

# Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative



Report to the  
Rhode Island  
General Assembly

April 2012

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## **I. Executive Summary**

The Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative was established via legislation enacted in 2011 by the General Assembly and signed into law (RIGL 20-38) by Governor Chafee on July 1, 2011. The legislation was enacted in response to an observation that “*there are currently insufficient resources and information necessary to support Rhode Island’s local fishermen and small businesses and ensure the best possible economic and environmental outcomes for the creation of more locally produced sustainable food systems, that in particular includes seafood, in the State of Rhode Island,*” (R.I. General Laws § 20-38-1).

The powers and duties of the Collaborative are to:

- Identify regulatory restrictions preventing and/or inhibiting local seafood marketing initiatives and identify opportunities to remove those regulatory restrictions;
- Identify and facilitate opportunities to increase consumer demand for local seafood;
- Identify and facilitate opportunities to establish agreements with local fishermen and seafood dealers for potential seafood marketplace expansion;
- Review and identify existing studies, pilot programs and initiatives of this state and other states regarding seafood-marketing practices;
- Provide educational opportunities for consumers and the fishing community regarding local seafood issues and initiatives;
- Identify funding sources available to the fishing community to support seafood marketing;
- Respond to requests for information from the legislature and comment on proposed legislation;
- Issue recommendations necessary to achieve these goals;
- Identify opportunities for potential funding to support Rhode Island seafood marketing efforts and initiatives.

The legislation calls upon the Collaborative to report its initial findings, as well as progress made in achieving the goals and objectives set forth in the statute and other pertinent information, to the Governor and the General Assembly by April 30, 2012 (and annually thereafter, by April 30 of every succeeding year).

The nine-member Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative is made up of representatives from DEM, EDC, CRMC, DOH, DOA, and URI. Its ten-member Advisory Council is made up of representatives from the following sectors, as legislatively mandated: fish wholesale or

processing; lobster and crab wholesale or processing; shellfish wholesale or processing; aquaculture wholesale or processing; seafood retail; the restaurant industry; shellfish harvest; fisheries management; marine science; and the hospitality industry. **Table 1** contains a complete list of members of both the Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative and its Advisory Council.

**Table 1**

**Members of the Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative and Advisory Council**

<b>R.I. Seafood Marketing Collaborative</b>	<b>Advisory Council</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Janet Coit, Chair, Director of DEM</li> <li>▪ Mike Walker, Senior Project Manager, EDC</li> <li>▪ Robert Ballou, Assistant to the Director, DEM</li> <li>▪ Ken Ayars, Chief of Agriculture DEM</li> <li>▪ Ernest Julian, Chief of Food Protection, DOH</li> <li>▪ Dave Beutel, Aquaculture Coordinator, CRMC</li> <li>▪ Barry Costa Pierce, Director, Rhode Island Sea Grant</li> <li>▪ Kelly Mahoney, DOA Policy Director</li> <li>▪ Dr. John Kirby, URI</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ryan Clarke, Vice President, The Town Dock</li> <li>▪ Ann Cook, Co-founder, The Local Catch, Inc.</li> <li>▪ Bill Silkes, President, American Mussel Harvesters</li> <li>▪ Derek Wagner, Chef &amp; Owner, Nick’s on Broadway</li> <li>▪ John Delgado, Seafood Buyer / Supervisor, Dave’s Market Place</li> <li>▪ Mike McGiveney, President Rhode Island Shellfishermen’s Association</li> <li>▪ David Preble, New England Fisheries Management Council</li> <li>▪ Hirotsugu Uchida, Assistant Professor, URI</li> <li>▪ Kathryn Farrington, Vice President of Marketing, Newport Chambers &amp; Visitor’s Bureau</li> <li>▪ Perry Raso, President, Ocean State Aquaculture</li> </ul>

**Activities of the Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative**

The Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative met four times between its creation in September 2012 and the submission of this report in April 2012. Meetings were attended by Collaborative members, Advisory Council members, other industry members, and interested parties. At the first meeting, the Advisory Council members decided there was a benefit to meeting jointly with the Collaborative. Meetings took place at the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) headquarters at 235 Promenade St, Providence, on October 14 and December 8, 2011, and February 2 and April 5, 2012. See both the DEM website at [www.dem.ri.gov](http://www.dem.ri.gov) and the Seafood Collaborative website at [www.seafoodri.org](http://www.seafoodri.org) for a link to the minutes of these meetings. In addition, subcommittee meetings were held at points around the state between February 2, 2012 and April 5, 2012.

## ***Brainstorming Exercises***

The first task of the Collaborative was to imagine ways to improve the marketing of seafood caught and/or processed in Rhode Island. During the first two meetings, Collaborative members, Advisory Council members, and other attendees raised issues and suggested many creative ideas that could be developed into projects of the Collaborative. Most involved efforts to increase demand for seafood within the local (Rhode Island) markets rather than export or out-of-state markets. Ideas included educational efforts, marketing initiatives, and elimination of regulatory barriers. Participants agreed that Rhode Island is well poised to capitalize on the “local food culture” that has taken hold in Rhode Island in the last few years to promote sales of local seafood. They also recognized that Rhode Island has an advantage in terms of the multiple organizations in the state with the knowledge and dedication to carry out local seafood marketing initiatives (e.g., Farm Fresh RI, University of Rhode Island/R.I. Sea Grant, and Johnson and Wales University).

## ***Presentations***

At its first three meetings, the Collaborative received seven presentations by experts from various fields relevant to seafood marketing. The goals of these presentations were to inform participants of current efforts, opportunities, and challenges with regard to seafood marketing both in Rhode Island and elsewhere, and to galvanize conversation among participants about next steps. The Collaborative, Advisory Council, and other participants viewed the following presentations between October 2011 and February 2012:

- Presentation by Ken Ayars, Chief of DEM’s Agricultural Division, on the success of local agriculture marketing efforts. (October 14, 2011)
- Presentation by Ann Cook, The Local Catch, on the promises and challenges involved in marketing local seafood in Rhode Island. (October 14, 2011)
- Presentation by Ernest Julian, Chief of the DOH’s Food Protection Division, on the health challenges involved in promoting local seafood sales at farmers markets. (October 14, 2011)
- Presentation by Barry Costa Pierce, R.I. Sea Grant, on the Baird Symposium (“Developing the Rhode Island Seafood Knowledge Economy: Perspectives on Seafood Sustainability”) held on June 26-28, 2011. (December 8, 2011)
- Presentation by Gerard Bertrand (R.I. Rural Development Council) on local seafood marketing and branding initiatives from other states. (December 8, 2011)
- Presentation by Jeremy Collie, URI Graduate School of Oceanography, on sustainable seafood certification benefits and options. (December 8, 2011)
- Presentation by Bob Ballou, DEM Director’s Office, on scup and striped bass as examples of species where regulatory aspects, such as landing seasons, may affect consistent supply. (February 2, 2012)

## ***Subcommittee meetings***

Much of the work of the Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative to date has taken place within six task-based subcommittees that were formed at the February 2, 2012 meeting. Subcommittee membership was open to all, and subcommittee meetings were held independently

of Collaborative meetings. The meetings that took place are listed in the subcommittee reports that follow this summary. The objectives of each subcommittee reflect the powers and duties of the Seafood Marketing Collaborative as well as suggestions that were made by attendees during the brainstorming exercises performed at the Collaborative's October 14 and December 8, 2011 meetings. The six subcommittees and their respective objectives are as follows:

- **Regulatory:** Identify DEM and DOH regulatory restrictions preventing and/or inhibiting local and/or direct-to-consumer seafood marketing initiatives; explore feasibility of alternative regulations that would preserve food safety and resource sustainability while facilitating the flow of seafood goods to market.
- **Promotion and Education:** Identify and facilitate opportunities to increase consumer demand for local seafood, through education, media, events, advertising, etc. Provide educational opportunities for consumers and the fishing community regarding local seafood issues and initiatives. Develop a promotional slogan and/or logo. Provide input on an R.I. seafood website.
- **Branding/Certification:** Explore the pros and cons of a label (branding) or seal (certification) conveying to the consumer that a product is local, healthy, fresh, sustainable, or some combination of the above. Determine logistics of applying this label/seal and define specific protocols for accountability/traceability.
- **Building local market connections:** Identify and facilitate opportunities to establish agreements between local fishermen and seafood dealers for potential seafood marketplace expansion. Explore potential regulatory, legal, and business aspects related to this type of agreement. Explore feasibility of a central seafood market.
- **Research:** Review and identify existing studies, pilot program and initiatives of this state and other states regarding seafood-marketing practices. Identify data needs for describing the current status of the R.I. seafood supply chain and possible improvements. Evaluate expected economic benefits to producers and consumers of R.I. Seafood Marketing Collaborative activities.
- **Funding:** Identify funding sources available to the fishing community to support seafood marketing. Identify opportunities for potential funding to support Rhode Island seafood marketing efforts and initiatives.

Subcommittees identified a number of needs and issues related to local seafood marketing efforts in the state, and proceeded to develop a total of 43 recommendations designed to address these issues. These recommendations range from the near-term to the long-term, and involve a number of different stakeholders, interests, and agencies. A complete set of recommendations is presented in **Table 2**. Major issues identified by each subcommittee are listed in the left-hand column, and recommendations made by each subcommittee in response to those issues appear in the right-hand column.

**Table 2**

**Issues and recommendations identified by RISMIC Subcommittees to advance local seafood marketing in Rhode Island.**

<u>ISSUE</u>	<u>RECOMMENDATION</u>	<u>NEXT STEP / LEAD</u>
<b>Regulatory Subcommittee</b>		
Inconsistent supply of finfish to meet market demands, partly due to management measures that restrict season and volume of available catch.	<b>1.</b> Track the management programs pertaining to the fisheries of major interest to Rhode Island to better correlate local marketing initiatives with resource availability.	DEM
Non-synchronous supply of shellfish to meet market demands, as a result of water quality and seasonal closures of shellfish management areas and the part-time nature of many shellfishermen.	<b>2.</b> Explore opportunities to achieve a more steady flow of shellfish product to the market, including but not limited to expanded (year-round) harvest schedules for the most productive management areas, and increasing the number of full-time commercial shellfishermen.	DEM, stakeholders
Limitations or lack of clarity around the licensing steps required for prospective seafood dealers (including commercial fishermen wanting to sell their catch directly to the public).	<b>3.</b> Pursue the establishment of a single point of contact, or web portal, providing all relevant information and guidance, including all DEM and DOH licensing and regulatory requirements, that relate to starting a new business involving seafood sales.	DEM, DOH
	<b>4.</b> As part of the above-described guidance process, develop and make available a case study showing how a fisherman who wanted to engage in direct sales to the public could become legally authorized to do so.	DEM, DOH
	<b>5.</b> Coordinate with “First Stop” (Secretary of State initiative). Consolidate all DEM regulations pertaining to dealers in one set of rules.	DEM, DOH

<b>Building Market Connections Subcommittee</b>		
Potential value of expanding the Community Supported Fisheries (CSF) model, while complying with existing health regulations requiring seafood to be processed through a licensed dealer.	<b>6.</b> Survey fishermen and wholesalers to identify parties potentially interested in collaborating to sell seafood to consumers through a CSF arrangement.	Building Local Market Connections Subcommittee
	<b>7.</b> Write a model contract to illustrate the potential roles, responsibilities, and compensation between fishers and wholesalers planning to enter into an agreement to enable fishers to make seafood available to consumers through a CSF arrangement. This model contract would be included in the Seafood Marketing Collaborative website section called Industry Resources.	Building Local Market Connections Subcommittee
	<b>8.</b> Coordinate with the Regulatory Subcommittee to explore ways to facilitate direct sales of seafood by harvesters to the public.	Building Local Market Connections Subcommittee, Regulatory Subcommittee, DEM, DOH
Unclear regulations governing the sale of seafood at farmers markets.	<b>9.</b> Work with the Department of Health to help establish clear rules and guidelines for sale of seafood (both farmed and wild-caught) at local farmers markets.	Building Local Market Connections Subcommittee, DOH
Inconsistent and nontransparent conventions for deciding which vendors are allowed into private farmers markets and what they are allowed to sell.	<b>10.</b> Work with farmers market organizers to establish transparent and consistent rules on allowing participation of new vendors at farmers markets, and on allowing vendors to sell products already sold at the markets.	Building Local Market Connections Subcommittee, Farm Fresh, independent farmers' market organizers, DEM
Tough barriers to state agency and institutional purchase of local seafood for cafeterias.	<b>11.</b> Work with state agencies to discuss opportunities and barriers in the state purchasing of local seafood.	Building Local Market Connections Subcommittee, DOA, DEM

Low volumes of local seafood being sold through local supermarkets and restaurants.	<b>12.</b> Conduct a survey of local restaurants and retail markets to gauge interest in purchasing more local seafood and perceived barriers to purchasing more local seafood.	Building Local Market Connections Subcommittee
	<b>13.</b> Conduct a survey of local seafood purveyors to gauge interest in selling more local seafood to local restaurants and retail markets, and perceived barriers to selling more local seafood through these channels.	Building Local Market Connections Subcommittee
Potential for a central seafood market as a hub to enable direct sales and promote local seafood.	<b>14.</b> Explore demand for and feasibility of a central seafood market in Rhode Island.	Building Local Market Connections Subcommittee
	Consider examples of central seafood markets in other states.	Building Local Market Connections Subcommittee
<b>Branding and Certification Subcommittee</b>		
Need for a way for consumers to distinguish Rhode Island seafood from other seafood available in the marketplace.	<b>15.</b> Establish a Rhode Island brand for seafood products, that can, and should, be pursued as a complement to existing and future certification programs, which require further study and analysis regarding their potential application or adaptation to Rhode Island fisheries.	Branding Subcommittee
Need to make the brand official and proprietary.	<b>16.</b> Make the brand professionally designed and formally established and protected, perhaps by registering it as a trademark.	Branding Subcommittee
	<b>17.</b> Consider involving the state insignia, along with a simple phrase, such as <i>Ocean State Seafood</i> or the like.	Branding Subcommittee
Need to define the meaning behind the brand to generally include “Rhode Island harvested, grown, or produced.”	<b>18.</b> Ensure a brand that means seafood legally harvested from the marine waters of Rhode Island as well as offshore New England and Mid-Atlantic waters and either landed in Rhode Island at a licensed Rhode Island dealer, or landed at a nearby port, by a Rhode Island interest, and	Branding Subcommittee
		Branding Subcommittee

	transported whole and unprocessed to a licensed Rhode Island dealer for processing and/or packing.	
	<b>19.</b> Consider further clarifying, or limiting, the application of “Rhode Island produced,” e.g., landed or harvested in Massachusetts or Connecticut and transported whole and unprocessed to a Rhode Island dealer on the same day.”	Branding Subcommittee
	<b>20.</b> Include in brand aquaculture products, that are legally harvested from a Rhode Island farm and conveyed or sold to a licensed Rhode Island dealer.	Branding Subcommittee
	<b>21.</b> Ensure a Rhode Island Seafood brand be representing <i>local, fresh, and healthy</i> .	Branding Subcommittee
Need to manage the use, and uphold the integrity of the brand.	<b>22.</b> Maintain and post a list of DEM- and DOH-licensed Rhode Island dealers, as well as a list of all managed fisheries in the region in order to be covered by the Rhode Island Seafood.	DEM
	<b>23.</b> Establish rules to remove any dealer found to be in violation of any state or federal law related to seafood from the list, for a given period of time.	DEM
Interest in traceability of seafood.	<b>24.</b> Explore traceability issues, including, the protocols established by the Wild Rhody Seafood Program and the Gulf Seafood Trace Program.	Branding Subcommittee
Unclear definitions of ‘local’ and ‘sustainable’ in the Local Seafood Marketing Collaborative Act.	<b>25.</b> Clarify definitions for “locally landed” and “sustainable food systems” as set forth in the Act establishing the Collaborative.	General Assembly

<b>Education and Promotion Subcommittee</b>		
Opportunity to increase demand for local seafood by making it “trendy.”	<b>26.</b> Work with local chefs to build the “buzz” about local seafood. Work with restaurants state wide to create seafood events, special dinners, promote locally caught/landed seafood on menus and identify local fisheries.	Education and Promotion Subcommittee, restaurants, retail, tourist industry
	<b>27.</b> Develop a full blown media campaign, with a series of media releases on pertinent topics relating to seafood in Rhode Island (e.g. - a history of the program, cooking demonstrations, available seasonal seafood, special events etc.)	Education and Promotion Subcommittee
	<b>28.</b> Work with Governor’s Office and State Tourism Office to incorporate efforts into state-wide “Beautiful Rhode Island” campaign.	Education and Promotion Subcommittee, RIEDC
	<b>29.</b> Work with local grocery stores to host chef cooking demos featuring Rhode Island caught and landed fish.	Education and Promotion Subcommittee, retail markets
Great curiosity among the public to learn more about where seafood comes from, etc.	<b>30.</b> Create a web site as a marketing tool. Include user friendly information for the consumer on: what species are caught/landed at what times throughout the year, nutritional information on the fish/shellfish, ways to prepare it, and locations to purchase.	RIRDC
	<b>31.</b> Develop printed materials for distribution at certain restaurants, farmers markets, grocery stores, retail seafood and fish outlets, cooking demos, WIC recipients etc., including information about species of fish available throughout the year and recipes.	Education and Promotion Subcommittee

Lack of knowledge and comfort among general public when it comes to cooking seafood.	<b>32.</b> Create a series of “how-to” videos for inclusion on the website, showing how to clean and prepare local seafood.	RIRDC
Need to include low-income communities in seafood marketing efforts.	<b>33.</b> Work with Department of Human Services to communicate with SNAP recipients the nutritional benefits of fish and seafood, distribute printed information as it is available or direct recipients to web sites; Healthy Foods, Healthy Families, work with retail fish and seafood markets to accept SNAP benefits via EBT cards.	Education and Promotion Subcommittee,
<b>Research Subcommittee</b>		
Lack of information on the supply chain of fish landed in Rhode Island.	<b>34.</b> Perform detailed profiling of how Rhode Island landed fish goes through the supply chain, as a way of getting at the question: why does most Rhode Island landed fish flow out of the state?	Research Subcommittee
Lack of data on middlemen’s preferences and perceptions on the overall seafood marketing:	<b>35.</b> Improve understanding of the needs of middlemen (dealers) for furthering promotion of local seafood.	Research Subcommittee
Uncertainty about how a Rhode Island local seafood label (brand) will appeal to consumers, and what it should stand for to maximize appeal.	<b>36.</b> Investigate the demand and premiums for such labels to inform what types of attributes the Rhode Island’s seafood label should represent.	Research Subcommittee
Need to increase demand for underutilized species.	<b>37.</b> Investigate the potential demand for underutilized species.	Research Subcommittee
Potential interest in a more advanced “certification” as opposed to a branding campaign.	<b>38.</b> Focus initially on a Rhode Island <i>seafood branding</i> initiative, and defer, at least for the time being, the much larger and complex issue of <i>seafood/fishery certification</i> .	Decision made by Collaborative, Advisory Council, and other participants.

