Summer 2006

NAMA Newsletter

NORTHWEST ATLANTIC MARINE ALLIANCE

The Nieuwkerk family poses for a photograph in lower Kennbunkport village where they keep their gillnet vessel, *Hannah Jo.* Photographer Becky Hale used a digital camera with a powerful strobe light to create the textured and hyper-realistic image. Crocker and Hale completed half of the portrait study over a 10 day, 1,000 mile journey across northern New England in July.

NAMA Awarded Grant to Write Book about the Northeast Fishery Management Debate; Work Will Focus on the Power of Personal Narratives in Building Consensus.

In May, NAMA was awarded a grant from the Andrus Family Foundation to write a book about the New England groundfishery crisis and the experience of the Fleet Visioning Project in trying to ameliorate the dilemma.

The work, titled *Sharing the Ocean: Toward a Common Vision in America's Most Historic Fishery*, will focus on the cultural and psychological dimensions that have worsened and sustained the groundfish crisis for nearly 25 years.

"The Northeast groundfishery is locked in a classic social dilemma—a situation

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MESSAGE FROM THE Chairman of the Board:

Dear Reader,

It is my pleasure to introduce NAMA's Summer Newsletter. As always you'll find that our staff is involved in a variety of important activities across the region.

With so many diverse program areas to work on it is sometimes easy to lose sight of the big picture--the common goal that is the focus of our time and energies.

Thus, I'd like to recall the "Vision" generated by the Fleet Visioning Project last year: *To create a diverse, economically viable, and environmentally sustainable fleet that is managed through a participatory governance structure.*

This Vision is especially appealing because it wasn't unilaterally handed down by the NAMA Board or funders or staff, rather it was an objective reached collaboratively by some 250 representatives of fishing communities from Downeast Maine to Long Island, New York. In this business, achieving such a broad consensus among such diverse stakeholders is an accomplishment on its own.

This is a source of reassurance when we press on with our work, but it also highlights some of the challenges we face and why it will take a range of programs to overcome them.

To realize the ambitious but critical goal of creating a diverse fleet that is biologically and economically sustainable we will all have to draw on our knowledge from numerous areas: science, economics, politics, culture, communications, and education, to name a few.

From NAMA's perspective, I think keeping the Vision in mind as we review our activities over the past few months demonstrates that we're headed in the right direction. That is, in order to forward sustainability and fairness we must work in several areas of inquiry simultaneously.

From communicating the hopes and desires of the groundfishing community to the public in a forthcoming book; to organizing fishing communities at the grassroots level; to integrating fishermen's knowledge of the ocean in a scientific framework; and other important work you'll read about in the Summer Newsletter, NAMA is putting the goals of the region's fishing communities into action.

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Dana Morse is Chairman of NAMA’s Board of Trustees and a member of the University of Maine Marine Extension Team (MET). The MET is a collaboration of Maine Sea Grant and the University of Maine Cooperative Extension. Its members live and work along the coast, providing educational and applied research programs to Maine's citizens in the areas of coastal community development, ecosystem health, fisheries, and aquaculture.

Often in works of history and the social sciences voices of informants are consciously or unconsciously muted by the author. In this book I hope to address that problem by including short narratives as told by active members of the fishery in their full contexts.

where individual rationality leads to collective irrationality. In situations involving public resources, the problem is popularly referred to as a "tragedy of the commons."

This is a good summary of what is happening in New England's groundfishery, but upon closer examination Crocker said the tragedy encompasses more than competition for resources between fishermen.

"At root, the tragedy in our fishery involves competing beliefs—between fishermen, scientists, environmentalists, and others—about how we ought to take care of the ocean. This book is about the kinds of beliefs that shape peoples' antagonistic behavior in the fishery and what we might do to resolve it."

To surface these underlying beliefs Crocker will examine the personal narratives from a cross section of participants in the project; and to add life to the work, the narratives will be included in their entirety opposite a color portrait of the storytellers by National Geographic studio photographer Rebecca Hale.

"Often in works of history and the social sciences voices of informants are consciously or unconsciously muted by the author. In this book I hope to address that problem by including short narratives as told by active members of the fishery in their full contexts," Crocker added. "Having color portraits is a great way to show that real people are being impacted by fisheries mangement decisions."

