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Meet the Fisherman

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Young students love local fish donated by Fishermen Feeding Mainers.

Annual Report 2023

Photos courtesy of Ellsworth School Department

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Every year, when it comes time to create our annual report, there's a tendency to start counting. How many fish were landed? Meetings attended? Working waterfront businesses supported? And money raised and spent? Important metrics for sure, but also mere snapshots of the actual impact of what we have achieved. Thanks to the hard work of our team, we have some impressive stats to share and accomplishments to highlight, but I want to start our report with a focus on a different metric. One of hope.

There is a lot coming at the fishing community in Maine and the immediate response can be one of fear, anger, sadness, or, at worst, apathy. Hope is a tool, an opportunity, and a solution for engaging fishermen to solve complex problems, demonstrating time and again that the future can still be bright and fishy.

Fishermen are at the core of our work, but we've invested in community resilience as a key part of building the network of support and hope around our fishing families. MCFA has touched the lives of so many of the neighbors, workers, seafood businesses, and the staff of small, under-resourced municipal offices along the coast as a way to show that we will be there for them, just as they are there for our fishermen.

We have fed hungry kids and families from all 16 counties, increased access to fish in multicultural communities, and made the jobs of school nutrition staff and food pantry volunteers a little bit better. We've assisted fishery scientists, resource managers, and policymakers to better understand the fishing community perspectives on stock assessments, quota cuts, offshore wind development, working waterfront infrastructure and the numerous other complex issues fishermen deal with daily.

Hope is a hard metric to measure. It is more about vibes than statistics, but looking back over the past year, I'm proud of the breadth and depth of our work and all that we've accomplished – together.

I'm even more proud of the team here at MCFA. Over my past 13 years at the Association, we've grown slowly and intentionally in response to fishing community needs. We now have seven amazing team members who are the actual folks delivering on the promise of hope for our fisheries and fishing communities. For this annual report, even more than sharing our organizational accomplishments in numbers and stats, I want to share the voices of MCFA as they reflect on memories and impacts from 2023. I hope you enjoy their stories.

Together, we persevere.

by Ben Mar



It's impossible to look back at 2023 without also acknowledging the devastation wrought by the storms of January 2024 to Maine's working waterfront. We stand fast with our fishermen and the many seafood related businesses affected by the storm. We are united in the hope and hard work of rebuilding.

Highlighted 2023 Accomplishments



Fishermen Feeding Mainers crossed our 1 millionth meal milestone!

MCFA's cultural competency trainings helped more than 180 local doctors, therapists, and medical students learn about the unique occupational hazards, stressors, and health access challenges facing fishermen.





Our work helped to catalyze a 40% increase in groundfish landings over 2022.

MCFA's Maine Coast Monkfish Stew qualified for schools to be able to use local purchasing incentives from the Maine Department of Education's Local Food Fund.





Hundreds of Maine fishermen were supported in bringing their voices to meetings shaping the future of ocean wind development, municipal waterfront ordinances, fishery science, and resource management.

Fifty-five fishermen in the Maine Coast Community Sector received MCFA staff support to manage catch reporting, quota tracking, and lease activities.



Dunstan Smokehouse worked with our team to launch a wonderful Smoked Maine Pollock Dip into retail and restaurant locations.





The law governing Current Use Valuation for Working Waterfront was changed to make it more useful and equitable for tax assessment of properties used for commercial fishing.

MCFA managed a transparent, fair leasing process for TNC that gave Maine fishermen access to 900,000 pounds of groundfish quota.





Cambodian families in Lowell, Massachusetts received free samples of flounder and grey sole as part of novel efforts to begin to supply emerging markets for whole fish preferred in many Asian cultures.

Five community panel discussions, 3 Scuttlebutt guides, and a feature in the Maine Policy Review explored challenges of shared coastal access, working waterfront preservation, gentrification, entrepreneurship, and climate resilience.





Seven community-based fishing organizations from around the country were supported to help national policymakers understand the needs of small-scale fishing businesses and the next generation of fishermen.