<b>Funding Subcommittee</b>		
Current funding for the RISMCM is limited, and USDA funding for projects like this one may decline in the coming years.	<b>39.</b> Explore the possibility of federal funds or other programs to support the RISMCM working our Congressional delegation and General Assembly.	Funding Subcommittee
	<b>40.</b> Seek pharmaceutical and private funding for consumer awareness and wellness information and educational programs to the general public.	Funding Subcommittee and RI Sea Grant
	<b>41.</b> Pursue better information on the economic impact of fisheries and allied industries.	Funding Subcommittee
Problem of transportation and logistics, which are expensive.	<b>42.</b> Review transportation and logistics infrastructure models for Rhode Island to provide local seafood to its citizens. Develop information related to new job potential in this section.	Funding Subcommittee
Additional funds are needed to pursue further recommendations of the Seafood Marketing Collaborative.	<b>43.</b> Develop a budget and pursue funding from all sources, including grants from public and private entities.	Full Seafood Marketing Collaborative

## *RISMC Website and Communications*

The Rhode Island Rural Development Council (RIRDC) received funding from USDA Rural Development (Rural Business Enterprise Grant) and the van Beuren Charitable Foundation to support the efforts of the Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative by providing communications and marketing expertise towards the effort. As part of this collaboration, RIRDC worked with the Providence Journal Food section to release two feature articles. The first was titled “Reel in Feast of Seven Fishes” and was published on December 21, 2011. The second was titled “From Sea to Table?” and was published on January 18, 2012. Both were authored by Food editor Gail Ciampa. (See **Appendix A.**)

In addition, RIRDC is working with a Newport-based web design and marketing firm, Paul Fleming & Co., to create a Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative website at [www.seafoodri.org](http://www.seafoodri.org). The website contains information for Rhode Island consumers about seafood species landed in Rhode Island, harvest seasons, and where to find local seafood. It features a “marketplace” section, where all seafood harvesters, processors, dealers, restaurants, and retailers will be able to input company profile information and post links to their respective websites, in order to advertise their local products. Website layout and flow are based on an “ocean to table” theme, with sections divided according to three steps the ocean-to-table process: “on the water,” “on the waterfront,” and “on the table.” In addition, the website will include a section called “industry resources,” where individuals in the Rhode Island seafood industry can locate information that helps them connect with each other and the public to promote local seafood. The website will continue to grow and change to meet new needs.

## *Next Steps*

As the Collaborative begins to implement the proposed actions listed in **Table 2**, it will seek to strike a balance between those actions that appear to offer the largest boost to Rhode Island seafood marketing efforts, those that enjoy the greatest consensus among Collaborative members and participants, and those that are most feasible to implement. The proposed branding campaign offers an example of trade-offs between these metrics. The branding campaign was a major focus of all Collaborative meetings and the central focus of the Branding Subcommittee. This intense focus reflects both a feeling among participants that a Rhode Island brand offers great benefits to the seafood industry, and also a significant divergence of opinion among members over what the brand should mean and how it should be enforced. However, while branding was by far the most complex proposal entertained by the Collaborative, there are others, such as establishment of a central seafood market, that present a larger challenge in terms of the resources required for implementation.

The following list of next steps breaks down many of the proposals listed in **Table 2** according to the type of action that is required to implement them. Each of the following actions is a step that the Collaborative and its members could realistically endeavor to undertake in the coming year. The list below follows an approximate flow from those steps requiring the lowest amount of external cooperation to those hinging entirely on collaboration from external sources. It does

not necessarily reflect a consensus among Collaborative members on the urgency or necessity of each proposal.

### ***Informational Requirements***

Identifying and filling information gaps are vital at this early stage in the Collaborative's development. Many of the subcommittee's proposed activities require some form of gathering of new information or clarification of existing information before they can fully move forward. Information on the current characteristics of the seafood supply chain and local demand for local seafood is critical to identifying new opportunities, and severely lacking at present. Moreover, potential obstacles standing in the way of improved local marketing of seafood are poorly understood. Gaining better comprehension of opportunities and obstacles to local seafood marketing is a vital prerequisite to fulfilling the Collaborative's mission.

In some instances, required information relates to public demand, and can be gathered through surveys and market research. In other cases, what is needed is clarification of existing regulations in laymen's terms, which can be assembled internally by participating agencies. While most of the proposed informational initiatives can be conducted by Collaborative subcommittees and RIRDC staff, some call for full-fledged research projects requiring the collaboration of qualified professionals, such as those at URI, Sea Grant, and other academic institutions in the state. The following is a complete list of informational needs that can be undertaken in the near term and with moderate funding. Agencies listed in parentheses are those whose collaboration is critical to filling these informational needs. In regard to external information sources and research projects (2. and 3. below), additional funds may be needed to gather data.

#### 1. Internal information sources:

- Assemble a centralized clearinghouse of DOH and DEM licensing and regulatory requirements related to selling seafood. (DOH, DEM)
- Assemble a clear set of rules and guidelines for sale of seafood at farmers' markets. (DOH)
- Encourage legislative clarification of the meaning of the word "local" as pertains to the intent of the Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Act of 201. (General Assembly)

#### 2. External information sources:

- Survey Rhode Island fishermen and wholesalers to gauge interest in collaborative CSF arrangements that enable fishermen to market their catch to the public.
- Work with farmers' market organizers to establish transparent and consistent rules of allowing participation of new vendors at markets.
- Survey Rhode Island restaurants and retail markets to gauge interest in, and impediments to, purchasing more local seafood.

- Survey Rhode Island seafood purveyors to gauge interest in, and impediments to, selling more local seafood to local restaurants and retail markets.
- Survey Rhode Island fishermen to ascertain how marketing efforts could help their businesses become more profitable.
- Improve understanding of the needs of middlemen.
- Investigate potential demand for underutilized species.

### 3. Detailed research projects:

- Detailed profile of how Rhode Island-landed fish moves through the supply chain, as a way of getting at the question: why does so much Rhode Island-landed seafood flow out of state?
- Investigate demand and premiums for Rhode Island seafood branding labels to inform what attributes a Rhode Island seafood brand should encompass.

### *New Agency Practices*

Several of the recommendations by the Collaborative and its subcommittees represent new actions that require the collaboration of key state agency and other entities but do not require regulatory or legislative changes *per se*. This category of actions is made up of new and creative ideas whose largest challenge may lie in their novelty (e.g., lack of established communication channels and allocation of agency staff time, murkiness around the logistics of carrying out such a proposal, etc.). But because of their novelty, these ideas may also offer large rewards in terms of boosting sales and purchases of Rhode Island seafood. These actions include:

- Conduct a “Rhode Island harvested, grown, or produced” branding campaign, requiring issuance and enforcement of a label and the standards that it represents. (DEM)
- Discuss and address barriers to state purchasing of local seafood. (DOA)
- Promote local seafood through media campaigns, website, special events, informational literature, and the Governor’s Beautiful Rhode Island Campaign. (EDC, restaurants, tourist councils, etc.)
- Work with the Department of Human Services to inform SNAP recipients of the nutritional benefits of seafood. (DHS)

### *Regulatory Actions*

The Rhode Island fishing and seafood industry is by necessity subject to both environmental and health regulations designed to ensure that seafood continues to be available in abundance and

safe for public consumption. At the same time, some regulatory restrictions may represent hurdles to the marketing of local seafood. Several subcommittees encouraged agencies to take actions to address these regulatory hurdles, when and if these hurdles can be addressed in a way that does not undermine the resource management and public safety goals of seafood regulations:

- Track fisheries management programs to improve coincidence of supply and demand (DEM).
- Consolidate all DEM regulations pertaining to dealers in one set of rules (DEM).
- Consider ways in which regulations pertaining to seafood sales could be modified to allow for safe sales of seafood direct to the public by fishermen (DOH).

### ***Legislative Actions***

The Collaborative and the Branding Subcommittee feel that further clarification is needed from the General Assembly on the meaning of the word “local.” As stated in the Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Act of 2011, the purpose of the Collaborative’s activities is “to support local fisherman and small businesses and to create more locally produced food system particularly seafood.” The Act defines “Rhode Island’s local fishermen” as “commercial fishermen licensed in the State of Rhode Island.” It also defines “locally landed” to mean “legally produced species of fish or aquaculture caught by a vessel landing and licensed to fish in the State of Rhode Island.” However, the Branding Subcommittee seeks guidance relating to whether and how Rhode Island-farmed product and Rhode Island-processed product (landed elsewhere) can or should be incorporated into definitions of local. A more detailed definition of “local” would inform both the scope of Collaborative activities in general and the proposed Rhode Island seafood brand specifically. The Collaborative will develop specific recommendations.

### ***Funding Needs***

While several of the Collaborative’s proposals can be accomplished through the volunteer time of participants and the day-to-day operations of agency staff, others require more substantial funding. Those activities that cannot be accomplished without external funding resources include:

- Surveys and data collection
- Professional design and promotional campaign for a Rhode Island seafood brand
- Full-blown media campaign to promote local seafood to restaurants, retailers, and consumers
- Development of web-based, video, and printed materials for distribution to the public about the benefits of consuming local seafood, where to find it, and how to prepare it.

## *Conclusions*

In the time since the Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative was signed into effect in September 2011, interest in local marketing of Rhode Island seafood has continued to increase among producers, consumers, and state agencies. The Rhode Island Local Agriculture and Seafood Act (H7701/S2611), was passed by the House and Senate in March and signed into law by Governor Chafee in April. This new law allows the DEM Division of Agriculture to: obtain private funding to set up a grant program for new farmers and organizations that support the growth, development, and marketing of our agricultural and commercial fishing sectors; promotes marketing and outreach efforts to support both local agriculture and local seafood products; and work with DOA and DOH to establish an Inter-Agency Food Council to provide the framework to engage in meaningful new initiatives around food safety, marketing, nutrition, purchasing, and more generally to think critically about how the agencies can better align efforts to encourage safe production, distribution, and processing of local foods for both local and national markets. This new statute complements the mission of the Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative and can help make many of the Collaborative subcommittees' recommendations possible.

Conversations among participants in Collaborative meetings have been optimistic and thoughtful. The eagerness of subcommittee members to attend multiple meetings and voice many constructive ideas is testament to the value that participants perceive in pursuing local marketing efforts for Rhode Island seafood. Similarly, the engagement of participants around tough conceptual challenges such as the meaning of the word "local" and the logistics of applying a Rhode Island brand to seafood indicates a high level of commitment to the overall mission of the Collaborative. As the Collaborative moves forward, members will continue to work together to implement measures that promote and raise awareness of Rhode Island's local seafood industry.

## **II Regulatory Subcommittee Report**

### **Subcommittee Members**

**Bob Ballou**, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

**Dave Beutel**, Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council

**Ann Cook**, The Local Catch

**Mike McGiveney**, Rhode Island Shellfishermen's Association

**John Mullen**, Rhode Island Department of Health

**Lori Pivarnik**, University of Rhode Island

**Bob Rheault**, Moonstone Oysters; East Coast Shellfish Growers Association

**Bill Silkes**, American Mussel Harvesters

**Representative Theresa Tanzi**, Rhode Island State Representative

### **Introduction**

The question of whether there are regulatory restrictions that prevent and/or inhibit local seafood marketing initiatives is set forth as issue number one in the statute establishing the Collaborative/Council. Accordingly, a Regulatory Subcommittee was formed and tasked with:

- Identifying DEM and/or DOH regulatory restrictions preventing and/or inhibiting local and/or direct-to-consumer seafood marketing initiatives; and
- Exploring the feasibility of alternative regulations that would preserve food safety and resource sustainability while facilitating the flow of seafood good to market.

The Subcommittee met briefly and informally on February 2, 2012 as an immediate follow-up to the Rhode Island Seafood Collaborative/Council meeting held that day. The Subcommittee held one other meeting, attended by five of the subcommittee members, on March 15, 2012. This report reflects the consensus views and opinions reached at that meeting, supplemented by supporting information drawn from relevant resources.

### **Focused Approach**

Initially, the Subcommittee engaged in a lively, free-wheeling discussion that touched upon a range of regulatory issues of interest to the members. It was then suggested, and agreed to, that the Subcommittee needed to narrow its focus, in accordance with its charge, and steer clear of an open-ended discussion regarding regulatory constraints that may be viewed as unnecessarily burdensome, but do not relate to local seafood marketing per se. With that in mind, the Subcommittee identified and addressed the following issues.

### **Inconsistent supply of finfish to meet market demands**

The Subcommittee recognizes that due to the life cycles and migratory patterns of marine resources, as well as the nature of the various management programs governing the major seafood products harvested and landed in Rhode Island, the rate at which the products are made available is often highly variable.

For example, striped bass migrate up and down the coast, and generally don't appear in Rhode Island waters en masse until late spring. The same is generally true for most other finfish, although the Rhode Island fleet generally has the capability to access most fish year-round, even when they are in offshore deeper waters during the winter.

Weather patterns, including long-term climate change, temperature regimes, and natural mortality also affect the availability of marine resources.

But the most significant, and controllable, factor affecting seafood supplies are the management programs that regulate when resources may be harvested (seasons) and the amounts that can be taken (possession limits). For most finfish, those regulations flow from industry-influenced management programs aimed at optimizing utilization of total landing limits, or quotas, which are established, and required under federal law, to guard against overfishing. For species subject to state quotas, (set by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and/or the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council), such as scup, summer flounder, black sea bass, tautog, and striped bass, Rhode Island has the ability to manage its quota as it sees fit. For federally-managed species like groundfish and sea scallops, the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils, along with the National Marine Fisheries Service, determine how much, when, and where species can be harvested.

Although the Subcommittee did not delve deeply into the issue, the general sense of the group is that it would be ideal to configure management programs in such a way that seafood products were caught and landed in Rhode Island in a relatively stable and consistent manner, stretched out over the entire year, or the entire season. However, the Subcommittee recognizes that in most cases, there are simply too many fishermen, and not enough fish, to enable that to happen.

Certain fisheries, such as summer flounder, are currently being subject to intense review, and alternative management approaches have been piloted and may be considered for future adoption in a more institutionalized form. Other fisheries, such as striped bass, seem to be locked in to derby-style approaches that awkwardly but necessarily are likely to continue, given the relatively small quota and disproportionately large number of harvesters.

The upshot is that many marine fisheries management programs engender inefficiencies due to the nature of the resources and the traditional, competitive mode for prosecuting fisheries. Progressive, market-driven approaches, such as "catch shares," offer the potential to reduce inefficiencies and yield stable and consistent supplies of seafood products, an approach that has recently been adopted for the New England groundfish fisheries. But the approach is controversial, complicated, and challenging, and may or may not be deemed applicable to other fisheries.

### ***Recommendation***

Track the management programs pertaining to the fisheries of major interest to Rhode Island to better correlate local marketing initiatives with resource availability.

## **Non-synchronous supply of shellfish to meet market demands**

Generally, the concerns associated with shellfish are the same as those described above regarding finfish: the products (namely, quahogs) do not flow to the market in a steady, reliable way. But the issues affecting shellfish are unique. In addition to the challenge of regulating harvests for the purpose of resource protection, there is the added challenge of water quality impacts.

