

Seafood Marketing Steering Committee Meeting Meeting Summary

October 15, 2018

MassWildlife Field Headquarters
1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, MA 01581

In attendance: Representative Gifford, Director David Peirce, Commissioner Ron Amidon, Bonita Oelkhe, Beth Casoni, Ed Barrett, Tory Bramante, Frank Mirarchi, Laura Foley Ramsden, Alex Hay, Bob Colbert, Ellie Leaning, Bill Doyle

Presenters: Kristin Uiterwyck, Mike Carroll, Josh Wiersma, Deputy Director Dan McKiernan

Audience Members: Abby Heavy, Ed Doherty, Amanda Davis, Steven Clark, Valerie Nelson

DMF employees: Wendy Mainardi, Story Reed, Kevin Creighton, Nicole Perlot

Director David Pierce's opening remarks:

- Welcome and thank you for attending.
- October 2, 2018 was the first Seafood Day at the statehouse. Legislators and members of the fishing industry were in attendance. This was a great opportunity to put our best foot forward for our legislators to gain their support.
- Suggesting that the Steering Committee meet in April and October of next year.

Wendy Mainardi's presentation on Seafood Marketing Program Updates:

- Latest statistics on seafood consumption. Approximately 20% of adults in the US consume seafood at least 2x/week, as recommended by FDA. Asians eat almost twice as much seafood as other races. We want to increase these numbers.
- We will try to do Seafood Day at the statehouse annually.
 - Beth: The timing of Seafood Day was not good for lobstermen, as this is their busy fishing season. The event seemed focused on Gloucester, would like to see other ports participate more.
 - Gifford: The timing was also difficult for legislators because they are out campaigning. Would like to see more promotion for the event and have it moved to the hall of flags in the statehouse.
 - Frank: Most people that attended Seafood Day already knew about fishing. Would love to see people with less knowledge and more curiosity in attendance. We were preaching to the choir.
 - Beth: Some pre-arranged meetings on the next Seafood Day would help attendance.
 - Ellie: Seafood day was very fruitful
 - Beth: Invite marine trade school and restaurant association to the next seafood day
- Sponsored Eating with the Ecosystem this summer who did cooking demos at farmers markets. Local chefs prepared local seafood and gave free samples.

- Ellie: The event in Brewster was great, scup was the fish the demoed. Need to have these fish available for sale at these events, people enjoyed the food but then didn't know where to purchase the local fish.
- Grant program update:
 - Amanda: partnered with Berkshire showcasing underutilized species and gave samples at farmers markets. Quantifying access to underutilized species in Boston restaurants.
 - Abby from New Bedford Harbor Commission: Cooking demos and classes were very popular.
 - Debating on if we should sponsor more small grant programs or focus on larger research projects.
- Seafood ambassador program where DMF staff visit restaurants and speak to servers. One of the most popular questions is if people should eat farmed or wild caught fish.
 - Tory: What kinds of restaurants did we visit and how did we get in to them?
 - Wendy: We started with seafood restaurants; these were the low hanging fruit.
 - Story: The restaurant's seafood purchaser is who brought in DMF, it was valuable to have them at the meeting with the servers.
 - Beth: Would love to incorporate a fisherman into these meetings to humanize the industry.
- Farm to school partnership
- Metrics of how many people we reach with our programs
- Upcoming events: Future of seafood at the Museum of Science 11/5 and Farm and Sea to School in Leominster 12/6
- New website in the works:
 - Laura: **Sustainability should be a large focus** on the website since Monterey Bay isn't doing us any favors with their seafood watch chart, marking red/yellow.
 - Mike: Monterey Bay doesn't understand New England fisheries. Maybe we should engage them directly.
 - Laura: At one point Monterey Bay didn't have enough data on Jonah Crab so they gave it a poor rating. Because of this, it was pulled from the shelves at Whole Foods. The rating was later fixed, but the market was already lost.
 - Ed: Every fish caught in the US is harvested sustainably. This should be highlighted on the website.
 - Frank: We are frustrated with our poor reputation even though we are doing well with quotas and sustainability, the website should help change this.
 - Beth: The website should also credit the state's management efforts, we do shut down fisheries when we need to.
- Research partnerships
- Haddock quality issue
 - Frank: The boats are shorthanded so they can't gut the fish quickly
 - Question on the law about bringing in haddock round
 - Dan: That is the Department of Public Health's regulations, we will follow up with them

Mike Carroll and Josh's presentation on Dogfish Markets:

- Dan: Only half of the approved quota has been taken, so the quota may be dropped. How high should trip limit quota be?
- Josh: Europe used to have a large dogfish fishery, but it collapsed in the 1980s. The US began fishing for dogfish around that time, but the fishery crashed in the 2000s. In 2017, the US supplied 90% of the European demand for dogfish. Most of the demand is for backs, but Germany also buys the bellies. Thailand and Hong Kong buy the fins.
- Josh: The fresh and frozen markets are separate. The price of fresh is 40% higher than frozen. Over the past 20 years, frozen prices have been trending upward, but there are very high points and then it crashes. Fresh prices are trending slightly down.
- Josh: There is a reduction in the diversity of countries buying fresh dogfish. Theory is this may have been due to the PCB scare around 2014. There is still a diversity of countries buying frozen dogfish.
- Mike: The price is determined by frozen inventory and processing capacity. It is expensive to process dogfish and processing capacity is limited.
- Mike: The total size of the global dogfish market is about 20 million pounds.
- Mike: Value added items and local food in the US are opportunities for new markets.
- Mike: On Mondays and Fridays there is an increase in fresh market value, but fish landed on Wednesdays goes to the frozen market.
- Josh: Increased trip limits may lead to lower prices.
 - Dan: All of the dogfish caught in the mid-Atlantic is processed in Massachusetts.
- Josh: A male-only harvest would require a lot of upfront investment. The males are smaller, so new cutting technology would be needed to process in volume. Flexibility is also required.
- Josh: Next steps include looking into new government markets, value-added markets, automated cutting machines, and room for improvement.
- Mike: The value added sector is successful and growing.
- Mike: Management could be structured to allow an increased volume on Mondays and Fridays.
- Josh: There is a “local” marketing opportunity. Bleeding the fish at sea would be more work but it greatly increases the value of the fish.
 - David: there was a market for many different parts of the dogfish 20 years ago, are there any markets for other products now?
- Mike: The markets for the other parts of the fish have dried up. The shark fin business has been impacted heavily by environmental campaigning.
- Josh: There may be a medical market
 - David: It was previously encouraged for fishermen to catch as many dogfish as possible because it was thought that they were impacting cod and haddock young.
 - Ed: A lawsuit in 2000 started dogfish conservation but there aren’t many dogfish around now. It has been a waste of money trying to market dogfish so far, the price hasn’t gone up in 20 years and longlining for jobs is not profitable.
 - Beth: Would prisons be a good market for dogfish?
- Mike: Usually the product that is sold to prisons is distressed and about to go bad so it is sold very cheaply, and it’s hard to compete with that.
 - Tony: There are variations in what people thing “underutilized” species are in New England.

- Frank: Dogfish is a good product when it is handled specially and bled on the boat, but it ends up being expensive and boats are not paid enough to make it work. Local fish prices are driven by the global market, while fishing costs have increased. Likes the idea of marketing local seafood in general rather than specific species. Traceability needs to improve, seafood mislabeling undermines our work. This may help with the need to increase prices paid to boats.
- Ed: **Eliminate using the word “underutilized”** because this implies that something else is over-utilized which is not true about any local fish.
- Wendy: The seafood expo can be used to gain visibility. There is a new designated space in the BCEC for state agencies we can use.
- Beth: Would like to participate in seafood expo efforts.

Dan McKiernan’s presentation on the Lobster Processing bill:

- The law used to prohibit all possession and sales of lobster parts. In the 90s, processing of tails and sales of tails out of state was allowed. In 2012, the sale of frozen tails in state was allowed. Today we are looking to allow the sale of detached claws.
- Were asked to write a report assessing lobster markets.
- There are distribution chains that sell lobster parts in other states where it is legal, but can’t do it in their MA stores. Did find claws for sale in Whole Foods on Christmas.
- The law needs to catch up.
 - Beth: Supporting this change. Gloucester is interested in a bigger role in the lobster industry in value added processing. We are sick of having lobsters caught in the US and processed in Canada. Hopefully changing this law will raise prices.
 - Gifford: Didn’t think a study was necessary, recommended that this just be pushed forward.
 - Frank: Culls and soft shell lobsters are much less valuable, it would be great to increase the price of these by being able to process them

BREAK

Kristin Uiterwyk’s presentation on Urban Harbors Institute projects:

- The first project assessed the value of small boat local catches. We interviewed members of the entire seafood supply chain and food system innovators.
- Seafood marketing is lagging behind agriculture, so there is a need for multi-stakeholder collaboration on a state, port, and regional level.
- There is an opportunity to call together experts at UMass and bring together marketing, economists, biologists, etc.
- The state should also help bring networks together
- The second project is about the poor infrastructure of ports. Will survey harbormasters and fishermen to describe current infrastructure and needs, and identify tools to address those needs.
 - Beth and Tory: What is the definition of a “small boat?”
 - Beth: Concern about slips and what determines if a vessel is considered commercial.

- Dan: Study will be state-wide and not discriminate. Would like to have this data while being able to maintain confidentiality.
- Public meetings may be helpful for this study. Confident that the study will incorporate the public's suggestions.
- Ed: Look at the transience of the fleet, tying up at different places seasonally to participate in different fisheries at different times of year is how fishermen are surviving.
- David: Set up a subcommittee to help with the survey.
- Story: Interested in the volatility of prices, difficult to compare how much a fishermen makes to their costs.
- Laura: Price changes are due to supply and demand.
- David: Internal price information is hard for the state to access. We don't know how much fishermen actually get for their catch. Leasing is also hard to understand.
- Josh: Would love a map of lease prices but that information is confidential.
- Ed: Lease price not always reflected in fish price because there is a price ceiling in the fish marketplace.
- Laura: This is due to global markets.

Dan McKiernan's presentation on Canadian striped bass:

- Looking to remove the requirement that imported fish meet our minimum size requirement, and authorize Canadian tribe to ship fish to Boston.

Story Reed's presentation on relationship between DMF and DPH:

- Department of Public Health and Department of Marine Fisheries both have a role in dealer permitting.
- Recently had to permit dealers to sell at farmers markets but it was complicated.
- Working to come up with a "retail: farmer's market" permit type.