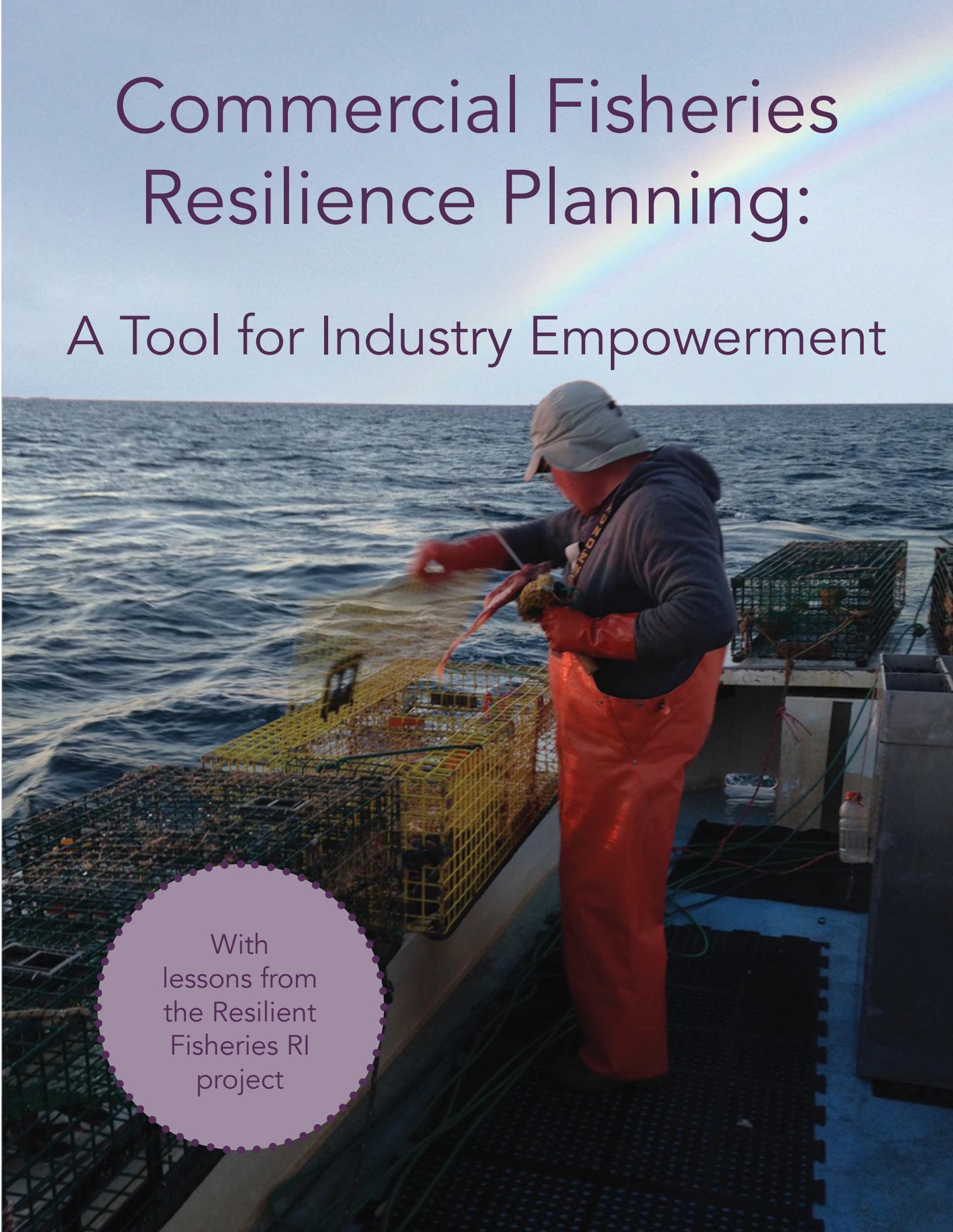


Commercial Fisheries Resilience Planning:

A Tool for Industry Empowerment



With
lessons from
the Resilient
Fisheries RI
project

Commercial Fisheries Resilience Planning: A Tool for Industry Empowerment

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About this Report

This report presents some initial reflections on the craft of commercial fisheries resilience planning, based on the experiences of the Resilient Fisheries RI project (2015-2018). Commercial fisheries resilience planning aims to strengthen ties and resolve among fishing industry members to navigate the rough and uncharted future that lies ahead for many fishing communities. This report, written by Resilient Fisheries RI project coordinator Sarah Schumann based on her personal impressions and feedback from participants in the Rhode Island fishing industry, intends to provide a starting point for commercial fishing industry organizers in other locales who may wish to learn from and build upon the Rhode Island planning experience. With candor and detail, it describes the value of resilience planning, outlines five steps that fishing communities can take to produce a comprehensive, inclusive, and engaging plan, and sheds light on the administrative nuts and bolts of creating and supporting a solid planning structure. General guidance is supplemented with lessons learned from the Resilient Fisheries RI project.

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For more information about the Resilient Fisheries RI project or to view the *Rhode Island Commercial Fisheries Blueprint for Resilience*, visit www.ResilientFisheriesRI.org or contact Project Coordinator Sarah Schumann at resilientfisheriesRI@gmail.com.