The resource management issues involve time and area restrictions governing shellfish management areas, which include Greenwich Bay, and several other portions of Narragansett Bay, as well as the coastal ponds. Several of the management areas in Narragansett Bay, including Greenwich Bay, open in December and remain open, intermittently, through April. Based on industry input, the management programs for these areas involve very limited harvest opportunities, e.g., for December 2011, Greenwich Bay was open on eight specified dates, from 8 am to 11 AM; in January 2012, it was open on Mondays and Wednesdays from 8 AM to noon; and from February through April it is open Mondays, Wednesday, and Friday, from 8 AM to noon. Other management areas are subject to similar restrictions, although some are more liberalized. Within the management areas, commercial shellfishermen are subject to a 3 bushel/day limit. Outside of the management areas, shellfishing is generally permitted all day, every day, with a 12 bushel/day limit.

The management areas are generally very productive areas that also happen to be fairly sheltered. As such, they afford commercial shellfishermen excellent opportunities to harvest during the winter months, when weather conditions are often poor. The purpose of the limited schedules is to allow for a relatively sustainable harvest throughout the winter months. The upshot, however, is that large numbers of commercial fishermen target the management areas during the winter months, resulting in effort and production surges. Many “part-time” harvesters then drop out of the fishery. Another surge occurs during the summer, outside of the management areas, as part-time fishermen who prefer fishing during the summer enter the fishery. As a result, many clams are landed at relatively low prices during the winter, and summer landings are unable to keep pace with the higher demand.

Layered on top of the above-described scenario is the issue of water-quality closures. Upper Narragansett Bay, as well as Greenwich Bay, are routinely closed to shellfishing, generally for a week to ten days, following major rainfall events. Such closures add more variability and unpredictability to the already highly variable scenario governing shellfish production.

The Subcommittee considered several suggestions for achieving more consistent and stable supplies of shellfish to the market, including:

- Adopting a new, year-round harvest schedule for highly productive areas like Greenwich Bay, such as one day/week, for a few hours each day, and
- Increasing the number of year-round commercial shellfishermen.
- Establishing wet storage facilities, perhaps in conjunction with “privatized” shellfish transplant activities, that would enable harvested product to be held and then metered into the market over time.

Neither of the first two suggestions was offered with the sense that it would be well-supported by industry, and both have downsides and challenges. Regarding the year-round proposal for Greenwich Bay, many shellfishermen feel strongly about the need to protect their access to Greenwich Bay in the winter; and that access could be compromised if the area were kept open throughout the year. What's more, from a resource management perspective, there may not be enough biomass in Greenwich Bay to sustain a year-round fishery. Regarding the proposal to increase the number of fishermen, by opening up more commercial shellfishing licenses, the key would be to provide such opportunities to full-time, year-round fishermen. However, there is currently no mechanism available to do that. DEM does issue about 25 new commercial quahog licenses every year, but many of them are obtained by part-time fishermen who focus much or all of their effort in the management areas. In essence, that trend merely exacerbates the existing boom-and-bust production cycle. To address the supply issue effectively, a new mechanism would need to be developed that would enable a significant number of new commercial shellfish licenses to become available, with the caveat that the recipients would need to be obligated to utilize them throughout the year. Building a stronger base of full-time harvesters would contribute to a more steady supply of product to the market, assuming, of course, that the supply is biologically sustainable.

The wet-storage/privatized transplant issue was not subject to further review or analysis.

***Recommendation:***

Explore opportunities to achieve a more steady flow of shellfish product to the market, including but not limited to expanded (year-round) harvest schedules for the most productive management areas, and increasing the number of full-time commercial shellfishermen.

**Guiding and facilitating new opportunities for prospective seafood dealers**

For those looking to engage in the business of seafood marketing, the regulatory and permitting process is multi-faceted, involves two separate state agencies, and is not as user-friendly as it could be. First, one needs to register as a business with the Secretary of State's Office (and or the Department of Business Regulation?). One then needs to navigate through both the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) dealer license process, which authorizes the business to legally buy seafood products from commercial fishermen and growers, and the Rhode Island Department of Health (DOH) dealer license process, which authorizes the business to legally sell seafood products. The DOH licenses fall into two categories: a Food Distributor's license, which is needed in order to sell to wholesale or retail markets; and a Peddler's license, which is needed to sell directly to the consumer, e.g., via farmer's markets or roadside stands. Once licensed, dealers need to comply with all applicable DEM and DOH dealer regulations.

At the Subcommittee meeting, it was suggested that a one-stop shopping approach, perhaps coordinated through the Secretary of State's Office, which offered prospective seafood businesses the ability to access all relevant licensing and regulatory information through a single point of contact, or web portal, would be enormously helpful. While the DEM and DOH representatives on the Subcommittee acknowledged that such an idea had considerable merit, it

was pointed out that not all business plans are the same, and that it would probably better serve a prospective license applicant to meet individually with DEM and DOH staff so that individual operating plans could be reviewed and tailored so as to both meet the state licensing and regulatory standards and meet the specific business interests of the applicant.

The Subcommittee suggested that it would be useful to develop a couple of case studies, based on the following examples: If a licensed commercial finfisherman, or a licensed commercial shellfisherman, wanted to engage in a new business venture whereby they would both harvest their product and sell it directly to the public, what licensing and regulatory process would they each need to follow to enable that to happen?

Lastly, it was noted that the DEM regulations pertaining to dealers are not consolidated; rather, they are interspersed within several sets of fishery-specific regulations, making them difficult to access and comply with.

### *Recommendations*

- Pursue the establishment of a single point of contact, or web portal, providing all relevant information and guidance, including all DEM and DOH licensing and regulatory requirements, that relate to starting a new business involving seafood sales.
- As part of the above-described guidance process, develop and make available a case study showing how a fisherman who wanted to engage in direct sales to the public could become legally authorized to do so.
- Consolidate all DEM regulations pertaining to dealers in one set of rules.

### **III. Building Local Market Connections: Subcommittee Report**

#### **Subcommittee Members:**

Sarah Schumann, Rhode Island Rural Development Council  
Greg Silkes, American Mussel Harvesters  
Kelly Mahoney, R.I. Department of Administration  
Derek Wagner, Nick's on Broadway  
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Hannah Mellion, Farm Fresh RI  
Rep. Teresa Tanzi, Rhode Island House of Representatives  
Steve Arnold, Wild Rhody

#### **Introduction**

The mission of the “Building Local Market Connections” Subcommittee of the Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative is to identify and facilitate opportunities to establish agreements between local fishermen and seafood dealers for potential seafood marketplace expansion, and to explore potential regulatory, legal, and business aspects related to this type of agreement. These tasks were laid out in the legislation entitled “An Act Relating to Fish and Wildlife – the Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative of 2011” (Rhode Island General Laws § 20-38-1). In addition, the subcommittee was tasked by the Collaborative with exploring the benefits and feasibility of a central seafood market, an idea suggested at the initial Seafood Marketing Collaborative meeting.

Participation in the Building Local Market Connections Subcommittee was open to all interested parties. Subcommittee members met on February 16, 2012 and March 2, 2012. Participants included Sarah Schumann (leader), Gerard Bertrand, Greg Silkes, Nick Obolensky, Hirotsugu Uchida, and Steve Arnold. In addition, a separate meeting was held between Sarah Schumann and Hannah Mellion on February 29, 2012 because it was felt that it was important to draw on Farm Fresh R.I.'s expertise in local markets and scheduling conflicts prevented their attendance at meetings.

Members of the Subcommittee affirmed the general feeling among Collaborative members that there is untapped opportunity in Rhode Island to both create demand for local seafood and to establish connections between fishermen, suppliers, and end users to meet that demand. The Subcommittee has developed the following recommendations to better align the objectives of local seafood producers with those of local consumers seeking high quality local seafood products.

The Subcommittee's recommendations fall into five categories: community-supported fishery programs (CSFs); participation of seafood purveyors in local farmers' markets; state agency purchasing programs; local seafood sales through restaurants and retailers; and a central seafood market. Each category represents an innovative market mechanism for facilitating closer relationships between seafood producers and consumers in Rhode Island. The subcommittee

evaluated the present status of each of these market channels, identified benefits and challenges facing current participants in each market channel, and discussed future opportunities and obstacles to success for each market channel.

### **Community-Supported Fishery (CSFs) Programs**

Community-supported fishery programs (CSFs) have been defined in the following way:

*“Based on the community-supported agriculture (CSA) model, a community supported fishery (CSF) is a program that links fishermen to a local market. In a CSF, customers pre-pay for a “season” of fresh, local, low-impact seafood, and in turn they receive a weekly or bi-weekly share of fish or shellfish (Local Catch 2012).”*

This definition is somewhat vague with respect to the means of implementing such a system. Unlike a traditional CSA, wherein consumers invest in the operation of a particular farm at the beginning of the season and receive a return on their investment in the form of shares of that farm’s products, some CSFs do not involve a direct relationship between harvesters and consumers. At least two CSF programs have been established in Rhode Island in the last two years, and both are of this latter type. In the model presently used in Rhode Island, consumers subscribe to a weekly delivery of seafood through a wholesaler/distributor. One of the CSF operators in Rhode Island is a for-profit business, and the other is a non-profit.

CSFs used in other states take a variety of forms. As the nation-wide CSF support organization Local Catch states, “No two CSFs are alike. Some involve a group of fishers, others involve only one or two. Some CSFs offer whole fish, others provide fillets. CSFs, like CSAs, vary widely in terms of structure, cost, and emphasis on community capacity building, environmental stewardship, economic equity, and other broad level goals (Local Catch 2012).” At one end of the spectrum, CSFs can represent true direct marketing, where fishermen sell straight to the consumer without the involvement of a middleman. Regulations in Rhode Island prohibit this style of direct marketing, except in the case of dockside sales of lobster. Thus, CSFs in Rhode Island are currently provided by licensed seafood distributors.

As a result of health regulations, any CSF established in Rhode Island requires the involvement of an intermediary. While at present, existing CSFs are initiated and managed by wholesalers, an alternative format would involve an individual fisher or group of fishers coordinating with a licensed wholesaler to provide the licensing and processing of the product, while the fisher(s) undertake the sales, delivery, and accounting for the CSF on their own. A precedent for this type of arrangement exists in the Rhode Island Raised Livestock Association’s partnership with an in-state processor to enable livestock growers to sell their meat at farmers markets and other venues, including CSFs (RIRLA 2012).

The potential benefits of CSFs to fishers and consumers are diverse. In general, CSFs have the advantage of providing up-front investments at the start of the season and have the added social benefit of connecting producers and consumers on a personal level. Moreover, pre-selling a varied share of catch may enable purveyors and fishermen to open new markets for less familiar

species, including species otherwise treated as market by catch, and to have control over the timing of their harvest. Lastly, direct sales are thought to keep jobs and money in-state.

However, there are currently several barriers that may stand in the way of achieving these results. Regulatory barriers to CSFs include the impossibility of fishermen selling their catch directly to consumers without the collaboration of a licensed wholesaler intermediary. Market barriers include a limited familiarity among consumers with the preparation and flavors of many of the species available in abundance to Rhode Island fishermen. High transactional costs for creating for creating cooperation among multiple fishing boats in order to provide the public with a suitable variety of seafood products, and to create agreements between fishermen and wholesalers that would enable fishermen to market their catch directly to consumers while complying with existing regulations. Another potential weakness appears to be a perceived threat among wholesalers that direct sales by fishermen could undercut their business.

Many members of the Subcommittee feel that there is potential in expanding CSFs in Rhode Island. Rhode Island could expand CSFs in Rhode Island by enabling fishermen to sell their catch direct to the public in safe and transparent ways. This would require a reworking of health regulations which currently prohibit sales of fish to the public by parties other than licensed wholesalers. Alternatively, the Seafood Marketing Collaborative could facilitate agreements between fishermen and wholesalers wherein fishers could pay a fee to processors to process, store, and submit paperwork on fishers' catch before returning it to fishers for direct sale. Fishermen could also form cooperatives to establish their own wholesale operations for marketing their catch directly to the public.

### ***Recommendations***

- Survey fishermen and wholesalers to identify parties potentially interested in collaborating to sell seafood to consumers through a CSF arrangement.
- Write a model contract to illustrate the potential roles, responsibilities, and compensation between fishers and wholesalers planning to enter into an agreement to enable fishers to make seafood available to consumers through a CSF arrangement. This model contract would be included in the Seafood Marketing Collaborative website section called Industry Resources.
- Coordinate with the Regulatory Subcommittee to explore ways to facilitate direct sales of seafood by harvesters to the public.

### **Farmers' Markets**

The Farmers Market Coalition defines farmers markets in the following way:

*“A farmers market is a public and recurring assembly of farmers or their representatives, selling directly to consumers, food which they have produced themselves. More specifically, a farmers market operates multiple times per year and is organized for the purpose of facilitating personal connections that create mutual benefits for local farmers, shoppers, and communities. To fulfill that objective a farmers market defines the term local, regularly communicates that definition to the public, and implement*

*rules/guidelines of operation that ensure that the farmers market consists principally of farms selling directly to the public products that the farms have produced. Some states have even established their own formal definitions which specify market characteristics in more detail (Farmers Market Coalition 2012).”*

In Rhode Island there are currently 45 farmers markets (Farm Fresh RI 2012a). Some of them currently offer seafood, both wild-caught and farm-raised.

The benefits that farmers markets offer to fisheries are assumed to be similar to the benefits that farmers’ markets offer to farmers. These include: farmers/fishers receiving a higher margin for their product due to removal of a middleman; establishment of a direct social relationship between farmers/fishers and consumers; increased knowledge among consumers about “where food comes from”; and a better guarantee that money spent earned in the state is spent in the state. In addition, farm market vendors may be able to receive a higher price from customers due to the perceived allure of shopping at farmers markets instead of the grocery store.

However, there are currently several impediments to fishers selling direct to consumers at farmers markets. Many barriers appear to be regulatory. The Building Local Market Connections Subcommittee does not possess the expertise required to expound on the regulatory hurdles to participation of fishers in farmers markets, but Subcommittee members have the impression that these hurdles are significant. Members have differing understandings of state rules on refrigeration, disposal or reuse of unsold product, and other aspects of selling seafood at farmers markets. In addition, Subcommittee members have received the impression that rules for farmed seafood product are significantly less stringent than rules for wild-caught seafood product, even when such rules concern the same species harvested from the same area. The Subcommittee feels that the Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative should work with the Department of Health to help establish clear rules and guidelines governing farmers’ market sales of seafood as a first step towards understanding the potential role that farmers markets could play in promoting local seafood.

A second set of constraints on participation in farmers’ markets is related to the internal rules of farmers markets. These rules vary from market to market. Farmers markets in Rhode Island are managed by a number of different entities: Farm Fresh RI, DEM, municipalities, land trusts, growers marketing associations, and private entities. At some markets, there are rules favoring established participants which make it difficult for new entrants to gain access to the market. Subcommittee members feel that this is a partial explanation for the upward trend in the number of farmers markets in Rhode Island in recent years, since there is an incentive for vendors excluded from existing markets to establish new markets at which they can sell their products. A downside to this upward trend, in the eyes of some vendors, is that the proliferation of farmers markets dilutes market demand geographically and forces vendors to participate in several markets in order to access the same customers that would be aggregated into fewer markets if fewer markets existed.

### ***Recommendations***

- Work with the DOH to help establish clear rules and guidelines for sale of seafood (both farmed and wild-caught) at local farmers markets.
- Work with farmer market organizers to establish transparent and consistent rules on allowing participation of new vendors at farmers markets, and on allowing vendors to sell products already sold at the markets.

## **State Purchasing**

The state of Rhode Island represents one of the largest markets for food in the state. Other large markets include schools, universities, hospitals, and military centers. The advantage to cultivating local sales of seafood to large buyers is that these markets represent an outlet for large volumes of seafood. While many of the smaller market channels (e.g., farm markets, CSFs) take advantage of the ability of local food systems to deliver a higher quality food product to customers, there is also an advantage to local food systems having an outlet for large volumes, especially in the case of very abundant but low-value seafood products such as scup, skate, or bluefish. State purchase of local seafood also provides indirect benefits to the public, such as keeping tax dollars in the state and providing enhanced food security by decreasing dependence on imports.

However, the barriers to state agencies purchasing local seafood appear to be substantial. A recent study commissioned by the Rhode Island Food Policy Council has this to say about state procurement policies and local foods:

*Since the 1990s, Rhode Island has had a local procurement policy in place that gives public agencies flexibility in procurement of Rhode Island products in what is otherwise a rigid state contracting system. Only recently have state agencies, including DEM Division of Agriculture and the Department of Administration, partnered to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the procurement policy. (Karp Resources 2011: 27).*

As this quote suggests, state agencies have been slow to take advantage of this procurement policy. According to one Subcommittee member, state agencies are blocked from buying local foodstuffs, including seafood, by stringent food safety requirements.

### ***Recommendation:***

Work with state agencies to discuss opportunities and barriers in the state purchasing of local seafood.

