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Woods Hole Science Stroll Attracts Local Residents, Visitors from Afar

Hundreds of local residents joined visitors from 22 states, 7 foreign countries and dozens of Massachusetts cities and towns on August 6 for the second Woods Hole Science Stroll.

“That was so cool!” and “It was awesome!” were familiar comments heard during the day as visitors toured the NOAA Ship *Henry B. Bigelow*, spoke with scientists about marine mammals, sharks, aging fish, how drones are used in research, how to use the Fish Rules app and much more at the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC)’s Woods Hole Laboratory and at other organizations.

The displays and activities were all part of the Woods Hole Science Stroll, a free, family-oriented opportunity to learn about the research and educational programs conducted at a dozen participating science institutions in the village of Woods Hole. NEFSC had 17 research displays under two large tents on the Woods Hole Laboratory parking lot, plus exhibits at the Woods Hole Science Aquarium, and tours of the 209-foot Fisheries Survey Vessel *Henry B. Bigelow*.

Other NOAA organizations, including the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary, National Weather Service’s Boston/Taunton Office and the National Satellite Service also had exhibits at the Woods Hole Lab site. The US Coast Guard Sector Southeastern New England, Air Station Cape Cod and Station Woods Hole, brought several displays to the NOAA Fisheries dock as well, and conducted a helicopter rescue demonstration in the harbor that brought oohs and aahs from the large crowd gathered along the Woods Hole waterfront.

The opportunity to tour the *Henry B. Bigelow*, in port at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution dock between NEFSC cruises for the Atlantic Marine Assessment Program for Protected Species (AMAPPS), was a big draw. Nearly 800 people visited the ship during the four-hour event. They toured the bridge, saw living quarters and learned about life at sea, and got a firsthand look at the science and research capabilities of the vessel, from the computer and acoustics lab to the net system on the fantail, fish processing lab and the side sampling station, where water chemistry and launches of specialized gear take place.

Another 1,318 visited NOAA’s Woods Hole Science Aquarium, and at least 1,296 viewed the exhibits on the Laboratory’s parking lot between 11 a.m. and the event’s official close at 3 p.m. Sales of *Bigelow* merchandise were brisk under a tent on the dock, and many in the crowd were

spotted wearing ship T-shirts. Various exhibits and displays offered by other village organizations along Water Street were also busy throughout the day.

In addition to NOAA Fisheries and the NOAA Office of Marine and Aviation Operations, participating local organizations in the 2016 Woods Hole Science Stroll were the Marine Biological Laboratory; Sea Education Association; Woods Hole Research Center; Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution; Buzzards Bay Coalition; Woods Hole Historical Museum; U.S. Coast Guard Sector Southeastern New England, Air Station Cape Cod and Station Woods Hole; Zephyr Education Foundation; Woods Hole Film Festival; and WCAI, the Cape, Coast and Islands NPR Station.

“Everyone loved the new FishRules application for mobile devices. At least 20 people downloaded the app on the spot, and we handed out over 100 laminated FishRules cards to others who indicated that they would download the app later,” said Scott Steinback of the NEFSC’s Social Sciences Branch, who helped expand the app to include the Northeast region, from North Carolina to Maine. He also helped staff the SSB exhibit. “There were even some people who asked for multiple cards to hand out to their friends. One charter fishing captain said he has been talking about the need for an app like FishRules for years and downloaded it the day it was released.”

Steinback noted that many visitors were unfamiliar with the role of social sciences in fisheries and fisheries management. “People were really impressed with the work the Social Sciences Branch is conducting to obtain a better understanding of how humans interact with marine ecosystems in the Northeast region,” Steinback said.

High winds prevented the life-sized inflatable humpback whale "Salt" from being set-up on the main lab parking lot, and that left a gap between the main tents and some exhibits located in the back parking lot, where the Coast Guard vessel was docked and other Coast Guard displays were located. “We were consistently busy and although we had fewer visitors than the main tents, we had more time to spend with each visitor or family,” said Mike Jech, who staffed the drone exhibit with Jennifer Johnson and Lisa Conger. “The stroll went really well, and I hope we get to do it again.”

Feedback from other village organizations participating in the event was also very positive. All reported plenty of foot traffic at their booths on Waterfront Park and at other village locations.

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Related links:

Woods Hole Science Stroll Expands in its Second Year:

<http://www.capecodtimes.com/article/20160803/NEWS/160809783>

2016 Woods Hole Science Stroll: <http://woodsholesciencestroll.org>

Woods Hole Lab “Open House,” Tours of NOAA Ship Bigelow Attract Large Crowd at Woods Hole Science Stroll (2015): <http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/news/features/woods-hole-science-stroll/>