



Maine Center for
COASTAL FISHERIES



2021 - 2024
STRATEGIC PLAN

MISSION

Secure a sustainable future for fisheries and fishing communities in Eastern Maine and beyond.

VISION

MCCF makes community resilience possible by bringing together fishermen and harvesters, scientists, policy makers, business and community leaders, and citizens to create and implement sustainable solutions for communities that depend on wild fisheries, aquaculture and the seafood economy. For fishing communities to prosper, they must be able to respond to, withstand, and recover from adversity including changes in ecosystems, fluctuations in markets, local demographic shifts and regulatory mandates.

WELCOME

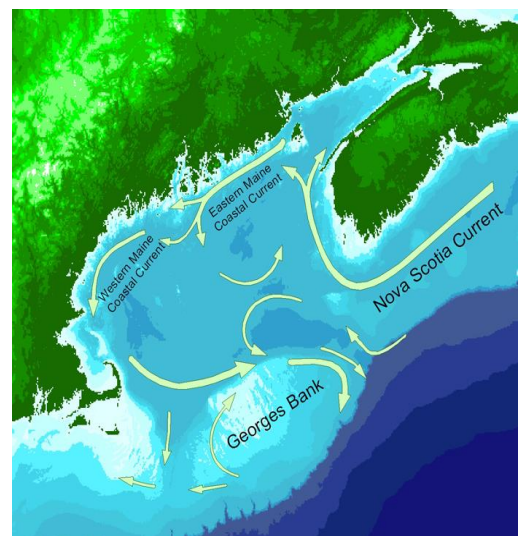
Maine Center for Coastal Fisheries invites you to join with us in our collaborative efforts to sustain fishing communities in Maine. We are taking collective actions that include the knowledge of fishermen, the findings of scientists and partnerships with a wide range of individuals and institutions to make sure we can continue to fish forever.

WHAT WILL WE DO?

This strategic plan outlines our collaborative approaches to research, fisheries management and education. MCCF applies these methods collectively, synthesizing across fisheries, communities, and projects in its partnership with the state and federal agencies in forming the Eastern Maine Coastal Current Collaborative (EM3C). The goal is to establish a network of collaborating people and institutions that contribute knowledge and capacity. This network will provide a model that more readily integrates local knowledge and science resulting in relevant practices and policies that are responsive to changing social and ecological conditions in the region.

WHY THIS PLACE?

The Eastern Maine Coastal Current, which runs east to west along the shores of Washington and Hancock Counties, provides us with a laboratory at a geographic scale that is smaller than that currently used by most federal fisheries management. This region of the Gulf of Maine is home to the most fisheries dependent communities on the eastern seaboard. Getting management right has high stakes and a broad diversity of community members are incentivized to contribute to managing fresh and marine resources sustainably to maintain their community identity, prosperity, and vitality. Defining this region with this oceanographic feature provides us with the social dimensions for exploring how ecosystem-based fisheries management can support communities.



WHY THIS APPROACH?

Current fisheries management is based on trends over large geographic areas and over long time scales. This approach has resulted in decision-making that is slow to respond to ecological, social, and climate-related changes. We think sustainable fisheries management needs a method for better integration of finer scale observations of ecosystem and single species trends that results in more nimble decision-making.



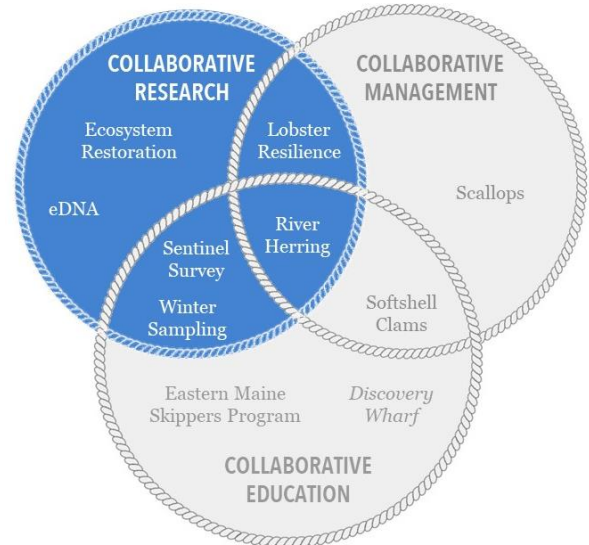
GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- We believe fishermen's engagement, knowledge and leadership is central to sharing responsibility, incorporating diverse viewpoints, and adapting to dynamic ecosystem, climate, market and social change.
- We believe that the success of fishing communities depends on healthy interconnected marine and river ecosystems, access to a diversity of opportunities and markets, and stewardship by the resource users.
- We believe that small-scale fishing, aquaculture and seafood business can provide more opportunity for coastal communities in eastern Maine and will help maintain the culture and maritime heritage.
- We believe that engagement, listening, and discussion are essential to the formulation of collaborative solutions that build on previous experience while being open to innovation.
- We believe that education at all ages leads to an informed public and fishing community better prepared to take responsibility for the stewardship of their resources.
- We believe in sharing with, and learning from, organizations and individuals from other parts of Maine, the U.S. and the world.

COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH

GOALS

- MCCF will develop and apply collaborative principles to managing and curating networks of scientists, fishermen and others to increase the credibility, relevance, and impact of research results.
- MCCF leads the development of selected research projects where fishing industry input and local knowledge are critical in providing novel information identifying research gaps that informs resource management and where the research questions are driven by and, responsive to, the needs of the fishing industry and coastal communities.
- MCCF will be proactive in communicating collaborative research results to a broad set of audiences so that the findings are applied to resource management policy and practices while informing the design of future research projects.