## **Expansion of Sales to Restaurants and Retailers**

Currently, the restaurant and retail industries in Rhode Island provide both local and out-of-state seafood in varying proportions. Anecdotal evidences suggest that larger supermarkets tend to sell exclusively out-of-state seafood while some smaller markets may be selling some local seafood. Subcommittee members are familiar with various small restaurants who demonstrate a strong commitment to sourcing seafood locally. Chain restaurants, in contrast, are probably not

sourcing locally. Based on this evidence, the subcommittee feels that the greatest opportunity for connecting local seafood harvesters and purveyors with the restaurant and retail trades involves targeting small establishments. This category includes independent restaurants and cafes, corner stores, independent grocery stores, and caterers.

One avenue for expansion of local seafood sales to restaurants and retailers is Farm Fresh RI's Market Mobile. Farm Fresh RI explains the rationale behind its Market Mobile program in the following way:

Inspired by the seasons, fresh flavors and face-to-face relationships with producers, many chefs prefer to purchase locally. However, many lament the fact that getting local food isn't always easy. Chefs cannot spend a lot of time away from the kitchen driving directly to the farms to pick up various orders. Farmers would love to sell to more restaurants, groceries and schools, but do not always have the time and labor available to make deliveries. That's why in 2009 Farm Fresh piloted a new program called Market Mobile, to facilitate buying relationships between Rhode Island producers and business buyers and institutions (Farm Fresh RI 2012b).

Market Mobile combines an online ordering platform with a centralized warehouse and distribution system. Farm Fresh charges a percentage-based fee on all Market Mobile transactions to cover the costs associated with website maintenance and delivery.

Farm Fresh RI is not permitted by the Department of Health to handle seafood. However, in 2011, Farm Fresh partnered with The Local Catch Inc., a business based in Pt. Judith, to offer local seafood to participating Market Mobile restaurant and retail customers. The partnership relied on the online ordering platform of Market Mobile, while warehouse and distribution phases were carried out independently by The Local Catch Inc. According to Farm Fresh RI, this pilot program met with mixed results and it is unclear whether there is interest on the part of chefs in purchasing local seafood online.

### ***Recommendations***

- Conduct a survey of local restaurants and retail markets to gauge interest in purchasing more local seafood and perceived barriers to purchasing more local seafood.
- Conduct a survey of local seafood purveyors to gauge interest in selling more local seafood to local restaurants and retail markets, and perceived barriers to selling more local seafood through these channels.

### **Central Seafood Market**

Establishing a central seafood market in Rhode Island modeled after the New Fulton Fish Market in New York City (wholesale) or the Pike Place Market in Seattle (retail) would be a new and innovative step in promoting sales of local seafood. To the knowledge of the Subcommittee, no efforts have ever been made to establish such a market, but anecdotal evidence suggests that there is some demand for one. One advantage of a central seafood market is that it could consolidate local seafood sales into one place, leading to predictable availability of seafood.

Moreover, a central market would have a permanence not found in farmers markets, possibly enabling vendors to establish a more regular and more varied customer base. Subcommittee members felt that the optimal location for such a market would be near the waterfront and/or near a walk-able population center such as Providence, or in tourist area.

The Subcommittee also discussed the possibility of creating a permanent central seafood market that would possess all the necessary licenses for fishermen to bring their catch directly to market and process it at the market, under an umbrella license and insurance package possessed by the market itself. The cost of managing the market and paying for processing facilities and insurance would be included in the vendor fee paid by fishermen to take part. Since the market would be designed to serve the public, it would be open to participation by all commercial fishermen, and fishermen could rent vendor space by the day or hour; rates could vary according to hourly/daily/seasonal customer traffic expectations.

### ***Recommendations***

- Explore demand for and feasibility of a central seafood market in Rhode Island.
- Consider examples of central seafood markets in other states.

### **Conclusions**

The Building Local Market Connections Subcommittee feels that there is untapped potential to promote marketing of local seafood in Rhode Island. This potential includes direct sales as well as intermediated sales involving wholesalers and processors. The Subcommittee has evaluated a number of obstacles standing in the way of this potential, and feels that at present, such obstacles are primarily regulatory and informational. In response to regulatory obstacles, the Subcommittee recommends working with the Department of Health, DEM, and other relevant entities to identify regulatory uncertainties and constraints affecting sales of local seafood in Rhode Island. In response to informational obstacles, the Subcommittee recommends undertaking feasibility studies, including the use of consumer and producer surveys, to better understand needs, opportunities, and barriers affecting sales of local seafood in Rhode Island.

The following is a summary of the recommendations presented in this report:

- Survey fishermen and wholesalers to identify parties potentially interested in collaborating to sell seafood to consumers through a CSF arrangement.
- Write a model contract to illustrate the potential roles, responsibilities, and compensation between fishers and wholesalers planning to enter into an agreement to enable fishers to make seafood available to consumers through a CSF arrangement. This model contract would be included in the Seafood Marketing Collaborative website section called Industry Resources.
- Coordinate with the Regulatory Subcommittee to explore ways to facilitate direct sales of seafood by harvesters to the public.
- Work with the Department of Health to help establish clear rules and guidelines for sale of seafood (both farmed and wild-caught) at local farmers markets.

- Work with farmer market organizers to establish transparent and consistent rules on allowing participation of new vendors at farmers markets, and on allowing vendors to sell products already sold at the markets.
- Work with state agencies to discuss opportunities and barriers in the state purchasing of local seafood.
- Conduct a survey of local restaurants and retail markets to gauge interest in purchasing more local seafood and perceived barriers to purchasing more local seafood.
- Conduct a survey of local seafood purveyors to gauge interest in selling more local seafood to local restaurants and retail markets, and perceived barriers to selling more local seafood through these channels.
- Explore demand for and feasibility of a central seafood market in Rhode Island.
- Consider examples of central seafood markets in other states.

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#### **IV. Branding and Certification Subcommittee Report**

##### **Subcommittee Members**

**Steve Arnold**, F/V Elizabeth Helen; Wild Rhody Seafood

**Bob Ballou**, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

**Gerry Bertrand**, Rhode Island Rural Development Council

**Ryan Clarke**, Town Dock

**Ann Cook**, The Local Catch

**Ross Pearsall**, Ocean State Fresh

**Bob Rheault**, Moonstone Oysters; East Coast Shellfish Growers Association

**Bill Silkes**, American Mussel Harvesters

##### **Introduction**

The issue of branding and/or certification was highlighted at the first joint meeting of the Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative and Advisory Council held on October 14, 2011, and was a central focus of discussion at the second meeting, held on December 8, 2012.

Accordingly, a Branding/Certification Subcommittee was formed and tasked with:

- Exploring the pros and cons of a label (branding) or seal (certification) program for use in Rhode Island that would convey to the consumer that a product is local, healthy, fresh, sustainable, or some combination thereof;
- Determining the logistics of applying this label/seal; and
- Defining specific protocols for accountability/traceability.

The Subcommittee met briefly and informally on February 2, 2012 as an immediate follow-up to the Rhode Island Seafood Collaborative/Council meeting held that day. The Subcommittee held one other meeting, attended by all of the subcommittee members, on March 8, 2012. This report reflects the consensus views and opinions reached at that meeting, supplemented by supporting information drawn from relevant resources.

##### **Statutory References/Guidance**

As a first step, the Subcommittee reviewed the Collaborative's enabling statute (Rhode IslandGL Chapter 20-38) to see what guidance or parameters it offers with respect to the branding/certification issue.

While the statute does not set forth any provisions pertaining directly to branding or certification, definitions are provided for two relevant terms.

The first is "*locally landed*," which is defined as "*legally produced species of fish or aquaculture caught by a vessel landing and licensed to fish in the State of Rhode Island.*" The phrase *locally landed* does not appear elsewhere in the statute, so its application is unclear. That said, it stands to reason that the definition signals legislative intent to characterize the nature of *local* seafood products. For the following reasons, the Subcommittee finds the definition to be problematic.

First, the term should apply to any locally harvested or grown products – not just “fish.” Second the term should apply to any such products that are harvested from, or brought into, Rhode Island waters by any properly licensed commercial entity – not just a “vessel.” Most, but not all, seafood products are indeed landed by vessels, but some commercial shellfishermen in Rhode Island dig from shore. Third, not every commercial vessel that lands in Rhode Island is “licensed to fish in Rhode Island” – some are federally permitted, fish outside of Rhode Island state waters, and land at Rhode Island ports via a Rhode Island landing permit. What’s more, as noted later in this report, limiting *local* to just Rhode Island may be too limiting.

Based on the above, the Subcommittee recommends revisiting and clarifying the definition of “locally landed,” as set forth in the statute. On that basis, the Subcommittee engaged in a review and analysis of the branding/certification issue drawing upon what it felt the legislative intent was, or should have been, with regard to promoting *local* seafood products.

The second definition in the statute that captured the Subcommittee’s attention is “*sustainable food system*,” which is defined as “[a system] in which resources (including natural resources such as soil or water, as well as human resources such as labor) are used at or below their rate of recovery.” While “sustainability” is a core element of the seafood branding/certification issue, it is a very complicated and somewhat controversial element that requires extensive analysis and, in the opinion of the Subcommittee, falls outside the scope of the current phase of work being pursued by the Collaborative. This report briefly frames the issue of sustainability, but ultimately defers on it. That said, the definition of sustainable food system, as set forth in the statute, seems awkward and potentially inappropriate as applied to Rhode Island’s marine fisheries. What’s more, the phrase does not appear elsewhere in the statute, so its application is unclear.

Based on the above, the Subcommittee recommends revisiting and clarifying the definition of “sustainable food system,” as set forth in the statute. On that basis, the Subcommittee engaged in a review and analysis of the branding/certification issue based on what it felt the legislative intent was, or should have been, with regard to promoting the marketing and sustainability of Rhode Island seafood products.

## **Background**

In pursuing a local seafood brand, the Collaborative can draw on experiences from other times and places for background. Some of the best-known branding campaigns are the global sustainability certifications, like the Marine Stewardship Council’s blue checkmark logo. Here in Rhode Island, the Collaborative can look to the past efforts of what might be considered its predecessor, the Rhode Island Seafood Council. Among other things, the Seafood Council can be credited with creating a name for Pt. Judith calamari.

The R.I. Seafood Council was formed in 1976 with a federal grant secured by retiring Senator John Pastore. Ken Coons became executive director in 1977 and the council secured an annual appropriation of up to \$100,000 for several years thereafter from the General Assembly. Ralph Boragine took over as Executive Director and remained in this post until the Council was disbanded in 2003.

The Council actively promoted local species that were then underutilized, including squid, and unified the industry behind seafood marketing. There was a multi-year active sampling and promotion program to introduce consumers to squid/calamari. Subsequently squid has become one of the most important species landed in R.I. and Point Judith squid has become an iconic product recognized around the world. The Council utilized a TV "Spokesfish" who urged consumers to "Eat fish and seafood twice a week."

In terms of branding efforts from other places, there is a wealth of information pertaining to the issue of fishery and seafood certification and labeling, much of which is available on the University of Rhode Island's (URI's) Sustainable Seafood Initiative website via a Resources Database. See: [http://seagrant.gso.uri.edu/sustainable\\_seafood/index.html](http://seagrant.gso.uri.edu/sustainable_seafood/index.html).

The website features links to nearly 200 peer-reviewed journal articles, government publications, reports by environmental organizations, and other pertinent reports addressing fisheries and aquaculture certification, consumer preferences for eco-labeled seafood, international trade implications, and other related issues.

There are several well-recognized fishery and seafood certification programs, including:

- The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification program;
- The Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch program; and
- The UN Food & Agricultural Organization's (FAO's) Fish and Fishery Products Eco-labeling program.

There are also several nascent regional programs, including:

- The Gulf of Maine Research Institute's Gulf of Maine Responsibly Harvested Seafood Branding Program; and
- The Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission's Gulf Seafood Trace Program.

Finally, a number of states, including Massachusetts, are examining ways to better promote local seafood via branding programs, modeled after the way Maine markets lobsters and Alaska promotes salmon.

## **Taking the Initiative in Rhode Island**

### ***Certification vs. Branding***

It is clear that a thorough analysis of the issues associated with certification, and more broadly with the "sustainable seafood movement," vis-à-vis its applicability to the Rhode Island commercial fishing and aquaculture industry, is well beyond the scope of the Subcommittee, and by extension, the Collaborative, given time and resource limitations. What's more, Dr. Jeremy Collie of URI's Graduate School of Oceanography, is engaged in an ongoing research project, funded by Rhode Island Sea Grant, titled "*Evaluating the benefits of fisheries certification: implications for Rhode Island fisheries.*"

Accordingly, the Subcommittee recommends that it would be best for the Collaborative to focus initially on a Rhode Island *seafood branding* initiative, and defer, at least for the time being, and pending the outcome of Dr. Collie's research, on the much larger and complex issue of *seafood/fishery certification*.

### ***Need for, and Benefits of, Branding***

Drawing from the minutes of the December 8, 2011 Collaborative/Council meeting, and the March 8 meeting of the Subcommittee, the Subcommittee offers the following findings:

- Rhode Island is a champion in the field of seafood production. The State's proximity to abundant and diverse marine fishery resources supports a vibrant seafood industry comprised of fishermen, farmers, dealers, and processors who supply large amounts of high-quality seafood products to Rhode Islanders, and to seafood consumers throughout the U.S., as well as in Canada and Europe.
- Despite the distinguished nature of Rhode Island seafood products, they generally flow into wholesale and retail markets without an established Rhode Island identity; as a result, they are often co-mingled with, and overshadowed by, products harvested from outside of Rhode Island, including an ever-increasing amount of branded products from other states.
- The lack of an established Rhode Island identity means that Rhode Island dealers are often unable to optimize the value of the products they sell, which means that they are unable to pay fishermen and farmers the full value of the resources they harvest.
- Consumers are also affected. Much of the seafood sold at retail markets and restaurants in Rhode Island is unidentified with regard to origin and/or imported. Thus, Rhode Islanders often don't know where their seafood comes from; and indeed, it might come from anywhere. And those wanting Rhode Island seafood often can't find it.
- A Rhode Island brand is therefore needed to identify seafood products that come from Rhode Island.
- Establishing a brand will elevate the status of Rhode Island seafood in the marketplace, yielding greater economic value for the industry, while also affording consumers the ability to readily obtain and enjoy Rhode Island seafood.

### ***Designing and Designating the Brand***

The brand will need to be developed in the form of a standardized stamp or seal. It will need to be professionally designed. The Subcommittee recommends use of the state insignia, coupled with a simple phrase like:

*Ocean State Seafood,*  
*Rhode Island Seafood*  
*Rhody Seafood,*  
*Rhode Island Fresh*  
*From the Ocean State*

The Collaborative will need to be mindful of business interests who may already be using a similar brand and/or phrase. The brand will need to be formally established and protected, perhaps by registering it as a trademark. Once formally established, it can be posted on the DEM website and made available for use by industry.

### ***Defining the Brand***

Recognizing the need to define the brand, the Subcommittee considered five principles typically linked, explicitly or implicitly, with seafood branding/certification programs:

- Local
- Fresh
- Healthy
- Traceable/Accountable
- Sustainable

### **Local**

The Subcommittee recognized that the term *local* relates to where seafood is harvested (grown or caught) and landed.

*Local* could mean seafood harvested from Rhode Island waters, from southern New England waters, or from anywhere off the Northeast or Mid-Atlantic coasts. The Subcommittee recommends the latter, since it best characterizes where Rhode Island fishermen and growers fish and harvest.

*Local* could just mean locally harvested seafood that is landed Rhode Island at a licensed Rhode Island dealer, or it could be extended to also include locally harvested seafood that is landed regionally, e.g., at neighboring ports, by a Rhode Island interest, and then transported to a licensed Rhode Island dealer for processing. The Subcommittee recommends the broader definition, since it best characterizes where Rhode Island dealers and processors obtain their products

The Subcommittee considered the phrase used to brand seafood products from North Carolina: “produced, packed, or processed in North Carolina.” The Subcommittee recommends a variation on this for defining the *local* aspect of the Rhode Island Seafood brand:

*Rhode Island harvested, grown, or produced.*

The Subcommittee offers this recommendation with the stipulations that (1) the brand can only be used by licensed Rhode Island dealers, operating in Rhode Island; and (2) that “produced” means “packed and/or processed in Rhode Island.” That latter distinction means that all Rhode Island landings will qualify for the brand, as well as seafood transported whole and unprocessed, from neighboring ports to Rhode Island dealers, for packing and/or processing.

The Collaborative may want to consider further clarifying, or limiting, the application of “Rhode Island produced,” e.g.,” landed or harvested in Massachusetts or Connecticut and transported

whole and unprocessed to a Rhode Island dealer on the same day,” or “landed or harvested in New England and transported whole and unprocessed to a Rhode Island dealer on the same day.”

On the one hand, the Subcommittee felt strongly that the brand should not be saddled with qualifications that would make it too unwieldy. On the other hand, the Subcommittee was mindful of the risk of diluting the significance and meaning of the brand if it were applied too liberally. Some examples of what the brand could/should apply to:

- It could/should apply to seafood that’s landed in New Bedford, MA by a Rhode Island vessel and then transported by a Rhode Island dealer to his/her place of business in Galilee for processing/packing/sale.
- It could/should apply to mussels grown in Maine and then boxed and sent to a Rhode Island dealer for sale.

