

# Eastern Maine Coastal Current Collaborative

## State of the Science Conference

### Summary

The State of the Science Conference was held at the University of Maine Machias on June 17 and 18. The conference was the inaugural event of the Eastern Maine Coastal Current Collaborative (EM3C), which is a partnership between the Maine Center for Coastal Fisheries, the Maine Department of Marine Resources, and the NOAA Fisheries Northeast Fisheries Science Center. The purpose of the collaborative is to develop a scientific framework to support Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management in Downeast Maine. An ecosystem-based approach allows consideration of multiple components of the region defined by the eastern Maine coastal current - including people, animals, plants, and highlights the connections from rivers to estuaries to offshore waters. EM3C is unique in developing science to support an ecosystem approach because it is building knowledge and connections from the local level.

The State of the Science Conference brought together 150 collaborators from coastal and tribal communities, fishermen, watershed NGOs, research institutions, and government agencies from the municipal to the federal level, and more, with people ranging from early-career to long-term contributors. Discussions were focused around four habitat-related themes: watersheds, intertidal, coastal, and offshore, with a half-day focus on each theme. Theme-related presentations were provided for each habitat addressing i) local perspectives, ii) important species in the habitats, iii) important ecological aspects of the habitats, iv) important human activities in the habitats, and v) important governance frameworks in and across the habitats. This structure followed the pioneering work of Nobel Prize winning economist [Elinor Ostrom](#). Presenters came from a wide variety of backgrounds including fishermen; local government; state, federal and tribal representatives; and university professors. Following the presentations, small groups of participants gathered to discuss information available, data gaps, and barriers to an ecosystem approach related to the theme. Conversations were wide ranging, and note-takers captured the discussions. The meeting was closed with summaries from Jon Hare, Director of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, and Pat Keliher, Commissioner of the Maine Department of Marine Resources. In all the participants and the organizers concluded the conference was successful, and there was a lot of support for holding the conference again and continuing to build a network of people interested in ecosystem-based fisheries management. We went beyond a traditional conference by emphasizing group discussions between people with different expertise and perspectives so that we could maximize information sharing and collaborative learning.

The next steps for the meeting organizers are to review the notes from the conference and summarize the discussions. This summary will guide the EM3C partners in determining the next steps for the project. In addition, meeting participants were asked to maintain connections made at the conference and to increase involvement in activities that promote a more holistic approach to management in Downeast Maine. An additional piece of “homework” for participants was informed by one of the panel speakers, Ed Bassett, to think not about *our* generation or even the next, “let’s be thinking 7 generations from now”. The meeting organizers will continue building upon this community network, and identify information gaps and opportunities to bring people together, maintaining the connections made here and creating new ones to move forward on collaborative research relevant to this ecosystem. We will definitely plan another conference. As one of the conference attendees said, “This was great!”