

## Dinner to benefit Port Clyde fishermen's group

By Emily Sapienza

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ST. GEORGE — The Midcoast Fishermen's Association will hold its second annual fundraising dinner on Saturday, Sept. 1 at 5 p.m. at the Martinsville Grange on Route 131 in Saint George.

The MFA has been raising funds to support its efforts to preserve access to the working waterfront and to restore groundfish populations to local waters. There is no suggested donation at the fundraiser. The MFA asks that everyone give what they can.

The MFA is a group of Port Clyde fishermen "who are trying to do the right thing by using the most up-to-date strategies for sustainably catching fish," said Nancy McLeod Carter of the Island Institute on Aug. 22. She said the group hopes to show consumers that it is dedicated to conservation and sustainability.

The MFA formed the Port Clyde Draggermen's Co-op, which is "developing a marketing strategy tied to a strong conservation ethic and the branding of their product as fresh and sustainably caught," according to a press release from the association.

"They're sincere in this," said Carter. "They believe it's not necessary to catch more than you need. And they are part of a larger group that has banded together with organizations to propose alternative strategies to ensure that the groundfish stocks don't diminish."

Many community fishing fleets have disappeared in recent years due to diminishing groundfish stocks. The Port Clyde fleet has remained active but the MFA is responding to the need to preserve the working waterfront and to restore groundfish populations before fishermen are forced out of business.

In just one year the MFA members have teamed up with a larger group, the Area Management Coalition, spearheaded by the Island Institute, the Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance and The Nature Conservancy. Together they have proposed new fisheries-management strategies to the New England Fisheries Management Council.

Of the 5,300 miles of coast in Maine, only 20 miles are still working waterfront, said Carter. And 66 percent of that working waterfront is privately owned and therefore vulnerable to development.

Working waterfront access isn't just a dock, said Carter. It includes access to the water during both high and low tide, parking, and the ability to refuel. "There's very little of that left," she said. "It's very important that it be preserved."

The MFA has secured permanent docking facilities in Port Clyde. The group's proposal to the Working Waterfront Access Pilot Program has won initial approval for \$250,000 that will make this critical access point a reality. The association will also place easements on the property so that it won't be sold back to developers. It is working with other groups to protect this land forever, said Carter.

The Island Institute is helping the MFA with the fundraising dinner. Carter said it's "one way to help them to continue to make this effort." She said the money raised will go toward MFA operating expenses to allow the association "to be able to represent these interests in front of the groups that matter." Making trips to Augusta to meet with decision makers costs time and money, she said.

"Woody Allen said that 90 percent of success is just showing up," Carter said. "If you can't show up, you can't make an impact."

"These are five guys from Port Clyde who just want the same opportunity," Carter said. "They're great guys. We are happy to help."

Volunteer chef Doug Anderson will prepare the dinner, as he did last year. The menu will include baked stuffed haddock fillet drizzled with Newburg sauce, salad, homemade biscuits, dessert and a beverage. All the seafood is being donated by local fishermen and the desserts are being contributed by some of the community's best bakers.

