March 9, 2023

Setting the seeds for fisheries co-management at the Maine fisherman’s forum

Attending the Maine Fisherman’s Forum this past weekend put a huge smile on my face for a lot of reasons, one of the most impactful reasons being number of generations within the fishing families that were represented. After a three year pause on this 49-year-old annual tradition, seeing everyone again and with small kids, teenagers, young adults, parents, grandparents made me reflect on this multi-generational stewardship that lies at the core of Maine’s unique fisheries co-management systems.

Passing on honored traditions and sharing in community building activities with our children present early in their early life has a powerful imprinting effect that preserves the community bonds. So great to see the wee-ones dancing, gaggles of teens mulling about, and old-timers catching up over long held hypotheses. This intergenerational imprinting applies to the scientists and managers in our co-management community too; early career scientists’ children who attended the forum as small squirts 45 years ago now return as the leaders in their respective fields with a vested interest, knowledge-base, and genuine relationships to partner in this co-management arena. And then there’s a chance for our early career scientists to be supported as they get their feet wet.

There is hope for the future of our communities and marine economies. The diversity of fisheries talks and species was evident across the talks at the forum, especially the student-led Eastern Maine Skippers’ Science Expo session which features more than 15 student posters asking great science and maritime industry questions. Thank you to all the amazing educators who give of their hearts and expertise to our next generation.

The added opportunity for more than 350 people to be snowed in together for the weekend, as together we faced a powerful mid-March storm that dropped more than 18 inches on us, made it even more special. Fun, laughter, listening, and learning made possible thanks to an incredible industry led Forum Board of Directors – thank you for being that time honored vital connective tissue for us. What a great way to keep Maine’s fisheries co-management going strong.

Do you have a question about our fisheries? Send it to info@coastalfisheries.org or call 207.367.2708.