

Division of Marine Fisheries

Seafood Marketing Program Steering Committee

December 7, 2017

Duxbury Bay Maritime School

Steering committee members: Representative Susan Gifford, Director and steering committee chair David Pierce, Bob Greco (designee for Commissioner Ron Amidon), Bonita Oelkhe (designee for Commissioner John Lebeaux), Bill Doyle, Frank Mirarchi, Ellie Leaning, Beth Casoni, Laura Foley Ramsden, Tory Bramante, Bob Colbert, Alex Hay, Bob Colbert

Members of the public: Kate Masury, Valerie Rosenberg, Ed Doherty, Michele Insley

Division of Marine Fisheries: Wendy Mainardi, Story Reed, Dan McKiernan, Kevin Creighton, Sam Andrews

Director and steering committee chair David Pierce's opening remarks:

Director David Pierce is looking forward to the new DMF office opening soon in New Bedford. This move is going to be a great opportunity to work together with SMAST as the Marine Fisheries Institute. The Department of Fish and Game's new Commissioner, Ron Amidon was not able to come today because of an unexpected meeting with EEA. We have a great working relationship with him, and Bob Greco is here representing the Department in his place.

We have filled out the roster of this steering committee dictated by the legislation. A list will be on our website very soon. We have three new members to welcome. Ellie Leaning from CCCFA, taking the place of Nancy Civetta who is now working on the Cape in a very important role as shellfish constable in Wellfleet. We have Bill Doyle. He is a member of our MA Advisory Commission, and he has been with us for two years there so welcome Bill for being now part of this group. He's also a member of the Shellfish Advisory Panel so we will get a lot of insight and information from him. Alex Hay is also a new member, thank you for agreeing to participate. You are involved with Wellfleet shellfish restaurateur as well as dealer and retailer.

There is going to be an update from Wendy regarding the Seafood Marketing Program and what we have been up to. Attention needs to be paid to some recent comments made by Mid Atlantic Fisheries Management Council where they are going to have more discussion about spiny dogfish. The panel recently concluded it is a market demand fishery, the domestic market is very small, traditional export market is soft, and they are working on new markets. They made some requests for market assistance in part because processors of MA say there is a lack of supply but apparently the market is not strong enough to promote the landing of dogfish.

During lunch we are going to hear from Ellie regarding the conclusion of the Pier to Plate program, and then after lunch we are going to hear from Kate Masury and an opportunity for partnership. David ends

by noting that this summer we did a great job getting the word out around the state about the value of Massachusetts seafood by doing Zip Trips run by FOX 25 news. He attended one of these and it was quite an experience - very early in the morning and very well attended. There was lots of promotion of seafood at our booth - it was a very attractive and eye catching exhibit.

The input of the steering committee has already helped shape this Seafood Marketing Program. We need it to maximize this program to benefit seafood consumers and those that provide it. Thank you for your input.

Introductions: name, organization, and what your organization is doing now specific to seafood marketing

Bill Doyle has a very small company: Plymouth Rock Oyster Growers, and we grow and ship oysters all around the country and as part of that we also spread out a little laterally and part of our company builds equipment for aquaculture.

Frank Mirarchi is retired but was a fisherman for 52 years and is still involved in fishery policy. One of the things that commercial fishermen realize is that we don't control price. The value of fish is sometimes lower than the cost of catching. This is a serious problem impacting small ports and even larger ports like Gloucester! I think one of the pathways forward is through marketing to get better value for the fish, creating niche marketing, creating understand with the public that there are reasons to buy locally sourced fish.

Ellie Leanig is with the CCCFA, most of their work in seafood marketing is with the Pier to Plate program.

Bonita Oelkhe is the designee for MDAR's Commissioner Lebeaux, and she collaborates with DMF.

Beth Casoni is the Executive Director of the MLA which has 1800 members. They are working on the promotion of the underutilized new shell lobster.

Laura Foley Ramsden is the owner of Foley Fish Company based in Boston and New Bedford and specializing in getting New England fish out in to the market across the country and beyond. Foley Fish spends a lot of time working face to face having customers taste the seafood. New England fish is affordable compared to in the West and South so it's a mission for us to push imported fish off of the menu in favor of our local seafood.

Tory Bramante is the owner of Atlantic Coast Seafood in Boston. Traceability is becoming more and more important nowadays, and Atlantic Coast is working to authenticate where fish comes from.

Bob Greco is the designee for Ron Amidon, new Department of Fish and Game Commissioner. Bob helps with DMF communications, grant announcements, press, and media through the administration.

Susan Gifford is the State Representative for the Wareham and Carver area and is focused on advocating on behalf of this program to legislators to promote Massachusetts Seafood.

Alex Hay operates a wholesale seafood company, three restaurants, and three retail markets all serving local seafood. He's been in business for 20 years, is a founding member of Oysterfest, and operates a commercial fishing vessel in his spare time.