*This issue requires further consideration.*

### **Fresh**

There is a common assumption that, with regard to seafood, *local* means *fresh*, or at least it should. The Subcommittee briefly reviewed the various ways in which *fresh* could be defined – e.g., when the product was harvested, whether or not it’s frozen, and how well it’s been preserved, from harvest through the point of sale – but decided against recommending any criteria or standards, since they are already, de facto, in effect. As a matter of standard business practice, dealers will not purchase seafood products from fishermen or growers that are not fresh. By the same token, dealers are unable to sell seafood products in the wholesale or retail markets that are not fresh. So, market forces alone are controlling. In addition, dealers are subject to the licensing and regulatory authority of the Rhode Island Department of Health, and are therefore subject to regulations aimed at ensuring food safety, e.g., temperature control and proper handling and storage. All Rhode Island dealers, per FDA requirements enforced by the Department of Health, are HACCP certified. As such, *freshness* would be properly inferred by the Rhode Island Seafood brand, and is reinforced, if not guaranteed, by market forces and food safety requirements.

### **Healthy**

There is a common assumption that seafood, particularly fresh, local seafood, is healthy. That seems true enough, given the food safety standards upheld by the Rhode Island Department of Health and applied to all licensed Rhode Island seafood dealers. Thus, generally, all seafood that passes properly through Rhode Island dealers licensed by the Rhode Island Department of Health can, and should, be deemed “healthy.”

The more challenging issues involve the application of *healthy* to shellfish (and finfish?) consumed raw, and to certain types of seafood products that are known to have high levels of mercury, PCBs, etc. There may or may not be value in seeking to nuance the Rhode Island Seafood brand such that it applies to all Rhode Island seafood, provided that health guidelines pertaining to how, or how much of, the seafood is consumed are followed.

The upshot is that the standard for *healthy* is already in place, as long as the seafood products are subject to all applicable food safety standards and regulations. For the purpose of this branding initiative, it seems safe to say that they are.

### **Traceable/Accountable**

In its efforts to address the broad and challenging issue of *sustainability*, the Subcommittee discussed the importance and relevance of *accountability* and *traceability* as proxies for sustainability.

The term *accountability* speaks to the integrity of the fishery management programs governing the seafood products landed in Rhode Island and nearby ports, and the mechanisms that are in place to ensure that the products are properly and responsibly sourced. The Subcommittee recommended taking a relatively simple, but meaningful approach to the issue – namely, by calling upon DEM to develop and post a listing of all *local* marine fisheries that are managed pursuant to approved fishery management plans/programs, i.e., protected and conserved as sustainable natural resources. Part and parcel of that approach is that, per DEM regulatory requirements every commercial landing in Rhode Island must be recorded and submitted to DEM by dealers. Thus, in the opinion of the Subcommittee, the posting by DEM of a list of all managed fisheries in the region (including state-managed, ASMFC-managed, and/or federally managed), as well as the posting of a list of all licensed Rhode Island dealers, will provide for a system of accountability, enabling listed dealers to brand any/all products involving species from the listed fisheries, and enabling seafood buyers and consumers to know that the products are properly and responsibly sourced.

As a caveat to the above, any dealer found to be in violation of any state law or regulation would be de-listed for a given period of time, and not allowed to use the brand during that suspension period; and any dealer whose license is revoked would be permanently removed from the list. Any dealer who fails to renew their license would be delisted until such time as they renew.

The ability to *trace* a seafood product back to its origin – e.g., when and where harvested by a given vessel, or a given grower – is an added benefit that provides source-to-plate information for consumers, increasing their confidence, and interest, and in so doing, increasing the economic value of the products. In a sense, traceability already applies to most, if not all, shellfish products in Rhode Island, and to an increasing number of finfish products, such as those harvested under the Wild Rhody Seafood program. Elsewhere in the U.S., broader-scale programs are being launched, such as the newly established *Gulf Seafood Trace Program*, which is touted as “a full supply chain traceability and marketing program that confirms and communicates the validity of the seafood product and thereby increases confidence of its source throughout the market.”

The *Gulf Seafood Trace Program* is sponsored and coordinated by the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission and is authorized by the state marine resource management agencies of the five states bordering the Gulf: Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida. GCR Inc., a New Orleans consulting firm, is working with the Commission to provide marketing and

outreach management. The Commission is also working with Trace Register, a leader in seafood traceability software.

The program is voluntary and complimentary. It allows companies to import directly into Trace Register from the established electronic trip ticket system. Enrolled companies are offered Gulf Seafood Trace at no cost until the end of 2014 to empower them to tell the story of their seafood and ensure confidence in the market. The program includes the use of Bluefin Data's e-trip ticket traceability interface for data entry from the existing system directly into Trace Register; it includes the Trace Register electronic traceability platform which gives each business the ability to share approved information through the supply chain; and it includes the Trace Register marketing module that will likely enhance demand for the product through an innovative interface.

The program also incorporates a data quality and confirmation component offered by Trace Register and a consulting company named MRAG to confirm the validity of the information being shared by businesses. Information can be shared with buyers, consumers and other stakeholders for innovative marketing purposes, communicating safety and quality, conveying compliance with regulatory and buyer specifications, demonstrating certification, improving labeling, and providing sustainability resources. Businesses can use this technology to build specific quick reference (QR) codes into their packaging that consumers can scan at restaurants or in their kitchen to access a wealth of information instantaneously.

It would behoove the Collaborative to further explore the issue of *traceability*, given its value in lending further confidence and integrity to the Rhode Island Seafood brand. The protocols established by the Wild Rhody Seafood Program and the Gulf Seafood Trace Program should be considered as potential models.

## **Sustainable**

The term *sustainable* clearly means different things to different people and organizations. At its most basic level, it refers to fisheries that (1) are not subject to overfishing, (2) are not overfished, (3) are harvested or grown in an ecologically sound manner, and (4) are harvested in full compliance with applicable state and federal fisheries laws and regulations.

The MSC Certification process applies three principles for determining whether a fishery is *sustainable*:

- A fishery must be conducted in a manner that does not lead to over-fishing or depletion of the exploited populations and, for those populations that are depleted, the fishery must be conducted in a manner that demonstrably leads to their recovery.
- Fishing operations should allow for the maintenance of the structure, productivity, function and diversity of the ecosystem (including habitat and associated dependent and ecologically related species) on which the fishery depends.
- The fishery is subject to an effective management system that respects local, national and international laws and standards and incorporates institutional and operational frameworks that require use of the resource to be responsible and sustainable.

The MSC utilizes a host of criteria for determining whether the three principles have been met for a given fishery.

Under the federal Magnuson-Stevens Act, which governs all federally managed fisheries, overfishing is prohibited. Thus, at least to some extent, all federally managed fisheries can be deemed *sustainable*. Examples of federally managed fisheries that are particularly relevant to Rhode Island include: squid, butterfish, mackerel, summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, monkfish, sea scallops, and groundfish (including hake, cod, yellowtail flounder, and haddock). Lobsters, Rhode Island's most valuable fishery, and striped bass, are both managed under the ASMFC via an interstate fishery management plan. Whereas the striped bass resource is deemed healthy and not overfished, the southern New England lobster stock is experiencing low abundance and poor recruitment and is deemed overfished. Quahogs, soft-shell clams and other shellfish from Rhode Island state waters fall under Rhode Island's exclusive jurisdiction, i.e., DEM's exclusive management authority. The biological status of Rhode Island's quahog resource is generally healthy and stable. The overall status of soft-clams is more difficult to quantify.

Many of the harvest methods used to capture fish, crustaceans, and shellfish are known to have ecological impacts – e.g., damage to benthic habitats, by catch of non-targeted species, discard mortality – but the impacts are often difficult to characterize, quantify, and avoid.

For the purpose of phasing in a relatively simple, and meaningful branding program for Rhode Island Seafood, the very important, but complex and challenging issue of *sustainability* should, in the opinion of the Subcommittee, be side-lined, pending a more thorough analysis of the existing certification programs, to determine their applicability to Rhode Island seafood. The Subcommittee maintains that as long as a seafood product is locally and legally harvested, in accordance with a duly adopted state, regional, or federal fishery management plan that's aimed at preventing overfishing and maintaining stocks at optimal levels of abundance, and handled by a licensed Rhode Island dealer, it is reasonable and appropriate to brand the product with a State-sanctioned seal, establishing it as *Rhode Island harvested, grown, or produced*. All seafood landed in Rhode Island, or at nearby ports by Rhode Island interests, would meet this standard.

The Rhode Island Seafood brand can and should be available for use in conjunction with any applicable certifications that may apply. Thus, if a given product is MSC certified, that certification can, and should, be applied to the product in addition to the Rhode Island brand.

Products harvested from approved aquaculture lease sites, in accordance with operational plans and all other applicable laws and regulations, seem perfectly suited, per se, for branding.

### ***Recommendations***

- Rhode Island should establish a Rhode Island brand for its seafood products. The brand can, and should, be pursued as a complement to existing and future certification programs, which require further study and analysis regarding their potential application or adaptation to Rhode Island fisheries.

- The brand will need to be professionally designed and formally established and protected, perhaps by registering it as a trademark.
- The brand should involve use of the state insignia, along with a simple phrase, such as *Ocean State Seafood* or the like. Other potential phrases are offered in the report. The Collaborative will need to be mindful of business interests who may already be using a similar brand and/or phrase.
- The brand should have the following general meaning: “Rhode Island harvested, grown, or produced.”
- More specifically, the brand should mean: Seafood legally harvested from the marine waters of Rhode Island as well as offshore New England and Mid-Atlantic waters and either landed in Rhode Island at a licensed Rhode Island dealer, or landed at a nearby port, by a Rhode Island interest, and transported whole and unprocessed to a licensed Rhode Island dealer for processing and/or packing.
- The Collaborative may want to consider further clarifying, or limiting, the application of “Rhode Island produced,” e.g.,” landed or harvested in Massachusetts or Connecticut and transported whole and unprocessed to a Rhode Island dealer on the same day.”
- With regard to aquaculture products, the brand should mean: Seafood legally harvested from a Rhode Island farm and conveyed or sold to a licensed Rhode Island dealer.
- Given the above criteria, as well as the market forces and regulations governing licensed Rhode Island dealers, a Rhode Island Seafood brand can be reasonably inferred to mean *local, fresh, and healthy*.
- To provide for sufficient accountability, and with a view to ensuring that the seafood products receiving the Rhode Island Seafood stamp are properly and responsibly sourced, DEM should maintain and post a list of DEM- and DOH-licensed Rhode Island dealers, as well as a list of all managed fisheries in the region. The Rhode Island Seafood brand may only be applied to the list of managed species by the list of licensed dealers.
- Any dealer found to be in violation of any state or federal law will be removed from the list, for a given period of time, and be precluded from using the brand during the period of de-listing.
- Given the added benefits of traceability, the Collaborative should explore its broadened application in Rhode Island as an adjunct to branding initiative. The protocols established by the Wild Rhody Seafood Program and the Gulf Seafood Trace Program should be considered as potential models.
- Although not viewed as an obstacle, the definitions for “locally landed” and “sustainable food systems” as set forth in the Act establishing the Collaborative are in need of correction and clarification.

## **V. Promotion and Education Subcommittee Report**

### **Subcommittee Members**

**Katrina White**, Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation  
**Kathryn Farrington**, Newport & Bristol County Convention & Visitors Bureau  
**Lori Pivarnik**, University of Rhode Island  
**Janice McEachen**, American Mussel Harvesters  
**Mike McGiveney**, shellfisherman  
**Mike Walker**, Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation  
**Mark Fratiello**, Town Dock  
**Perry Raso**, Matunuck Oyster Farm  
**Derek Wagner**, Nick's on Broadway  
**Nick Obolensky**, Nobol Trading  
**Sarah Schumann**, Rhode Island Rural Development Council  
**Mercedes Lyson**, Brown University  
**Hannah Mellion**, Farm Fresh RI  
**John Schenck**, Edible Rhody  
**Genie Trevor**, Edible Rhody  
**Ross Pearsall**, Ocean State Fresh

The Education and Promotion Subcommittee met on February 13, 2012.

### **Rhode Island Seafood Collaborative Public Outreach/Education/Promotion Goals:**

- To make the public aware of the new efforts to keep seafood in Rhode Island (rather than going out of state for processing and sale)
- To provide a fresher product with higher quality
- To educate the public about Rhode Island caught and landed fish; how to prepare it at home, resulting in higher seafood sales, job retention and creation in the state.

In order to increase awareness of the seafood in Rhode Island, the committee would institute a campaign that would consist of the following action steps:

- The creation of a web site as a marketing tool, chock full of pertinent user friendly information for the consumer on; what species are caught/landed at what times throughout the year, nutritional information on the fish/shellfish, ways to prepare it, and locations to purchase. Would incorporate a series of "how to" videos on the cleaning of the seafood, and easy to prepare recipes for the consumer.
- A full blown media campaign, with a series of media releases on pertinent topics relating to seafood in R.I. (For example: a history of the program, upcoming cooking demonstrations, available seasonal seafood, any restaurant/chef special events etc.) Focus on local lifestyle publications, food editors and or including but not limited to; The Providence Journal, Rhode Island Monthly, The Rhode Show, Edible Rhode Island, regional monthly pubs such as Providence Monthly, SO Rhode Island, and electronic

media including social media outlets, bloggers, state and regional tourism web sites, and travel guides.

- Work with restaurants state wide to create seafood events, special dinners as well as promote locally caught/landed seafood on their menus and if possible, identify local fisheries. Incorporate the Rhode Island seafood element into all of the” Restaurant Weeks” celebrated throughout Rhode Island.
- Work with Farm Fresh Rhode Island and other farmer’s markets to create more opportunity for fresh seafood to be available and sold. Work with local grocery stores to host chef cooking demos featuring Rhode Island caught and landed fish.
- Work with Department of Human Services to communicate with SNAP recipients the nutritional benefits of fish and seafood, distribute printed information as it is available or direct recipients to web sites; also, work with retail fish and seafood markets to accept SNAP benefits via EBT cards.
- Develop printed materials for distribution at certain restaurants, farmers markets, grocery stores, retail seafood and fish outlets, cooking demos, WIC recipients etc., including information about species of fish available throughout the year and recipes.
- Work with Governor’s Office and State Tourism Office to incorporate efforts into state-wide “Beautiful Rhode Island” campaign.

**Tentative Budget Required to Implement Promotion and Education Activities**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Costs</b>	<b>Total costs</b>
Brochure w/ recipes, nutrition info	\$150 (Design and layout) \$1000 (Printing)	\$ 1,150
Cookbooks (to be sold at retail outlets, events and farmer's markets to cover cost and generate revenue stream eventually for the group)	\$15,000 (cost for 500 cookbooks, includes design, layout, copywriting and editing)	\$15,000
Media kits	\$500 (Design cost only. 10 hours @ \$50/hour. Media kit can be made to PDF and be downloaded and printed from website)	\$ 500
Cooking demos at grocery stores	\$200 per event (supplies and ingredients); 5 demos per year	\$ 1,000
Seafood events at local restaurants	\$200 per event (to cover publicity); 5 events per year	\$ 1,000
<b>Total costs for campaign</b>		<b>\$18,650</b>

## **Minutes from February 2, 2012 meeting:**

### Ideas:

- Work with local grocery stores (Whole Foods, Eastside Marketplace, Dave's, etc) to create a schedule of in-store cooking demos and tastings with local chefs preparing underutilized fish.
- Print a brochure/booklet listing underutilized species with recipes created by local chefs for distributions at grocery stores, fish markets and farmer's markets
- Market recipes and lists to families receiving WIC benefits stressing the value and nutrition of these species
- Tie in to Governor's "Beautiful Rhode Island" Campaign targeted to residents of Rhode Island

### Action steps:

- Obtain list of underutilized species
- Invite Chefs statewide to participate with providing recipes and donating time and talent at cooking demos
- Invite local grocery stores, seafood markets, Farm Fresh RI, and other farmer's markets to participate by providing space for demos
- Print recipes/list for public distribution
- Create a Seafood Month (July?) where chefs would feature underutilized species at their restaurants
- Identify means to market to WIC families
- Have regional tourism offices embrace the program and include in their marketing efforts, especially for restaurant promotions

### Challenges:

- Funding for printing/design
- Funding to purchase seafood/supplies for cooking demos (would the fishermen donate for the long term benefit of selling more fish?)
- Is there a way to market to WIC families?
- Someone will need to coordinate cooking demo schedule and work with sites to make sure everything is there and ready and Board of Health compliant (table, electricity, washing facilities, etc.)

## Minutes from February 13, 2012 meeting:

- After discussion, it was decided the goal of the committee would be to create demand for Rhode Island seafood within the marketplace.
- Need information regarding how much of allotments are being caught and sold so that programming can be shaped accordingly

- We are looking to raise sales figures and income of local fishermen, seafood markets, processors, etc
- We need a definition of what is “local”
- A web site was suggested with:
  - Glossary of terms to aid the consumer
  - Facts about seafood in healthy eating
  - Information for the consumer about what species are being harvested when
  - Who will maintain web site?
  - Need consumer demographics
  - Need access to local events to promote Rhode Island seafood
  - We need to get “buy in” from the local fishermen for this to be successful
  - Who is involved?:
    - Fishermen
    - Processors
    - Restaurants
    - Consumers
- Is there a way to get information to families receiving EBT benefits and how can we do that?
- Are fish markets set up to take EBT benefits, and is that something we should look at?
- Finally, how will the programs be financed?

