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ARRA: Legal Barriers and Opportunities to Developing Business Partnerships Between Fisheries and Tourism

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Maine Sea Grant College Program

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5/12/14

Dear Ms. Showalter-Otts,

In early March, 2014, Sea Grant and our partners hosted the last workshop related to our SGLC funded project: "Legal Barriers and Opportunities to Developing Business Partnerships between Fisheries and Tourism." We are so thankful for the funding support and flexibility in this project's timeline, and wanted to share a few outcomes below.

Since our last report, after having completed a comprehensive needs assessment, we completed an in depth study of the legal framework related to fisheries and aquaculture tourism, including issues related to liability and insurance, vessel and personnel requirements, permitting and licensing, and business models and contracting. This initial research was conducted in partnership with Roger Williams School of Law and Rhode Island Sea Grant who advised law student Scott Gunst in this legal research. The project team then translated the 100 page legal memo into a series of 10 factsheets on the above topics (as well as three new ones on marketing, partnerships, and "what makes a great tour," all of which were identified in the needs assessment).

Once all the outreach materials were complete, the team conducted four workshops on fisheries and aquaculture related tourism. The workshops included success stories and models, challenges faced by industry members, business support resources, and an overview of the legal framework. Collectively, over 150 people attended the workshops held in Machias, Belfast, and Portland, as well as at the 2014 Maine Fishermen's Forum. The feedback from the workshops was quite positive, including most attendees reporting they had learned useful new information that they could apply in their own business models. Several workshops attendees went so far as to say that they could see starting a new business venture in the coming year. We will be tracking these businesses in the coming years to explore the long-term impact of the project.

Though the funding provided by SGLC has come to an end, the project continues! Next steps include:

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- A webinar on fisheries and tourism, hosted by the Sea Grant's Fisheries Extension Network for members of the Sea Grant community to learn from each other (June 10, 2014).
- A presentation on the role of fisheries-related tourism in community development at the upcoming Maine Humanities Summit (May 16, 2014).
- A project in conjunction with Bold Coast Scenic Byway to develop working waterfront and landscape tours and itineraries over the course of the next year.
- Continued support to fisheries and fish farmers who seek to diversify their business plan.

Meanwhile, the original partners on this project, Maine Sea Grant, Lobster Institute, Maine Aquaculture Association, and the Island Institute will be conducting a project debriefing meeting in the next few weeks to explore strengths and weaknesses of the project approach and explore further opportunities to provide support for fisheries and aquaculture businesses as they venture into tourism. The need for these businesses to diversify their earnings portfolio has certainly not gone away since we first applied for the funds in 2011, and the feedback from the workshops shows that the information provided was a great first step. But people wanted more training opportunities for how to overcome legal barriers, more opportunities to develop partnerships across industries, and more models and case studies that walk through the steps toward success.

All of the project's materials are available at the project webpage on the Maine Sea Grant website at: <http://www.seagrant.umaine.edu/fisheries-tourism>. This page includes the original legal research report, factsheets, workshop descriptions, reports, and video recordings, models of successful businesses, press generated by the project and more.

We felt like SGLC's funds stretched far and are grateful!

Sincerely,

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