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS FISHERIES RESILIENCE PLANNING?

Commercial fisheries in many locations are experiencing existential challenges. Increasingly complex and restrictive fisheries management systems, coastal development and gentrification, globalization of seafood markets, ecological changes, and shifts in demographics and labor markets form an intimidating cocktail of stressors that stretch the industry's ability to adapt.

Empowering fishery stakeholders and their allies to overcome these challenges requires a systems approach with an eye to the future. Fisheries resilience planning is one tool that can help prepare fishing communities to confront complex mixtures of challenges, opportunities, and unknowns.

A fisheries resilience plan is a document co-created by a broad group of fisheries stakeholders that assesses the current landscape of vulnerability and recommends an industry-vetted suite of consensus-based strategies for coping with change. A resilience plan not only addresses challenges and opportunities known to a fishing industry at present, but prepares for uncertainty by embracing the default assumption that the future will be variable and unpredictable.

Effective resilience plans can form a bedrock for positive industry transformations that both buffer

the fisheries sector against adversity and lay out pathways to capitalize on new opportunities. A resilience plan can also act as a cornerstone of collaboration, not only among fishing industry participants themselves, but also with researchers, nonprofits, extension agents, regulators, other government actors, investors, funders, and other partners, who together constitute what is referred to as the "fishery support community" throughout this document.

The present document is a resilience planning guide that draws recommendations from a recently completed effort in the state of Rhode Island called the Resilient Fisheries RI project. The coordinators of Rhode Island's plan learned a number of preliminary lessons through their own experience. They share those lessons here, in the hopes that commercial fishing stakeholders in other locales will build upon and add to these lessons as they too craft locally tailored resilience plans for their own local fishing industries.

Lessons from the Resilience Fisheries RI project are presented throughout this report in italics. More information, including the *Rhode Island Commercial Fisheries Blueprint for Resilience* strategy document that was produced through the Resilient Fisheries RI project, can be found at www.ResilientFisheriesRI.org

RHODE ISLAND'S RESILIENCE PLANNING EXPERIENCE

As in many parts of the U.S., Rhode Island commercial fisheries face a number of challenges. Many fishermen and shoreside businesses feel their industry is reaching a tipping point. Without coordinated action, they fear that commercial fishing as they know it may not exist for another generation.

However, this systemic urgency was unknown to the coordinators of the Resilient Fisheries RI project at the outset. In fact, the Resilient Fisheries RI project began as an effort to understand and plan for the impacts of a single stressor - climate change - on Rhode Island fisheries.

In the early stages, however, it became clear that if the project was to have relevance for local industry members, its original focus would have to embrace a broader landscape of vulnerability. As they began to talk with industry members, project coordinators began to realize that environmental change was co-occurring alongside a number of other stressors and uncertainties. Some industry members argued that with so many drivers of vulnerability occurring simultaneously, elevating one above the others by making it central to the project amounted to a denial and suppression of other critical issues.

The first lesson learned through the Resilient Fisheries RI project, therefore, was the importance of a holistic view that treats fisheries as a system with many interconnected parts. Implementing this lesson meant broadening the focus of the project from climate change to a full spectrum of stressors identified by the industry.

Faith in the future

A resilience plan leverages change as an asset rather than resisting it as a threat. It assumes uncertainty as a given. Perhaps most challenging of all, it requires faith in the future. In many fishing communities around the U.S., fishermen have lost this faith. Resilience planning asks us to reverse this trend and make a long-term commitment to creating a better future.

Resilience planning may not bring back the "good old days." But with a strong sense of commitment, fishing communities can reinforce the most essential aspects of their trade, buffer themselves against challenges, take advantage of new opportunities, and guide their industry into the 21st century.

WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

Resilience may sound like just another buzzword, but although the term has become a word *du jour* in public planning and policy circles, it has a longer tradition in academic fields, from medicine to engineering to ecology. In socio-ecological systems theory, resilience is defined as "the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity, and feedbacks." As a philosophy, resilience embraces the inevitability of change, posing the question: how can individuals and communities undergo change without losing the core aspects that make them what they are?

The Resilient Fisheries RI project crafted the following definition of "resilience": "an ability to change without collapsing; to adapt in the face of adversity; to recover from setbacks; to thrive despite unknowns."

WHEN IS THE RIGHT TIME TO DO RESILIENCE PLANNING?

A resilience planning process is most likely to be effective when a fishing community is facing chronic stress. Acute stressors such as major management changes or coastal development projects do not create ideal situations for resilience planning, because they are likely to cause participants to remain overly focused on the single most pressing problem at hand. Conversely, fishing communities that are not facing any serious sources of stress are not well placed to carry out resilience planning because they lack the distress that motivates participants to engage in the planning process. For these reasons, situations of chronic stress, especially those characterized by multiple stressors, are most likely to benefit from resilience planning.

WHO ARE THE RIGHT PEOPLE TO DO RESILIENCE PLANNING?

The most effective fisheries resilience plans are those carried out by industry members themselves. This is because the act of planning can help build social capital within the industry that itself constitutes a resilience-boosting strategy. Fishermen are known for their independence, a strength at the individual level that can also be an Achilles heel for the industry as a whole. When fishing industry participants join forces in the process of resilience planning, it can help overcome this usual gap in organization, create a habit of speaking with a common voice, and represent a sort of unspoken contract between industry members to collaboratively work towards a shared vision of the future.

