



Cod Farming for Maine's Commercial Fishermen

Cod Academy Classes: Learning Fish Farming

Purpose: Train large boat fishermen from Hancock and Washington Counties in the necessary skills and knowledge of cod farming by offering a free course that consists of classroom and hands-on instruction. After applying for enrollment, selected fishermen will take classes, starting in mid-January and running 1 day/week for 15 weeks. Classes will be held in Franklin and Sorrento.

Partners: Maine Aquaculture Association, Great Bay Aquaculture of Maine, Coastal Enterprises Inc., Center for Cooperative Aquaculture Research of the University of Maine, University of Maine Sea Grant Extension, with funding from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Overview: We believe that fishermen trained in cod farming and given the means to successfully make the transition from fishing to farming will offer eastern Maine working waterfront families an option to stay on the water. This training course and start-up business model was used successfully in Norway to assist herring fishermen become successful salmon farmers. It can work here with cod farming.

- Cod is a native species that grows well in the Gulf of Maine
- Juvenile cod are readily available through an experienced nursery located nearby.
- Maine has a viable 10-cage cod farm that has pioneered the way, and will act as a training site.
- Selective breeding of cod brood stock has entered its fifth consecutive year.
- Cod is hardy and immune to most diseases that affect salmon.

Components

Eligibility

- 1) You must own a boat **or** have access to use of a boat through a family member or through a fisherman mentor and sponsor.
- 2) You must be currently fishing, have significant fishing experience, or come from a fishing family and be unable to acquire fishing permits.
- 3) Demonstrate financial capacity to self-finance or provide collateral for a possible future pilot scale cod farm start-up business.
- 4) Sign a letter of commitment promising to contribute the time and effort to complete the course.
- 5) Be free of regulatory fishing violations.

Application: Interested fishermen will determine their eligibility (requirements listed above) and fill out an application for mailing. Forms may be printed from the website, or requested by phone or email. Completed applications should be mailed to the address on the form by Friday, December 17. Applicants may be asked for a more in-depth conversation about their qualifications and interest. We anticipate that ten to fifteen qualified fishermen will be accepted.

Course: The course will be offered FREE and is scheduled to begin Thursday, January 20, 2011. It will run for 15 weeks, one day a week (consecutive Thursdays with the exception of Feb. 24 and Apr. 21, school vacation weeks), combining some classroom and some hands-on instruction. The choice of an over-winter schedule will allow fishermen to attend with a minimum of interference with their fishing days and earnings. Teaching

locations are at the University of Maine's Center for Cooperative Aquaculture Research facility in Franklin and at the Great Bay Aquaculture of Maine cage site in Sorrento.

Details

- An outline for the classroom studies and hands-on segments is developed. Presenters throughout the coursework will be knowledgeable and experienced people including a commercial fish farm owner, farm manager, feed company representative, University fish farming experts, business counselors, and fish farming consultants.
- Primary applicants may be accompanied in the course by one person: a spouse, family member, mentor, or business partner.
- Weekly hand-outs will allow assembly of a resource manual kept by fishermen-students.
- Students will develop a cod farming business plan as part of the course requirement. One on one business counseling to help with the plan will be offered.
- Group instruction will be given on how to file a finfish aquaculture lease application with the state of Maine.
- A video documentary of the project will be created to be used as a communication and outreach tool as well as recruitment tool for future training programs.

Planning for Follow-up Pilot Scale Single Cage Cod Farms

Purpose: To encourage Cod Academy course graduates to create their own cod farm businesses.

Timeframe: Planning in the summer and fall of 2011, finding resources for some course graduates to partially underwrite the start of a single cage farm. Stocking of juvenile cod would be planned for the spring of 2012 for those graduates who after careful consideration choose to try cod farming in an experimental, small scale way. The exact timing of this phase depends upon the resources available to organizers and to fishermen.

Program support goals

- Transition qualified graduates of then course to ownership of their own Pilot Scale Cod Farms in which part of the upfront risk money (~50%) is theirs and the balance would be subsidized for one harvest cycle.
- Contingent upon grant support, subsidies for Pilot Scale Farms will be sought throughout 2011 by the project partners.
- Pre-approved lease sites - assistance in acquiring alternative sites may be offered if requested.
- Continuing technical assistance from Cod Academy partners and extension personnel available.
- Great Bay Aquaculture of Maine will provide juvenile fish for stocking at a pre-arranged market rate.
- Purchase of feed and veterinary services will be pre-arranged at market rates.
- Markets for harvested fish can be arranged through Great Bay Aquaculture of Maine or by the fishermen/cod farmers through alternative outlets into niche markets.

More information: Sebastian Belle, Maine Aquaculture Association, 207-622-0136, maineaqua@aol.com
Dick Clime, Coastal Enterprises Inc., 207-882-7552, rdc@ceimaine.org

