

Oregon Students to Learn “the True Value of Local and Sustainable Seafood”

Sustainable Seafood

By Nancy Fitzpatrick



A new pilot program in Seaside, Oregon, will help students in grades 5-12 learn more about their local, sustainable seafood industry and the benefits of eating seafood as part of a healthy diet. Any teachers of government, civics, or economics will be interested in the Boat-to-School Program, especially if they live in a community that relies heavily on the local ecosystem for its economic sustenance.

The Educational Program

The Boat-to-School Program aims to bring increased knowledge and excitement about the seafood industry to 110 Seaside's youth and their families. During the academic year, students will learn about five wild and locally sourced seafoods, most of them certified sustainable.

The year-long program starts with salmon in October, followed by groundfish in December, Dungeness crab in January, albacore tuna in March, and comes to a close with jordani pink shrimp in May. Students will learn about these species' roles in a healthy ecosystem, explore the importance of the local seafood industry to the community, and observe industry-government

cooperation in action. They'll also experience the health benefits of Oregon-caught seafood through field trips, hands-on activities, and delicious meals.

The program has several components:

1. During assemblies and classroom time, guest speakers from the Oregon Albacore Commission, Oregon Trawl Commission, Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission, Oregon Salmon Commission, as well as fishermen from each fishery, will guide students in hands-on activities teaching the impact of locally-caught seafood in their community.
2. There will be culinary events with the commission members working alongside students to prepare seafood tastings to be enjoyed on the spot.
3. Students will take a field trip to a local salmon hatchery to learn about biology and conservation.
4. Students will take home recipes (written in English and Spanish), recipe ingredients, and some fresh seafood (all packaged in a reusable shopping bag) so that they can prepare meals at home with their families and discuss what they've learned.
5. The Commissions are creating workbooks, posters, and nutritional guides for the students with educational information and lesson plans to be completed during class. Social studies curriculum standards such as **7 Production, Distribution, and Consumption**, **8 Science and Society**, and **9 Global Connections** will help guide the planning.

Institutional Collaboration

This new effort is an example of successful cooperation among three main partners.

The Oregon Albacore Commission, which directs the Boat-to-School Program, is itself a program of the Oregon Department of Agriculture. The OAC's primary mission is to support artisan fishermen who sustainably harvest truly wild albacore, as well as the food processors and handlers who are committed to providing healthy food to customers. Read about the commissioners at oregonalbacore.org/commissioners. There are quite a few agricultural commissions in the state, each with several members who represent workers who catch or grow the product; a few who buy, package, and/or handle the product; and one member of the general public.

The Marine Stewardship Council is an international non-profit organization that addresses the problem of unsustainable fishing in hopes of safeguarding seafood supplies for the future. MSC, which has an office in Seattle, Washington, is recognized as the world's leading certification program for sustainable, wild-caught seafood. It is contributing \$1,000 for supplies to this program, and hoping that similar programs might be replicated elsewhere. (www.msc.org)

The Oregon Department of Education, which provides the principal funding (a \$15,411 farm-to-school grant), oversees the public schools in the state, and hosts a remarkably user-friendly social science webpage (www.ode.state.or.us) that facilitates curriculum planning and assessment for social studies teachers.

Looking Ahead



The OAC hopes to expand the Boat to School Program to more Oregon school districts, thus teaching children and their families to understand the importance of sustainability, healthy eating, and their local communities and economies.

OAC Commissioner Christa Svensson (from Bornstein Seafoods) said, “I was so excited about the program that I approached the Marine Stewardship Council to further promote local, wild, sustainable seafood in our schools.”

Leslie Brazeau of MSC added, “The MSC is all about enabling everyone to play a part in securing a healthy future for our oceans, so bringing sustainable seafood and classroom materials is right in line with our mission.”

We hope this unique educational effort might serve as a useful model for similar collaborations that would benefit both our youth and our natural environment, especially in agricultural communities.

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