However, in some cases, resilience plans may be developed jointly by members of the fishing industry and fishery support community. For example, a plan may be coordinated by a neutral party such as a local nonprofit or extension agency in close collaboration with members of the industry. Just as an industry-led planning process can strengthen ties within the fishing industry, a jointly led process can strengthen ties between the fishing industry and the support community. Which of these types of cohesion is more important - intra-community bonds and trust within the fishing industry or inter-community bonds and trust between the fishing industry and its support community - will vary with locale and situation. These are important considerations when embarking on a resilience planning process.



Industry and the support community

Fishing industry: The collection of captains, owner-operators, crew, shoreside support businesses (gear, fuel, engine repair, marinas, bait, etc.) and waterfront seafood buyers that together make up the harvesting side of the seafood industry.

Fishery support community: The collection of governmental and non-governmental professionals whose work provides science, management, marketing promotion, training, communications, and other forms of support to the fishing industry. This community can include federal and state fisheries management entities, extension agents, university researchers, non-governmental organizations, elected officials and their staff, journalists, artists, educators, funders, and investors. Coalescing this broad spectrum of actors into a self-aware community with a shared goal of supporting fisheries can occur through the practice of resilience planning.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO RESILIENCE PLANNING

1. IDENTIFY KEY THEMES

2. COME TO A SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF THE ISSUES

3. PLAN FOR SURPRISES THROUGH SCENARIOS

4. CO-WRITING AND CONSENSUS BUILDING

5. MAXIMIZING UPTAKE AND LEGITIMACY

STEP 1. IDENTIFY KEY THEMES

A good way to begin resilience planning is to consult the broadest and most representative spectrum of fishery participants possible about their current realities, lessons from the past, and hopes and fears for the future. This portion of the process not only serves to gather valuable information that will help frame subsequent steps, but can also help participants prepare to engage in the process by wrapping their minds around the landscape of challenges and opportunities facing the industry. Moreover, this phase is an opportunity to begin building the project's database of fishing industry contacts and to start crafting the relationships that will ultimately underpin creation (and implementation) of the resilience plan.

This first step corresponds very closely to a tool typically used when developing a business or organizational strategic plan: the SWOT analysis. SWOT stands for "Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats," defined as follows:

- Strengths: characteristics of a business that give it an advantage
- Weaknesses: characteristics of a business that place it at a disadvantage
- Opportunities: elements in the environment that a business could exploit to its advantage
- Threats: elements in the environment that could cause trouble for a business

If planners find it helpful, they may approach the scoping exercise in Step 1 using this same structure and terminology.

Step 1 can take the form of one-on-one interviews, focus groups, or written or online surveys. A standard survey questionnaire is perhaps the easiest method to administer, but it may not capture nuances or elicit enough detail to uncover the relationships between strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The choice of which method to use will probably depend on budget, timeline, and local context.

Regardless of the method used, it is important to encourage participants to think not only about challenges and weaknesses, but also about opportunities and strengths. Fishing industry members, who in many places tend to be downcast about their present realities, may overlook positive aspects that can provide footholds to a better future. Having a grasp of these aspects is just as important for resilience planning - if not more so - as understanding weaknesses and threats.

An advantage of using a self-administered online or written survey is that there is no limit to the number of people who can participate. Survey results are easy to tally, and eliminate potential bias in interpretation. Most importantly, every respondent can feel that his or her perspectives have been taken into account on an equal footing with all others, which may help to build trust in the process.

The Resilient Fisheries RI project did not use a survey, but rather a series of 48 one-on-one sit-down interviews. Each interview lasted between one and three hours and gathered observations about changes in the natural environment and other aspects of the fisheries operating environment, and asked what steps respondents were taking to adapt to them. The interviews also included a questionnaire that asked respondents to rank a number of different challenges against each other in importance, which helped prioritize themes for subsequent steps of the process. The interviews generated a copious amount of rich and nuanced information and built strong two-way relationships between the interviewees and the planning coordinator. On the downside, the process was time-consuming, expensive, and limited in the number of people it could reach.

STEP 2. COME TO A SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF THE ISSUES

After listing critical issues in Step 1, industry members can enrich each other's understanding of these issues through structured face-to-face interactions, such as workshops. This step sets the stage for social learning: knowledge building that takes place through participation in social environments characterized by interaction and deliberation. An additional purpose of Step 2 is to learn where the fracture lines and points of agreement are located within the industry. In some cases, this step may help industry members come to shared understandings of issues that were previously divisive. This filtering process is a useful preparation for Step 4 (Consensus Building).

Coordinators of the planning process must make several decisions about how to structure these face-to-face learning opportunities, including:

- Number of sessions to hold
- Key themes to explore
- Whether to invite members of the fishing industry only, or include members of the support community. If both, what is the desired balance of attendance and talk time?
- Whether to opt for lecture-style sessions with time for discussion, or roundtable discussions where everyone has equal opportunity to shape the direction of conversation
- Whether to bring in external facilitators

Choice of time and location should be informed by the seasonalities and daily work patterns of members of the fishing industry. It may be important to vary locations in order to assure that different geographical areas of the fishing industry are able to participate. Locations should be venues that are familiar and comfortable to members of the fishing industry.