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Groundfishery Collage. Rebecca Hale and Michael Crocker toured northern New England in June to capture the portraits of Fleet Visioning Project participants. This is a sample. The photographs will appear opposite the participants personal narratives in *Sharing the Ocean.*

NAMA Pioneers Work: Ecosystem Mapping of the Gulf of Maine

A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words: Diagrams, maps, and illustartions depict ecological relationships in the Gulf of Maine

Over the past 25 years biologists and economists have searched for a fisheries management plan that best suits the needs of fish and fishermen in the Gulf of Maine. As veterans of the fishery are aware, it has been a laborious and sometimes controversial process that continues to this day.

During that time, a kind of buzzword for a strategy that could do both was repeated at universities, laboratories, classrooms, and on the waterfront: Ecosystem-based management.

The problem was (and is) few agreed on what constituted an ecosystem, much less on a management plan that best suited the diverse needs in the Gulf of Maine.

Last year, NAMA convened fishermen and scientists at a series of meetings to discuss the complex relationships that affect the region's commercial fisheries, and how this knowledge might best inform management decisions.

The products of these meetings were recorded and compiled to create what may be the first set of images that include fishermen's and scientists' understandings of ecological relationships in the Gulf of Maine.

The images, maps, and diagrams generated from the project highlight the linkages across numerous species in the region, forming a fuller understanding of the fisheries as an integrated system.

For the purposes of the project, participants started with a simple definition of ecosystem: "An ecological community together with its environment, functioning as a unit."

In the Gulf of Maine, commercial and non-commercial species work in relationship to each other in ways that impact the quality of fishing.

In a departure from much previous work, the group discussions expanded the conceptualization of the ecosystem beyond large predators--like whales and tuna, commercially valuable fish, such as cod, haddock, and flounder, crustaceans such as lobster and shrimp, as well as their prey, species like herring, copepods, and plankton--to include the role that humans play as predators in the food chain.

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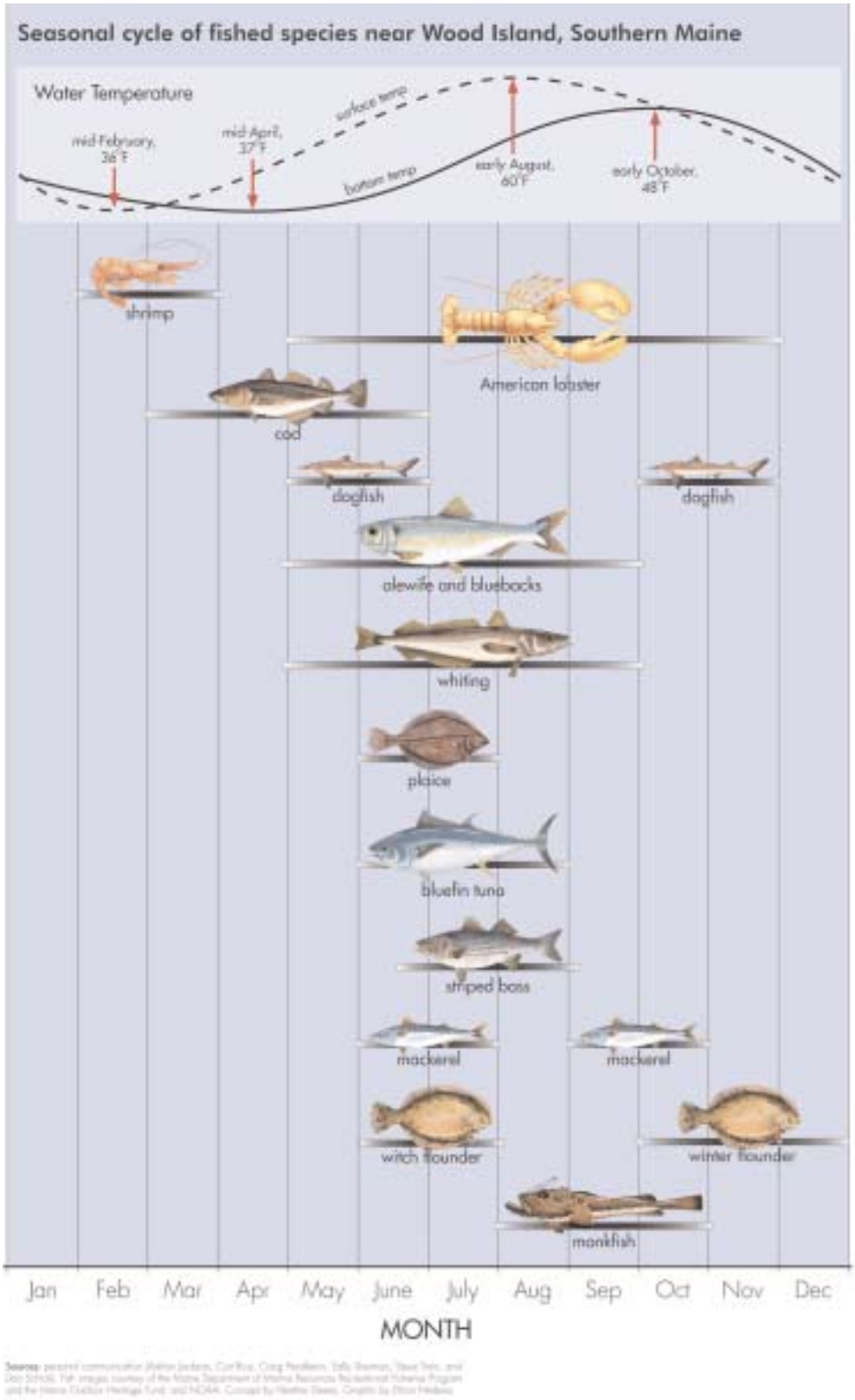


