

# Rhode Island Commercial Fisheries Blueprint for Resilience Launch Event

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May 7, 2018

## *Notes from the Public Relations Breakout Group*

Moderator: Kate Masury

Notes: Joshua Bird

Participants: Dean Pesante (F/V Oceana), Phil Russo (F/V Steel Pulse), Jody King (F/V Black Gold), Amber Neville (URI Coastal Institute), Michael Marchetti (F/V Mister G, F/V Captain Robert, Eastern New England Scallopers Association), Stephanie-Lyn Ball (quahogger), Joshua Bird (quahogger), Andy D'Angelo (charter boat), Alan Glidden (fish trap), Kate Masury (Eating with the Ecosystem)

Goal: Enhance public understanding and appreciation of Rhode Island's wild-harvest fishing industry

The purpose of this breakout discussion is to come away with a clear understanding of:

What do we need to do? (the key issues, barriers, next steps)

How are we going to do it?

Who needs to be involved?

Summary: The Public Relations working group included eight fishermen, as well as representatives from the nonprofit Eating with the Ecosystem and the URI Coastal Institute. The group recognized that the public has a generally negative perception of commercial fishermen, but that this is beginning to change and can continue to change if we all work together to present a more positive story. Current efforts, such as the "Come Clam with Me" classes offered by Jody King in partnership with DEM, the fisheries interpretive signage trail being developed by Eating with the Ecosystem and partner fishermen, and the use of Instagram by individual fishermen to share their lifestyle with the public, should be continued and built upon. Specific narratives that should be promoted include (1) local seafood is well managed and sustainable; (2) shellfish are safe to eat if you know when to eat them; and (3) a clean bay is not necessarily a productive bay, and we need to take care of the habitat that produces our seafood. Fishermen and their allies should expand the use of photography, video, television, fishermen speakers at public events, fishermen presence at seafood

festivals, and creative seafood branding and marketing. The group will stay in touch via periodic meetings and email. Next steps include creation of a shared media database.

#### 1. Current efforts:

- Come Clam with Me (DEM and Jody King)
- Interpretive signage (Eating with the Ecosystem and fishing partners)
- Social media (e.g., Instagram)
- Photography
- Video
- Newsletters
- Television (e.g., public interest pieces)
- Fishermen talking in a positive way
- There is a generally negative public perception of fishermen, but it is beginning to change

#### 2. What else is needed?

- TV: contacts in the local programming community
- Public appearances: bring fishermen into the venue
- Branding fishermen's own catch (e.g., "Jody King's clams", "If it ain't black it ain't fresh")
- Asset list for producing video content (photographers, videographers, editors)
- Educating the public on the differences between a clean versus a productive bay (e.g., lawn fertilizer runoff, pharmaceuticals)
- Festivals
- Educational ads in local magazines
- Fisheries management helps us make the case that our fisheries are well managed, so that consumers will buy our seafood
- There is public fear around red tides; we need clear messaging to let people know when it's safe to consume shellfish

#### 3. Who else should be involved?

- Save the Bay
- RIDEM
- State of Massachusetts

#### 4. How will this working group move forward?

- Periodic meetings

- List-Serv
- Presence at festivals (e.g., New England Quahog Festivals, seafood festivals)
- Coordinate around a public screening of a film
- Create a resource database