While it is not strictly necessary to involve members of the fishery support community at this stage, doing so can provide counterbalancing viewpoints, help answer technical questions, and inform industry members about current discussions in scientific and regulatory arenas. It can



Members of the Rhode Island fishing industry discuss climate change with a NOAA scientist at a local brewery during the Resilient Fisheries RI project.

also help build champions outside the industry who understand and value the planning effort - a strategy that can pay off in Step 5 (Maximizing Uptake and Legitimacy).

The Resilient Fisheries RI project performed this step through ten two-hour evening seminars. Themes were drawn from Step 1 interviews and encompassed a number of changes in the local fisheries operating environment, from the ecological to the economic to the regulatory, including warming waters, ocean acidification, changes in water quality, the next generation of fishermen, diversified versus specialized fishing portfolios, and socioecological vulnerability. Seminars reflected a strong emphasis on environmental factors due to the project's original focus on climate change (see page 5).

Resilient Fisheries RI seminars were open to all members of the Rhode Island fishing industry. Most seminars were closed to non-industry members, with the exception of invited speakers. Speakers were members of the fisheries support community who were invited to share their expertise on specific themes.

Seminars were held at locations that were on or near fishermen's "turf" and/or offered a comfortable and social environment: breweries, Elks lodges, fisheries centers, and portside meeting rooms. Locations associated with fisheries management meetings were avoided. Light snacks were provided and a cash bar was available wherever possible.

Coordinators made a strong effort to capture the content of seminar discussions and share it with members of the fishing industry who were unable to attend in person. Recognizing that fishermen's variable and unpredictable schedules make it necessary to find creative ways to communicate, coordinators took notes on a flip chart and recorded audio at each workshop. Audio content, written transcripts, and lecture slides were delivered to fishing industry members via the project list-serv and website.

Publicity for the seminars was accomplished through word of mouth, postal mailings to members of fishermen's associations, the project list-serv, third-party list-servs, port posters, and phone calls. Publicizing the seminars was time-consuming, but well worth the effort.

STEP 3. PLAN FOR SURPRISES THROUGH SCENARIOS

Since resilience planning is about the future, an excessive focus on present-day issues can reduce its effectiveness. Thus, it is important for fisheries resilience processes to set aside some time to plan for “unknown unknowns,” or surprises. This can be done through scenarios planning.

Scenarios planning is a tool designed to engage groups in thinking outside the box about what

the future might bring. A scenarios planning process typically involves four breakout groups. Each group receives a different scenario. Scenarios are not predictions, but rather plausible storylines about how the future might unfold.

Each scenario includes many different aspects of reality in various permutations. Each one is internally coherent. Additionally, each scenario must be just realistic enough to be believable, while just different enough from present-day reality to push participants into new ways of thinking.

Defining a vision

Because a resilience framework is based around the idea of maintaining some kind of core essence in the face of change, it becomes necessary to define what that core essence is. Without such a vision, it can be difficult for participants to design strategies for the future, because it will not be clear what they are “aiming for”. The scoping activities in Step 1 and the social learning opportunities in Step 2 can be useful for generating a sense of what is most important to fishing industry members to maintain, restore, or develop with in their industry.

The Resilient Fisheries RI process neglected this step at first. But sooner or later, the need for a vision to act as a North star for the industry’s planning efforts became clear. Looking back at content gathered through Steps 1 and 2 of the Resilient Fisheries RI process, the project coordinators sketched out a tentative vision. This vision was used as the basis for Step 3: Scenarios Planning. During scenarios workshop, participants were asked to design strategies that would help achieve and maintain the industry vision in the years 2025-2030 under a suite of different changes, challenges, and opportunities.

The Resilient Fisheries RI vision went through subsequent refinement through Step 4: Co-writing and Consensus Building. When included in the final report of a planning process, a vision can be a helpful tool for engaging members of the fishery support community around a shared trajectory for the industry.

The Change Handbook: The Definitive Resource on Today's Best Methods for Engaging Whole Systems (Holman et al. 2007) describes scenario planning (or scenario thinking) in this way:

Ultimately, the point of scenario thinking is not to write stories of the future. Rather, it is to arrive at a deeper understanding of the world in which your organization or community operates, and to use that understanding to inform your strategy and improve your ability to make better decisions today and in the future. At its most basic, scenario thinking helps communities and organizations order and frame their thinking about the long-term future, while providing them with the tools and the confidence to take action soon. At its finest, scenario thinking helps communities and organizations find strength of purpose and strategic direction in the face of daunting, chaotic, and even frightening circumstances.

Scenarios planning is likely to be the most expensive component of a resilience plan. This is because the most effective scenarios processes are those coordinated by professional facilitators. Yet in the absence of funding, it is not impossible for a group of fishermen (and members of the fishery support community, if desired) to perform a scenarios exercise on their own, as long as they spend some time getting familiar with how the process works. The Resilient Fisheries RI scenarios process is described below as a template.

The Resilient Fisheries RI scenarios process was in many ways the high point of the process. It included forty-five fishing industry participants and was facilitated by a consulting firm that specializes in helping businesses plan for the future.

