

Bowdoin College's 2020 Honorary Degree Recipients

For the Degree of Doctor of Science

EDWARD P. AMES, SD

Edward P. “Ted” Ames has been a commercial fisherman, scientific researcher, educator, and advocate for marine conservation and for sustainable fisheries in the Gulf of Maine. His contributions to an understanding of the historical, ecological, and economic factors that are connected to the decline of ground fisheries in the North Atlantic earned him a 2005 MacArthur Foundation grant.

Ames grew up on Vinalhaven Island on the central Maine coast and has fished for sixty years (lobstering; ground fishing by tub trawling, gillnetting, and dragging; shrimping; scalloping; and shark fishing). After high school, he served in the US Navy. He earned an MS in biochemistry at the University of Maine at Orono (UMO) in 1971 and taught chemistry, biochemistry, and environmental science at UMO and at Mt. Desert Island High School. He returned to fishing until stocks collapsed in the mid-1990s. Ames turned his efforts to bringing back cod, haddock, and flounder in the eastern Gulf of Maine and to documenting the historical distribution of spawning grounds and fisheries by mapping more than a century's worth of recorded catches and interviews with fishermen. His historical approach to fisheries ecology demonstrated that cod and other species existed in localized stocks which, once depleted, were not replaced by recruitment from adjacent areas. He also identified the importance of river-spawning species such as alewives for ground fish populations.

Ames has been a leader and activist for sustainable fisheries as the executive director of the Maine Gillnetters Association, a member of the national Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee, marine resources director for the Island Institute, president and laboratory director of Alden/Ames Laboratory, and director of the Stonington Fisheries Alliance and the Zone C. Lobster Council. He was one of the founders of the Penobscot East Resource Center (now the Maine Center for Coastal Fisheries). He retired from the Center's board of directors in January of 2019.

Ames was awarded an honorary degree from the University of Maine at Machias. In the 2010–2011 academic year, he was the coastal studies scholar at Bowdoin and a member of the Maine Rivers, Estuaries and Coastal Fisheries Project, a collaboration among Bowdoin, Bates, University of Southern Maine, University of Maine, and Penobscot East Resource Center.

Ames lives in Stonington with his wife, Robin Alden, who is also a prominent member of the marine conservation community.