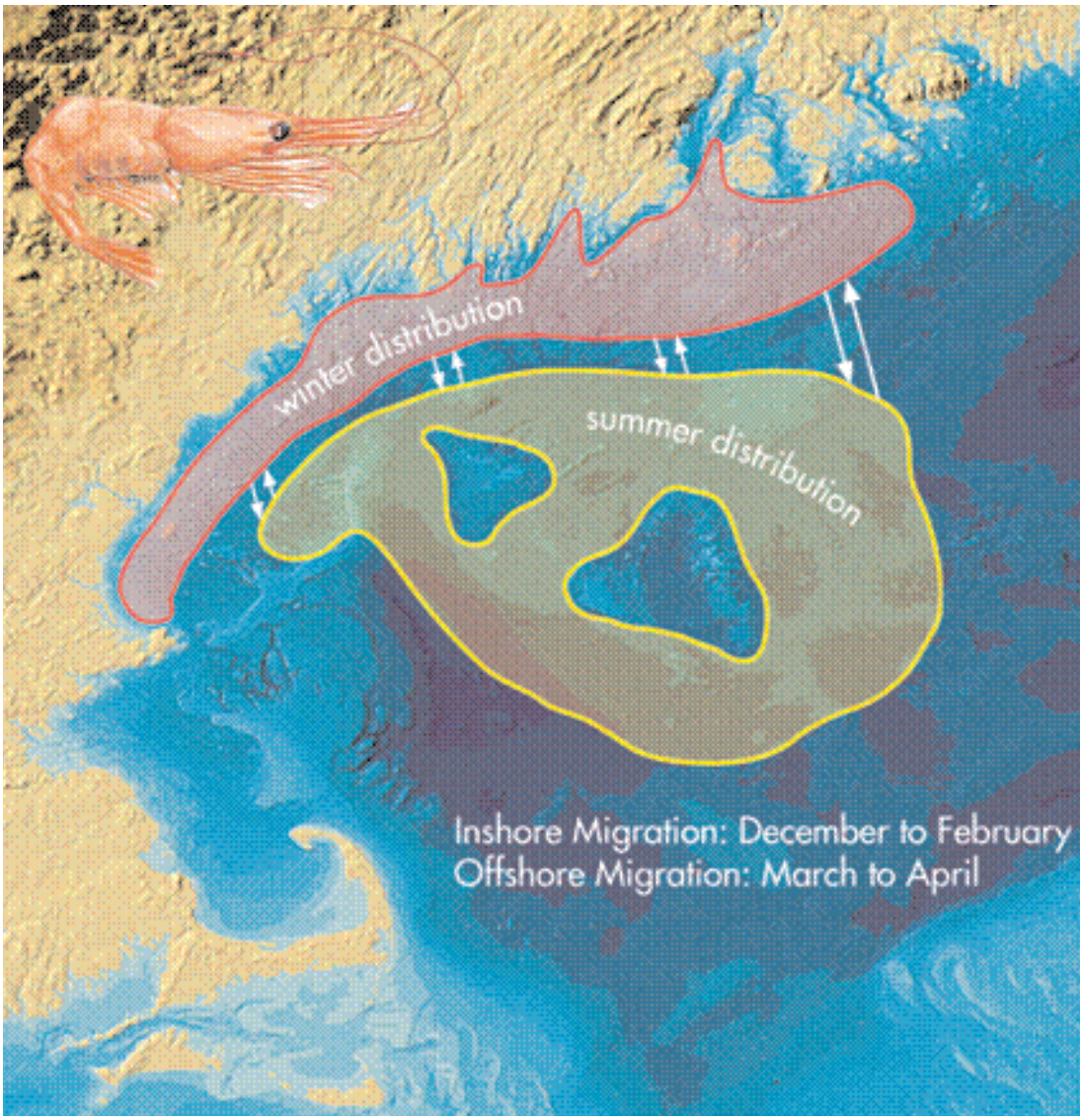
Fishermen and scientists have merged their expert knowledge about the Gulf of Maine to create a better understanding of fish, habitat, species interactions, and spatial and temporal dynamics. The resulting diagrams, charts and text enable more sophisticated ecosystem-based decision-making and motivate relevant scientific work.

