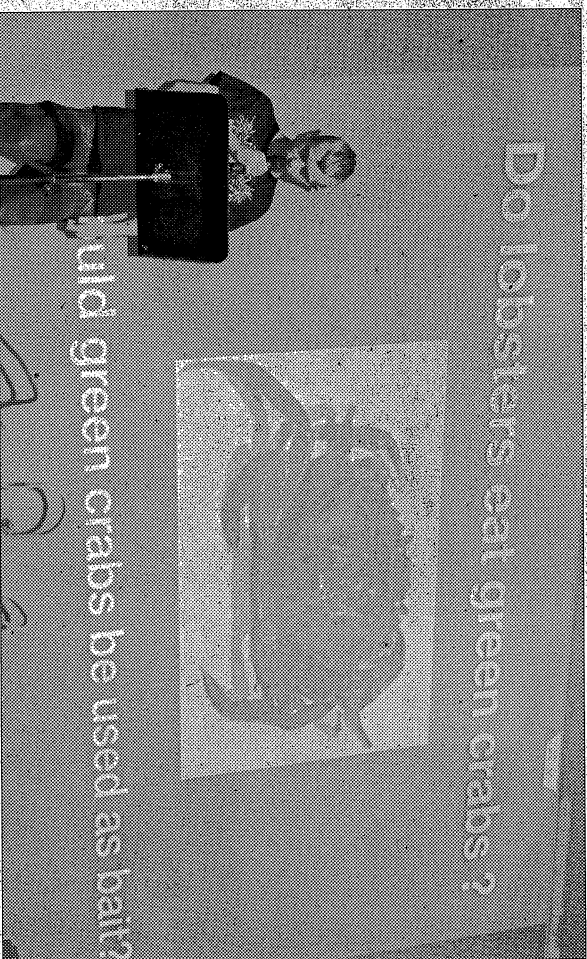
In 2014, based on their research and collaboration with PERC and the DMR, students were awarded a special license by the DMR to trap winter flounder.

"The students are working on real problems [that] we're working on in marine resources,"

said Mendelson.

Dennis Damon, PERC Chairman and former state senator, hosted the event. "Some students may choose to pursue a fishing career. Others may choose to go on to college

for marine-related [studies]," he said. The main goal of the program is for the students "to understand the heritage of fishing communities and what it takes to be a part of them."



Students from George Stevens Academy, Deer Isle-Stonington High School and four other coastal schools in the Eastern Maine Skipper's Program presented their final projects on May 28 at The Grand in Ellsworth. Tony Nevells was one of the 14 students who helped present Deer Isle-Stonington's green crab research.

Photo by Anne Berleant