Monique Coombs

Director of Community Programs

When asked to reflect on the past year and share a favorite accomplishment, memory, or experience, it may initially take a few moments to remember something significant. But as you sift through your calendar and photos, if you're lucky, a flood of positive memories may suddenly come rushing in, reminding you what a wonderful year it has been. Despite facing obstacles and difficulties, it's often these very challenges that prompt reflection and gratitude for the many good things that occurred.

Something good.

I was truly grateful for the opportunity to serve as an advisor and judge for the University of New England's (UNE) Area Health Education Center (AHEC) competition. This event brought together around 80 students in health fields from UNE, Tufts University, and Husson College. In groups of 6 to 8, students were given a "case" involving a commercial fisherman, and their task was to identify ways to support the fisherman in his healthcare. Some proposed familiar ideas, such as a mobile healthcare unit, while others suggested innovative solutions like creating convenient food boxes for fishermen.



What made this experience even more special for me was that my daughter, Jocelyne, had the opportunity to join as a judge. Jocelyne recently graduated from Mt. Ararat High School with high honors, holding certifications in OSHA 10 and structural welding. She also obtained her commercial fishing license before she graduated. It's inspiring and hopeful to be able to work with, and support, the next generation of fishermen and healthcare workers.

Something tough.

This year brought its fair share of challenges due to persistent issues in the industry – namely, wind and whales. These ongoing concerns have fueled growing levels of uncertainty, frustration, and stress within the industry. My family is deeply dedicated to the commercial fishing industry, with my husband and daughter actively involved as fishermen, my son holding a student lobster license, and myself working for an industry organization. Being a fishing family is intrinsic to all our identities, and like many others in the fishing community, we can't envision a future that doesn't include fishing and the ocean as integral parts of our lives.

But another good thing.

I'm proud of the work that we have been able to do to build the Fishermen Wellness program. Destigmatizing conversations about mental health in the industry; advocating for more resources for commercial fishermen; offering cultural competency training for healthcare providers; and important legislative initiatives like the recent Fishing Industry Safety, Health and Wellness Improvement (FISH Wellness) Act from Senators Collins, Markey, and Sullivan all contribute to humanizing the commercial fishing industry and ensuring that fishermen not only have the resources they need to be well, but to thrive in an increasingly stressful business.

Coastal challenges.

Over the past couple of years, I have tried to be more involved in my town's committees to ensure that the fishing community and working waterfront are thoughtfully included and supported in any future planning. Given that Maine is a home-rule state, residents can make a genuine impact in their municipality. But Maine's coastal communities have undergone substantial changes in the past few years, with individuals leaving places like California and Texas to find solace on the coast of Maine. Additionally, the pandemic has created opportunities for remote work, further influencing these shifts. Some new residents do not appreciate the activity in a working waterfront community. They have the capacity and resources to argue or demand ordinance changes and can make the lives of long-time residents and fishing families incredibly trying. Unfortunately, municipalities are struggling to manage growing contention.

Create a solution.

Because of MCFA's previous report, The State of Maine's Working Waterfront, and because of what we have been hearing from our friends and colleagues in coastal communities (as well as my own experiences), MCFA (along with Tidal Bay Consulting) produced the Working Waterfront Inventory Template. MCFA collaborated with Tidal Bay Consulting to examine how municipalities include working waterfront considerations in their comprehensive plans and coastal ordinances. Together, we created a user-friendly data collection template and process for communities to inventory their working waterfront. This inventory enables towns to gather information on the infrastructure of working waterfronts and the economic impact of fisheries and aquaculture through a straightforward, step-by-step approach. The resulting report not only helps communities comprehend their existing working waterfronts but also equips them with tools to monitor, preserve, and invest in these areas for the benefit of future generations.

With gratitude.

I feel incredibly grateful and fortunate to hold a position that enables me to collaborate with fishermen, their families, and coastal communities. Together, we can work towards developing solutions to address the challenges and concerns currently affecting our industry and community. Who knows what's in store for 2024, but I am looking forward to continuing to build the Fishermen Wellness and Working Waterfront programs here at MCFA.

Mary Hudson

Director of Fishery Programs & Manager of the Maine Coast Community Sector



In the past year, my job expanded to become a seller representative at the Portland Fish Exchange. This new role immersed me in the intricate world of seafood markets, where I have become intimately acquainted with the nuances of supply and demand, as well as the inherent volatility of our industry.