"While much research has focused on individual characteristics or parts of the system, very little has been done to connect the pieces to form a picture of the whole. This project brought researchers studying various aspects of the Gulf of Maine together to compare information and discuss relationships. Critically, these discussions included commercial fishermen who offer a lifetime of observations and expertise from their intimate interactions with the oceans and its bounty," writes the project report.

The project breaks new ground in marine research by illustrating the relationships between numerous aspects of the ecosystem and variablility over time and space. Second, its reliance on fishermen's knowledge offers a more complete conceptualization of the Gulf of Maine system.

"Fishermen and scientists have merged their expert knowledge about the Gulf of Maine to create a better understanding of fish, habitat, species interactions, and spatial and temporal dynamics. The resulting diagrams, charts and text prsented here enable more sophisticated ecosystem-based decision-making and motivate relevant scientific work," writes the final report.

Copies of the report are available from NAMA. Call Jen Levin at 207-284-5374.



Ecological notes of interest

- Seasonal changes in bottom temperature are thought to trigger adult female movement inshore for spawning
- The commercial fishery targets adult females while they are inshore to release eggs (In winter and early spring). Vessels drag with 2 inch mesh and a Nordmore Grate to reduce bycatch.
- Northern shrimp are at the southern end of their range in the Gulf of Maine.
- Interannual changes in bottom temperature, salinity and nutrients might affect overall abundance and distributions of shrimp within the Gulf of Maine.

credits

Content developed by Adrian Jordaan, Curt Rice, Craig Pendleton, Sally Sherman, Steve Train, and Dan Schick. Shrimp image from www.hafra.is. Concept by Heather Deese. Graphic by Ethan Nadeau.

In Other News...

NAMA Helps Community Organization Form in Port Clyde, Maine

The Midcoast Fishermen's Association (MFA) will develop fisheries management alternatives that work for their community and their resource.

NAMA was founded on the principle that the best and most enduring decisions in government come from the local level. This is an especially important concept in natural resource management, where human communities can be as diverse as the ecosystems they rely on.

To put it another way, fishermen in Port Clyde, Maine or loggers in Libby, Montana probably know the social and biological intricacies of their backyard better than a bureaucrat in Washington.

In rural communities on the margins of centralized power and capital, the issue of local control can speak to the matter ofsocial equality as well. So when a group of fishermen began meeting about issues of access to the fish off their coast, NAMA was pleased to work with them.

The MFA is a group of fishermen and community members from the Port Clyde region concerned with the health of their resource and the fairness of management decisions, and they are well on their way to being a new organized voice in New England fisheries management.

