Fishing community resilience

What does it take for a town to fish forever?

Robin Alden - Executive Director, Maine Center for Coastal Fisheries

Vinalhaven Land Trust Annual Meeting
July 28, 2017
But we don’t have fish, we have lobsters… dependence/lack of diversity

2016
Maine Lobster Landings

130,000 lbs
$533 million
Landings by Zone 2004-2016

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Ecological and economic fragility in the midst of abundance

Think of it:

Stonington  ~$65 million
Vinalhaven  ~$40 million
Lobster monitoring at all life stages

- Water temperature 53.6°F
- Important warning signs
- Expanded lobster habitat

Juvenile
- Inshore Trawl Survey
- Ventless Trap Survey
- Sea Sampling

Young of Year
- Settlement Survey

Adult
- Inshore Trawl Survey
- Sea Sampling

Reproduction
- Sea Sampling

Larvae

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Current context

- **Unprecedented challenges**
  - Climate change
  - Lobster dependence
  - Loss of fish/depletions
  - Loss of access rights to fish

- **Unprecedented opportunities**
  - Dam removal; positive ecological change
  - Climate change: new fisheries science and governance
  - Vibrant, owner-operator fleet
  - Fishing matters here: motivation
• Focus on resilience of fishing communities

• Can fishing be done in such a way that it sustains itself regardless of what the ecosystem dishes out?

• Fishing community resilience requires:
  1. Abundant resources
  2. Access right to fish
  3. Ability to make a living

Mission: Secure a future for fisheries and fishing communities of eastern Maine and beyond
13 Atlantic Ave., Stonington coastalfisheries.org
• Protect and sustain ocean resources through **joint stakeholder stewardship**: collective action of fishermen and their communities, supported by science and working in combination with regulatory authorities at all levels.

• Vital role of fishermen and local communities.
Taking the long view

• Hope: it is possible to change fisheries management laws and regulations
• Good science is essential – pursue answers to local questions
• Fishermen and communities must step up to contribute to science and stewardship – government can’t do what is needed at the local level
• Build capacity – in communities, in government, and in science to make this change
Tools for Building Resilience

Iterative and interdisciplinary

Dynamic

1. Abundant resources
2. Access rights to fish
3. Ability to make a living

Interconnected
It’s working
Eastern Maine Skippers Program

• 8 high schools Vinalhaven to Jonesport (~50 students/yr)
• Academics through hands-on fisheries questions
• Skills and tools for future co-management

EMSP is done in collaboration with Rural Aspirations Project, 8 schools, Island Institute and many others
Scallops: rebuilding a winterfishery

- 7 year effort
- 150+ meetings: fishermen proposed a change in management
- Labor intensive, but rebuilding the resource, and proposing entry in 2018-19 season
Sea changes in fisheries science: Spatial complexity and climate change

Groundfish – Stock structure
Scallops
Climate change – impact on science
Sentinel Survey: Monitoring for local groundfish recovery

- Collaborative jig and longline survey 2010-2017
  University of Maine Dr. Yong Chen
  Fishermen – design, survey, analysis
  Area under-surveyed by state and federal scientists
  Raising awareness about hook fishing as a model for the future

Results:
- Robust abundance indices
  Inshore cod up
  Inshore halibut up
- Genetic and stable isotope research partners
Access rights to fish – public resource

- Owner operator – lobsters, scallops 2017
- 2% of Maine lobstermen have any federal permit except lobster
- Groundfish permits
Bringing it together: Agreement to pilot an ecosystem approach

Maine Center for Coastal Fisheries, NOAA Fisheries, and Maine Department of Marine Resources

- Vehicle for new approaches to fisheries: managing in a time of change
- Community involvement emphasis is a defining feature
- Develop a scientific framework to support ecosystem-based fisheries co-management for the Eastern Maine Coastal Current
- Watersheds and coastal marine waters
- Include local, real time observation
Thank you!

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