



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

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SEAFOOD MARKETING PROGRAM STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING SUMAMRY

October, 2020

Held Virtually Via Zoom

In attendance:

Steering Committee members: Representative Susan Gifford, Director Dan McKiernan, Bonita Oehlke, Angela Sanfilippo, Beth Casoni, Laura Foley, Tory Bramante, Bob Colbert, Bill Doyle, Frank Mirarchi

DMF members: Julia Kaplan, Kevin Creighton

Members of the public: Jynessa Dutka-Gianelli, Josh Weirsma, Dana Barthalomew, Matthew Hill

Director McKiernan: This is my first meeting as official DMF Director and I'm looking forward to it. This meeting will be recorded. This is a semi-annual meeting of this legislative appointed committee that is designed to guide DMF on the activities and the spending dedicated to marketing seafood. These times are not routine. I am impressed with this year's Seafood Marketing Program activities and I hope you are too. The Seafood Marketing Program dates back to 2015, thanks to Senator Bruce Tarr, with the goals to increase awareness and demand for Massachusetts seafood. When sales plummet like they have this year we are faced with many challenges and you will see how the program pivoted in response to the COVID-19 crisis. Your input ensures the needs of the industry are met. We depend on your knowledge to make the program timely and appropriate. Thank you.

Angela Sanfilippo: The fishing industry in the first month of COVID-19 was in total disarray. Fishermen found they had no market and processors could not process because they had no staff. This started new wheels turning and we started working with Josh Weirsma. The question was, why isn't the state buying our seafood? Turns out there was legislation passed in MA that forced some agencies to buy local seafood and this was a surprise. DMF didn't know about this. I got in touch with Tarr's office and he didn't remember either. We decided we couldn't go on like this, we started talking about an entity that would bring all of the seafood processors together. We had a 75 person zoom call to discuss how we can all work together. We put together the MA Seafood Collaborative. We have just finished the bi-laws. We don't have a board yet, but we have a working group. We will be getting in touch with other processors. This organization is not just for seafood buyers, we want to include fishermen. Everyone is very happy – this has been the missing piece, similar to the Fisherman's Partnership formation.

Dan McKiernan: As a regulator, I welcome this kind of group established. We often need input from buyers. It would be ideal to send requests for management comments to an organization. If you want to talk to lobstermen, a call to Beth Casoni is a powerful tool and it makes sense to have this for the dealers. I credit you and Josh for putting this together.

Josh Weirsma: It would organize what was historically a competitive industry. Restaurants and retail are also involved for example Roger Berkowitz. There are all sorts of bulk purchasing opportunities that New England has been left out of. Forming this trade association gives the opportunity for the major players to see what is possible. We have realized we need an overhaul/modernization of the fleet to compete with Iceland and other places. We have applied for the FSIG Grants and now we will see some changes.

Dan McKiernan: We can offer you our list of all permitted wholesale dealers for a membership drive.

Wendy Mainardi: At our last meeting we talked about doing some advertising and we did it: we spent the most money we have every spent - \$72,000 - to pay for radio ads across the Commonwealth that amounted to 6 million impressions via the I Heart Radio family. I know that people in the industry heard the ad because they told us about it. We had a digital component as well. (Billy Costa video shown). "Good for you, even better for the fisherman" was a message we used. We decided to do radio over billboards because people were not driving. This was late June – early August.

Angela Sanfilippo: There was a good response among the industry to these radio ads.

Tory Bramante: How was the money broken down? I would love to see more of this.

Wendy Mainardi: Billy himself wasn't that much money, the impressions were the bulk of it. We had to decide how much money we had to work with first. We decided to cover the whole state instead of just the coast for a longer amount of time.

Frank Mirarchi: During the time the ad was running the local fish market here had the biggest single sales day in their 35 years. Seafood is selling. People are very interested, and this is a huge help.

Beth Casoni: Thank you for the video that you did with Dan in April, that got a huge response. The ad was great, our phones were ringing off the hook. Thank you for the ad.