Member of the public introductions

Kate Masury is the Program Director at Eating with the Ecosystem.

Valerie Rosenberg is Director of Marketing and Retail at Red's Best working on direct to consumer education through multiple events at the Boston Public Market.

Ed Doherty retired magistrate at the court, and is an unofficial delegate of a local legislator.

Michele Insley is from S.P.A.T, which seeks to promote oysters and clams and is just starting to create markets for alternative shellfish.

Wendy's program update

Thanks everyone and the new members for coming.

ZipTrips is a fox 25 morning show in its 13 year. It's a pop up fair with tents, people, and food early in the morning. We did all of the locations – 10. We got to be in front of people who we don't usually engage with such as communities in the middle of the state. People were enthusiastic about seafood. We brought maps of where people could buy their local seafood and sometimes live lobsters. We evolved our outreach materials throughout the season. We have a new banner, and we had a game "stick the fish" and we thought this was for kids, but the adults were more drawn to it. The kids usually knew more than the adults. Most adults could not identify cod which was insightful. Would we do ZipTrips again? It's expensive at 25K, but it got us on the road across the state for the summer. It's very specific what we paid for: Taste of the Town was where restaurant demo-ed seafood. Also we were on camera and got credit. We should post this on DMF's YouTube channel.

Alex Hay is curious how we are measuring metrics of this program. This is something we discussed in our first meeting. We could measure by surveys, or how many people we are reaching with media, for example through ZipTrips. Laura F R asks if there is another dot to be connected past awareness such as participation with the local restaurant or market. There could be an incentive to purchase. Valerie R. agrees that finding a way this stuff translates to sales is important, because that's the bottom line. We need to continue consistent events and messaging; marketing has to result in sales. Beth Casoni points out that MLA had an idea of a statewide lobster crawl with a punch card so you could have places take money off.

This Fall Story and I went to Island Creek Oyster Bar and we met with their servers at 4pm and we spoke with them for 20 minutes about fisheries management and they were very enthusiastic. It felt great because servers are on the forefront, and we can learn from them also. We can expand this program to educate more servers. Bob Colbert points out that at the Fisherman's View the chef does a nice job of educating the staff and TVs work well to educate customers. Alex H says that what's interesting is how

under-educated the consumers are; it's very hard to get specific with servers when the lack of knowledge is broad. We over-estimate the knowledge of consumers. Laura F R responds by saying that she's used bullet points that work. Ie: it's illegal to overfish in the U.S and there are triple buffers. The server doesn't need to know details, they need bullet points. What about creating a seafood ambassador program and partnering up with the Mass. Restaurant Association? (Group agrees). Tory B suggests that we spend some money to hold some classes to send some groups to teach about regulations. It is noted that there's the Boston Public Market as a venue, and that it's not just fisheries management, it's seasonality and menu writing too.

Alex H asks what the metrics are: the pier to plate was really great because the fisherman saw the benefits and the restaurant was buying it. Frank M says the Marine Fisheries Institute is doing really good work and you should highlight this work and the public would find it interesting. Val R says that training the trainers is on point: it's slow moving but servers are the ones that are interested in food and it creates a culture in each restaurant. We are always training people and we send out info on a certain species once a week to reduce the amount of talking time. Retail is important also.

David Pierce comments: Has anyone seen this comic book from the 1960s? DMF and I think it shows the importance of fishermen and I am suggesting we take another look at it based on what is said here about the impression people have of fishermen.

Wendy continues: The Boston Seafood Festival was good this year. We had a conference call about videos and the vendors were procured. Let's have another call this upcoming season. Also, there is a conference next week at the Museum of Science run by GMRI that DMF will be attending. The partnership with MA Farm to School is going strong.

We were working with Seafood Expo to try to carve out a unique opportunity to showcase MA seafood, but have not had much luck. The state's website moved to a different platform so building content will be a project with an intern this summer. We are also working with CCCFA to synchronize our availability calendars.

Wendy continues: our pilot grant program was successful. The popularity has increased this year. Everyone here is welcome to apply. We set the limit at \$15K this year though we are flexible. Last year we did over 100K and we don't know this year what funds are available exactly. Most of the grants last year were between \$10 and \$20 thousand. Wendy is happy to work with people if they have an idea.

Ellie Leaning's presentation about the CCCFA's Pier to Plate Program

Ellie presented on some key findings from their summer program promoting dogfish and skate. Dogfish was served best fried. They aren't sure if it is worth changing the name. There was a fully integrated marketing plan: social media, TV, farmers markets, videos. They had a lot of collateral for people to bring home and also table top stuff for restaurants. Placemats worked really well. Whole fish worked for public engagement. Adults wanted simple recipes. One issue is that they are not available regularly at the local fish markets. Giving away fish isn't easy: restaurants needed to be onboard; training programs with staff were difficult because the seasonality of the Cape, and it required a lot of coordination. CCCFA

thinks that there is a demand for these local fish. This program was just one summer. Skate is an easy sell, dogfish not so much. Is there anything we can do for quality? We would need a processor on the Cape. Alex H points out that sales are great, but they have to be at scale.

