

Downeast Fisheries Trail Initial Outreach Results, Spring 2010 SUMMARY

June 24, 2010

This is the summary of a larger 18 page report dated June 4, 2010.

Introduction and Background

Project background: Downeast Fisheries Trail in 2000

The original trail dates back to 2000 and was specific to Washington County. Fourteen sites were on the original trail map and brochure with four interpretive signs on location at the Milbridge pier, Cobscook Bay, Machias River and Lubec. Since 2000, little active maintenance or advertizing of the trail has occurred. In 2009, an effort was launched to revive the Downeast Fisheries Trail in Washington County and extend it into Hancock County.

Reviving and extending into Hancock County, 2010 and beyond

The project received grants from Maine Community Foundation (Fall 2009) and Downeast and Acadia Regional Tourism (January 2010) to revive the trail in Washington County and expand it into Hancock County. **The initial scope of these grants is to identify sites for the Downeast Fisheries Trail in 2010 and beyond, map these sites, and develop brochure and signage templates for outreach about the sites.** Built into the project is the development of a long term plan to maintain the Trail as a series of sites, as well as explore other ideas for celebrating and highlighting the region's fisheries heritage (including possibly: website, oral histories, learning centers, local product development, festivals, preservation of fisheries infrastructure etc.)

Goals of Downeast Fisheries Trail 2010

1. Support for fisheries economy/industry
2. Coastal community revitalization and community pride
3. Tourism economic development
4. Educational opportunities for the next generation

Outreach Results as of Spring 2010

A series of regional focus meetings happened during spring 2010 (Machias, Stonington, Winter Harbor, Bar Harbor), as well as a larger meeting at the Maine Fishermen's Forum in March 2010. In addition, project partners have initiated specific conversations with various interested stakeholders in the region. Finally, a survey with 5 questions has been created (both print and online version). The purpose of all this outreach is twofold:

- to identify potential sites for the Downeast Fisheries Trail and
- to explore other ideas for celebrating fisheries heritage in the region.

We have made every effort to capture as much as possible of all of these conversations, focus group meetings and survey results into an **Initial Outreach Results** report which reflects recommendations and ideas to help the project move to the next steps of actually identifying sites. The document in your hands is a brief summary of the larger *Initial Outreach Results*.

What should be on the trail?

General themes for all areas:

Participants as a whole felt that the project needs to include both historical and current fisheries heritage. Through the course of the meetings and outreach, there emerged a potential structure for the project

whereby the Trail could serve as a gateway to local fisheries heritage projects. For example, for a geographical region like Stonington and Deer Isle, two or three sites could serve as central nodes for the region, and then people could drill down much deeper into local fisheries heritage via complimentary local information. A central node on the large Downeast Fisheries Trail could lead people to many more local sites and activities. This seemed exciting to many participants throughout the region.

Washington County

Washington County was home to the original DFT from 2000, and at that time, an outreach process helped identify the original 14 sites. One meeting was held in Machias in 2010 to revisit the existing sites and explore potential new sites and themes for Washington County. In addition to identifying a few new sites, participants emphasized that the trail should highlight activities for visitors and school aged children.

Hancock County

Three meetings (Stonington and Deer Isle region, Bar Harbor and MDI region, Winter Harbor and Schoodic region) were held in Hancock County to explore potential new themes and sites for the Downeast Fisheries Trail as well as explore other ideas for highlighting fisheries heritage in the region.

Stonington and Deer Isle region

Meeting hosted by Penobscot East Resource Center in Stonington www.penobscoteast.org/. Participants explored the potential structure of DFT at local level, the role of Deer Isle/Stonington Historical Society, Penobscot East Resource Center, and other existing entities. They outlined important fisheries sites both locally and nearby, explored themes for interpretation, identified sites that should not be on the trail, and identified local people with particular interest in this issue.

Bar Harbor and MDI region

Meeting hosted by Bar Harbor Whale Museum www.barharborwhalemuseum.org/. Participants discussed existing projects (such as the Somesville fish passage project), identified active and historical fisheries in the region, and the historical significance of Frenchman and Penobscot Bay for Cod, identified potential partners and educational venues, discussed signage and interpretation approaches, and identified people with a particular interest in this topic.

Winter Harbor and Schoodic region

Meeting held at Hammond Hall, Schoodic Arts for All www.schoodicarts.org/. Participants explored the ramifications of the Stinson's sardine plan closure on this project and on the region as a whole, as well as the opportunity it presents for heritage education; they suggested sites and themes for the trail, discussed existing related projects, and explored ideas for implementing the project in this area, such as boat tours.

Downeast Fisheries Trail Methods and Ideas

Collected here are ideas from all the outreach for how to share the region's fisheries heritage. These are not geography or fisheries-specific; rather these are participants' thoughts on HOW to implement the topics.

Signage

Participants felt that there should be unified signage that interprets fisheries heritage in the region in a graphically connected way, but they felt that the project should highlight locations that already have interpretive signage (rather than re-invent the wheel). They talked about focusing new signage in areas

where you might not be able to see what was once there, and areas where what IS there could use some explaining.

Web, digital, and electronic options

Participants were unanimous that this project needs an active website and needs it early in the development of the project, perhaps as a larger priority than developing a brochure (even though the funding is not currently in place to do a website). They identified models from other regions, and also discussed the potential for webcams, iphone applications, oral interpretation, Geo-caching and Google Earth. Participants emphasized that we live in a digital age and this project's success is dependent on having a digital presence, though many also felt a need for print material to distribute to visitors on site. Participants acknowledged the limited internet access in the region.

Activities on the Trail

Participants felt strongly that this project could be so much more than just another website, or more signage or a simple brochure. They felt that there is a lot of potential in hosting complimentary activities including: things to do at a site, getting people on the water, lobster boat tours, meeting fishermen, eating seafood, purchasing seafood, fisheries related festivals and events, lobster boat races etc.

Engaging Students and Teachers

There was great interest in reaching out to schools for fisheries heritage-related service learning, curriculum development, having exhibits travel from school to school, and having local schools adopt portions of the Trail (such as a local sign or exhibit) for maintenance and their own projects.

Appendix 1: Participants: meetings, surveys or other conversations as of Mid-May 2010

Appendix 2: Resources (mostly books and films, some statistics on heritage tourism)

Appendix 3: Existing sites in Washington County (as described by Jen Peters from SCEC at Machias meeting)

Project Contacts

General information about the project : www.seagrant.umaine.edu/downeast-fisheries-trail

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