After much discussion, it was decided that once the information required that is mentioned above is acquired, that the following could happen to assist with increasing sales:

- Programs could be created with local chefs to start a “buzz” about local seafood. This is already being done at some establishments, can be spread state-wide. Derek and Katrina could work on this.
- Survey the fishermen and processors to see where they can sell more seafood- what species can be sold more, etc. Laura and Sarah could work on this.
- Create an interactive harvest calendar for consumers. Sarah and Hannah could work on this.
- Create press releases and marketing opportunities within the media to highlight locally harvested/landed seafood. Work this into the Governor’s Beautiful Rhode Island campaign. Kathryn and Katrina can work on this.

## **VI Research Subcommittee Report**

### **Subcommittee Members**

**Sarah Smith**, Rhode Island Sea Grant

**Perry Raso**, Matunuck Oyster Farm

**Hirotsugu Uchida**, University of Rhode Island

**Mercedes Lyson**, Brown University

### **Introduction**

The tasks for Research Subcommittee were defined as:

- Review and identify existing studies, pilot program and initiatives of this state and other states regarding seafood-marketing practices;
- Identify data needs for describing the current status of the R.I. seafood supply chain and possible improvements;
- Evaluate expected economic benefits to producers and consumers of R.I. Seafood Marketing Collaborative activities.

The subcommittee met twice since its establishment: on February 2, 2012, immediately after the RISMC meeting; and on March 15, 2012, at East Matunuck (see Appendix A for minutes from the second meeting).

### **Review of Existing Studies**

There are wide range of studies conducted on demand for seafood and seafood markets. Here we will provide reviews of studies that are most relevant to RISMC.

#### ***Demand for ecolabeled seafood***

Since the establishment of Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) and its MSC ecolabel, many studies have tried to evaluate the demand for ecolabeled products by estimating the so-called “willingness to pay.” Central question was: will there be a price premium for ecolabeled products to benefit those who supply such products at a cost of being certified? Such studies were conducted in European markets (e.g., UK and Norway), US markets, and Japanese markets (e.g., Jaffry et al. 2004; Johnston et al. 2001; Johnston and Roheim 2006; Uchida et al. 2011). These studies found that positive premium for ecolabeled products over nonlabeled products exists but the magnitude varies across markets; premium can be as low as a few percent up to 20% or more. Some studies also found consumers need to be informed for them to respond to ecolabel. For example, in the study of Japanese consumers two studies found that the premium does not emerge unless consumers are not only informed of what is ecolabel but also why something like ecolabel is even needed—in another word, be informed of the current status of many fish stocks around the world. Studies also found that information must be perceived as “credible” and also capture the interest of consumers; information perceived as “exaggerated” resulted the worst. These results suggest that educating the consumers is important but doing so

with sensational fashion—such as “fish will be gone by 2048” rhetoric—could backfire. That said, the distinction between “interesting” and “exaggerated” is likely to differ among countries and cultures.

For US markets, earlier study by Wessells, Donath, and Johnston (1999) evaluated consumers’ potential acceptance of an ecolabeled seafood based on the telephone interviews to 1,640 seafood consumers across the country. Although preferences for ecolabeled fish varies by species, geographical region, consumer group, and certifying agency, it was found that the US consumers perceive value in ecolabeled seafood products. Those consumers who are conscious of environmental/sustainable issues are more likely to value labeled seafood products.

Will the consumers in Rhode Island accept and pay premium for MSC ecolabeled seafood? Ongoing research led by URI researcher, Dr. Jeremy Collie, and funded by Rhode Island Sea Grant is addressing this question. Specifically, it will examine the benefits of fisheries certification in both biological (e.g., improvement in stock status) and economical (price premium) outcomes.

### ***Demand for “local” seafood***

There are several studies assessing the consumer characteristics associated with the purchasing behavior of local food products. Studies by Eastwood et al. (1999) and Govindasamy et al. (1998), for example, found that consumers with higher education, have above-average income and enjoy cooking, and purchase organic food were more likely to buy local food products. Also, consumers who come from agricultural background have higher willingness to pay for locally produced food (Brown 2003).

A nation-wide study by Food Marketing Institute (2009) found that freshness, support for the local economy and knowing the source of product were major reasons for buying the local food products. Consumers likely to pay higher price for the local food products place higher importance on quality, the environment (Brown 2003), and nutrition (Loureiro and Hine 2002). For local restaurants, the important factors for buying locally grown foods were perceived superior quality, freshness, high demand, and supporting local business (Painter 2008).

A more recent study by Roheim et al. (2006) and Grimley and Roheim (2010) focused specifically on local seafood in Rhode Island. Both studies assessed consumers’ preferences for local seafood and found that better quality and freshness were important reasons for buying locally produced food regardless of the different categories of income group. Roheim et al. (2006) also found that Rhode Island residents preferred local food based on their perception for its lower environmental impacts and lower transportation-associated carbon footprint.

Both studies also attempted to elucidate the term “local” as perceived by Rhode Island residents. Roheim et al. (2006) found that the majority of Rhode Island seafood consumers did not included products from adjoining states, Connecticut and Massachusetts, as part of “local” definition. Furthermore, the study found that about half of southern Rhode Island consumers surveyed consider locally produced food as those only from southern Rhode Island. Grimley and Roheim (2011) study asked to select from among several statements about which best defines local

seafood, and found that “seafood caught within 30 miles of Rhode Island’s coast” was the most popular selection, followed by “seafood landed in Rhode Island ports.”

Grimely and Roheim (2011) study’s surveys were conducted at farmer’s markets. Consumers were asked which seafood products they were most likely to purchase at the farmers’ market; popular answers were scallops, lobster, haddock, cod, and flounder. Willingness to pay surveys found that consumers were likely to pay more for Rhode Island caught haddock and flounder, and many consumers stated a willingness to purchase whole (not filleted) fish. The survey also found that consumers buy local products because they feel them to be environmentally responsible, and that most consumers at farmers’ markets were shopping there because they preferred to buy local products. The study concluded that consumers are pre-disposed to purchasing seafood at farmers’ markets, and that seafood sales at farmers’ markets have the opportunity to expand.

### ***Demand among ethnic populations***

Population of ethnic groups—especially the Asians—are on the increasing trend in Rhode Island.<sup>1</sup> Constituting only 2.9% of Rhode Island population (based on 2010 Census), it is still considered as niche market. However, given its rapid growth and unique seafood consumption pattern, targeting this niche market could be a good place to start in promoting locally caught fish and underutilized species. Several studies exist looking at the characteristics of this niche markets in the US.

Myers et al. (2006) conducted consumer surveys in Asian ethnic fish markets in the Northeastern US. The five stores that sell more than 500 pounds of live fish per week were selected, including two markets in New York (Flushing and Staten Island), two markets in New Jersey (Edison and Franklin Park) and one market in Philadelphia. Information was collected from 50 consumers in each of the stores selected. The study found that consumers preferred freshness and quality (97% and 94%, respectively) to price and availability (79% and 65%, respectively). The live seafood section was viewed as the most important part of their business. Crab (mostly blue, stone, and Jonah or Dungeness), buffalo fish, lobsters, tilapia, and hybrid striped bass were the dominant species in most of the stores. Tilapia and hybrid striped bass were the best selling fish species in these Asian ethnic fish markets. About 50% of live seafood suppliers were from within the state, 44% from out-of-state, and 6% were imports. This and another study conducted in North Central Region of US found that the availability of the live fish/shellfish throughout the whole year was important for shoppers.

### ***Demand for aquaculture seafood***

To date, there are very few studies on consumers’ views of farmed seafood and their seafood purchase patterns. Public’s perception of aquaculture farming and farmed seafood is mixed at

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<sup>1</sup> According to the census, the Asian population in Rhode Island increased by 28.7% between 2000 and 2010, which was the highest rate of increase among all the ethnic groups, constituting 2.9% of Rhode Island population (Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, <http://www.dlt.ri.gov/lmi/census/demo/ethnic.htm>).

best, but often seen negatively due to perceived environmental impact and food safety issues. In fact, a study by Whitmarsh and Palmieri (2009) found that socially acceptability of aquaculture is tied to perceptions about its environmental impact.

Gorelick et al. (2011) conducted a survey research that evaluated Rhode Island consumers' views of farmed seafood, and factors which may influence their purchases of farmed seafood. They found that important attributes considered when purchasing seafood were freshness, type of species, and health and nutrition. However, when asked whether they prefer wild or farmed salmon the majority of respondents preferred to buy wild salmon, suggesting their preferences to wild caught fish species over farmed ones. The study also found that Rhode Island consumers prefer locally harvested seafood over seafood product harvested in other regions, thereby concluding that marketing campaign for Rhode Island farmed products should capitalize on this fact: that the purchase of farmed oysters, for example, support local aquaculturists who can provide the freshest of the products and have control over product attributes that protect the environment and product quality.

There are several ongoing or research proposals submitted on aquaculture seafood issues. For example, different groups of URI researchers, collaborating with industries and other stakeholders, have proposed research on (a) economic tradeoffs in oyster farming between disease-tolerant traits vs. fast/evenly growing traits; (b) consumer perceptions on farmed oyster vs. locally grown seafood; (c) impact of health benefit and risk information on consumers' willingness to pay for farmed seafood; and (d) the demand and supply impact of health-related disease outbreak in oyster farms and how each farm that had no outbreaks can shield itself from negative information spillover effect.<sup>2</sup>

### *Supply chain analysis*

Anecdotally we “know” that the majority of fish landed in Rhode Island do not stay in Rhode Island—or at least they leave the state at once to larger central wholesale markets and then come back. But an analysis describing how a landed fish in Rhode Island goes through the supply chain seems next to nonexistent.

The closest previous study on this topic we found is the report by Cornell University Extension Marine Program (Hasbrouk et al. 2011) that looked at the industry profile of Rhode Island commercial fishing and seafood industries. The report conducted its own research to identify and characterize the seafood processing establishments in Rhode Island, as available data from NMFS generated reports were found to be unreliable (Hasbrouk et al. 2011, 35–36). Since the processors are one of the first entry points for landed fish into the supply chain (along with the dealers), this information will be a useful starting point in tracking the fish along the supply chain.

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<sup>2</sup> (a) Sproul, Uchida, and Gomez-Chiarri submitted to USDA; (b) Smith, Concepcion (U of CT) submitted to NOAA; (c) Roheim (U of Idaho), Johnston (Clark U), and Uchida currently funded by USDA; and (d) Uchida and Sproul submitted to NOAA.

## **Data and Research Needs**

In this section we consider the data needs for describing the current status of the Rhode Island seafood supply chain and possible improvements.

### ***Supply chain***

As noted above, detailed information on the supply chain of fish—the flow and destinations of Rhode Island landed fish through the supply chain—is largely lacking. While tracking individual landed fish is nearly impossible (unless innovations such as Trace & Trust becomes a norm in the industry), it may be possible to trace them by the lot. This will require a dedicated and significant level of cooperation from the dealers, processors, and other seafood-related establishments and businesses in Rhode Island.

Detailed profiling of how Rhode Island landed fish goes through the supply chain is important because it will in return inform us the why question: why does most Rhode Island landed fish flows out of the state? Why some species stays within the state (if any)? Combining the answers to these questions with the in-state seafood demand analysis (see below) will provide insights in how Rhode Island seafood supply chain can be improved in conjunction with promoting in-state demand and consumption.

### ***Demand and supply analysis***

The largest “missing link” in the demand and supply analysis to date is perhaps the middlemen’s preferences and perceptions on the overall seafood marketing: there are ample studies on fishermen’s behavior responses to fishery regulations, and also for consumers’ preferences and perceptions. However, the portion of this industry that sits in the middle of the two end points (producers and consumers) is mysteriously absent from existing studies.

Whether it is feasible to propose a central seafood wholesale market, and should that be “real” or “virtual”, all hinges upon what the users of such institution—the middlemen—wants to enhance their business opportunity. Furthermore, the demand and preferences of dealers, processors, and wholesalers will be critical in informing (a) how the producers—fishermen—need to be operating (and whether the current management system is meeting that demand), and (b) what type of product flow can be expected downstream (and whether that matches what the consumers say they want).

On the demand analysis front, there are two lines of research that can be useful and informative to RISMC. One is to investigate what are the really useful, from consumers’ perspective, label to be on seafood products. Many studies have asked consumers what they look for most when purchasing seafood, and most of them found that quality and freshness rank at the top. Quality is difficult information to convey with a label, but freshness can be done by including the date when particular fish was caught (or landed) on a package label. However, such label might not be so useful since freshness (and quality) is something that can be visibly observed and examined. Other attributes such as food safety—e.g., mercury and PCB contamination, post-harvest treatment for parasites (e.g., fluke) and food borne bacteria (e.g., shellfish)—could be something consumers might value to be labeled. Investigating the demand and premiums for

such labels will inform what types of attributes the Rhode Island's seafood label should be representing.

Another is to investigate the potential demand for underutilized species. In doing so, it will be important to incorporate the effect of branding: there is anecdotal evidence that consumers responded differently for the same fish but under different name, or branding (e.g., scup vs. pan fish). Survey or experimental auction methods to consumers, and preferably including multiple ethnic groups in the sample, can be utilized to estimate such demand.

### ***Evaluating expected economic benefits to producers and consumers of RISMIC activities***

This is listed as the third task of this subcommittee, but it serves well as another research need for RISMIC.

Evaluating the benefits of a program such as RISMIC can come in two flavors: qualitative and quantitative. The former can be accomplished, for example, with consumer surveys that directly ask whether RISMIC promotions and campaign had any impact on their seafood consumption decisions (at retailers and restaurants).

Quantitative evaluation is more complex and difficult. Even trying to compare whether the perception of certain things (e.g., "local" seafood) changed before and after RISMIC, one needs to control for all other exogenous factors that could have influenced the perception. Furthermore, to do such analysis right we would need a control group—those who did not get exposed to RISMIC activities but are otherwise comparable to those who did. Identifying such control group could be challenging, especially when RISMIC aims to cast as wide a net as possible within the state.

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## **Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative – Research Subcommittee Meeting Minutes March 15, 2012 East Matunuck, Rhode Island**

**Attendees:** Sarah Smith, Hirotsugu Uchida, Perry Raso

- Discussion:
- Could we research the potential demand of Asian-Americans in Rhode Island / Southern New England for local seafood?
- Where do they purchase fish? - Is this a potential market for underutilized species?
- This is a tough group to reach - how would we change their buying practices?
- Harvesters/wholesalers may not want to target this market – may not be as profitable.
- What is the level of disposable income in this group?
- Fish are not necessarily kept cold enough at Asian markets.
- What is the impact of harvest quantities and seasons on marketing?
- Would it be possible to have a more steady supply of some species, or at least better consistency of seasons' supply?
- Not always possible to get local fish. - E.g. Cod is available locally in winter, but not in summer. Could we research how to decrease variability in harvest?
- Sectors should provide less variable supply.
- It would be easier to market local species if we knew how much there would be market consistency.
- Dealers were hoping consistency would come out of sectors.
- How do we maximize consistency?
- Research traceability – there should be some kind of teeth in the regulations for people who are mislabeling seafood.
- What about ways to market scup?
- Perry had more success marketing it as “pan fish.”
- Can we rename scup to something else?

## VII Funding Subcommittee Report

### Subcommittee Members

Gerry Bertrand, Rhode Island Rural Development Council  
Barry Costa Pierce, Rhode Island Sea Grant  
Kelly Mahoney, Rhode Island Department of Administration  
Steve Anderson, Rhode Island Party and Charter Boat Association  
Ken Ayars, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

The Funding Subcommittee met on March 20, 2012, at URI Sea Grant in Narragansett, Rhode Island.

The members of the RISMC subcommittee met about the currently financial funds/ grants of the RISMC, upcoming and pending grants, and potential avenues for new future funding.

It was noted that the opportunities for more funding of seafood marketing initiatives by USDA may be limited in the upcoming years.

The shape and organizational structure of the RISMC is still not fully developed, so our thought process revolved around how the RISMC program and its initiatives could move forward in the future.

First, review of current financials was done with all attendees:

Current funds available from Rhode Island Rural Development Council are:

▪ Remaining USDA-Rural Development RBEG - closing date is 6/30/12	\$ 7,306.96
▪ van Beuren Charitable Foundation – closing date is 12/31/13	<u>\$ 30,000.00</u>
<b>Current funds available:</b>	<b>\$ 37,306.96</b>

Pending and Pre-Application Grants are:

▪ USDA-Rural Development RBEG Grant for Seafood Marketing (new) Pending / dependent on successful close of prior USDA-RD grant	\$ 50,000.00
▪ USDA-Agricultural Marketing Service – FSMIP grant Pre-application phase, awards announced Sept 1, 2012	<u>\$ 50,000.00</u>
<b>Pending grant funds</b>	<b>\$100,000.00</b>

Next, the group discussed the possible future phases of organizational development and capacity building needed to get the RISMC organized and operational.

