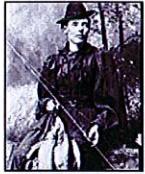


May 2016 Volume 21, No. 5

FISHERMEN'S VOICE

News and Comment for and by the Fishermen of Maine



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"Off The Point." The days when just being in it makes the trip worth while. Recent lobster licensing changes may effect the wait time for access for young people who want to fish. Access, in a larger sense, to fisheries resources both commercially and as a local food supply is a concern being addressed on both the East Coast, Gulf of Mexico and West Coast. Driving concern is the top down movement to privatize public marine resources. The impact of catch shares and pending Ocean Policy marine zoning are linked. *Peter Ralston photo* <http://www.ralstongallery.com>

Fishermen & Farmers Meet at Machias

The Future is the Past

by Paul Molyneaux

Two fisheries conferences took place on March 12, 2016—Slow Fish 2016, an international event in New Orleans; and the Washington County Food Summit in East Machias.

Slow Fish hosted fishermen, scientists, regulators and fishery activists from around the world. They gathered to network and share winning strategies for fishermen who have endured in a food production system controlled by large-scale entities that also dominate management and marketing. That meeting included renowned chefs who prepared shrimp, oysters and other delights flown in by fishermen from all over the U.S.

That same weekend, the NGO Healthy Acadia held the second

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biannual Washington County Food Summit, with a similar agenda. The summit, held at Washington Academy High School, was the kind of localized event the larger Slow Fish conference said it hoped to spawn. The lunch menu had a distinctly Downeast flavor: smoked alewives and an alewife dip made by Dwayne Shaw, director of the Downeast Salmon Federation.

By connecting farmers to fishermen from the coast of Maine, Healthy Acadia was ahead of the curve. "Our mission was to bring fishermen and farmers together to network and share resources and ideas," said event organizer Regina Grabrovac.

Amanda Beal, of Maine Farmland Trust, delivered the keynote speech, Land and Sea: Connections in Our Food System.

CONTINUE READING STORY

That's Not Over Yet

Alaska Salmon Runs Threatened by Canadian Mines, but Alaska Fishermen Lack Recourse

Royalty of the River

Lee Wilbur – Me & Den Fishing in a Limo, Part V

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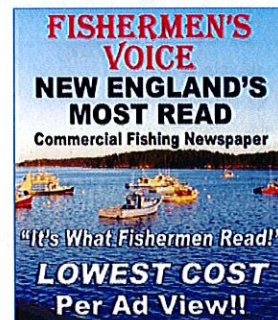
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Fishermen & Farmers Meet at Machias

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"There are mismatches between production scale and management," said Beal. Like Grabrovac, Beal believed that small-scale farmers and fishermen could help each other. "What we hoped," said Beal, "is that we would find overlapping areas where there was a common language that would bring more attention to issues that affect both fishermen and farmers." In addition to protecting ecosystems, Beal highlighted the need for both farmers and fishermen to have infrastructure and regulations geared for small-scale food processing, as well access to lucrative markets.



The lunch menu had a distinctly Downeast flavor: smoked alewives and an alewife dip. *Bill Kitchen photos*

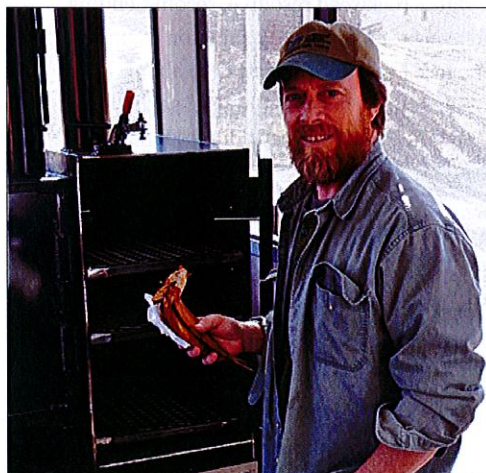
The Washington County Food Summit featured three morning panels, on marketing, food security, and fisheries diversification. The panels included Maine's former Department of Marine Resources commissioner, Robin Alden; fisherman and chair of the Maine Fishermen's Forum Kristan Porter; Maine seaweed harvester Larch Hanson; and an aquaponics specialist, Jackson McLeod, co-owner of Fluid Farms in Yarmouth.

The panelists represented well over a hundred years of experience in fisheries production, management and marketing. Together they presented attendees with an overview of the issues facing small-scale seafood producers on the coast of Maine.