After a brief welcome, participants spent most of the day in four breakout groups. Each group was pre-selected to include inshore and offshore fishermen as well as shore-side business operators. Each group included individuals from diverse fisheries, gear types, personalities, and attitudes. These assignments assured a spectrum of viewpoints within each group.

Each group received a pair of randomly assigned scenarios describing how the future might look in the years 2025-2030: a hypothetical natural environment and a hypothetical sociopolitical environment (pages 12-13). Groups spent six hours immersed in their respective scenario combination, proposing strategies that the Rhode Island fishing industry can implement in the present to help the industry thrive in 2025-2030, if its given scenario were to play out in reality.

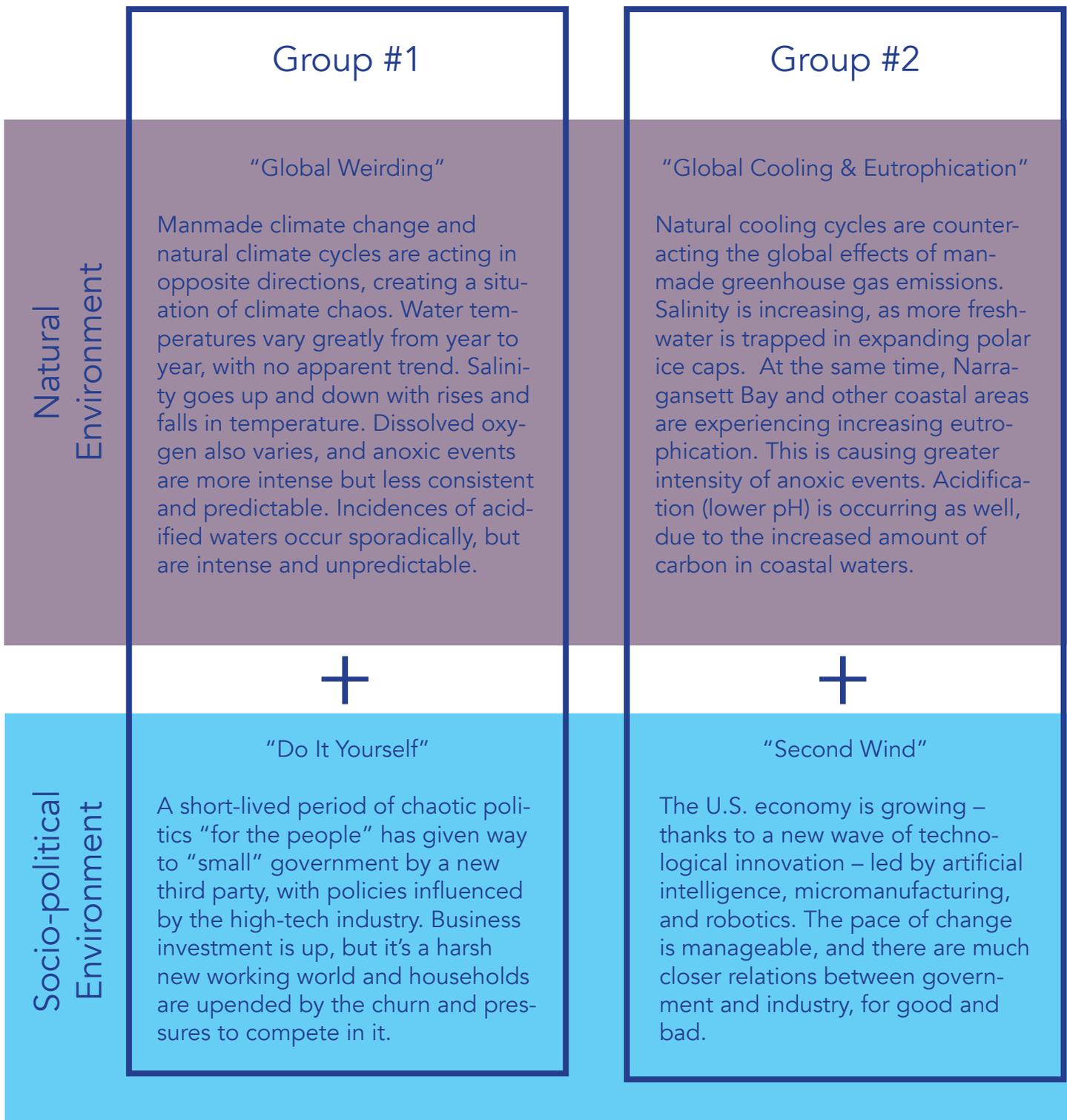
At the end of the day, groups reconvened to share, score, and rank each other's strategies. Strategies that worked well in multiple scenarios rose to the top while others fell to the bottom. Crosscutting strategies deemed to work across multiple scenarios were thus identified as the most robust to future change and uncertainty.



Participants in the Resilient Fisheries RI scenarios process share and score each other's proposed strategies.

The Resilient Fisheries RI Scenarios

During the Resilient Fisheries RI scenarios process, each breakout group received a random combination of two scenarios: one describing a hypothetical natural environment and one describing a hypothetical sociopolitical environment, in the years 2025-2030. The rationale behind the coupling of two types of scenario was to reflect the fact that adaptation to new realities in the natural environment takes place within the constraints of the sociopolitical environment, and vice-versa. Because fisheries are coupled socio-ecological systems, change can take place in both of these areas simultaneously, sometimes in complex ways.