Kate Masury's presentation about Eating with the Ecosystem Scales to Tales food boat

Eating with the Ecosystem is a place-space approach with 5 pillars: proximity, symmetry, adaptability, connectivity, and community. We like to teach consumers what is local and available. We partner with fishermen, scientists and chefs. We have a few programs, but we are discussing just one of these today. Our food boat program: Scales and Tales food boat. Our food boat program is free and is for local public where we have a 19 food skiff with a culinary station set up outside and we can go to farmers markets, etc., and we can teach out of it and hand out samples. We opened with scup for 130 in Newport at a farmers market. We did a seafood festival where we handed out over 900 samples of seabass and squid. We had four different chefs come in and work on the boat. One of the biggest benefits of the boat is letting people sample the seafood.

Wendy and I have been talking about expanding into MA. Our message is regional, and we'd like to take this on the road by partnering over the summer. The goal: to raise awareness and demand for local seafood. We hand out a lot of marketing material so that would be another goal. We have four possible themes: underwater and overlooked, fisheries of the future, salt marsh and kelp, know your fisherman. We are open to collaborating on other themes you might want.

Wendy: instead of doing ZipTrips this summer we would put the money towards this. We could sponsor Eating with the Ecosystem to do this work.

Great idea, but how do we know the impact? Could we connect with local fish markets? Do we use a punch card situation?

Beth C: can we send you ideas of festivals to bring this boat to? Wendy can collect information about the festivals. Ellie L: people like samples, but then we recommended that people ask for it in the markets. Kate M agrees as she saw this work with the citizen scientists. Laura F R: Stop and Shop and Shaws don't carry this local product. Alex H: the inconsistency is a real challenge. Kate: we try to teach people to be adaptable. Beth: if you go 30 miles west, you can't find a lobster tank. David Pierce asks who consumes RI scup that goes to NYC? Kate: the immigrant communities buy the whole fish so we would have to break those barriers. David Pierce: It's year round and people love it. There is a lot of talk about the processing issue of scup.

Discussion facilitated by Wendy and Story

Story: we have been hearing from fisherman that they were getting lower prices on certain species. For example, we opened black sea bass when RI was still open so the price was very low until later in the season it went back up. Also Bluefin tuna this year: regulations were in play to make the trips off shore worthwhile, but the fish turned up near shore and the price was much lower than it has been because of all the fish being landed. We are mentioning this because in our grant program we are asking for

proposals that highlight underutilized and undervalued species. We are also thinking about focusing on this in the program, not just the grant program.

Beth C: Plymouth is going to celebrate its 400th anniversary in 2020 and we should be there.

Bill D: I know that your efforts won't be seen immediately. In the early 80s we were talking about squid and now people here have sold millions of pounds. The results of your work are a starting point.

Alex H: if people go fishing it's a judgement call and they have to know that price and if it's worth their time.

Val R: I think there can be short term, middle, and long term goals.

Kate M agrees; its' changing behavior over time.

Tory B: I don't focus on a skate or dogfish. Everything is underutilized. I'm trying to get people to eat cheap haddock still. Haddock is underpriced so I want people to serve the product, learn the big picture, eat local, eat wild. Let's not lose track of all of the seafood to market. I want educate the public so that we don't over fish.

Beth C: is there a way to create an infographic about health benefits of wild vs. farm when it comes to chicken. Sourcing food locally is good for the environment. We want more visuals.

Frank M: our problem is processing capacity. Boston fish pier can't handle anything: ice, storage, etc. We need to rebuild the economy. The room for growth is in the species that aren't caught. The group agrees, but we don't know if processors will ever come back when they are cheaper in Canada, etc.

Recap with funding: it's a \$250,000 yearly budget. Last year we spent \$234K and we were very happy. It is asked who decides who gets the grant program money? The answer: we have an internal DMF grant review committee. How do we make the call to fund for profit vs. non-profit? The grant review committee decides based on stated priorities and criteria in the application.

Story and Wendy want to thank you for what you do and your input: we have some concrete working items.

Director David Pierce's closing remarks

Story and Wendy have been going great, and we very much appreciate your input and welcome to the new members. David always learns quite a bit at these meetings, and realizes that his management has been impactful on the marketing and prices over time. We always try to keep the price up but it's not an easy call. These meetings make me better make decisions for the fishing economy. Never hesitate to call Wendy as we will most likely act on your idea. We will keep you informed of our progress.