These boiled down to habitat protection, effective management, resource access, and community values. A separate panel focused on marketing, which depends on available infrastructure, who is fishing, and how. In her keynote address, Beal compared the interconnected nature of these issues to a skein of yarn. "Pull on one thread and you find it intertwined with all the others," she said.

The Fisheries Discussion

Robin Alden, executive director of Penobscot East Resource Center, opened the Fisheries Panel discussion by highlighting one of the most critical issues in fisheries—access to the resources. Alden noted that contrary to farming on private property, fishing takes place in the ocean



Dwayne Shaw, director of the Downeast Salmon Federation with a smoked alewife in hand standing before a fish smoker. *Bill Kitchen photo*

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commons, and depends on permissions and licenses granted by the state and federal government. She identified privatization as one of the biggest threats to local access. Fisheries that become privatized through Catch Shares tend to become consolidated, with access rights shifting into the hands of fewer and fewer players.

Porter followed Alden's presentation with specifics on how Maine is managing the fisheries he participates in—lobster, scallops, quahogs, and sea urchin—with an emphasis on improvements in the way the state handles scallops. Like Alden, Porter said he wants to see Maine's small fishing communities, such as his home port of Cutler, in a position of strength, based on healthy resources. His presentation illustrated a mismatch in scale and regulation. Porter said he fishes under often-changing federal and state regulations that require detailed record-keeping and trip reports, an added burden for small-scale fishermen and their spouses who are often up nights crunching numbers that larger operations can leave to their accountants.

Larch Hanson, who has harvested edible seaweed in Dyer Bay for 40 years, spoke about the state's mismanagement of its rockweed resource, particularly the privatization of the resource through sector management that he said has allowed one Canadian company, Acadian Seaplants Ltd., to dominate the industry.

Jackson McLeod co-owner of Fluid Farms, offered a different point of view. McLeod and his business partner Tyler Gaudet grow fish on land. "The only regulation we have to deal with is we need a permit from Fish and Wildlife to grow hybrid striped bass," McLeod said. His operation now grosses \$120,000 on a \$75,000 investment, and relies more on vegetables than fish. "So far, we mostly eat the fish," he said.

Local Management

Hanson also talked about the export of the state's rockweed resource, recommending municipal management of the resource and using it to fertilize Washington County farms. At the wrap-up session, many farmers in attendance heard for the first time about the usefulness of rockweed as a fertilizer. "The nutrition of the soil leaches into the sea," said Hanson. "What we need to do is move that back onto the land. This is how we can address food security here where we live."

Pointing out the state's failure to regulate rockweed in a way that benefits coastal communities, Hanson recommended municipal control over the resource, but that idea has been a non-starter in the legislature, he said.

The discussion raised a number of other questions from non-fishing attendees.

"Who decides?" asked Ruth Cash-Smith of Dennysville. "Who calls the meeting and speaks up for communities?" The panel said they found her question difficult to answer.

"Fisheries are an economic lifeboat in this region," the moderator offered. "The question is, How do we want to act in that lifeboat? Do we try to get as many people aboard as possible, or do we let the strongest cannibalize the weakest?"

Amanda Beal echoed the sentiments of many when she framed the issue in terms of values. "So often we're only thinking about the dollar," she said. "We need to embed other values in our food systems. For example, can farmers and fishermen make a living wage? How does food production affect the environment and communities?"

The networking that is vital to shaping and establishing those values in food systems took place on an international level at the much larger Slow Fish conference in New Orleans. But according to Robin Alden, the local level is where the action is. "It is invaluable to come together face-to-face—a good example of why community-level action is the way to build real change and real economic opportunity," she said. "It was very nice for me to be able to connect

Lack Recourse

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the key issues of the long-term health of fishing in the county—owner-operator licensing in the scallop fishery, among other things—with people who are involved with food but not necessarily fishing.”

For aquaponics entrepreneur Jackson McLeod, the Washington County Food Summit revealed “how many passionate people in Maine are motivated to change our food production/distribution landscape.” At the same time, he showed how fishery diversification could come ashore and illustrate a link between healthy fisheries and healthy farms.

Commenters noted that, while high-quality food produced locally by small-scale operations usually costs more than factory-farmed options, it is often better for one's health. Beal said that sometimes quality is better than quantity, and that many farmer's markets accept SNAP benefits, enabling lower-income families to join the local feast. “You pay for it now, or you pay for it later,” said Beal, referring to the medical costs associated with a poor diet. “Local farmers and fishermen keep us healthy.”