Wendy Mainardi: We launched a Chef Series this summer with it's own sub-logo. This is social media forward. When the Navigating MA Seafood event at the Expo got canceled this was one of our pivots. We have been collecting recipes from Chef's throughout the state along with good photographs to inspire home cooking of seafood. This goes to Instagram then onto Facebook. (Examples shown). We have over 3,500 followers on our Instagram and twice that many on our

Facebook. We are getting images of seafood dinners in front of people. (Instagram screen shot shown). We created a website to host these recipes. (Screen shot shown).

The second part of the Chef Series is our videos. We made six educational how-to videos starring Mac Hay. (Oyster video shown). We want people to be able to approach seafood production at home. These six videos can be seen and shared from our YouTube channel. Dan's video had 6,000 views and this inspired us to make more videos. Lastly, we thank you for your input on the MassGrown Exchange and it's doing well.

Beth Casoni: Can we add fishermen with retail boat permits or do they have to add themselves?

Bob Colbert: We have been hearing – and you guys have confirmed – that fishermen who started out selling directly to consumers have found it to be a lot of work, like another job, and they are slowing down.

Beth Casoni: Some of the younger fishermen have been very successful using social media selling directly and the work has been worth it.

Story Reed: This is not a new permit but we waived the \$65 fee.

Wendy Mainardi: Because of COVID and this steering committee input, we are taking a break from our Seafood Marketing Grant Program after five good cycles. We have two ongoing projects now. We are creating a real-time availability website and there is also going to be a virtual cooking competition this fall.

The Seafood Marketing Program will be covered by Julia Kaplan and Story Reed while I am on maternity leave.

Beth Casoni: Is there any way to track seafood consumption in MA? To measure promotion success.

Dan McKiernan: Most of our seafood is shipped out of state and we don't have data past the first buyer.

Story Reed: I wonder if it would help this group to poll the retail stores?

Josh Wiersma: Mike Carroll and I received a grant to dig deep on traceability labels and attitudes on local haddock. (See "Consumer Preference for Local and Traceable New England Haddock"). A willingness-to-pay survey was developed with 143 respondents. 50% of the time people chose haddock as favorite white fish. Pollack was at the bottom of this list. Fish was primarily purchased at Whole Foods, of all the grocery stores. The most important attribute on a label is date landed. Consumers were willing to pay more for their ideal traceability label.

Wendy Mainardi: Food Security Infrastructure Grant is something that I have been working on all summer. There was a lot of competition with an emphasis on equity. I have been advocating for the seafood industry during this process as a reviewer.

Story Reed: As most of you know, and many of you have been involved, we received and divided up \$27.8 million to four sectors of the commercial fishing industry. This does not nearly cover the loss that the industry has suffered. They payments have been made. Twelve DMF staff workers help us do this.

Dan McKiernan: This was a massive data exercise: we have great data analysts and quality data. We had a lot of support from industry working groups including people on this call so thank you. We were the first state to get approved by NOAA fisheries and the first state to cut checks.

Beth Casoni: Thank you, we know that you have been getting a lot of questions from lobstermen. A lot of lobstermen didn't qualify because they have had a good season. The guys that went to work made more money than the guys who didn't.

Frank Mirarchi: The 35% loss was contentious because fishermen just worked hard to get over that loss. There was processing choke point in May that they worked past. Prices have been suboptimal. No one was happy about the threshold, but they understand it. We appreciate the work you did.

Dan McKiernan: In the future, we are going to continue to do advertising and we are going to continue to do more video content.

Frank Mirarchi: Wendy has done a better job at selling fish than we have done catching fish. Landings of groundfish according to NOAA right now, 5/12ths through the year: haddock caught is at 12%, pollack is at 5% there is a lot of fish swimming in the ocean that are not getting caught. We need to upgrade our ability to catch fish through modernization. We've got boats fishing shorthanded because the economics of fishing are not good and they are overwhelmed by haddock – it's very hard to get these processed in a timely manner on deck. Maintaining quality is a huge factor. Let us keep in mind these technologies. We need to look at this holistically, this is a time of opportunity when the pandemic ends.

Beth Casoni: People have been interested in eating locally and environmentally friendly. I like the idea of a featured fishermen or restaurant or processor of the month.

Dan McKiernan: We are proud of what has been done by this program this season. A benefit of the pandemic is that people are cherishing their local product and places.