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Understanding the Public Perception of Available Scientific Resources in Coastal Southern Maine

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JAY GALLAGHER (Marine Affairs)

Understanding the Public Perception of Available Scientific Resources in Coastal Southern Maine

Sponsor: Frank Gwalthney (Ocean Park Association)

I have focused my education as an undergrad towards the effective communication of scientific fact to non-scientific groups. This area of study has recently been dubbed Science Communication and it encompasses the effective articulation, communication, and education of scientific topics to people who haven't dedicated their lives to scientific study. A major component of effective Scientific Communication is understanding your audience and what kind of communication strategies are best for a chosen demographic. I grew up in Ocean Park Maine, a small town on the coast of Southern Maine which drove my interest in Marine Science. With my experience in marine science and my focus on effective science communication, I knew I could build a project that would reflect my upbringing and my newly acquired experience.

I constructed a survey aimed at understanding the demographic I grew up in and how the scientific community, in particular their ability to communicate with non-scientific groups, is perceived. The survey was 10 questions long, approachable and non-intrusive, which made responding to it as appealing as I could make it. I published this survey in our community Facebook Group which gave back a great number of responses.

I proceeded to analyze the data conduct statistical analysis on it to draw any significant conclusions. I then used the information I gained to construct an effective communication plan around the preferences and thoughts of our community. My hope is to take this kind of practice into my future with even more experience and expertise to construct community communication plans so that the scientists can more easily engage with the general public to share their incredible wealth of knowledge and experience with the world.