My primary responsibility in this role is representing the fish being landed on auction, a task that involves accepting and denying bids from buyers and

working to secure the best possible prices for our fishermen. Amidst the ever-changing market, we face many challenges. One that stands out in particular is the difficulty in finding consistent markets for flounders, such as dabs (American Plaice) and grey sole (Witch Flounder).

The high cost and low yield of processing pose a significant barrier to getting boats a fair price on these fish, but we have been able to see opportunity. Through our Fishermen Feeding Mainers program, we discovered a newfound connection with cultures that cherish whole fish. This led us to an exciting venture with SEA Maine, Tae Chong from the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, Richard Bilodeau from the University of Southern Maine, and the Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association.

Together, we embarked on a mission to introduce Maine seafood to the Cambodian and Greater Lowell community at the Lowell Southeast Asian Water Festival. In August 2023, armed with over 4,500 pounds of whole dabs and grey sole, we were met with overwhelming enthusiasm. In just two hours, every last fish was distributed, and surveys were provided to gauge preferences and willingness to purchase. The results were nothing short of promising. The majority of respondents not only expressed interest in purchasing theses species but also demonstrated a willingness to pay and recommend the product to others. Through analysis, we estimated a market potential for 500,000 pounds of whole flounder annually within the Greater Lowell community alone.

This endeavor not only opened new avenues for our Maine fish but also fostered valuable connections within multicultural communities. Moving forward, we are committed to building upon this success by forging relationships with local purveyors and distributors.

Our journey into the world of seafood representation has been marked by challenges, discoveries, and ultimately, opportunities. As we continue to navigate the ever-changing landscape of the market, we are excited to explore new opportunities, forge new connections, and pave the way for a more diverse and inclusive seafood industry.

Emily Coffin

Seafood and Fisheries Policy Coordinator

It's nearly impossible to choose a favorite memory from my first year at MCFA; from a trip to Tampa to develop a National Future Fishermen Coalition to speaking in front of Chellie Pingree and the House Agriculture Committee to advocate for the inclusion of seafood in the Farm Bill, I've had an exciting intro into the world of fishery policy!

If I had to choose, I would say that my trip to Washington D.C. with the Fishing Communities Coalition is my most exciting memory. I flew in on an early morning flight and spent the day cruising around the capital visiting staffers of our local representatives. We also got the opportunity to meet with the director and a senior advisor of NOAA to discuss the new National Standards language proposed by the department, which would have huge impacts on the national fisheries. I listened and admired how our colleague organizations advocated for the protection of community and small-boat interests. I found my new colleagues to be not only friends, but role models too.

While we were in D.C., the Coalition also hosted a delightful event at Luke's Lobster featuring local fish from member groups of the organization. I ate skate stew, shrimp, and crab rolls, and enjoyed everyone's wide eyed reactions to our delicious Maine Coast Monkfish Stew. It was all a wonderful opportunity to meet like-minded folks from other regions of the country. I met fishermen and women from Alaska who I had only ever met via zoom. It was inspiring to bond over the shared desire to advocate for the small-boat communities we come from and love. For me, the trip was fun and motivating. I really look forward to my next D.C. opportunity and I'm still thankful to all the folks who made my first trip so great!



Nina Murray and Emily Coffin

Nina Murray

Operations Administrator



Susan Olcott and Nina Murry

I've felt at home among this wonderful bunch of passionate people since day one. I came to this job having sold my wholesale food business after five years in operation. I was looking for work that allowed me to engage in something greater than my own profits and losses, something that broke me out of the insular focus of business ownership - something with a mission I really believed in.

What I've found at MCFA is a role in which I can help support real and meaningful work in our community work that gets fresh fish into food pantries and schools, work that offers fishermen physical and mental health support, work that bolsters access to the working waterfront, and advocates for sustainable fisheries. What I've found at MCFA is a broad and welcoming community of folks who are genuinely making our state a better place to live and work, and a job that makes me feel valued and valuable. What I've found at MCFA is a bevy of co-workers who are kind and smart and tenacious, from whom I have a lot to learn.

