



Building Resilient Fisheries and Communities Through Diversification

Project Title: Diversifying Maine Fisheries to Improve Community Resiliency

Headline Title (2-5 words): **Building Resilient Fisheries and Communities Through Diversification**

Brief Summary (Abstract): Maine fishermen and fishing communities are highly dependent on the lobster fishery and the lobster fishery is increasingly vulnerable to climate-related shifts in the abundance and distribution of lobsters. This project pulls together a wide variety of smaller projects and partners to help fishermen understand ways to improve their resiliency through increasing awareness and diversification. This project is testing a series of steps to increase climate resilience of the fishing industry and fisheries-dependent communities including sharing information about best practices for handling product, ways to reduce fuel use, and improved marketing practices as well as helping fishermen learn more about shellfish aquaculture and running tourism related businesses. We are also making strategic investments of staff time or capital in some of the business ideas.

Project Location: Maine

Partners: Island Institute, partners for various aspects of this project include Maine Sea Grant, Coastal Enterprises Inc, Maine Aquaculture Association, Lobster Institute, Maine Coast Fishermen's Association.

Background: Maine coastal communities are incredibly dependent on the lobster fishery but the fishery is shifting and changing. In the last 5 years, the industry has been plagued by economic difficulties and significantly reduced profitability. The next 5 years may bring a decline in the abundance of lobster. Helping fishermen run more profitable businesses will enable their communities to remain in the face of these changes. At the same time, we have seen a decrease in the ability of fishermen to participate in the groundfish and shrimp fisheries, traditional fisheries that helped provide a small amount of supplemental income to fishing communities. Shellfish aquaculture and fisheries based tourism opportunities may provide a solution for some fishermen who want to diversify their economic base.

Project Goals: Help fishermen access information, resources, and experts to enable them to ensure their businesses are more resilient with climate-related changes in ocean conditions. Provide technical training, additional information, and assistance to fishermen who want to explore whether a specific idea make sense for them. Invest human or financial capital in the most promising business that are either scalable, disruptive, or otherwise provide models for fishermen in other communities.

Strategy Goals Implemented: Goals 2; Goal 7:

Climate Impacts Addressed: impacts of warming water and ocean acidification on fisheries and fishing communities

Status of Project Implementation (Timeline, Milestones, Next Steps): Ongoing. Started in 2011.

Project Outcomes:



NATIONAL *fish, wildlife & plants*
CLIMATE ADAPTATION STRATEGY

The project outcomes are first about sharing information with fishermen who are interested in one of the specific topics mention. Sometimes this information sharing is a personal conversation, sometimes it happens in a formal meeting. Frequently we bring fishermen or coastal community residents from elsewhere to Maine to spark these conversations. We estimate that over 200 fishermen from Maine and 100 fishermen from outside the state have participated in portions of this programming, with many fishermen from Maine participating in multiple components. We have also sought to engage a broader range of coastal community members to participate in some of these conversations.

To facilitate the transformation from interesting ideas to more substantive engagement, either the Island Institute or our partners on specific projects developed fact sheets or informational materials that are useful for fishermen. In a few targeted instances, we have made significant investments in staff time, financial resources or social capital to help a project move through a critical period.

- Workshops and fact sheets focused on practical ways to reduce fuel usage.
- Energy audit of 6 vessels engaged in the New England groundfish and lobster industry.
- Facilitated conversations about bait usage and an increased awareness of the economic savings from decreasing the amount of bait used.
- Facilitated conversations about product handling, product quality and the connection to the price paid to fishermen.
- Sharing ideas about marketing and business structures with fishermen from across the country at the Community Fisheries Network Annual meeting.
- Sharing ideas about Community Supported Fisheries and local marketing through 2 different exchange trips.
- Investment in improved marketing infrastructure at two lobster coops.
- Workshops on fisheries and tourism and our partner (ME Sea Grant) developed fact sheets about the legal concerns related to starting a tourism business
- Held a series of 11 week long class at two lobster coops to teach fishermen about the scientific, business, legal and marketing aspects of running a shellfish aquaculture businesses.

Funding Sources: National Sea Grant, Maine Sea Grant, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation

Photos/Attachments (can be provided later if avail): yes

Photo/Figure Credits (do we have permission to print):

Suggested Photo Caption: