

Sea Grant Sustainable Fisheries Program Excels in National Competition; Castro to Coordinate Northeast Regional Effort

Several new fisheries projects are now under way as a result of the Rhode Island Sea Grant Fisheries Program's success in the National Sea Grant Fisheries Extension Enhancement Initiative. The initiative is a \$3 million Congressional mandate intended to provide fisheries extension programming to stakeholder groups at local, regional, and national levels; to promote collaboration among federal and state fisheries agencies, management councils, and constituents to resolve fisheries issues; and to expand information exchange among all groups.

State Sea Grant programs were encouraged to work together regionally to develop proposals for both noncompetitive regional awards and competitive national awards. Kathleen Castro, [Rhode Island Sea Grant Sustainable Fisheries Extension Program](#) director, took on the role of coordinator for the Northeast Sea Grant Programs in helping to develop the noncompetitive proposals and to coordinate meetings and training sessions.

"We have so much talent in the Sea Grant network; this initiative allowed us the opportunity to pull it all together into meaningful projects for the fishing industry and management agencies."

Extension programs traditionally extend the knowledge and understanding gained through university research into the community with practical applications for direct impact on people's lives and work. Rhode Island Sea Grant's fisheries extension efforts have touched the lives of fishermen with developments affecting the gear they use, the species they harvest, the aquaculture techniques they employ, and the role they play in management of their own fisheries. As part of the broader network created by the Extension Enhancement Initiative, Rhode Island Sea Grant will help to focus the resources of multiple agencies on problems of crucial importance to the fishing community.

As a result of this new initiative, Rhode Island Sea Grant Fisheries Extension was awarded an additional \$172,000 for fisheries extension programming in 2002–03. Projects funded include educational workshops on urgent fishery management issues, an effort to map fishing gear types utilized in the Northeast, and a facilitation training workshop for Sea Grant extension personnel.

Foundation of facts

"Better Information for Better Management: Fisheries Educational Workshops" was selected as one of only 11 proposals funded nationally. The workshops will provide a forum intended to stimulate dialogue among individuals and agencies with a stake in the fisheries and fishery management. These workshops supplement a two-year-long process through the [URI Coastal Institute](#) that brought together fishermen, managers, scientists, environmentalists, policy advisers, and other interested individuals to develop options for restructuring the state's commercial licensing system. While that process produced draft legislation for licensing reform, it also identified issues requiring additional

attention, such as bycatch as a factor in the harvest of species managed by quota, marine protected areas (MPAs) as a management tool, and property rights in fisheries management. These issues will be explored at the educational workshops.

“Our primary objective is to provide access to the most current scientific and technological information on these subjects and to review and assess experiences and case studies from other areas,” says Castro. The first workshop was held in November. Workshops will run through the spring. Written records of each session will be available in printed documents and on the Web. The workshops are delivered in partnership with the [National Marine Fisheries Service](#), the [R.I. Department of Environmental Management](#), and the Sea Grant programs of [Connecticut](#), [Maine](#), and [New Hampshire](#).

Mapping fishing gears of the Northeast

Mapping who is fishing and where could help fishery managers tailor regulations and simplify management. A project to map areas of Northeast coastal waters according to their use by different fisheries will delineate reference areas that are harvested primarily with fixed gear and those that are fished with mobile gear.

The [Massachusetts Institute of Technology Sea Grant Program](#) will take the lead on this project, but Rhode Island Sea Grant’s prior experience with this type of effort will figure prominently and serve to strengthen the outcome.

Starting with data obtained from commercial fishermen, the mapping project outlines the boundaries of fishing areas associated with certain gear types, says David Beutel, Sea Grant Sustainable Fisheries Extension Program research associate, who has already developed such a map for Narragansett Bay, R.I. These data will be incorporated into a GIS database and analyzed with statistical and other information to create the map. From this map, managers can begin to assess the impact of different management practices, develop appropriate regimes for protecting essential fish habitat, identify optimal locations for temporary or permanent area closures, and minimize gear conflicts.

Training facilitators of tomorrow

Sea Grant often facilitates discussions among diverse groups that may be at odds with one another, such as fishermen and regulators. But to be an effective facilitator takes special training. Under the fisheries enhancement initiative, the Northeast Sea Grant programs will host a two-day facilitator training workshop with Lynne Hinkey, NOAA Coastal Services Center-Sea Grant liaison and trainer. Hinkey has extensive experience in providing training for public issues and conflict management. The workshop is geared for Sea Grant fisheries extension specialists, but other Sea Grant outreach personnel are invited to attend. The workshop will be held January 9 to 10, 2003, at the Biltmore Hotel, Providence.

—*Tony Corey and Malia Schwartz*

For more information on Rhode Island’s Fisheries Educational Workshops, click [here](#).