

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **MERI RECEIVES \$15,000 EDUCATION GRANT**

BLUE HILL – The Marine Environmental Research Institute (MERI) has received a \$15,000 grant from The Marpat Foundation to support its education programs, which serve the research organization’s constituency of more than 140,000 people in mid-coast Maine. “We're delighted to receive this grant for the 10<sup>th</sup> consecutive year from The Marpat Foundation,” said Dr. Susan Shaw, MERI Founder and Executive Director. “Our education programs are strengthened and sustained by personal donations and grants – it is this kind of ongoing annual support that enables MERI to continue to offer high quality education programs for the community year round.”

Among the summer education programs that the Marpat grant will support are MERI’s Island Explorer Trips for children ages K-12, and Eco-Cruises for families, which offer children and adults opportunities to explore the ecology of Blue Hill Bay aboard the R/V MERI, with an emphasis on stewardship of ocean resources. In 2003, MERI also will offer special charter trips for those interested in seabirds, marine mammals, lobster ecology, and/or tide pooling.

The Marpat grant additionally will allow MERI to build on its internship programs in 2003 by offering six Marine Biology Internships to college students, and three Junior Internships to high school students on a competitive basis. During the school year, Internships are offered to high school and college students who can earn school credit in marine sciences. The grant also will support the MERI Seal Program, allowing it to take on up to four children, ages 12-13, who have participated in MERI field trips, and can share their knowledge about the marine environment with younger children.

MERI’s new Ocean School Program in the Sea Library and Ocean Aquarium Room will benefit from the award as well. Introduced in the fall of 2002, the program offers sequential

classroom lessons on the world's oceans and the Maine coastal ecosystem to elementary and high school classes, ecology clubs, and other groups. The lessons, which take place at MERI's Center for Marine Studies in Blue Hill, are specifically designed to help K-12 students achieve Maine state learning standards in the sciences. Ocean School lessons will continue throughout the academic year, culminating in beach-walks and island field trips. As part of the Program, a teacher training course and teacher resource kits will be developed for national distribution. Other programs that the recent grant will benefit are MERI's Ocean Story Hour for pre-schoolers, Hands-On Science for elementary school students, and Ocean Video Night for individuals and families. Every Friday in January and February 2003, Ocean Video Night will feature the award-winning "Blue Planet: Seas of Life" series, beginning with 'Ocean World', the first video in the eight-part series, on January 10. The award also will allow MERI to continue to offer its marine discovery programs, featuring touch-tank inhabitants, to the region's libraries, reaching thousands of children and adults in mid-coast Maine.

For coastal communities, MERI acts as a scientific information resource on public policy initiatives to protect ocean resources and public health. The Marpat award also will support the organization's current community outreach initiatives, which include: a distinguished speaker series to educate coastal communities on ocean issues such as the impacts of aquaculture, dredging, and land-to-sea pollution; an initiative addressing the health hazards of toxic metals leaching into coastal and surface waters from old mine sites on the Blue Hill peninsula; and special forums and conferences such as the 2002 Gulf of Maine Coastal Forum, which MERI recently convened in Blue Hill. This multi-sector Forum brought together more than 200 experts and citizens from the region to examine the health of the coastal environment, and will lead to a "State of the Gulf Summit" in 2004. MERI will be a lead organization in that Summit, which will provide the first region-wide assessment of the state of the Gulf of Maine in 13 years.

MERI was founded in 1990 as a non-profit organization to protect the health of the marine environment through research and education. To learn more about MERI programs, call 207-374-2135, e-mail: [meri@downeast.net](mailto:meri@downeast.net), or visit MERI online at [www.meriresearch.org](http://www.meriresearch.org).

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**PHOTO CAPTIONS:**

*Dr. Susan Shaw, MERI Founder and Executive Director, listens to Dr. Kenneth Black, a noted expert on the impacts of salmon aquaculture, who presented the first lecture in MERI's new Elisabeth Mann Borgese Lecture Series on August 23 at the Center for Marine Studies in Blue Hill.*

*MERI Intern Angela Schnur talks about sea life with a child aboard the RV/ MERI during one of the research organization's Island Explorer Trips in Blue Hill Bay.*

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