Are You Smarter Than A Stone Crab?

A local outreach effort to raise awareness of Collier County’s Commercial Stone Crab Industry

NATIONAL WORKING WATERFRONTS AND WATERWAYS SYMPOSIUM
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Outline

- Overview of Florida’s stone crab fishery
- Rationale for a local seafood outreach program
- “AYSTASC” Program
  - Goals
  - Partners
  - Components
  - Outcomes
- Tips for implementing a similar program in your area

Image credit: Bryan Fluech,
Florida’s Commercial Stone Crab Fishery

Florida produces approximately 98% of stone crab claws landed in the U.S.

Source: NOAA

Image credit: Bryan Fluech
Collier County’s Commercial Stone Crab Industry

- # 1 commercial fishery
  - In production and value

- Supported by 20 wholesale and 93 retail dealers

**2011/2012 Season**

- 616,779 lbs claws landed

- Estimated dockside value:
  - $5.5 million

Source: FWC
Changes in the Collier County Commercial Fishing Industry

King mackerel, Mullet, Stone Crab, Blue crab, Pompano, Grouper/Snapper

Landings Data Source: FWC
- Loss of working waterfronts and coastal development
- Regulation changes
- Competition from imports
- Natural disasters
- Attrition
Growing Interests in Local Seafood

especially stone crabs

Image credits: Bryan Fluech
“Are You Smarter than a Stone Crab?”

- Created: 2011
- Lecture, sampling and fish house tour-based outreach program
- Offered 3 times during season
- Target audience: Collier County residents and visitors*
- Limited space

Image credit: Bryan Fluech
Program Goals

- Educate participants about the biology and life history of stone crabs
- Provide insight into the management of Florida’s stone crab fishery
- Develop more informed consumers about local seafood and its supporting infrastructure
- **Increase awareness of the economic and cultural importance of Collier County’s stone crab industry**
- Collaborate with local stone crab businesses to support and promote their industry
Program Partners

Industry Partners

- Captain Kirk’s Stone Crab
  - Naples
- Grimm’s Stone Crab Inc.
  - Everglades City

Education Partners

- Rookery Bay NERR
- Everglades City Museum
Program Components

- **Lectures**
  - Biology and life history
  - Stone crab management
  - Seafood safety
  - *History and heritage*

- **Seafood sampling**
  - Stone crab vs. blue crab

- **Fish House Tour**
  - “Life” in the industry
  - Processing
  - Regulatory oversight
  - Q&A
  - Market *optional*
Scenes from the Fish House

Image credit: Bryan Fluech
Marketing Efforts

- Email distribution lists
- Newspaper articles
- Social media
  - Facebook
  - Blogs
- Flyers at outreach events
- Program participants
  - Word of mouth
Program Outcomes

- Five session offered Fall 2011-Winter 2013
- All sessions sold out with a waiting list
  - 200+ participants

Approximately 90% of participants have “strongly agreed” or “agreed” the program increased their awareness and appreciation of the local commercial stone crab industry.

Image credit: Bryan Fluech
What was the most important thing you learned from today’s program?

- Both claws can be removed if they meet the minimum size limit
- The connection between the biology of the crabs and the reason for managing them
- The history of the stone crab industry; the ocean to plate process
- How the crabs claws are processed
- The history and culture of Everglades City and their dependence on the fishing industry

Image credit: Bryan Fluech
Program Benefits to Industry Partners

- Positive spotlight on the area’s commercial industry

- Community involvement

- Repeat business & recognition
  - Revenue generator through retail market sales*
Suggestions for Developing Similar Programs

- Seek out willing partners – JUST ASK
  - Education and industry

- Work with and respect partner schedules
  - Plan appropriately
  - Flexibility

- Involve all partners in planning and marketing efforts
  - Identify venues
  - Program schedules
  - Review materials

- Share credit
  - Media stories
  - Social media

- Keep communication lines open

Image credit: Bryan Fluech
Thank You

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