Developing Your Own Scenarios

The best way to develop your own scenarios is with the help of trained scenarios planners. But if that is not feasible, you may adapt the Resilient Fisheries RI scenarios to fit your own locale or craft your own tailored scenarios. Scenarios should be sufficiently varied to stretch participants' imagination in different ways. The scoping processes in Step 1 can help identify areas that are rich for exploration. The Resilient Fisheries RI scenarios presented here are in abbreviated form; detailed scenarios descriptions may be obtained by contacting the project coordinator.

Group #3

"Anthropogenic Warming"

Water temperatures in Southern New England have continued to rise since the 1980s. Natural causes may play a role in some places, but the increase in temperature is primarily driven by manmade greenhouse gas emissions. Salinity is becoming lower due to the melting of glaciers and polar ice caps. Dissolved oxygen levels are going down, because warmer waters hold less oxygen. Anoxic events are more frequent. Ocean acidification (lower pH) is also occurring, mostly as a result of increasing carbon dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere.



"The Long Plateau"

The U.S. has settled into a challenging and somewhat confusing period. The economy is sluggish and opportunities are limited. Inequality has fallen because there are fewer affluent households. Tough protectionism and government programs are keeping a lid on frustration. People wonder: is this as good as it gets?

Group #4

"Natural Warming"

Water temperatures in Southern New England have continued to rise since the 1980s. Man-made contribution to climate change appears to be negligible; instead, the warming that is occurring is due to natural cycles like the North Atlantic Oscillation. Salinity is becoming lower due to melting of glaciers and polar ice caps. Dissolved oxygen levels are also going down, because warmer waters hold less oxygen. Anoxic events are more frequent. Ocean pH has remained relatively constant.



"The Next Big Thing"

A new economy is taking root, in anticipation of unprecedentedly cheap renewable energy. New energy storage technology promises to solve renewables' intermittency problem. There are definite upsides for consumers. But in the near term, there are big adjustment problems, and ongoing uncertainties are profound – for the U.S. and the rest of the world.

STEP 4: CO-WRITING AND CONSENSUS BUILDING

Resilience planning can be rich in both tangible and intangible benefits. The primary tangible output of the process should be a planning document that encapsulates vital issues and outlines consensus-based strategies to address them.

In consensus-based decision making, everyone has the same power to influence the process. To say that a fisheries resilience plan is consensus-based doesn't mean that there is universal agreement among an area's entire fishing industry about every word or strategy; it means that all members of the industry have ample and equal opportunity to weigh in, and any issues flagged as divisive or inaccurate are removed.

Consensus building is an iterative process. A slate of potential strategies can be developed by drawing on the scenarios process in Step 3, supplemented by content from the interviews or surveys in Step 1 and social learning opportunities in Step 2. Proposed recommendations can then be vetted through an industry feedback process until no further issues are flagged.

Within any fishing industry, there are certain topics upon which consensus does not exist. These can be left out of a resilience plan. However, probing into these issues lightly through hypothetical scenarios can be edifying. Although these conversations may not ultimately lead to strategy recommendations that can be included in a plan, they can give industry members a chance to think about challenging issues from different angles.

A suggested section structure for the resilience plan document is as follows:

- Value. What makes the industry important and valuable to its locale?
- Vision. What is the industry's vision for its future?
- Process. How was the plan developed? How does this process make the plan strong and credible?

- Challenges and opportunities. How has the industry evolved and changed in the past? What are the most pressing challenges facing the industry today? What current opportunities can be leveraged to shore up the industry's resilience?
- Strategies. What are the industry's strategies and recommendations for the future? These should be actions that the whole industry can get behind.
- Next Steps. How does the industry envision the implementation of this plan? What key actors are needed, and how does the industry plan to engage them?

Once a draft is developed, it should be widely shared with the industry for feedback. It is critical to assure that as many industry members as possible have a chance to review it, and to amend the draft as necessary to assure that its recommendations are thorough, accurate, and representative of the entire industry. Points that generate dissent should be understood and then modified to ensure consensus, or removed from the draft.



There are several tactical decisions that should be made at the outset of this phase, including:

- What are the start and end dates of the draft review process?
- How many rounds of edits will be made?
- Who will be in charge of outreach (making sure industry members know about the draft and feel invited to provide feedback)?
- Who will evaluate feedback and decide on the appropriate revisions? How will this process remain accountable to the industry?

Some tips for the draft review process include:

- Offer industry members a wide range of ways to provide feedback – both online and offline.
- Publicize the review opportunity as broadly as possible, starting well before the first draft is released.
- Let industry members know how the final document will be used; this will encourage them to engage in the review process and will help them understand their audience.
- Track feedback and changes. A log of comments and edits can be shared with industry members so they can visualize how their suggestions are being taken into account.
- Ask industry members to inform their own networks about the opportunity to read and comment. This can help engage new participants and demonstrate broad-based industry ownership of the process.
- Do not be disappointed if feedback is limited. Thorough listening and attention to detail in Steps 1-3 can result in a plan that industry members consider satisfactory in draft form. If few comments are received, check in directly with a handful of industry members and ask them to read the draft and provide feedback.

