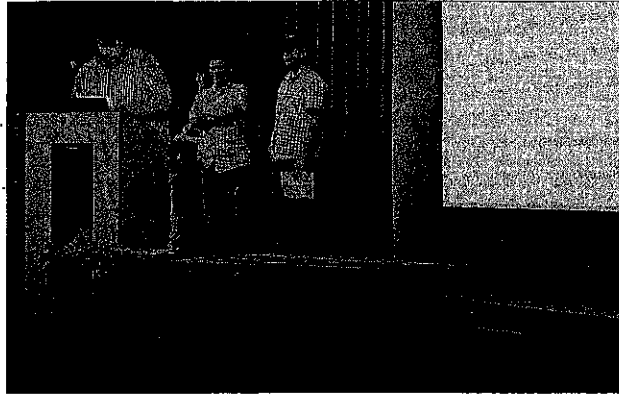


## Students in coastal high schools strive to impact lobster industry



Deer Isle-Stonington students show-and-tell how to build a wooden lobster trap and the environmental benefits of using wooden traps. Photo courtesy of Penobscot East Resource Center

ELLSWORTH—On Wednesday, May 25, more than 65 students in the Eastern Maine Skippers Program presented their year-long collaborative lobster projects to fishermen, industry leaders, family and community members, legislators and DMR representatives at the Ellsworth High School Auditorium, according to a news release.

Each of the projects addressed the question: "How can I or we impact lobsters or the lobster industry?" The students came from eight coastal high schools: Deer Isle-Stonington, Ellsworth, George Stevens Academy, Jonesport-Beals, Mount Desert Island, Narraguagus, North Haven and Vinalhaven.

Three students from North Haven were involved in the winning project. Grayson Demmons, who was the project leader, presented for the group. The students pursued development of an idea Grayson had while

a patent and decided not to. And, they manufactured and tested a prototype using a 3-D printer and a lot of craftsmanship. Grayson has connected with a manufacturer in China and is starting sales calls with local marine supply stores.

Each of the other seven high schools explored different areas of the lobster industry.

Ellsworth High School students learned about shipping lobsters internationally; George Stevens Academy, Narraguagus High School and Deer Isle-Stonington High School examined the age-old trap design and each decided there was room for a new interpretation in the lobster industry.

Vinalhaven took on the task of designing a new lobster box for boats that would increase better handling of lobsters; Jonesport-Beals examined the history of lobster traps with their skipper

a panel of judges who scored Skippers students on presentation style, data collection, potential impact and overall creativity. The expert judges included: Rep. Robert Alley, Jonesport-Beals; Stephenie MacLagan, Economic Development Associate at Island Institute; Meredith Mendelson, Department of Marine Resources Deputy Commissioner; Chris Peterson, Professor at College of the Atlantic; Hugh Reynolds, owner of Greenhead Lobster; Katherine Thompson, Department of Marine Resources Lead Lobster Sampling Program Scientist; and Rep. Will Tuell, Machias. The host for the evening was Dennis Damon, Penobscot East Resource Center Board Chairman.

At the end of the evening, the judges deliberated and awarded each presentation with a score out of 100. North Haven was awarded the Lobster Project Award for a score of 95 for their presentation and work designing a buoy scrubber. Vinalhaven came in a close second with 91 points for their lobster box design. Both projects have the potential to directly help lobstermen and women, demonstrating the impact individual Skippers or students can have on the

lobster industry.

By investigating the lobster industry, students were given the opportunity to think outside the box and dig deeper into the industry they participate in and live with. The audience could see that the projects were about more than catching lobsters. They focused on how the economy of their communities function and sustain themselves in relation to our fisheries.

The Skippers' projects have a further application beyond students' high school education by connecting "real world" research that communities can use as they sustain the fishing economies that are vital to Downeast communities. Students were able to learn and practice important skills such as public speaking through final presentations and testifying before the Legislature, learn about the market chain locally and internationally, and what is involved in securing a patent. All of these experiences will prepare them for fishing careers as well as post-secondary education.

For more information on The Eastern Maine Skippers Program in your area call Christina Fifield, 367-2708 or email [christina@penobscot-east.org](mailto:christina@penobscot-east.org).