

ON-THE-JOB TRAINING PROGRAM FOR TRAINEE COMMERCIAL FISHERMEN

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ABSTRACT

Under the provisions of the Manpower Development and Training Act, an on-the-job training program has provided commercial fishing training for 24 unemployed men.

The training program plus the cooperation between Federal, State, and municipal agencies have assured the success of the project, employed 24 men, and provided the Gloucester, Mass., fishing fleet with new workers in a tight labor market.

INTRODUCTION

Successful completion of an on-the-job training program under the Manpower Development and Training Act has made available 24 trainees skilled in the fundamentals of otter-trawl fishing as prospective fishermen for the trawlers of Gloucester, Mass.

Directed by the U. S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training, the program provided vocational on-the-job training in the skills required by commercial fishermen aboard vessels of the North Atlantic fishing fleet. Development of the project was co-sponsored by the Gloucester Fishing Vessel Owners Association and the Atlantic Fishermen's Union (AFL-CIO). Federal, State, and municipal agencies directly concerned with the program included the U. S. Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, Massachusetts Division of Employment Security, and the Gloucester Vocational School.

Under the provisions of the Manpower Development and Training Act, the Federal government bore all costs of the training program, including the subsistence and transportation allowances of the trainees. Additional project costs included salaries for instructors, procurement of supplies and materials for net-loft training, procurement and supply to each trainee of personal and foul-weather gear for use on shipboard, and premium costs for liability insurance in Protection and Indemnity coverage for trainees. Personal and foul-weather gear included rubber boots, oilskins, hat, work gloves, and mattress. Trainees were required to supply their own work clothes and blankets.

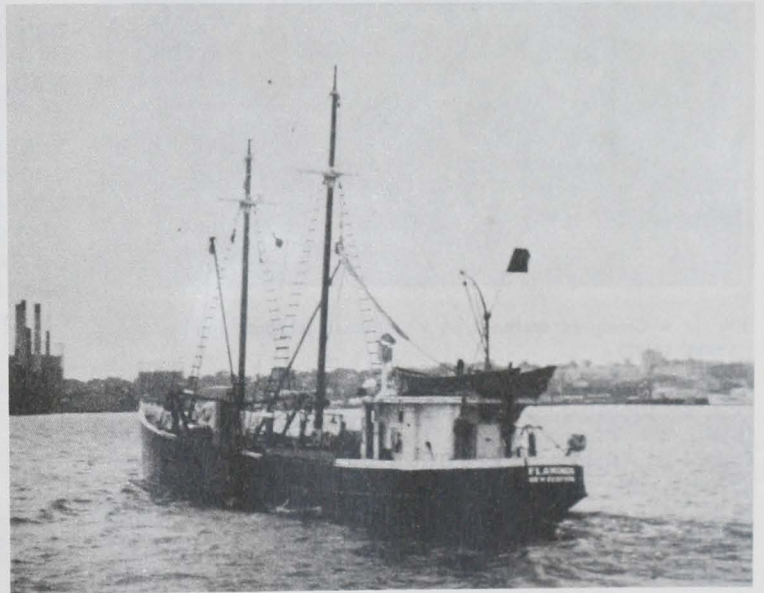


Fig. 1 - Medium fishing vessel operating as a scallop dredger or otter trawler from New England fishing ports.

SELECTION OF TRAINEES

The applicants were first screened by the Massachusetts Division of Employment Security. To qualify for the training, applicants had to be either unemployed or underemployed (working less than 40 hours weekly), head of a family or household, strong and in good health, and Safety Officer, U. S. Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, Gloucester, Mass.

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willing to work at sea on board fishing vessels during most of the training period. The trainees had been laborers, welders, painters, shipping clerks, machine operators, and electrician's helpers. Although desirable, previous fishing or maritime experience was not required of the applicants, and only 5 of the 34 men selected for the course had previous experience either on fishing boats or merchant ships.

The program began August 3, 1964, with a class of 34 trainees and ended November 20, 1964, with a total of 24 persons completing the full course of instruction.

Average age of the group was 33 years--considerably lower than the average age of the commercial fishermen operating in the otter-trawl fishery out of the port of Gloucester and Boston, Mass. (table).

Years	Number
Under 25	5
From 25 to 29	4
" 30 to 34	8
" 35 to 39	2
" 40 to 44	3
" 45 and over	2

COURSE OF INSTRUCTION

The training period was 16 weeks--13 weeks of on-the-job training at sea on board fishing trawlers and 3 weeks of supplemental training ashore under the guidance of instructors skilled in the arts of fish-net assembly and repair, and in the splicing of wire and rope. The shoreside training was scheduled for a 2-week period prior to sea duty, plus a week of instruction in the net loft during the final period of the course.