The final output of the Resilient Fisheries RI project was a forty-page plan called the Rhode Island Commercial Fisheries Blueprint for Resilience. A draft of the report went through four rounds of feedback: an initial round by members of the project steering committee (10 people) for one month; an intermediate round by fishing industry members who had participated in Steps 1-3 (120 people) for two weeks, and two final rounds by the industry at large for two months.

The draft plan was posted online in a password-protected area of the Resilient Fisheries RI website. Hard copies of the draft were placed at twenty fishery-related business locations, along with instructions for providing feedback. Reviewers were given several options to provide comments: they could submit them through a Google form or communicate them to the project coordinator through email, phone, or in person.

Efforts were made to reach as many people as possible within the project timeframe, through the project list-serv, third party list-servs, and posters on dock pilings and in fishery-related businesses. Rhode Island does not have a public database of license holders and their mailing addresses, but in states where such a list exists, a postal mailing to the full list would be an ideal way of reaching a broad constituency.

The most effective feedback mechanism was face-to-face dialogue. The review process included a kickoff gathering at a local brewery and a series of office hours sessions in each of Rhode Island's fishing ports. The project coordinator spent many hours walking the docks and stopping in at fishery-related businesses to solicit feedback. To help industry members find her, she posted her daily whereabouts on her personal Facebook page and the project list-serv.

In general, the quantity of feedback generated through the Resilient Fisheries RI project review process was moderate. None of the proposed strategies met with outright rejection, likely because they had already undergone fairly thorough consideration during the seminars and scenarios process in Steps 2 and 3. A few gaps were identified; these were filled through conversations with industry experts and re-circulated to the broader industry for approval.

The review process for the Rhode Island Commercial Fisheries Blueprint for Resilience was lengthy - perhaps longer than necessary. With more advance notice and a tighter adherence to planned timelines in Steps 2 and 3, it is probably possible to streamline the review period. This can help maintain momentum and avoid over-saturation of participants' attention spans.

STEP 5: MAXIMIZING UPTAKE AND LEGITIMACY

A document becomes a plan only when it is widely accepted by a broad constituency of actors as a shared template for action. If it fails to achieve this stature, it is simply an advocacy effort by a special interest group. To succeed, a fisheries resilience plan requires buy-in from both sides of the fisheries equation: those working within the industry (on the water and shoreside) and those in a position to support the fishing industry through regulatory, legislative, financial, educational, scientific, public awareness, and other initiatives. A resilience plan can be a highly effective way to bring both groups into closer alignment, but to achieve this outcome, the plan must be equally embraced by all.

Legitimacy and uptake are a function of both the content of a plan and the process that produces it. The process must be comprehensive, clear, and consistent, and every effort must be made

to assure the thoughtful input of a diverse and representative group of fishing industry members. Content (diagnosis of current situations and suggested strategies for the future) must be based on shared understandings and framed in ways that help intended audiences understand them and feel empowered to help address them.

It is also possible to enhance legitimacy through the way the plan is written. For example,

- Phrase issues in broad terms. Narrowly defined issues become outdated faster and can be more vulnerable to argument.
- Strike an appropriate balance between the aspirational and the realistic. Proposed strategies must not only benefit the fishing industry, but must be actionable in the real world if they are to be taken up and implemented.
- When characterizing the current landscape of vulnerability, use descriptions that can be understood and believed by all parties. Understanding the worldviews and motivations of all groups is a prerequisite for this.

RHODE ISLAND COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

BLUEPRINT FOR RESILIENCE

YOUR INPUT AND EXPERTISE ARE NEEDED!

READ & COMMENT!



HOW TO ACCESS THE DRAFT:
Online: ResilientFisheriesRI.org
E-mail: ResilientFisheriesRI@gmail.com
Phone: (401)297-6273



RI COMMERCIAL FISHERMEN:
Attend an informational session
on the draft

BLUEPRINT FOR RESILIENCE

Tuesday, February 6
4:00 - 6:00 PM
Whalers Brewery
1174 Kingstown Rd. Wakefield



This postcard (left) and social media graphic (right) are examples of outreach to the fishing industry used for publicizing the draft review process for the *Rhode Island Commercial Fisheries Blueprint for Resilience*.

- Leave out issues that are divisive within the fishing industry. Strategies should reflect the consensus of all participants.
- Stress positive aspects where possible, while being serious about negatives.
- When framing strategies, think about which partners in the fishery support community will be needed to implement each one. Make sure that each strategy is described in such a way that these partners feel able and motivated to support its implementation.
- Feature faces and voices from individuals within the industry. Quotes and photos can bring the plan to life and show that it is grounded in the lived experiences of fishing industry members. Make sure that they are strategically balanced across the industry to include different perspectives, locales, gear types, and fisheries.
- Balance familiar faces that the fishery support community often hears from (such as leaders of industry associations) with newer, less familiar voices. This helps weave together the known and the new, and shows that the plan is embraced by industry leaders and “rank-and-file” fishermen alike.
- Highlight work that is already being done: efforts already in place to boost resilience that can be built upon in the future. This will not only build goodwill with the entities spearheading those projects by giving credit where it is due, but will make the challenges mentioned in the plan seem less insurmountable.

