4-18-2001

UNH Researchers Participate in Effort to Reconstruct Fisheries Unknown Past

Sharon Keeler

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholars.unh.edu/news

Recommended Citation
https://scholars.unh.edu/news/2473
UNH Researchers Participate in Effort to Reconstruct Fisheries Unknown Past
UNH Researchers Participate in Effort to Reconstruct Fisheries' Unknown Past

By Sharon Keeler
UNH News Bureau

April 18, 2001

DURHAM, N.H. -- The University of New Hampshire will house a new center that is part of an international project to recover the history of commercial fishing and whaling.

The project, titled the "History of Marine Animal Populations" (HMAP), intends to improve knowledge about the stock sizes and distribution of marine and whale populations before the industrial era by locating and analyzing historical records that might provide such a picture. It is funded by a two-year, $1.2 million grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, a New York-based private, philanthropic organization.

Andrew Rosenberg, dean of the College of Life Sciences and Agriculture and a leading expert on population dynamics in marine fish, leads the UNH center, which will focus on the Gulf of Maine. The other centers are located at the University of Southern Denmark and the University of Hull, England.

"There have been major ecological and fishery shifts in this region," says Rosenberg. "HMAP is an exciting opportunity for us to bring our strengths in maritime history and marine ecology to understanding these important changes and their implications for New England and to other regions of the world."

UNH faculty members also involved in the project are Jeffrey Bolster, associate professor of history; Kurk Dorsey, associate professor of history; Mimi Larsen Becker, associate professor of natural resources; Bill McDowell, professor of natural resources; and Michael Lesser, associate professor of zoology. Tim Smith, a scientist with NOAA Fisheries, Northeast Fisheries
Science Center in Woods Hole, Mass., has also joined the natural resources department as affiliate faculty.

HMAP will provide an historical dimension to a larger project, the Census of Marine Life, which is conceived as a decade-long program to promote and fund research assessing and explaining the diversity, distribution and abundance of marine organisms through the world's oceans. Project leaders hope reconstructing the history will lead to more informed approaches to regulation today, and provide new information about the collapse of various fisheries resources.

Six of the seven case studies will look at exploited fish populations in places with well-established commercial fisheries, including those of the Northwest Atlantic.

The information collected will help improve understanding of such things as the role of marine resources in human history, the long-term changes in marine animal stock abundance, and the ecological impact of these changes.

The idea for reconstructing the history of marine populations was developed by Poul Holm, Southern Denmark University, and Tim Smith through a February 2000 workshop in Esbjerg, Denmark. There, an international gathering of environmental histories, fisheries biologists and marine ecologists discussed their mutual interests. After determining where the best data existed in which to base the project, the study proposal was initiated.

Back to UNH News Bureau