Fig. 2 - Group of trainees at wharf during instruction in fishing vessel safety.

During the first week of the training, under the direction of the Fishing Vessel Safety Unit of the U. S. Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, the trainees were given an intensive course in the basic principles of fishing vessel safety. Safety instruction included inspection of selected fishing vessels, explanation of the use and function of fishing gear employed aboard otter trawlers, general briefing on safe operating practices, and enumeration of unsafe conditions and hazards apt to be encountered on shipboard during their tour of sea duty.

SHORE TRAINING: Shore training included over 100 hours of instruction in handling fish nets, wires, ropes, and accessory fishing gear used in the otter-trawl fishery. Emphasis was devoted to the fundamentals of trawl assembly, rigging of floats, rollers, and accessories for otter-trawl nets, and the splicing of wire and wire rope. Additional phases of the instruction covered such operations as serving and parceling wire rope, marking main trawling wires, and tying simple knots widely used on board fishing vessels.

SEA TRAINING: Most of the training program was carried out at sea on board Gloucester trawlers working under actual fishing conditions. Forty-nine fishing vessel owners and captains participated in the program and made their vessels available to carry and instruct the trainees under on-the-job conditions.

The trainees were not classed as regular crew members but rather as supernumeraries,

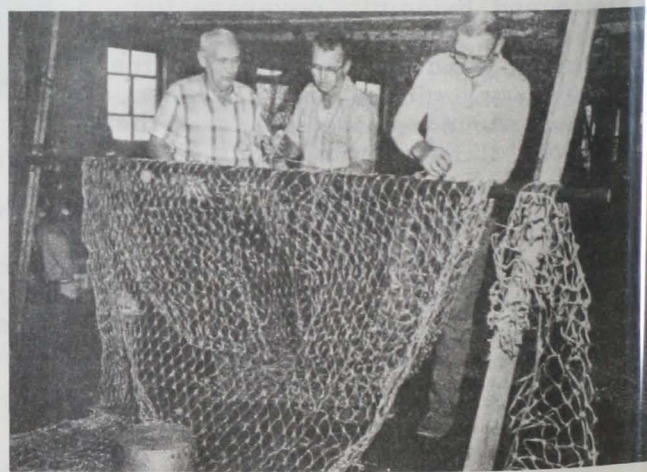


Fig. 3 - Instructor counsels trainees in the art of fish net repair.

assisting the crew in all possible ways while obtaining experience and skill in the duties of otter-trawl fishermen.

The trips varied from 4 to 20 days depending on the fishery, the availability of fish, and weather encountered. Boats operating in the fisheries for whiting and groundfish on in-shore fishing grounds made short trips of 2 to 8 days. Vessels in the ocean perch fishery, working fishing areas 300 to 600 miles from Gloucester, averaged 12 days per trip. The program instructors scheduled training trips so that the trainees would serve on vessels in the whiting, groundfish, and ocean perch fisheries.

While the progress of the trainees in acquiring fishing skills depended in great part on the individual's initiative and capability, shipboard instruction was generally directed towards:

1. Quartermaster duties--standing regular wheel and lookout watch with crew members while the vessel was traveling to and from the fishing grounds.
2. Rigging otter-trawl nets and accessory fishing gear prior to setting the nets.
3. Setting and hauling otter-trawl nets.
4. Culling, dressing, and washing fish catches.
5. Icing fish catches in vessel's hold.
6. Unloading fish catches and preparing fish hold for next trip.
7. Servicing fish nets and gear in preparation for next trip.

BENEFITS OF THE PROGRAM

The combination of shoreside instruction in fishing skills and experience at sea on-the-job has added 24 trained men capable of handling the arduous duties of fishermen on board fishing trawlers in the North Atlantic waters. The program, at a cost to the Federal Government of less than \$800 per trainee, has removed men from the ranks of the unemployed, qualified them for employment in a trade where the fishermen have averaged earnings of from \$1,000 to \$6,500 per year, and provided new recruits for an industry plagued by an extreme shortage of competent workers.

Indoctrination of the trainees in the fundamentals of fishing vessel safety was the first time that safety instruction was included in a training project of the Manpower and Development Training Act. The immediate purpose of the instruction was to minimize the possibility of personal injury by pointing out the hazards associated with commercial fishing operations and creating a positive attitude towards accident prevention on the part of trainees. The accident-free work record of the trainees established during the training period indicates the value of the safety instruction.



Fig. 4 - Trainees practice their skill in mending fish nets.