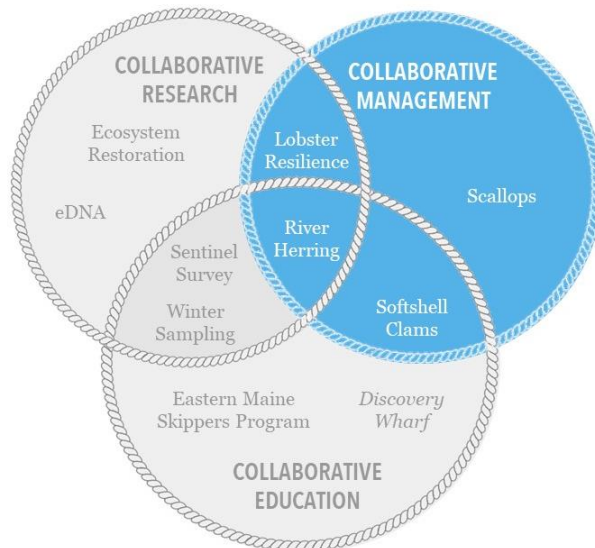
PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

Now in its tenth year, the Sentinel Survey for groundfish in eastern Maine is our long-term monitoring collaboration with fishermen, the University of Maine's School of Marine Science, and The Nature Conservancy. Our partners at Maine DMR and NOAA are involved as advisors and beneficiaries of this project.

COLLABORATIVE MANAGEMENT

GOALS

- MCCF promotes application of collaborative fisheries management practices that are nimble and responsive to climate and demographic changes, and address local needs and opportunities, while maximizing sustainability, prosperity, and stewardship.
- Develop, test, and refine ways to engage fishermen, community leaders, and state and federal policy makers, providing information on current practices while exploring alternative management strategies and improving local capacity for collaboration.



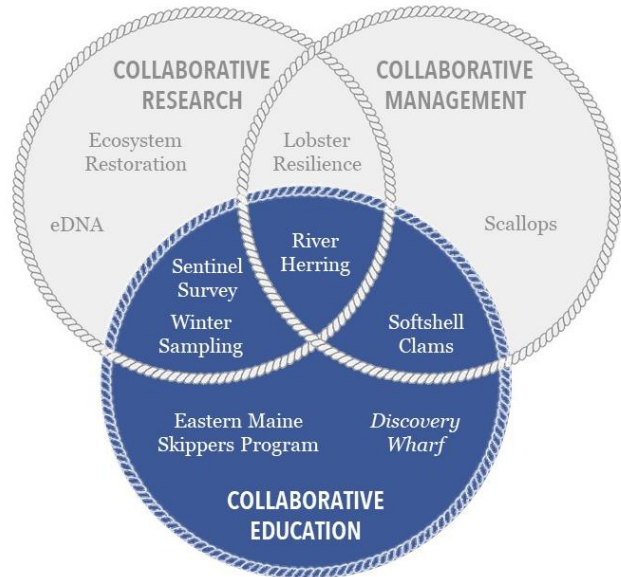
PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

The Center's demonstrated accomplishments in facilitating community-based restoration and management of the Bagaduce Watershed's five alewife runs shared among three towns are direct result of five years of coordinated collaboration with local fishermen and community alewife committees, Maine DMR, local land trusts, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, and other non-profit organizations.

COLLABORATIVE EDUCATION

GOALS

- Deliver and expand MCCF's formal education program, Eastern Maine Skippers Program to improve engagement of students and build local capacity for the stewardship and expansion of commercial fisheries in Eastern Maine's coastal communities.
- Engage the public through informal education activities and publications to promote better understanding of, support for, and stewardship of Maine's coastal and nature-based economy.



PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

The Eastern Maine Skippers Program, which is going into its ninth year, is a collaboration between nine area high schools and the Center. This program's approach enlists the participation of other community members and topical experts to engage with students in project-based learning that expands their horizons beyond experiences provided by current fisheries management/science approaches and classroom-based curricula.

ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE

For Maine's coastal fishing communities to be resilient, they need to be armed with the best information available to respond to challenges in a way that builds on their strengths and creates sustainability and prosperity for the people who live, work and recreate here. For the Maine Center for Coastal Fisheries to achieve its mission, we must be a resilient organization. As we developed this strategic plan, we were subjected to a global pandemic that forced us to re-think who we are, what we do, and how we do it. Clearly, our society is not as resilient as we want to believe, and the ability to respond to challenge and to be nimble in our approach to change represents skills and assets we may not yet have.



MCCF will remain relevant and will lead by example in being both strategic and responsive in our work as we support our stakeholders and collaborators to achieve success. We must balance the conviction to our long-term goals, with the commitment to pay attention to what is happening in our coastal communities and use our connections to bring new ideas, new technologies, and new participants to the table.

We are committed to life-long learning and we know that our organization must continue to pursue excellence and betterment through our internal administrative functions and with our outward looking programs. To that end, the staff and Board of MCCF commits to evaluation and accountability.

GOALS

- Establish an annual process to conduct a thorough internal and external review across all administrative functions to identify efficiencies, document findings and implement improvements.
- Establish a program evaluation process to ensure accountability and measure success in meeting our mission goals.

CLOSING STATEMENT

Thank you for taking a look at our Strategic Plan for 2021-2024. This document on its own cannot not convey all of the details of our work, but the process of writing this and the companion Implementation Plan has been invaluable. Our challenge is great, and we believe we can make a difference if we collaborate well and build on one another's knowledge and interests. Please consider getting involved and sharing in our success.