

## **Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative & Advisory Council**

On Friday, October 14, 2011, the Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative called to order its first meeting convened together with the Seafood Marketing Advisory Council, at 1:00 p.m. at the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, 235 Promenade Street, Room 300, Providence, RI.

### **In attendance were:**

#### **Collaborative Members**

Janet Coit, Director of DEM, Chair  
Mike Walker, Senior Project Manager, EDC  
Robert Ballou, Acting Chief of Fish & Wildlife, DEM  
Ernest Julian, Chief of Food Protection, DOH  
Ken Ayars, Chief of Agriculture, DEM  
Dave Beutel, Aquaculture Coordinator, CRMC  
Barry Costa Pierce, Director, RI Sea Grant

#### **Council Members**

Ryan Clarke, Vice President, The Town Dock  
Ann Cook, Co-founder, The Local Catch, Inc.  
Bill Silkes, President, American Mussel Harvesters  
Perry Raso, Ocean State Aquaculture  
Derek Wagner, Chef & Owner, Nick's on Broadway  
John DelGado, Seafood Buyer / Supervisor, Dave's Market Place  
Mike McGiveney, President RI Shellfishermen's Association  
David Preble, New England Fisheries Management Council  
Hirotsugu Uchida, Assistant Professor, URI  
Kathryn Farrington, Vice President of Marketing, Newport Chambers & Visitor's Bureau

#### **Others**

Gerard Bertrand, Executive Director, RI Rural Development Council  
Dave Roebuck, Oyster Farmer, Salt Pond Oyster  
Richard Cook, Co-founder, The Local Catch, Inc.  
Pete Duhamel, Planner, DEM Fish & Wildlife  
Michael Marchetti, ENE Scallop Association  
Sarah Smith, Fisheries Extension, RI Sea Grant  
Linda George, Policy Analyst, Senate Policy Office  
Rayna Santoro, Assistant to the Director, DEM  
Tim Faulkus, Writer, ECO RI News

Director Coit called the meeting to order by welcoming all and asked each participant to state who they are and their role in the Seafood Marketing Collaborative or Advisory Council. Director Coit noted that both the Collaborative and the Council are in attendance which made sense for the initial meeting. Under the statute that governs this initiative, the Advisory Council is a separate entity with a distinct role.

Next Director Coit provided an overview of the Collaborative and Advisory Council's responsibilities and goals, which include submitting a report to the General Assembly by April 30, 2012. This report will be informed with what we learned through this process and importantly through the advice of the Council.

Director Coit introduced her Assistant, Rayna Santoro who will be working to support both bodies. She also introduced Gerry Bertrand with whom DEM has contracted to aide the effort and help with research and writing.

Director Coit announced that she had arranged to have several presentations at the first combined meeting to help get everyone up to speed, and to identify some of the opportunities and issues up front.

### **Presentations**

Ken Ayars head of DEM's Agricultural Division, led off with the goals and benefits of creating local markets. Ken reviewed recent programs by Farm Fresh RI and others in promoting markets for locally grown products. He focused on how providing scaled up systems and web-based connections has promoted a dramatic growth in local sales – especially retail sales at farmer's markets, and direct sales to Rhode Island restaurants. Ken mentioned that with land values so expensive, Rhode Island farmers feel extra challenges. He stressed positives – like the upcoming Food Assessment Report and the Food Day on October 24<sup>th</sup>.

Ann Cook from The Local Catch, provided a presentation showing how often local markets only sell imported seafood, and outlined the progress and barriers working to connect the fishing industry with local markets. Ann showed how very quickly she and Rick have found interested buyers of fresh caught Rhode Island seafood; however, many barriers exist to getting that catch processed out from the dock to the table of Rhode Island residents. Local seafood is a tourist draw.

