



Contact: Maggie Mooney-Seus
978-281-9175
774-392-4865 cell

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Public-Private Partnership Provides Elementary School Students with Opportunity to Learn Ocean Science onboard Historic Fishing Schooner

Today marked the start of a new collaborative effort, called the Ocean Explorers Program, which will provide more than 600 Gloucester elementary school students a chance to learn first-hand what it is like to be a marine or physical scientist. This NOAA supported informal educational program is being conducted by Maritime Gloucester at their waterfront museum/educational facility and onboard the Schooner *Ardelle*, a 55-foot pinky schooner.

“We’re delighted to be partnering with Maritime Gloucester and the Schooner *Ardelle* on this wonderful program that will enable Gloucester students to see how science is applied and further their understanding of the city’s rich culture and ecological resources,” said Daniel Morris, acting regional administrator, NOAA Fisheries Service.

Students enrolled in the Ocean Explorers Program split their day between shore-based lessons at Maritime Gloucester focused on marine ecology and vessel-based applied scientific studies such as conducting plankton tows, using underwater vehicles equipped with cameras, and habitat sampling experiments. Maritime Gloucester educators, Captain Burnham and his crew, and NOAA scientists and staff, will sail with students, sharing their expertise as students conduct sampling and observations.

“We see these experiential opportunities as a complement(sp) to what students learn in the classroom and a way to directly connect children with local natural and heritage resources so they can better understand and sustain what they have in their backyard,” said Thomas Balf, executive director, Maritime Gloucester. “We’re thrilled to partner with Captain Burnham and use the *Ardelle* as the platform to provide this educational opportunity to local students.”

The *Ardelle*, was launched in July 2011 and will make its home at Maritime Gloucester. The vessel is captained by designer/builder Harold Burnham. Burnham constructed the *Ardelle* in the same spot where his family has engaged in shipbuilding for the past four centuries.

“Working with Maritime Gloucester and NOAA is a perfect fit for the *Ardelle*,” said Captain Harold Burnham. “What better place to learn about Gloucester’s seafaring history and the working waterfront of today than onboard an old-time fishing schooner.”

The mission of Maritime Gloucester is to inspire students and visitors to value marine science, maritime heritage and environmental stewardship through hands-on education and experiences. For more information on our education programs and museum hours of operation, be sure to check out our website at <http://www.gloucestermaritimecenter.org/>

The Schooner *Ardelle* provides public, private and educational sails out of Maritime Gloucester. During the trips passengers learn about fishing, shipbuilding, and Cape Ann’s maritime heritage. Passengers also get the opportunity to learn from Capt. Harold Burnham, who is renowned for his shipbuilding skills in the traditional Essex style. To learn more about the Schooner *Ardelle*, visit the website at <http://schoonerardelle.com>

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