In August, I was able to attend a fundraising event for MCFA in partnership with Helm Oyster Bar and Bistro, helping Susan, our Director of Strategic Partnerships, run the table where we talked about MCFA's programs and sampled our Monkfish Stew. It was a perfect, sunny summer afternoon on the patio, just a stone's throw from the waterfront. Platters of phenomenally prepared local seafood appetizers from Helm's talented chefs plied the happy guests and donors, and we were surrounded by a ring of generous members of the business community who took time out of their busiest season to support the event. In this moment, and in many moments since, I have felt the great satisfaction of working for and representing MCFA - an organization whose programs you'd be hard pressed not to feel good about supporting.

Susan Olcott



Director of Strategic Partnerships

One of my favorite memories of 2023 was running the Maine Marathon relay for the third year in a row to benefit MCFA's Fishermen Wellness program. Together, our team of over 16 people, the biggest yet, was able to raise over \$8,000. Running, for me, is a big part of my own physical and mental well-being. Participating in an event like this to raise awareness and funds for the work that we do at MCFA to support fishermen is incredibly rewarding. I was proud to be invited to share about our program in the wee hours of the morning of the race, thanks to WMTW-TV.

In addition, the camaraderie among the team this year made the event a lot of fun. We had three relay teams - the Flying Fish, which included several returning team members including those from local fishing families, the Leaping Lobsters, headed by Luke's Lobster owner, Luke Holden, and the Racing Redfish, which I had the treat of running in with my 12-year-old daughter, Phoebe. MCFA's Seafood Policy Associate, Emily Coffin, inspired the team this year by running the full marathon! Events like these that help tell people about MCFA's work in creative ways are one of the best parts of my job.



An amazing team of runners supported MCFA.

Jill Harlow Director of Strategic Initiatives

I joined the MCFA team in May 2023 and it's amazing how the year has flown by. I've caught up on an so many important ocean issues and reconnected with inspiring folks. There have been many great moments with staff, partners, and community members. Whether it's brainstorming ways to build markets for abundant (and totally tasty!) flounder, figuring out how to tell stories of the working waterfront through photos (yes, dock dogs are the best!!), or connecting with funders who want to support our work, there's just amazing energy on the MCFA team.

The moment when I knew that I'd absolutely made the right next career move was sitting in an offshore wind public comment meeting. Don't get me wrong. Wind meetings are often excruciating. There's just so much at stake and seemingly no right answers. But it's not the endemic conflict that stands out. It was a simple moment of quiet conviction.

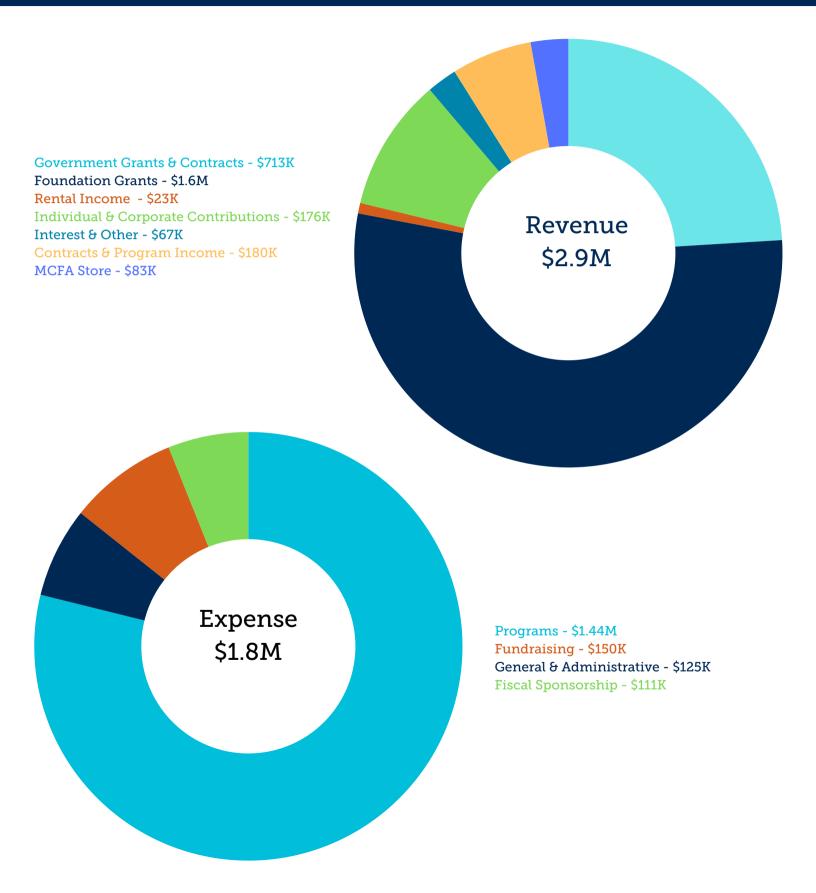
A fisherman who I didn't know spoke up from the back of the room. His voice was a little hesitant at first but gathered confidence as he spoke. It was clear he had a point to make that wasn't rehearsed and came straight from his heart. He wasn't interested in drawing lines on the map to protect his rights to fish today. Instead, he wanted to speak up for future fishermen. He didn't feel like it was his right to support decisions that could irrevocably change the fishery ecosystem or limit where the next generation would be able to catch fish.

