



Coastal Floating Lab Offers Hands-On Learning About Marine Ecosystems

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NH Sea Grant

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DURHAM, N.H. - This spring, students will have the opportunity to get their hands wet while learning about the Gulf of Maine ecosystem.

NH Sea Grant and the UNH Marine Docents will be offering marine-based learning programs on their Coastal Floating Lab on weekdays (excluding Fridays) from May 12 through June 5, 2008. The three-hour onboard program is geared towards students in middle school and above. Various activity-based stations are set up, including water chemistry, benthic communities, plankton, currents and marine navigation, which allow students to collect data from throughout a New Hampshire harbor and learn about the ecosystem. Students also get their hands wet pulling up an otter trawl and picking through the seaweed, crabs and fish to catch a glimpse of underwater organisms.

Each activity station directly supports the NH Science Standards, and the cost for the program is \$425-825 depending on trip length. Teachers interested in having their students attend the program should contact Mark Wiley, NH Sea Grant marine educator, at 603.749.1565 or mark.wiley@unh.edu.

"The strongest memories students have of their time during school often revolve around events and field trips," Wiley says. "If you can shape a curriculum around these events you will maximize the potential for a very positive experience for them."

Wiley explains that the Coastal Floating Lab could be combined with an onshore beach ecology program to make an entire day of marine education. Students who are interested in the more technical components of marine education could also build an underwater remotely operated vehicle (ROV) back in the classroom and bring it to operate from the floating lab. The ROV will have a video camera hooked up to an LCD screen to allow for viewing the seafloor and underwater organisms.

"We make it flexible for the schools to meet their educational needs," Wiley adds.

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Photograph available to download: http://www.unh.edu/news/img/sea_grant/crab_lab.jpg.

Caption: A UNH Marine Docent explains crab physiology to students aboard the Coastal Floating Lab last year. Credit: Rebecca Zeiber, NH Sea Grant.

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