Ernie Julian, Chief of the DOH's Food Protection Division, provided an overview of health issues that must be addressed and considered up front as we look at using farmer's markets and vendors to sell locally-caught and -farmed seafood. Ernie gave a Power-Point presentation that identified DOH's interest in working to promote healthy, local sources of food. This goal requires special efforts to prevent diseases – important to the marketing and success of the industry

### **Discussion**

The next phase of the meeting involved a lively discussion and brainstorming of several ideas. Following is a summary of some:

- Provide better information on shellfish closure announcements. When a press release goes out, we need to educate the buying public that not all shellfish is bad just those in that area. Provide a crisper analysis of closure.
- Timing is good for local marketing effort. Regulations changes may help. Regulate the IUU fisheries to not allow them in our waters.
- Traceability – chain of origin of the fish. Buyers and consumers want to know where the fish came from. They want to hear the story. Get them excited about local seafood. The shorter the chain, the higher the quality.
- Advertising local fish in market flyers and on restaurant menus.
- Suggested that we create a central fish market. Perhaps Point Judith.
- Buying from wholesalers is cheaper, but you do not know the origin of the fish, therefore you do not know the quality of the fish. Buying local is more expensive, but a higher quality. Need to get this across.
- Start a promotional campaign such as Agriculture Day using local hospitality centers, markets, and distributors.
- Look at past efforts, RI Seafood Council, Johnson & Wales University's conference on improving Rhode Island's seafood economy. What went well, what went wrong?
- Make a pitch such as "Rhode Island eating Rhode Island" - - "We fish so you can eat fish"
- Show that DEM / DOH are not just the fish police.
- Crisper analysis of closures – provide guidelines for transplanting shellfish into better waters. Increase abundance of local harvest.
- More transplanting – funding issue.
- Flex time to land – landing times does not synchronize with fish abundance. Ease some regulations (example, striped bass), and manage supply better to ensure a consistent predictable product for markets and restaurants.
- Stabilize the supply and protect the brand.
- Educate fish market clerks. What is local? How to cook it.
- What is the definition of local? Lots of discussion on this and the need to define a brand. For seafood, many issues. Is locally caught about where it is landed? Do we want a brand that shows a sustainable approach? Need to define "local."
- Use Rhode Island Food Day to promote marketing. Bertrand will meet with some of the Council members to work this through.
- We need a promotional campaign with support from the state.
- Discussion of "plus" factors. Providence a destination of foodies. Hospitality and tourist groups interested in promoting seafood as a part of Rhode Island's appeal. Growing interest in eating local and sustainable supply. Leadership from Johnson & Wales University, URI, Co-op Extension, restaurants, Brown, etc.

After the discussion, Director Coit asked the group to summarize some of the state governments functions that were put on the table. The list included:

- Promote food marketing
- Ease regulations that constrict supply to markets
- Support positive practices (don't just police)
- Shellfish – increase supply and clarity of rules
- Shellfish – engage in or support more public seeding programs
- Support better jobs in fishing industry
- Extend seasons so dealers have consistent products.
- Flexibility of DEM regulation
- Increase training / support partnering
- Protect the brand

When the Collaborative phase of the meeting was ready to close and the meeting was to be turned over to the Council, it was suggested that the two entities remain together and the meeting was to be as one entity. The majority agreed. Director Coit pointed out that the Advisory Council has a distinct role and different point of view and may want separate meetings. Even if meetings are combined, the Advisory council needs a chair.

Last, the need to create a “brand” to stamp the product indicating that it is a Rhode Island certified local seafood product was reiterated and emphasized. It was suggested as a topic for the next meeting.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 8, 2011 at 2:00 p.m. at the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, 235 Promenade Street, Room 300, Providence, RI.

Suggested agenda items are:

### **Presentations**

Bertrand	Lessons learned on branding
Costa Pierce	Lesson learned from the Johnson & Wales University's efforts
Ballou	Quick review of some DEM regulations: Scup and Striped Bass Management Programs

If you have any other suggestions, please contact Rayna santoro at [rayna.santoro@dem.ri.gov](mailto:rayna.santoro@dem.ri.gov)

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:30 p.m.