



**Rhode Island Seafood Marketing  
Collaborative & Advisory Council  
December 3, 2013  
Meeting Minutes**

**In attendance:**

**Collaborative**

Janet Coit, DEM Director  
Ken Ayars, DEM Chief of Agriculture  
Bob Ballou, DEM Assistant to the Director  
Ernest Julian, DOH Chief of Food Protection  
Mike Walker, EDC Senior Project Manager  
Allison Rogers, DOA Director of Policy  
Laurie Pivarnik, URI Cels

**Advisory Council**

Derek Wagner  
John DelGado  
Mike McGiveney  
Chris Brown  
Hirotsugu Uchida

**Others:**

Rayna Maguire, DEM Assistant to the Director  
Dan Costa, DEM Port Manager  
Sheri Griffin, Farm Fresh RI  
Azure Cygler, RI Sea Grant  
David Monti, Quest  
Linda George, Senate Policy Analyst  
Nancy Sullivan Senate Legislative Aide  
Mike Ryan, DEM Division of Agriculture  
Katrina White, Travelinque Organization  
Gail Mastrati, DEM Assistant to the Director  
Representative Peter Martin, State Representative

## *Introductions & Updates*

The meeting was called to order by Director Coit at approximately 2:00 p.m. Director Coit briefly reviewed how the Collaborative & Advisory Council and the agreement by both bodies that they would meet together rather than separately, although that could always change if either group wanted it to change.

Director Coit announced that many of the Advisory Council members agreed to renew their appointments, which is deeply appreciated. Director Coit also announced two new members of the Council: Christopher Brown and Robert Smith. Mr. Smith, of RI Clam, was unable to make the meeting, but he will be on the Council representing shellfish dealers and/or processors of clams. Mr. Brown, President, Rhode Island Commercial Fishermen's Association will be on the Council as specialist in fisheries management issues. Mr. Brown gave a brief summary of his 20+ year history as a commercial fishermen and his involvement in seafood marketing, the Trace and Trust program, and other sustainable seafood initiatives. Director Coit noted that she is still seeking a replacement for Ryan Clarke, who represented fish dealer/wholesaler/processors on the Council.

As for the Collaborative, there is one new member: Mike Rice, Professor of Fisheries and Aquaculture at the URI College of the Environment and Life Sciences in the Department of Fisheries, Animals and Veterinary Sciences. Mike was selected by Senate President Pavia-Weed to replace Barry Costa-Pierce. Mike was unable to make the meeting, but will be a welcome addition to the Collaborative.

Director Coit acknowledged and welcomed Dan Costa, DEM's Port Manager. Dan plays a key role in his day-to-day interactions with the RI commercial fishing community, and his oversight of the ports at Galilee and Newport. His knowledge, experience and ideas are sure to provide a nice boost to the work of the Council and Collaborative.

Director Coit acknowledged and welcomed Azure Cygler, representing the Rhode Island Sea Grant Program. Ms. Cygler summarized a key focus of her work with the URI Coastal Resources Center: the Shellfish Management Planning initiative. She noted that there are several areas of commonality between the Shellfish Planning process and the work of the Council and Collaborative, and that she looks forward to helping build on those synergies.

Everyone in attendance at the meeting then introduced themselves.

Director Coit then briefly reviewed some key developments and activities since the last meeting in March 2013. The second annual report was completed and submitted to the Governor and the General Assembly. A key aspect of the report is the branding/logo program. Regulations governing the brand have been filed and the program is ready for launch.

A new law is also on the books -- the Local Agriculture & Seafood Act. The statute authorizes DEM to administer a grant program for new farmers and organizations that support growth, development & marketing of Rhode Island's agriculture and commercial fishing. Over the past year, DEM has enacted regulations to administer the program via small grants. DEM just issued

a press release seeking nominations for membership on the newly created Local Agriculture and Seafood Act Advisory Committee. Director Coit anticipates that one of the initial grants to be issued under the program will go toward promoting and marketing the RISMC logo.

The 2nd Annual Galilee Fishing Tournament and Seafood Festival took place in September, and was bigger, more successful, and more popular than the inaugural event in 2012. The festival featured a behind-the-scenes peek at the operations of the port, local seafood and food vendors, artisans, music, music and education exhibits, a touch tank, tours of commercial fishing vessels and fish processing plants. It was a great display of DEM's partnership with the RI Saltwater Anglers Association, the Town of Narragansett, and the entire RI fishing industry.

Over the last year, DEM, DOA and DOH have participated in an Interagency Food & Nutrition Policy Advisory Council and have grown as group to better understand and promote local food in state purchasing and policies.

A reinvigorated Rhode Island Marine Fisheries Council, comprised of several new members, continues working towards a more sustainable set of management rules for our commercial fishing industry.