"The key focus of our group has shifted from, how can I get more days at sea, and we don't need these regulations, to, we need to do something to bring back the fish. This is a huge change from a perspective of total self interest to one that is much more focused on the resource. The acknowledgment that more fish will ultimately bring about the needed changes to everyone's bottom line is really a new direction for fishermen to take. This stance by the fishing community should provide for a much more unified voice from all concerned parties such as, environmental, state, scientific, regualtory, and fishermen. Having everyone on the same page or close to it should send a powerful political message out to Washington," said Glen Libby, chair of the MFA.

Just a few months old, this organization has already accomplished a great deal, drafting alternative groundfish management concepts, including new gear restrictions and area management. Ideas that NAMA worked with during the development of the Gulf of Maine Inshore Fisheries Conservation and Stewardship Plan.

"One of the most important reasons for having a group like the MFA is to give people who don't usually go to council meetings and are uncomfortable speaking before large groups a forum for their ideas to be heard. Then, the more vocal members of our group can take their ideas before council members. You never know when the guy that never speaks up might have the "eureka"! idea," said Libby.

Additionally, MFA is working with NAMA staff as they explore the opportunities and benefits of forming a fishermen's cooperative.

"When I saw the plan for area management I was amazed at how closely it aligned with some of our ideas," Libby said. "We have basically arrived at the same conclusions." To help pay for the costs of attending meetings and developing materials, the MFA had its first fundraising event, a baked haddock supper which brought in over $5,000. They plan to host another event later this summer.

"NAMA's influence was a catalyst for this group to form," said Libby. "And, your help and ideas about forming a cooperative have been very helpful."

For more information on the Midcoast Fishermen's Association, contact Glen Libby at rider0503@aol.com or (207) 372-0628.

Today, Port Clyde is home to only about a dozen groundfish boats, still making it one of the largest groundfish ports east of Portland. The MFA hopes to restore fish populations in order to diversify the economy of the natural resource dependent community.

Fleet Visioning Book (continued)

Crocker said much of the social scientific work conducted on the fishery has illustrated reactive movements in the community as change has been imposed on them. He hopes that this project will illustrate a proactive effort made by the fishery to protect its own interests for the future.

"The changes that the fishery has undergone in the past 10 or 15 years have unsettled the social fabric of the region's working fishing communities. What we discovered during the Fleet Visioning Project is that sharing stories about personal experiences helped people to move past some of the negativity out there and collaboratively plan a new future," Crocker said.

About 30 stories from a diverse sample of the 250 Fleet Visioning Project participants, and their portrait, will be included in the book.

"Stories are one of the fundamental ways people organize and explain how they understand their experiences. Therefore using stories, which are at times very poignant and compelling, to surface the underlying beliefs that shape peoples' actions in the groundfishery has a nice logic to it," Crocker said.

The book will draw on recent scholarship in the humanities--history, anthropology, and psychology--to demonstrate the value such disciplines in practical problem solving.

"Very often scholarly work in history and the social sciences is too abstract for a application to real problems. One of my goals is to explore the ways in which our recent understanding about how people understand their relationship to nature can be applied to practical problem solving," said Crocker.

The book will be published by Tilbury House, an independent publisher in Maine next year with 50 percent of proceeds going to NAMA.

ACT TODAY! In order to serve you better, NAMA has developed a "Subscriber Program." NAMA's subscribers come from many walks of life, including fishing, research, conservation, and education, and they share a common desire to manage our marine resources sustainably and fairly. We believe this can be accomplished by pro moting collaborative approaches to fisheries research and management, where the fish ery's diverse community is united by a shared sense of responsibility for building a resilient northwest Atlantic ecosystem. We cannot do this without your help. Please con sider supporting our efforts to to protect fish and fishing communities for future genera tions.

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Support NAMA's Programs! NAMA works on a multitude of programs that benefit fishermen and the resource. Your tax-deductible contribution and support will enable us to continue to promote and advance excellence in fisheries management, science, and harvesting through networking, information-sharing, visits to Capitol Hill, and maintaining a resource center in Saco, Maine.

Enclosed is $_____ to assist NAMA in continuing its excellent work in advancing the welfare of fishermen and the resource in the northwest Atlantic.

Detach this form and mail it with your check to: The Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance; 200 Main Street, STE A; Saco, ME 04072 Or, visit us online at www.namanet.org to subscribe or donate by clicking on the Network For Good icon.

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