Who Are We

The UNH Marine Docents are a group of volunteers who staff NH Sea Grant Extension marine education programs and who are dedicated to the preservation and wise use of marine resources. They provide a lens through which the marine environment can be viewed, understood, and enjoyed sustainably by people of all ages. Originally funded in 1977 with a six-month grant, funding was picked up by the federal Sea Grant College Program in 1978. Since 1986 the UNH Marine Docents have been supported by both NH Sea Grant and UNH Hampshire Cooperative Extension.

The Program

The Marine Docent program has grown into a valued leader in coastal and estuarine education. Over 170 Docents are actively working throughout seacoast New Hampshire and southern Maine, teaching in school settings and on boats, educating community groups, and guiding visitors at two local nature centers. The group encompasses a wide variety of talented volunteers - from retired teachers and scientists to young adults who want to become involved in their community.

Project WADE

Project WADE (Wider and Deeper Experiences) and team meetings are designed to keep the Docents up-to-date and interested. The program sponsors a “white tablecloth dinner” at the end of the training period to officially welcome candidates into the Docent program and recognize other docents through a system of awards. Annually, Docents drive 65,000 miles and spend at least 5,000 hours delivering programs.

The Sea Trek Program

SeaTrek Programs cover a variety of marine topics through slide presentations, lectures, field trips, and tours. They are designed to increase public awareness of the marine environment. The Sea Trek program reaches over 7,000 people a year and includes:

- The UNH Coastal Floating Lab curriculum is studied by middle-school classes before traveling to Seabrook, NH to do their research cruise aboard a fishing boat.
- Great Bay Living Lab curriculum is studied by middle school classes before traveling to the Jackson Estuarine Laboratory on the shores of Great Bay. The program includes a watershed study walk, an intertidal study, a sampling excursion aboard the Gulf Challenger, and a series of labs on land.
- UNH Discovery Cruises take people on cruises to the Shoals Marine Lab on Appledore Island. On board Docents engage the participants in hands-on sampling activities.
- The National Ocean Science “Nor’easter Bowl” held once every three years
- Working with the Maine Lobster Conservancy, surveying a coastal site for baby lobsters, and helping with the state’s coastal clean-up and National Marine Debris Monitoring.


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