



Dr. Robin Hadlock Seeley
2022 Conservation Leadership Award

for her work to ensure the protection of rockweed, a keystone species found on the Maine coast, and her leadership in the successful effort to ban industrial mining in Pembroke

When industrial rockweed harvesters began dramatically increasing their harvesting along Maine's coast over the last two decades, Robin Hadlock Seeley was among the first to sound the alarm. Rockweed, as you saw in the video, is a type of seaweed that plays an important role in coastal ecosystems by providing habitat and shelter for other marine life. Maine's rockweed forests are comparable to the West Coast's famous kelp forests. Robin, a Yale-educated marine ecologist, is a leading expert on rockweed. From her home in Pembroke overlooking her study site in Cobscook Bay, she noticed crews of harvesters arriving from Nova Scotia, filling their skiffs with rockweed, without regard to the environmental damage they were causing. In the years since, Robin led the effort to pass the rockweed management law for Cobscook Bay, which resulted in far greater protection from overharvesting for this critical area. Robin has also successfully shepherded lawsuits all the way through the Law Court defending the ownership of rockweed in the intertidal zone by landowners. Without this requirement, not even land trusts would be able to protect the rockweed resources they have purchased coastal lands to protect. Unfortunately, industrial rockweed harvesters continue to ignore the requirement to get landowner permission to harvest rockweed, and enforcement continues to be a challenge. Robin is still fighting, taking videos of illegal harvests, and pushing for protection of rockweed resources. Robin has brought the importance of rockweed as a keystone species to the forefront of public discourse in Maine.

In addition to her work protecting rockweed, Robin also led the effort to pass a ban on industrial mining in Pembroke, to keep Wolfden Resources, a mining company with a very shady past, from mining there and putting the region's water resources at risk. The ban passed overwhelmingly thanks to Robin's willingness to go door to door and talk to townspeople, and also as a result of her longstanding reputation as a guardian of Cobscook Bay. Robin, for your work to ensure the protection of rockweed, and your leadership in the successful effort to ban industrial mining in Pembroke, on behalf of the Natural Resources Council of Maine, it is my honor to present you with a 2022 Conservation Leadership Award.