I was deeply touched by his message and reminded when fishermen advocate for or against changes to fishing rules... or ask for better science ...or oppose ocean wind, their perspective is too often dismissed as being about self-serving financial interest. My experience is the opposite. The fishermen who founded MCFA and with whom we continue to work with day after day bring a deep environmental and community stewardship ethic and amazing knowledge of ocean changes to these conversations. Nobody cares more about the future of our fisheries and the thousands of Maine families who depend on them now and into the future.



At the end of the day, it just feels good to be a part of this kind of values-based work.

MCFA ended the year in a strong financial position. We had a diverse mix of revenue sources, including several multiyear foundation grants. Over 78% of expenses were associated with delivery of our programs, with modest administrative costs (primarily associated with our facility) and fundraising expenses.



With Gratitude to our 2023 Donors

Thank you for supporting Maine's fishing communities!

Photo by Scott Gable

With Gratitude to our 2023 Donors



FISHERMEN'S KNOT - \$10K+

The Betterment Fund Builders' Initiative Broad Reach Foundation Sam L. Cohen Foundation Davis Conservation Foundation The Celia Lipton Farris &

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REEF KNOT \$5K - \$9,999

2004 Carita Foundation Bonnell Cove Foundation Coastline Seafood LLC Farm Credit East Cares Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance Horizon Foundation Maine Women's Giving Tree Mascoma Bank Nancy and Daniel Paduano Richard Schulze Family Foundation Wild Blue Fund



SHEET'S BEND KNOT \$1K - \$4,999

Atlantic FCU Foundation Beach Grass Kevin and Deb Bielke Boathouse at Kennebunkport John and Candace Boyne Jonathan and Nancy Breul Buzz Burlock Margaret Burnham Charitable Trust Barbara and Steve Burns Edward Cadv Charles L. Read Foundation Charter Communications Community Health Options Fund of MCF Nancy Corkum Maureen and Charlie Cragin Jon Edwards Dr. Lisa Estev First Federal Savings and Loan Christopher and Alyssa Goodwin Peter and Harriette Griffin Kendal C & Anna Ham Charitable Helm Oyster Bar & Bistro Daniel Hildreth Kristin Hite Jacobs Family Foundation LTCOL Margaret A. Jealous USAF KJPL Restaurants/Hurricane's Mark Leuchtenberger and Tracy Burlock Kevin and Jan Lipson Cornelius and Suzanne McGinn Joey Most Steven and Linda Paquette Perkins Thompson Tracy Putnam James and Michelle Rines David and Polly Roth David and Lori Beth Schwartz Sherman's Maine Coast Book Shops Simmons Foundation SoPo Seafood State of Maine Reed Stockman Tax Bracket Town Fair Tire Foundation, Inc. Town of Brunswick Vessel Services Inc. Lorene A. Waresmith Doug Warren and Pam Berry Elizabeth Eyres Webster WEX Inc.

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Special Tributes

In Memory of...