Barry Costa-Pierce stated that there is a large universal movement and studies underway on Omega 6 and Omega 3 (health oils for seafood) for a balance diet. Costa-Pierce said pharmaceutical companies already have testing devices (similar to diabetic testers) to test you balance of Omega 6 and Omega 3 in your bloodstream. If these are the next steps to healthier lifestyles, better diets and longer lifespan, the seafood industry is well positioned to begin promoting this new information about seafood and healthy Omega 3 benefits to the public. Wellness programs currently receive substantial funding.

There may be funding avenues to explore with pharmaceutical companies. The Attorney General's Office had previously received funds from class action lawsuits to Pharmaceutical companies, and perhaps there might be funds for our 'Fish to Institutional' sales endeavors. Or, direct application to pharmaceutical companies for grants.

Steve Anderson mentioned that there needs to be better infrastructure for logistics and transportation services of seafood. If we desire to have more CSFs (Community Supported Fisheries), there may be job opportunities for call center or IT personnel to take orders via internet or iPhone. Then, there needs to be better organizational logistics for distribution and delivery. It was mentioned that DOT might have infrastructure funds for transport models that use less fuel (perhaps propane operated trucks).

Farm Fresh RI was contacted prior to our meeting and continues to have interest in "Farm to Institutional" sales activities. Currently, Farm Fresh RI operates and manages the logistics for Market Mobile which has done agricultural sales of \$1,000,000 this past year. They were interested in future dialog about "Fish to Institutions" programs as well.

Senator Sheldon Whitehouse has been involved in Ocean technology. It was suggested that we have a meeting to discuss our Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative and the upcoming plans for URI Sea Grant/J&W Baird Symposium 2013.

It was also mentioned that there might be grant funds available to do additional studies on the economic impact of the fishing industry and charter boats –and, their economic multiplier for Rhode Island.

Some discussion surrounded the certification process for fisheries, but that topic was relinquished to Regulatory subcommittee action plans.

## **In Summary**

- Current grants may be limited in funding a long term marketing campaign of awareness for our citizens.
- Rhode Island Sea Grant's Safe and Sustainable Seafood Program may offer opportunities for collaboration and future funding.
- Pharmaceutical and private funding might be best for consumer awareness and wellness information and educational programs to the general public. Benefits of eating seafood as a dietary supply of healthy Omega 3 oils rather than Fish Oil tablets.

- More transportation and logistics infrastructure models need to be reviewed and explored for Rhode Island to provide local seafood to its citizens. These potentially might be new jobs.
- Perhaps DOT funds might be available or other Ocean programs to support our RISM. More discussion and information needs to be transmitted to our Congressional delegation and General Assembly.
- Better study on the economic impact of Fisheries and allied industries should be explored and combined with information about aquaculture.

## VIII Conclusions

In the time since the Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative was signed into effect in September 2011, interest in local marketing of Rhode Island seafood has continued to increase among producers, consumers, and state agencies. In March 2012, the House and Senate passed the Rhode Island Local Agriculture and Seafood Act (H7701/S2611), which allows the DEM Division of Agriculture to: obtain private funding to set up a grant program for new farmers and organizations that support the growth, development, and marketing of our agricultural and commercial fishing sectors; promotes marketing and outreach efforts to support both local agriculture and local seafood products; and work with DOA and DOH to establish an Inter-Agency Food Council to provide the framework to engage in meaningful new initiatives around food safety, marketing, nutrition, purchasing, and more generally to think critically about how the agencies can better align efforts to encourage safe production, distribution, and processing of local foods for both local and national markets. This new legislation complements the mission of the Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative and can help make many of the Collaborative subcommittees' recommendations possible.

As the Collaborative begins to implement the proposed actions recommended by its subcommittees, it will seek to strike a balance between those actions that appear to offer the largest boost to Rhode Island seafood marketing efforts, those that enjoy the greatest consensus among Collaborative members and participants, and those that are most feasible to implement. The proposed branding campaign offers an example of trade-offs between these metrics. The branding campaign was a major focus on all Collaborative meetings and was the central focus of the Branding Subcommittee. This intense focus reflect both a feeling among participants that a Rhode Island brand offers great benefits to the seafood industry, but also a significant divergence of opinion among members over what the brand should mean and how it should be enforced. However, while branding was by far the most complex proposal entertained by the Collaborative, there are others, such as establishment of a central seafood market, that present a larger challenge in terms of the resources required for implementation.

Conversation among participants in Collaborative meetings has been optimistic and thoughtful. The eagerness of subcommittee members to attend multiple meetings and voice many constructive ideas is testament to the value that participants perceive in pursuing local marketing efforts for Rhode Island seafood. Similarly, the engagement of participants around tough conceptual challenges such as the meaning of the word "local" and the logistics of applying a Rhode Island brand to seafood indicate a high level of commitment to the overall mission of the Collaborative. As the Collaborative moves forward, members will continue to work together to implement measures that promote and raise awareness of Rhode Island's local seafood industry.

The Collaborative and Advisory Council members see great potential in moving forward together on the issues, and to carry out the recommendations in this report. More resources and involvement by others will be needed, but the General Assembly and the SMC have gotten the ball rolling, and there are already tangible results. At its last meeting, the RISMC agreed that the issues surrounding developing a Rhode Island brand need to be vetted and addressed quickly. Due to the importance of getting this right, and off the ground soon so it can be put to use, this will be an area of immediate focus for the Collaborative moving forward. Work will continue in

regard to the other recommendations as well, and the potential for additional gains in promoting our seafood are going to be realized as we work together to move this agenda. In conclusion, there is much to be gained for the benefit of Rhode Island's economy if we can better market our locally harvested and grown seafood, and work together to ensure that Rhode Island Seafood is seen as the smart, healthy and best choice.

## **APPENDIX A: Providence Journal Articles about the Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative**

The following two feature articles were the product of collaboration between the Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative and Providence Journal Food section editor Gail Ciampa. The first article was published just before the Christmas holidays. The Newport & Bristol County Convention & Visitors Bureau collaborated extensively in this effort, locating chefs and recipes for the effort. The second article was released in January 2012, and discussed more specifically the Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative's efforts to promote local seafood. Feedback from the Providence Journal has indicated that both articles were very well received and generated a lot of interest among the public in learning more about local seafood.

“Reel in Feast of Seven Fishes”, December 21, 2011 by Gail Ciampa, Food Editor Providence Journal.

“From Sea to Table?” January 18, 2012 by Gail Ciampa, Food Editor Providence Journal. Available online at: <http://blogs.providencejournal.com/arts-entertainment/lifestyles/food-dining/2012/01/catch-the-next-wave-in-local-food-fish.html>

# Reel in Feast of Seven Fishes

La Vigilia, the tradition among Italian-Americans of serving seven fish courses on Christmas Eve, lives on in many families.

Maybe you want to try new recipes; preparing some fresh, local Rhode Island fish like scup (also known as porgy), squid or monkfish? Well, several local Newport, Bristol, Warren and Providence chefs and a South Kingstown oyster farmer have shared their seasonal recipes here.

And as a nod to tradition, I offer a baccala recipe out of the archives from Mediterraneo which was one of the few doing La Vigilia dinners a decade ago. Now they are common. One list of spots to dine in or to take out ran in last week's paper and there are more listed today.

GAIL CIAMPA

## Pan Roasted Native Monkfish With Lentils du Puy

**Monkfish (each one yields 2 6-ounce filets, see note)**  
Sea salt  
White pepper

**Cooking oil**  
Unsalted butter  
Lemon for squeezing

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Season filets with sea salt and white pepper. Place a medium sauté pan over high heat with 1 tablespoon of cooking oil. Lay seasoned filets in pan. Sear till golden brown and caramelized, flip filet over and continue to sear. Turn pan down to medium to low heat and add 1 tablespoon unsalted butter and begin to baste for one minute.

Remove fish from pan and squeeze a few drops of lemon juice over the top. Continue to cook in the oven till done (approximately 3 minutes). Remove and let rest for 2 minutes. Slice when ready to serve.

**Chef's notes:** Monkfish needs to be cleaned if bought with skin on or off. Remove the skin by wrapping a kitchen towel around the front of the filet and peel back. Once the skin is off, using a sharp knife continue to trim off all of the under-skin membrane and the bloodline.

Sprinkle fennel pollen over the filet when done cooking to add flavor. Serve with Lentils du Puy (see recipe).

From Chef Jake Rojas, Tallulah on Thames, Newport

## Lentils du Puy

**2 cups lentils**  
**2 cups carrots, small diced**  
**2 cups onion, fine diced**  
**1 cup bacon, small diced**  
**1 cup fennel, fine diced**  
**8 cups chicken stock**

**1 tablespoon parsley, chopped**  
**1 tablespoon chive, chopped**  
**1 cup white wine**  
**2 tablespoons unsalted butter**  
**1/4 cup sherry vinegar (Sherry de Jerez preferred)**

In a medium-to-large saucepot over medium to high heat, add bacon and cook until caramelized, constantly stirring. Add onion and fennel. Stir in lentils and deglaze with white wine and reduce by half. Add chicken stock and bring to a boil.

Turn heat down to low and simmer for 15 minutes, then add carrots and continue to simmer for 5 more minutes.

When lentils are fully cooked but still have a little tooth to them, add the butter, salt and white pepper and chopped herbs.

To finish, add 1 tablespoon vinegar right before serving, which will brighten up your dish.

**Chef Rojas**

Makes 8 servings.



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / KRIS CRAIG

Native Monkfish is a fish entrée developed by Chef Jake Rojas of Tallulah on Thames in Newport.

## Fennel and Blood Orange Salad

**1 bulb of fennel with tops still on; remove tops and saved for garnish**  
**3 blood oranges**  
**2 chigga beets or golden beets**

On a mandoline or with a vegetable peeler, shave the fennel and beet; reserve for salad.

Peel 2 oranges and slice into rings, break rings into individual segments. Over a bowl, squeeze the juice of one orange. Reserve segments and use the juice to create quick vinaigrette to toss your salad in.

Fennel tops can be used by picking away the fronds and using as a garnish.



**Chef Rojas**

Makes 8 servings.

## Zuppa Di Pesce

**1 1/2 pound lobster (cooked and split in half)**  
**8 littlenecks (washed)**  
**8 mussels (scrubbed and debearded)**  
**4 ounces calamari**  
**4 shrimp (U-12 size)**  
**1/2 cup of white wine**  
**4 cloves of garlic, smashed**  
**4 tablespoons vegetable oil**  
**2 cups of marinara (see note)**  
**1 cup of clam broth**  
**1 teaspoon red pepper flakes**  
**4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil (for finishing)**  
**French bread (grilled, for serving)**

Heat vegetable oil in large sauté pan until lightly smoking. Add in garlic and lightly toast, being careful not to burn it. Add in pepper flakes.

Add the white wine to deglaze the pan and simmer until wine is reduced by half. Place in the little necks and calamari. Add the marinara and clam broth to pan, cover and turn heat down. Lightly simmer for 6 minutes.

Add in the mussels and shrimp; cover for another 3 minutes. After the 3 minutes, uncover and add the lobster to the pan. Taste to check for seasoning, add salt and/or pepper if needed.

Finish by drizzling with the extra virgin

olive oil.

Serve with grilled bread.

Serves two as a main course.



**Chef DiLibero**

From Chef Kevin DiLibero, Waterman Grille, Providence



### Nantucket Scallop Crudo with Pickled Persimmons, Cucumber, Lemon Vinaigrette and Petite Cilantro Leaves

For the pickled persimmons:  
1 cup fresh hazy persimmon, cut into slices or wedges  
1/2 cup rice white vinegar  
1 cup water

1/2 cup sugar  
1 tablespoon pickling spice  
2 fresh bay leaves

For the scallops:  
12 ounces bay scallops

Sea salt  
1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil  
1 teaspoon lemon juice  
Fresh cucumber, minced

For the pickled persimmons: Bring everything to a boil together in a saucepot, simmer for five minutes, then cool and infuse for thirty minutes. Pour the liquid over the persimmons and allow to chill overnight in the refrigerator.

For the scallops: Slice scallops in half and season with fine sea salt to taste, olive oil and lemon juice. Place the scallops on a plate in a line and spoon small piles of minced, fresh cucumber over each slice of scallop.

Place the pickled persimmons between every third piece of scallop, only using a maximum of three. Garnish the dish with fresh cilantro leaves and a few more drops of extra virgin olive oil. This should be served chilled as an individual appetizer or on a larger dish to be shared at the table.

Serves 4 as an appetizer.

From chef Christophe Spindel, Persimmon, Bristol.

### Stuffed Braised Squid

8 medium-sized squid tubes, cleaned with tentacles removed and reserved  
Toothpicks

For the stuffing:  
1 pound Jonah crab meat  
2 hot Italian sausages (removed from casing)  
2 sweet Italian sausages (removed from casing)

1 medium white onion, finely diced  
1 roasted red pepper, finely diced

1 roasted yellow pepper, finely diced  
3 cloves garlic, finely chopped  
1 1/2 cup panko bread crumbs  
1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley

For the braising sauce:  
1/2 medium yellow onion  
1 (32-ounce) can whole crushed tomatoes  
1/2 teaspoon paprika  
1/2 teaspoon cayenne  
1/2 cup white wine

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

To prepare stuffing: Sweet sausage, onion and garlic together until onion and garlic are translucent and sausage is cooked through. Allow to cool and then add bread crumbs, peppers, parsley and crab meat. Toss gently so all ingredients are incorporated. Filling should be moist, but not sticky.

Stuff squid with filling approximately three-quarters full. Skewer the squid closed with a toothpick. With a second toothpick, pierce hole in opposite end of squid to prevent squid from opening during cooking.

To prepare braising sauce: Sweat onions with wine until liquid is reduced by half. Add tomatoes and spices and let cook over medium heat about 20 minutes. Puree with hand blender until smooth.

Line a baking dish with a small amount of sauce. Place stuffed squid and tentacles in baking dish and ladle remaining sauce over the top of the squid.

Cover with foil and cook at 350 degrees about 10 minutes. Remove foil and cook an additional 5 minutes.

Serves 8.

### Herb-Crusted Wild-Caught Point Judith Scup Filet With Bitter Greens and Lemon Aioli

For the fish:  
2 whole scup or 4 scup filets (scored skin on, preferred)  
1 pint buttermilk  
1 cup cornmeal  
1 cup rice flour (works best, all-purpose is fine)  
2 bunches parsley (leaves picked, chopped finely)  
Salt and pepper to taste

For the bitter greens:  
1 bunch green kale, cut into large ribbons  
1 bunch Swiss Chard, cut into thick ribbons  
1 small head green cabbage

1 white or yellow onion, peeled and sliced  
1 tablespoon minced garlic  
2 ounces white wine

For the aioli:  
2 egg yolks  
1 pint olive oil (extra virgin for strong olive flavor or blended oil for more subtle)  
1 1/2 ounces white wine vinegar (lemon vinegar preferred)  
2 lemons, zested and juiced  
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard  
1 teaspoon roasted garlic puree (optional)  
Parsley (from above)  
Salt and pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Pick and chop the parsley; half will be used for the fish, and the rest for the aioli.

For the fish: You will need two skillets (preferably a good non-stick for your fish). Place on the stove on low heat while you organize and prepare your ingredients. Mix the cornmeal and flour together, season with salt and pepper. In a separate bowl, mix the buttermilk and half the parsley. Season the filets lightly with salt and pepper, dip into the buttermilk, then into the seasoned cornmeal. Evenly coat each filet this way, making sure to coat, but also to shake off any excess; we want the fish to be light and crispy. In a hot non-stick skillet lightly coated with oil, begin to cook the fish. Do not over-crowd the pan. If you cannot fit all 4 filets without space between, do 2 at a time. Brown each filet lightly on each side. If you can fit all 4 filets in one pan, you can finish cooking the fish in the skillet. If they don't all fit, you may place the filets on a baking sheet and finish in the oven. Cook for 5 minutes at most, and fish will be crisp on the outside, moist on the inside.

For the greens: This is a simple, three-green mix, but this method works really well with broccoli, rabbit, collard greens, spinach and other greens.

While fish is in the oven, heat 2nd skillet to high temperature, add oil to coat, then add onions, cook until onions wilt, then add garlic, then add white wine. Once wine is in the pan, add cooking greens. Cook only until greens wilt. Adjust seasoning with salt, pepper and lemon juice, finish with butter and/or olive oil.

For the aioli: Place yolks in food processor with mustard, lemon zest and garlic puree, and begin whipping on high. Begin drizzling olive oil in a slow, steady, thin stream. Add lemon juice, vinegar and adjust seasoning with salt and pepper.

Chef's note: This is a really simple preparation that does not require a lot of space or time. The aioli can be made days ahead of time if necessary, and makes a quick, delicious, versatile accompaniment to many fish and seafood dishes, or even chicken.

Recipe from chef Derek Wagner of Nicks on Broadway, Providence.

