

Island Ad-Vantages



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Coastal students present work at Fishermen's Forum

ROCKPORT—More than 75 students in the Eastern Maine Skippers Program presented their year-long collaborative lobster project posters to a full house at the Maine Fishermen's Forum on Friday, March 4. The students came from eight coastal high schools: Deer Isle-Stonington, Ellsworth, George Stevens Academy, Jonesport-Beals, Mount Desert Island, Narraguagus, North Haven and Vinalhaven.

Projects covered the lobster industry from egg to trap, and from trap to plate as well as broader topics in the fishery such as regulation, marketing, and qualifications for licensing, according to a news release. Each of the schools created posters to explain their chosen questions, potential impact, what they already know, and what resources they need to finish their projects. Topics range from a new trap design created by a group of Narraguagus High School students to a proposed law on mandatory drug testing from a group of Deer Isle-Stonington students to a scrub brush that attaches to a lobster boat's pot hauler to clean the rope as it's hauled from students at North Haven Community School. Other projects include Mt. Desert Island students investigating their local lobster market and Jonesport-Beals students looking at the impacts of changes in boat designs over time.

The session audience was invited to walk around and ask students questions about their projects and to offer support and resources for students to complete their projects. After session, participants engaged directly with students, the floor was opened up to questions for Skippers' staff, students, and teachers.

By investigating the broad scope of the lobster business, students are given the opportunity to think outside the box and dig deeper into the industry. The students' projects are not just about catching lobsters, but how the economy of their communities functions and sustains itself. The project has a further application beyond students' high school education by connecting "real world" research that communities can use as

they sustain the fishing economies that are vital to Downeast communities. Students are able to learn and practice important skills such as public speaking through testifying before the Legislature, learning about the market chain locally and internationally, what is involved in securing a patent, all of which will prepare them for fishing careers as well as post-secondary education.

The students presented to a wide array of fishermen, scientists, elected officials, and community organizations. They will now put their proposals into action to complete their projects which will be presented during the last week of May. For more information on The Eastern Maine Skippers Program, call Christina Fifield at 367-2708 or visit penobscoteast.org.