Ken Ayars referred the participants to the placemat created by Farm Fresh RI. Ms. Griffin of Farm Fresh RI explained the design as it shows the seafood that is available by season. Ayars further added that DEM plans to use the design in many venues – websites, events, restaurants – and welcomed other suggestions from the group.

### ***Focus for 2014***

Director Coit asked participants to focus on the question of what should be the RISMC's focus next year. With new members, new experience and ideas, and the infrastructure (namely, RI Seafood Logo) in place, Director Coit challenged members to review the first annual report and consider priorities for the upcoming year. She suggested that marketing and promotion, food system infrastructure, funding and resources were high on her list.

Ayars reiterated that we are on the threshold of launching the logo and a marketing strategy hoping that members will use the logo for their own products. Again either in a seafood display case, on a menu or on a web site. Ayars is hoping for initial involvement by Dave's Marketplace and Nick's on Broadway.

Brown stated that a priority should be to put food on plate this year so that this initiative actual takes life throughout the state. Move ideas that are ready to go. Costa added that species ready for the upcoming season: fluke; quahogs; and black sea bass. Director Coit tossed out the idea of "fish a month."

Walker asked whether promoting local seafood will lead to increase profitability for RI fishermen, prompting an interesting dialogue on the issue.

Ayars related the issue to how the Farmer's Market has been fruitful for local farmers. Being part of the Local Produce group has increased their profits because the farm is now known. Brown echoed Ayars and added that everyone in the industry must work together to ensure that the market stays viable and everyone shares the benefits.

Director Coit mentioned that promoting local seafood should lead to higher prices because seafood consumers are likely to be willing to pay more not only because of the quality of the product, but also because they want to help support the local fishing industry.

McGivney added that we need to grow from within and jump-start the market. The aim is not to upend the existing supply chain, but rather to better understand it and support it.

Supply and demand must grow together. The seafood industry supports this initiative and use of the logo, but they are maxed out. Brown added that if we have people looking to do something different or change harvest levels, they have to do it themselves. A small group of distributors working as one will move their products faster and more effectively than individuals acting alone.

Walker stated that is why he asked the question to get to these thoughts.

McGivney asked if DEM is willing to use economic factors into its regulatory process. Ballou responded that we already do. The winter harvest schedule is an example. DEM is timing the harvest in accordance with industry requests such that the flow product is metered into the market. While state law appears to prohibit fisheries regulations that are based solely on economic factors, such factors can be considered as part of an overall management program.

On a related matter, the group discussed the pros and cons of cutting out the "middle man" – i.e., processor/wholesalers – as a result of more direct sales by harvesters who obtain dealer's licenses.

Costa suggested the development of an information package for potential dealers, including rules & regulations, fish seasons, and frequently asked questions.

### *Upcoming Opportunities*

White mentioned that food festival season will be upon us soon, providing an opportunity for vendors to use the logo and further promote local seafood. White also volunteered to help coordinate a fund-raising event in support of the RISMC.

Cygler passed out recipes cards that her program has produced and suggested that they can be used to help draw attention to local seafood.

Ayars suggested a tour of Galilee. Director Coit added that a visit to Galilee will provide the RISMC with a tangible means for furthering its goals and purposes. She will coordinate with Costa to set up one or more visits early in 2014. She further suggested other field trips that are not necessarily meetings.

Director Coit mentioned that during one of the Shellfish Management Plan meetings, educating children was deemed key. She asked the group if that would be a worthwhile pursuit for the RISMC as well. Brown responded that in his experience educating children is very successful. He further mentioned that teachers are always looking for speakers to talk to their classes. Ayars added that there is a Rhode Island Farm School meeting in January, and perhaps some might want to come in and speak. Rogers offered to use the Rhode Island Miss America Committee to help to promote that.

Ayars noted that the next meeting, scheduled for January 16, 2014, will be devoted to presentations on marketing. Ideas are welcome. Director Coit suggested that Dan Costa could provide a presentation on the operation of the Port of Galilee and Pier 9 (combined with a tour); and that experts from Johnson & Wales could also be invited. Dave Monti offered to contribute.

Director Coit also asked for any stories, events, or festivals that can be sent to the Providence Journal to promote seafood.

Mastrati proposed using WJAR 10's "Cooking with Class" with Chef Terranova to promote seafood. Another suggestion is having a segment on WPRI 12's "Rhode Show." Mastrati will follow up on both.

Ballou reiterated that the logo must be out there though either a dealer or wholesaler to the table at restaurant. The marketing of logo will mushroom and expand on itself.

Wagner asked how he can advertise Rhode Island Seafood at his restaurant. Suggestions were placing the placemat in front the restaurant, or place stickers on the menu.

### ***Final Summary***

Director Coit concluded the meeting by suggesting the formation of new subcommittees to address specific issues, such as:

- distribution/infrastructure;
- marketing/PR/promotion; and
- education/events/communication.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:00 p.m.