### Butternut and Sage Baked Matunuck Oysters

24 Matunuck oysters shucked, left in shell  
4-6 slices thick smoked bacon  
2 cups vegetable oil  
24 sage leaves  
1 small onion, diced  
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided use

1/2 pound peeled butternut, cut into half-inch dice  
2 tablespoons sage, chopped  
1 cup plain bread crumbs (freshly toasted preferred)  
Salt and Pepper

Shuck oysters and place on cookie sheet lined with aluminum foil. Put in refrigerator until ready to assemble.

Cook bacon until almost done — but not too crispy, because you will cook the bacon again when heating the oysters. Reserve remaining fat. After the bacon is cool, cut into 24 equal-size pieces and set aside.

Carefully heat oil in a small sauce pan until it reaches 350 degrees. Add whole sage leaves 12 at a time and fry approximately 10-15 seconds. Remove and place on a paper towel and season with salt immediately. Set aside.

Sauté onion in 2 tablespoons butter and reserved bacon fat over medium heat until soft, approximately 8-10 minutes. Add diced butternut and enough water to barely cover the squash and cook slowly until the squash is soft enough to puree smooth but not so soft that it's "soggy." Strain and reserve liquid.

Puree in food processor or with electric beater until smooth. Adjust consistency with reserved liquid and season with salt and pepper. Add chopped sage and cool slightly.

Place about 2-3 teaspoons of the puree into each oyster shell. Add one piece of butter to each oyster and sprinkle with bread crumbs evenly to cover.

Bake at 375 degrees for about 10 minutes or until heated through and the bread crumbs are lightly brown.

Arrange on platter and place one sage leaf over each oyster.

Serve immediately.

Makes 24 oysters.

From Perry Rice, owner of Matunuck Oyster Bar and Farm, South Kingstown

### Lobster Scampi

2 tablespoons Italian garlic, sliced  
2 tablespoons shallots, small diced  
3 tablespoons red peppers, small diced  
3 ounces olive oil  
1/2 teaspoon dry basil  
1/2 teaspoon dry oregano  
8 ounces dry white wine

2 ounces roasted red pepper juice (from a jar)  
20 ounces cooked linguini  
2 (3-pound) lobsters (steamed, shucked and diced)  
Salt and pepper to taste  
6-8 tablespoons butter  
2 tablespoons scallops, biased cut

Sauté garlic, shallots and red peppers in olive oil, until translucent. Add basil, oregano and white wine. Let reduce by about two-thirds, then add linguini and roasted red pepper juice. When linguini is just warmed, add diced fresh shucked lobster meat. Reduce liquid in pan to almost nothing, then remove from the heat and add butter and scallops. Then adjust seasoning with salt and pepper.

From chef Trafford Kane of Traflet, Warren.



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / MARY MURPHY

Baked cod — or Baccala alla Acqua Pizza — served at the Feast of the Seven Fishes at Mediterraneo restaurant in Providence.

### Baccala Acqua Pizza

2 pounds scrod or baccala (see note)  
1 large sliced onion  
2 chopped garlic cloves  
20 kale/mata olives  
8 sliced green olives  
2 cups plum Italian tomatoes in juice  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
2 tablespoons caperberries

1/2 cup dry white wine  
1 cup fish broth (can substitute clam juice)  
6 basil leaves  
1 cup diced Roma tomatoes  
1 teaspoon fresh chopped oregano  
Salt and pepper to taste

In a sauté pan over medium heat, transduce the onions and the garlic with the olive oil. Add the diced tomatoes and let it cook for 2 minutes. Add the wine and reduce for another two minutes. Add the plum tomatoes, capers, olives, fish broth, salt and pepper. Let everything simmer for about 5 minutes at medium heat.

Put the baccala (or scrod) in a roasting pan, top it with the sauce, and sprinkle with oregano and basil. Cover with aluminum foil and bake at 375 for about 20 minutes. Serve hot with grilled Italian bread.

Note: The recipe calls for fresh cod of baccala. If you use real sea cod, it must be soaked for three days, changing the water two times a day.

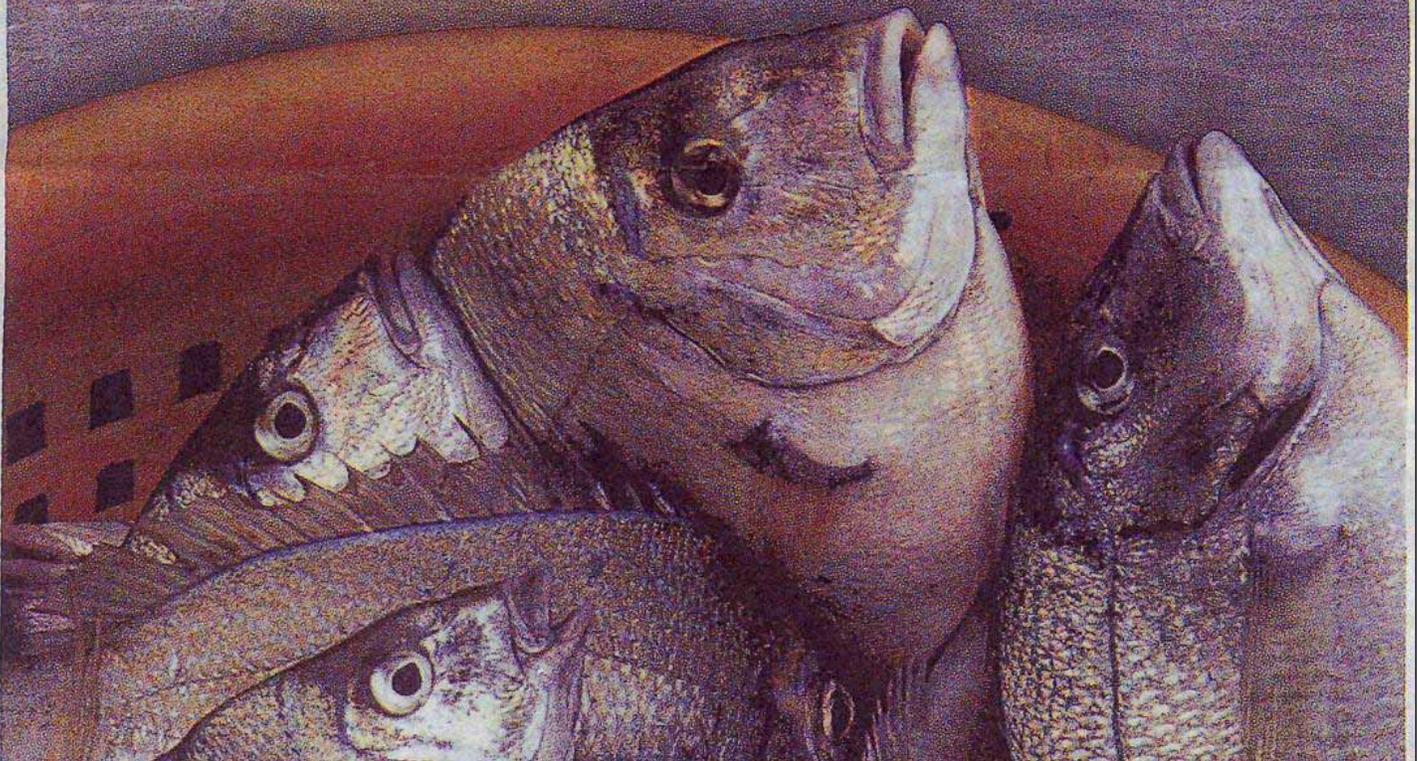
From the Journal archives, shared by Mediterraneo, Providence, in 2000

# From Sea to Table?



Rhode Island's fortunes could be enhanced by a thriving seafood industry inspired by the state's 400 miles of coastline. A collaborative created by the General Assembly is hard at work exploring the possibilities.

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

# Catch the next wave in local food: Fish

Marketing collaborative wants to make 'sea to table' a reality in R.I.



Scup, also called porgies, are on display at the Bristol Fish Market.

THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / BOB THAYER



Gail Ciampa

There is something really amazing going on that could set a course to make "sea to table" a viable reality in Rhode Island.

Last spring the General Assembly passed a bill creating the Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative & Advisory Council to support local fishermen and small businesses in the marketing of local seafood. Governor Chafee signed it into law in September.

Now, the 19-member collaborative is talking about the possibilities for developing local seafood business and maybe creating what might be described as a Farm Fresh R.I. for the seafood world. The group includes a diversity of people including representatives from many state government agencies as well as harvesters, seafood processors, scientists, chefs and marketing experts. They'll have a report to file with recommendations to the legislature in April.

Simply having the people within this group talk together, there's potential not just for a new world of sustainable food, shared resources and local markets that deliver direct to the consumer, but also for economic development. Rhode Island is, after all, a state with 400 miles of

coastline, active ports and a fishing industry.

"We have the chance to make Rhode Island THE place for seafood," said Janet Coit, chairman of the collaborative and director of the state Department of Environmental Management.

Never have consumers cared more about where their food comes from than today. Locally grown, or caught, is the mantra in a new world where food isn't just sustenance but a national obsession.



JOURNAL / CONNIE GROSCH

Janet Coit is the director of the state Department of Environmental Management.

Derek Wagner, chef/owner of Nick's on Broadway, said diners love it when he can point out the men who caught their lunch off Point Judith dining at his counter because they just delivered fresh local fish to his Providence restaurant.

Many people feel the food system of our nation is broken and eating local may be the best way to fix it. Some are doing their part

buying vegetables, fruits and greens in season grown at local farms; and seeking out everything from homegrown beef to farm-raised turkeys.

Now it's time to talk about fresh and sustainable local fish and seafood and to figure out how to get it from sea to home tables and restaurant kitchens.

"There really is a lining-up of the stars today," said Coit about the positive timing of the collaborative's assignment.

"As a small state with lots of coastline, we can be innovative," said Ken Ayars, chief of agriculture for the state Department of Environmental Management, and a collaborative member. But no one thinks it will be easy.

Regulatory obstacles need to be addressed, said Coit. The collaborative is working to make shorter hurdles for things such as getting dockside markets up and running similar to the one in Newport at State Pier Nine, Long Wharf, that opened last summer. Conversations must include ways to keep food safe, too, so the Department of Health is involved in the collaborative.

But the new market goals are just the tip of the iceberg. Ultimately the ideal would be to create a locally based food economy, said Ayars.

If you are wondering why you should care, Ayars points to local agricultural for the economic boost it has provided the marketplace. In the past five years, everything having to do with local food has grown. That means "it's gone in the opposite direction of the rest

of the state's struggling economy," he said.

Nearly all of locally farmed food goes on to local sale, he said.

Imagine if you can similarly grow the seafood

willing to pay more for it. But as the local market grows, prices could even out, he suggested.

"There is every reason in the world to make the effort," he added.

**"As a small state with lots of coastline, we can be innovative."**

Ken Ayars, Department of Environmental Management

industry to develop a local food system to sustain the state.

While Ayars notes that the locally grown produce is more expensive than that shipped in, it's very much in demand and people are

There is a successful model to follow here. Until Farm Fresh R.I. developed its Market Mobile program, small farmers couldn't realistically sell to restaurants. There were small yield and delivery

issues. But put together the crops of many farmers and each week restaurants can order the freshest of local bounty and have it delivered to them.

Can that happen so fisherman, harvesters and other seafood proprietors can sell to the all the restaurants craving fresh, local product? Can there be a bevy of seafood markets set up weekly as farmers' markets are?

Stay tuned and see where the collaborative leads Rhode Island.

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# Local seafood industry starts with people's taste buds

By GAIL CIAMPA  
JOURNAL FOOD EDITOR

Can the seafood industry give an economic boost to Rhode Island? The answer is yes, but not without some changes, say several of those in the fish business who are on the Seafood Marketing Collaborative.

Despite the significance of Point Judith as a fishing port, right now a majority of the state's seafood catch is leaving the state and even the nation, said Ken Ayars, chief of agriculture for the state Department of Environmental Management.

Furthermore, a huge percentage of fish consumed in the United States is imported, said Perry Raso, an oyster farmer, restaurant owner and member of the collaborative.

Worse yet, the fish may have been caught here, sold off cheaply to a wholesaler, then sent elsewhere or even overseas for processing before being bought back by a large American distributor, said Derek Wagner, a chef and owner of Nicks on Broadway and a collaborative member.

How's that for madness?

There are several reasons given for this upside-down situation, but the two main ones are seen as regulations and local taste, said Raso.

The complexity and limitations of fishery quotas are cited for their impact on Rhode Island fishing and aquaculture industries in the Rhode Island Food Assessment report which was prepared by Karp Resources for the Rhode Island Food Policy Council and released last fall. Health-code restrictions and transportation licensing for seafood are also named as handicapping local distribution.

"And it has to change for both consumer and fishermen," Raso added. "Fish going directly to the consumer is good for the fact of having fresh fish, and it helps fishermen sell at a higher price." He cited the success of Point Judith's Wild Rhody fishermen who sell directly to restaurants where diners benefit by knowing where their fish was sourced through a new Trace and Trust technology that identifies the origins of the catch.

Quotas have had a lot of success in bringing back fish, he admitted. But talk to any fisherman and they are frustrated by regulations that many feel need to be reexamined, Raso said.

As for local taste, consider how Rhode Island has come to embrace oysters, Raso said. This in spite of the fact that many people had little exposure to them.

He began his Matunuck Oyster Farm a few years ago with 1.3 acres in Potter Pond. His need for a commercial dock there in South Kingstown landed him with a restaurant as well. He operated it to see what would happen, not committed at first to running a restaurant.

What did he find? That people were willing to try a local sustainable product such as oysters even if they had never had a bivalve before. Now his oyster demand has grown and he has a 7-acre farm for

production and more employees.

"Selling the freshest seafood was good business" he learned as people came to love his oysters on the half shell.

Raso suggests that there is a need to establish a new market for some underutilized species. He'd like to see some educating of consumers about scup, also known as porgy, for example. This is a high-volume, low-cost local fish that has an almost invisible profile in the marketplace. It resembles tilapia, now commonly found in markets, in size and shape. While tilapia is a fresh-water fish (and always farmed elsewhere), scup is a local salt-water fish caught in the wild.

"Nothing happens unless the public is interested and sees what's in it for them," cautioned Wagner. But as chefs, he believes he and his colleagues can effect change.

"We start with the taste buds," Wagner said.

He buys whole fish out of Point Judith weekly, more than a hundred pounds, and revels in all the local varieties including skate wing, herring, yellowtail tuna, monkfish, scup and bluefish.

"These are all attainable and sustainable," he said.

He began offering bluefish for breakfast, with eggs, at Nicks on Broadway and has people saying, "I can't believe I'm eating fish for breakfast" and loving it.

Don't be surprised to find dishes like herb-crusted herring on his menu. Last week he served skate wing, roasted in a skillet with lemon oil and served over risotto and fennel. He prepares other fin fish varieties by leaving the skin on and crisping it up by cooking with olive oil.

"It's about exposing people to something new," he said. It might take people outside their comfort zone, but it's still approachable.

"They might see it at another table and the aroma brings them to it," Wagner said. "Or I will give them a taste if they are interested."

Wagner cares less about looking back at why the fisheries business developed as it did. He wants to look ahead instead.

"If we can get people thinking about eating local fish and supporting small businesses, it can really create some exciting new opportunities that support our community," he said. And by "our community" he means neighbors who have made fishing their livelihood.



Ayars



Raso



Wagner

# Seafood companies seek to define sustainability

Bill Silkes, president of American Mussel Harvesters, says he is pleased to be on the Seafood Marketing Collaborative because he wants to keep local, wholesome products in Rhode Island. His company farms and processes seafood at a state-of-the-art facility in Davisville, but he estimates that he ships 75 percent to 85 percent of his product out of Rhode Island.

His business, like many other seafood companies, is pressured economically to validate its products as sustainable. This requires spending money on independent or assigned auditors to provide that assurance to companies

(think Whole Foods).

But what sustainability means is anyone's guess.

In general, sustainability refers to the concept that fish are left capable of regenerating, not overfished, and that there is no harm being done to other wildlife in the process, said Robert Ballou, assistant to the director at the Department of Environmental Management, and a collaborative member. He acknowledged that nailing down a definition might be part of the group's work.

Silkes would like to see a state certification program for sustainability. He's not alone, said Ballou, adding, "Lots of



Silkes

people think certification may be needed."

But then the question becomes one of funding, which is yet another question facing the collaborative: Will there be money for programs they suggest instituting?

GAIL CIAMPA

## Snapshot of local seafood

If you want local fish right now, here is what's available to be fished and most abundant in the wild: **cod, lobster, sea scallops, quahogs, fluke, scup** and **squid**, according to Robert Ballou, assistant to the director at the Department of Environmental Management. This is not a guarantee that you will find them and it doesn't mean there isn't something else available either, he cautioned.

Local **oysters** and **mussels** are also in season.

Even getting such a list is difficult and cobbled from many sources.

One local company, The Local Catch, out of Narragansett, has made local purchase and selling of fish their mission. Check out their seasonal calendar at [TheLocalCatch.com](http://TheLocalCatch.com).