

RESOURCE CENTER PROGRAMS. Heidi Leighton, Cobscook Bay Resource Center

The Resource Center was formed in 1998 with the mission to encourage and strengthen community-based approaches to resource management and sustainable economic development. Since that time we have developed the program areas described briefly below.

Cobscook Monitoring Network

Purpose: to gather environmental data to assess the health of Cobscook Bay and to protect the public health.

Activities: monitor Cooke Aquaculture sites in Cobscook Bay and Machias Bay for presence and abundance of phytoplankton; share monitoring results with Cooke Aquaculture and Maine Department of Marine Resources; maintain a phytoplankton database.

Technical Support and Assistance

Purpose: to build the capabilities needed for effective local participation in resource conservation and management, to promote safe and trusted processes of information sharing and decision-making, and to facilitate conflict avoidance, reduction or resolution.

Activities: work with Cobscook Bay fishermen to protect the last good scallop grounds in Maine; explore marketing strategies for locally produced seafood and other food products; facilitate public discussion of renewable energy initiatives.

Information Exchange

Purpose: to increase the availability of information about Cobscook Bay and the marine environment.

Activities: maintain and expand our Resource Library, develop our website; organize public informational events, in addition to a Cobscook Bay conference; provide information on renewable energy efforts, particularly by acting as a clearinghouse for information on projects to generate electricity using tidal power.

Community-Based Research

Purpose: to articulate local research priorities, arrange logistical support for scientific studies in the Bay; provide a link between researchers and local people; develop scientific data to better utilize the Bay's resources.

Activities: analyze, display and distribute results of a five-year field study of circulation patterns in the combined Passamaquoddy/Cobscook ecosystem; support monitoring and research of the invasive species *Didemnum* in Cobscook Bay.

Marine Resource Education

Purpose: to engage students in learning about the marine environment.

Activities: present innovative learning modules on water quality procedures, phytoplankton in the food chain, a sense of place: maps in the classroom, lifecycles of local marine species, and oceanography.

Alliances

Purpose: to leverage our scarce resources far beyond what we might otherwise expect in our working relationships with individuals, agencies, universities and community organizations.

Activities: work with Penobscot East Resource Center to help secure sustainable fisheries for coastal communities; work with the Maine Shared-Use Kitchen Coalition and others to strengthen Maine's local food infrastructure.

Organizational Growth and Development

Purpose: to increase the long-term abilities of the Resource Center to conduct our mission.

Activities: Our focus at this time is the development of a shared-use Resource Center facility at the head of the Breakwater here in Eastport, Maine. Renovation of the existing building at 110 Water Street will provide a permanent home for Resource Center offices and a community meeting place, while a new building will be constructed in the back to house a licensed commercial kitchen and a marketing co-

operative where individuals and businesses will be able to add value to and sell Cobscook scallops, farm produce and other local food products.

Development of a new Resource Center facility is essential to the work we do. In 1998, when we first opened our doors, we rented a commercial office building here in Eastport. Since 2004, when ownership of the old office changed hands, we have worked out of a home office. While we have been able to make do with what we have, working from the home office has its limits: our library remains in boxes, the equipment we use for Red Tide monitoring is un-packed and re-packed each time we use it, and we can't hold classes or conferences or community meetings without searching for available meeting space.

Construction of the marketing co-op and commercial kitchen will help increase income generating opportunities for fishermen and other people involved in food production in the Cobscook region as well as providing greater access for Cobscook residents to healthy, affordable, locally produced food. Having a new facility will also increase the sustainability of the Resource Center as an organization.