

**SEA Maine:  
Maine's Marine Living Resources Economy: Capacity Building Grants**

**Final Report from the Maine Center for Coastal Fisheries**

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**Project Title:** Young Fishermen Training: Deckhand Orientation Course

**Executive Summary:** Maine Center for Coastal Fisheries (MCCF) designed, coordinated and delivered content training focused on providing young adults with the knowledge and skills needed to become a deckhand on a fishing vessel—in either the capture or culture fishing industries. The Deckhand Orientation Course, also named Deckhand 101, is a 10 Unit course designed to cover Boat Handling & Maintenance, Navigation & Rules, Safety and Product Handling. Five students participated in the course offered from March 15, 2023 through June 3, 2023. Although we advertised the free program at Maine's Fishermen Forum and at various lobster and aquaculture businesses, most of the participants came from the College of the Atlantic. Several learnings were achieved from this experience—such as the suggestion that there should be a fee or deposit to incentivize participants to show-up and perhaps the first and last day of the session could include representatives from 5-6 businesses describing their job needs and offering encouragement to complete the course. The curriculum and materials developed for this course will allow MCCF and other organizations to replicate the program.

**Outcome Overview:**

- 1. APPROXIMATELY HOW MANY INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS HAVE BEEN SERVED BY OR HAVE PARTICIPATED IN THIS PROJECT TO DATE?** *Five*
  
- 2. LIST UP TO THREE PROJECT OUTCOMES OR RESULTS THAT WERE INCLUDED IN YOUR ORIGINAL PROPOSAL FOR SUPPORT.**
  - a. General training in marine skills and safety*
  - b. Flexibility to enable participant access*
  - c. Curriculum outlines and materials for future use and refinement*

**3. HAVE YOU MADE ANY SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO THE DESIGN OF YOUR PROJECT? THIS COULD INCLUDE CHANGES IN THE PROJECT TIMELINE, EXPECTED RESULTS, PARTICIPANTS OR THE STRATEGIES USED? IF SO, PLEASE DESCRIBE THEM AND ANY IMPORTANT FACTORS THAT LED TO THESE CHANGES.**

*MCCF had expected to draw participants who wanted to join the fishing industry, however, the most interest came from institutions of higher learning. After advertising at the Maine Fishermen Forum, pinning posters to local stores and restaurants and providing flyers and verbal descriptions to marine related businesses, both lobster and aquaculture, there was only 1 interested person. This lack of interest resulted in the activity of emailing several colleges and universities with marine programs. These emails did yield several replies, however, the travel time and commitment did not match many of the students' availability—except for the College of Atlantic (COA) located in Bar Harbor. Three students from College of Atlantic signed up for the course and we added a fifth participant from the Ellsworth High School.*

*Our timeline of March 15 – May 15, 2023 was extended to June 3, 2023 when several of the participants could not attend the coast guard drill conductor and first-aid training.*

**4. WHAT STRATEGIES ARE YOU USING TO IDENTIFY OR MEASURE THE SUCCESS OF THIS PROJECT? (EX. COUNTING THE NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS OR USING PARTICIPANT SURVEYS, ETC.)**

*Although the original goal was to prepare the participants to obtain a position in the fishing or aquaculture industry, the success of the program is now measured in the number of learnings from offering this first-time program.*

*In addition to MMCF staff observations, interviews with participants also offered insights for future programs.*

*Other measures of success: two fishermen did acquire the First aid/CPR Certification and one COA student indicated an interest to work in the kelp aquaculture industry after graduation next year.*

**5. DESCRIBE THE MOST IMPORTANT ACHIEVEMENTS OR RESULTS THAT YOU HAVE ACCOMPLISHED TO DATE.**

*Due to participants' schedule, some units were condensed and our learning was that condensing content into intense delivery, along with as much hands-on delivery as possible, is achievable and effective. This approach was able to create basic levels of exposure and familiarity to essential marine skills that are fundamental to working in both capture and culture fisheries. While no substitute for multiple and varied experience, one can expect to gain familiarity and minimum level of experience with this approach.*

**6. PLEASE SHARE ANY SIGNIFICANT LESSONS YOU HAVE LEARNED FROM DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING THIS PROJECT. FOR EXAMPLE, WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENTLY IF YOU COULD DO THIS PROJECT AGAIN? WHAT WOULD YOU ADVISE ANOTHER ORGANIZATION IF THEY WERE INTERESTED IN DOING A SIMILAR PROJECT?**

*Key lessons to consider for future use or adaption of this program:*

- 1.) *Recruit and promote post-secondary institutions with marine-based programing. This type of experiential, marine-based learning is surprisingly sparse in programs designed for careers in marine science and related fields. This is concerning as it can result in individuals going into the field with untested and often assumed basic marine skills in safety, maintenance, vessel operation and personal conduct and culture expected by employers and vessel operators.*
  - a. *COA students suggested that the course be offered through the institution.*
- 2.) *Design delivery to be on a fixed schedule. Attempting to make the training fit the participants' real life nuances was counterproductive for both the delivery and partners as well as the participants. Scheduling became complicated and in most cases created some conflict for both delivery and participants. Participant transportation was an unanticipated stumbling block as well, a few students had no personal transportation. A specifically designed block of time at a convenient location would be more effective. Such as, a "May term" class or summer workshop.*
- 3.) *Request some level of financial fee or refundable deposit to incentivize participants to attend the sessions.*
- 4.) *Consider offering each weekend session as an individual course. We observed students just attending the units that interested them and then not attending the other sessions.*
- 5.) *Directly ask fishing captains to send a crew member, this would be an investment as a crew member is not going to attend without being paid.*
- 6.) *Ask fishing captains and lobster and aquaculture businesses to participate in the course's early session where they could describe jobs that may be available for workers with the needed skills or at least introductory training provided in the Deckhand 101 course.*

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**7. IF YOU COLLABORATED OR PARTNERED WITH ANOTHER ORGANIZATION(S) TO DEVELOP OR IMPLEMENT THIS PROJECT, DESCRIBE IN GENERAL TERMS ANY CHALLENGES AND/OR THE BENEFITS THAT RESULTED.**

*We collaborated with McMillan Offshore Survival and Maine Maritime Academy for the USCG certified portions of the safety section of the program. These were very professional presentations but with sparse and loosely committed participation, not efficient under the circumstances.*