



FISHERMEN'S VOICE

News and Comment for and by the Fishermen of Maine

Preparing the Next Generation of Fishermen and Community Leaders



April 2017 Volume 22, No. 4

Two students from the Eastern Maine Skippers Program from Mount Desert Island High School exhibiting the results of their research on water quality and diadromous fish populations. *Paul Molyneaux photo*

In 1987, the average age of a Maine fisherman was thirty-seven years old, but over the last three decades the average has increased to over fifty years old. One of the biggest questions facing Maine's fishing communities today is how to keep young people on the water and engaged in fisheries issues. The Eastern Maine Skippers

Program, operated by the Maine Center for Coastal Fisheries has taken on the mission of ensuring the next generation of fishermen and leaders in Maine's coastal communities will have what they need to preserve their way of life.

The Skippers Program has been operating for four years, offering schools, teachers, and students the chance to engage in experiential learning with a focus on fisheries issues relevant to them and their families. Each year the Skippers students have presented their project ideas at the Maine Fishermen's Forum, seeking input from fisheries professionals. At the 2017 Maine Fishermen's Forum more than sixty students from seven coastal high schools conducted a workshop with a record crowd. At 10:30 AM on Friday March 3, students set up posters around the Rockport Room at the Samoset Resort, the largest room available, and engaged with a record crowd that included Senator Angus King. After a brief introduction the audience mingled with students looking at posters that highlighted a variety of issues. Audience members asked questions and offered feedback on proposals to investigate seaweed biofuel production off the coast of Maine; analyze the effects of water quality in area watersheds on diadromous

species; compare the wild scallop harvest with scallop aquaculture, and other current issues all centered on the question of how to maintain sustainable marine food systems.

“There’s no more noble work than feeding people.” said Senator King. Students in the Coastal Fisheries operated Skippers Program are engaged in solving real world problems that include, design of a low impact shrimp beam trawl, developing a lobster bait substitute for herring, analyzing the effects of scallop dragging, and research on how to mitigate the impacts of invasive species in Maine waters.

Students have, so far, attended numerous field trips and three Cohort Days, at which all participating students attend a day of workshops in one location. The Skippers students have learned about

- seaweed and shellfish aquaculture
- wild seaweed harvesting
- how to get an aquaculture lease
- the evolution of fishing gear and its effects on catches and the environment
- how to market seafood
- ocean grabbing and how to be vigilant of resource access



Students in the Eastern Maine Skippers Program and their parents filled a conference room at the Maine Fishermen’s Forum in Rockland on March 3, 2017. The program engages students in hands-on learning projects in current and emerging Maine fisheries. *Paul Molyneaux photo*

Based on their experiences, and the curriculum, students develop project ideas with help from Coastal Fisheries staffers Paul Molyneaux and Christina Fifield, as well as Val Peacock from Rural Aspirations.

Val Peacock has been a pioneer of the program, and thought the 2017 MFF poster presentation was the most well received yet. She noted that from now until the end of May Skippers staff will be supporting students and teachers in completing their projects in time for their final presentations at the Grand Auditorium in Ellsworth on May 25th at 5:00 PM.

***For more information, please contact
Robin Alden, Executive Director at ralden@coastalfisheries.org.***

**Maine Center for Coastal Fisheries
PO Box 27 • 13 Atlantic Avenue, Stonington, Maine 04681
(207) 367-2708 • www.coastalfisheries.org**