Joe Nickerson in honor of his daughter Hayley Brown by Jocelyn Acheson Kevin Babcock Patience Bandoma Amanda Bralev Dina Brochu Beth Carlson Susan Cardwell Beth Carlson Christopher Cimonette Monique Coombs Patricia St. Cyr Paul Danforth Rebecca Federico Patricia Georges Debbie Grenier Corde Ives Curtis Johnson Chris Kellev Rhonda St. Laurent Shelby Lynn Ben Martens Joel Mccan Chris Mattoon Marybeth Mcgrath Jennifer Metcalf Eben Nieuwkerk Danielle Ouellette Jo-Ann Panniello Keith Pike Linda Rapaport Peggy Rivard Marshall Spear Stephanie Speckin Martha Sprague Alex Todd Marie Wilson Megin Wolfman

Malcolm (Malkie) Presley Golding by Pam Perry

Linda Smith Quinn Jotham Trafton Craig and Cheryl Vosmus

John Ryan by Jon Edwards

Alfred A. Perry Jr. by Public Archaeology Laboratory Gretchen Pineo

Anita Rahertson by Jean Pellegrino

Skip Werner by LTCOL Margaret A. Jealous USAF

Martin Leuchtenberger by Mark Leuchtenberger and Tracy Burlock

Barb and Tom Putnam by Tracy Putnam

In Honor of...

Steve Harrison SS Orion by David and Lisa Harrison

Ben Martens by Daniel Schuberth

Valeria Bustamante by Daniel Stone and Laura McCandlish

Gerry Cushman by Bob and Lisa Barry David and Lori Beth Schwartz

Monique Coombs by Bob and Maggie

John Ferraro by Margaret Ferraro

Fox/Edwards Family by David Kurushima

Lucy Belle Herrod by B. Lee Mallory

Herbert Noyes by Kendra Miller

Claudia Dunigan by Ali Mitchell

Carter Goodell by David Otto Robin Patton

Emily Coffin by Chelsea Puckett

Keith Miller by Kenneth Rodgers

Marshall Spear by Katherine Shrub

Luke Holden by Kenneth Talanian

Maine Marathon Runners Keith Bisson by J. Maurice Bisson, Kenneth Rodgers, Susan Olcott

Jonathan Bisson by Keith Bisson, J. Maurice Bisson, Susan Olcott

Sarah Breul by Nicolette Bohnett, Jonathan and Nancy Breul, Shanna Brownstein, Calla Fankhanel, Sarah Hay, Tim Lange, Elizabeth O'Rourke, Molly Poarch, Martha Sprague, Kevin Sutherland Valeria Bustamante by Kristen Olsen, Cayla Saret, John Tower, Daniel Stone and Laura McCandlish

Emily Coffin by Kerry McQuaid, Shane Moulton Pamela Noe, Laura and Jonathan Singer

Amy Floren by Janet Beegan, Paul Danforth, Kristine Floren, Jennifer Nygaard, Leslie Sanford

Luke Holden by Sam Dorval, Roger Gill & Meghan Gallagher, Jack Lufkin, Neil Morgan Jason Stackhouse, Kenneth Talanian Alison Vinciguerra, Charles Walsh Long Wharf Supply Co., Jay Takefman

Adam Kemberling by Julian Burnett (for Pepper!), Elizabeth Burnham, Tuc Fisher, Mary Kemberling, Hannah MacDonald, Evan Martinez, Steve and Elle Martinez

Susan Olcott by Marie Abrahams, Tom Barry Keith Bisson, Ruth Budd, Susan Cardwell, Andrea Royce, Kaitlyn Wallace Nolan, Maggy Wolfman, Bob and Judy Little, Marc and Sarah Zimman

Phoebe Olcott by Tom Barry, Rachael Gosnell Scott Handler, Michael Macisso Ana Monahan, Birgitta Peterson Diane Wilde Olcott, Becky and Nick Wilkoff, Marc and Sarah Zimman

Kristin Olsen by Gus and Barbara Frey, Mark Olsen

Marci Train by Chilloa A. Young

Rosie Train by Laura and Jonathan Singer, Chilloa A. Young





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