



Mount Desert High School students Brenna Sullivan (left) and Isis Heyman were among the students from the Eastern Maine Skippers Program who presented posters at the Maine Fishermen's Forum. Their project suggested steps the industry and individual fishermen might take to make lobsters more available to the public year-round. PHOTO BY STEPHEN RAPPAPORT

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## Young skippers show the way to the lobster industry's future

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**ROCKPORT** — At a quick glance, a roomful of Maine lobstermen might be mistaken for a gathering of the AARP or seminar on the approaching benefits of Social Security. A second look will disclose a good scattering of young men and women who have decided to make lobster fishing their lives, but graybeards are definitely in the majority.

A visit with members of the Eastern Maine Skippers Program, though, suggests that the future of Maine's fishing industry is secure in good and

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This year, students from Vinalhaven, North Haven, Deer Isle-Stonington, Ellsworth, Mount Desert Island, Jonesport-Beals and Narraguagus high schools and George Stevens Academy have been working on a project that they hope will elicit feedback on a variety of ideas they have developed for making an impact on the lobster industry that they will one day be part of.

On Friday afternoon, students from each of the schools in the program did a poster presentation at the Maine Fishermen's Forum displaying the questions they have raised and answers they propose. Their enthusiasm was palpable and contagious.

Among the posters was one prepared by Ellsworth High School students Jack McKechnie, Hayden Sattler and Ben Mazgai, who were trying to find a way for fishermen to ship their lobsters directly to European consumers through a cooperative that would eliminate the middleman.

The Eastern Maine Skippers program grew, initially, from a collaboration between the Penobscot East Resource Center in Stonington and educators at Deer Isle-Stonington High School. According to the PERC website, graduates of the program "will be flexible and adaptive fishermen who can advocate for the resource, the industry and their communities."

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Stephen Rappaport has lived in Maine for nearly 30 years.

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