Another important way to enhance legitimacy and uptake is by delivering the completed plan to the planning and recipient communities in ways that engage, invite, and empower all actors to facilitate implementation of the plan. Some tips for making plan delivery as effective as possible include:

- Find ways to let your audience know about the planning process and its expected outputs well before the plan is finished.
- If the fishery support community is not directly involved in the development of the plan, leave “breadcrumbs” for its members during the planning process. Seeking information or advice can help these individuals feel that their knowledge has been valued from the

beginning. This in turn can build anticipation, increase trust, and ensure that the final plan is realistic and actionable through partnerships with these individuals or entities.

- If the project budget permits, printing copies of the plan – or at least its executive summary – can help make a good impression and can increase the chances that recipients will read the plan in its entirety.
- Leverage personal relationships when delivering the plan to recipients. Make a list of intended recipients and identify individuals from within the planning community who are best poised to deliver the plan to each recipient. A cover letter or email from these individuals can help build interest and trust.

Additionally, a memorable launch event can bring attention to the plan, galvanize action around it, and mark the transition between plan development and implementation. A launch event has several purposes, including:

- Celebrate the fishing industry and the hard work it has done to create the resilience plan.
- Issue calls to action on the most pressing needs identified in the plan.
- Formulate new configurations of relationships to underpin implementation.
- Bring in new participants from the fishing community who might not have participated extensively in plan development.
- Expand the fishery support community by engaging and educating new people.
- Honor established fishing industry leaders while introducing new faces.
- Solidify a sense of shared purpose and commitment among members of the fishing industry and fishery support community.

These launch event objectives should inform decisions about food, speakers, seating arrangements, invitations, breakout groups, moderators, master(s) of ceremonies, and any post-event communications. While the size of the audience may be determined by logistical constraints, it is generally advisable to send invitations to anyone who played a role in developing the plan as well as anyone who has a potential role to play in implementing it.

The Resilient Fisheries RI process culminated with delivery of the Rhode Island Commercial Fisheries Blueprint for Resilience to many members of the fishing industry and fishery support community and a celebratory launch party in May 2018. The delivery process included the following actions:

- Fifty print copies of the Blueprint for Resilience were distributed via postal mail to heads of federal and state fisheries regulatory agencies, other state and federal agencies with purviews affecting fisheries, and several local nonprofits and universities with an interest in food and fisheries.
- 1,000 copies of the executive summary were printed. Every member of Rhode Island's General Assembly received an executive summary, cover letter, and invitation to the launch party. Stacks of executive summaries were made available to members of the fishing industry and fishery support community to distribute to their own networks.
- Electronic copies of the full report were sent to all of Rhode Island's coastal cities and towns and members of state, interstate, and federal fisheries management councils and commissions, along with an invitation to the launch party.
- The project coordinator sent personalized electronic invitations to the launch party to about seventy-five key actors in the fishery support community. The list of targeted invitees was generated by members of the steering committee.

The launch event was attended by over 130 people, including an even distribution of members of the fishing industry and fishery support community. It was a pivotal moment that exposed new audiences to the contents of the Blueprint for Resilience. It jump-started implementation of the Blueprint by convening working groups to carry forward the plan's recommendations. The event included a buffet of local seafood (donated by local companies and prepared by fishing community volunteers), a two-part central speaking portion, and time for attendees to work in groups. Each component affirmed appreciation of the Rhode Island fishing industry and contributed to a shared sense of direction.

During the first part of the speaking program, fourteen members of the fishing industry presented an overview of the Blueprint for Resilience by drawing on their own lived experience in the Rhode Island fishing industry to bring its contents to life. Speakers were chosen strategically, to provide broad representation of different ports and gear types, to highlight individuals not already featured in the plan and not often heard from in the media or by policy-makers, and to include some younger fishermen. Next, eight members of the steering committee described the process that was used to create the plan. Their testimony emphasized the extensive and adaptive nature of the planning process.

Speaking portions of the event were emceed by a well-known individual with a food planning and community development background and a reputation for fairness, compassion, and wisdom. The choice of an individual equally respected by the fishing industry and the fishery support community to play this central role was critical to building a shared sense of purpose among event attendees.

Following the speaking portions, attendees split into seven working groups. Group names and assignments corresponded to the seven core strategy areas identified in the Blueprint for Resilience: public relations; civic engagement; the next generation of fishermen; working waters and coastlines, innovative seafood marketing; healthy habitats; and adaptive science and management.

Each group was moderated by an individual affiliated with the research and nonprofit side (i.e., not the regulatory side) of the fishery support community. Moderators were given a sheet of prompting questions to guide conversation. Other individuals within the working groups took notes on group discussion and turned them in at the end of the event. After the event, the project coordinator typed up these notes and sent them to event attendees as a way of getting the ball rolling on implementation of the Blueprint's recommendations.



The launch event for the *Rhode Island Commercial Fisheries Blueprint for Resilience* was attended by over 130 members of the fishing industry and fishery support community (top). The event began with 22 fisherman speakers (middle) and culminated with formation of seven working groups (bottom) to begin charting next steps for implementation.

ADMINISTRATIVE ASPECTS OF RESILIENCE PLANNING

To be as effective as possible, a resilience planning process should be supported by an adequate coordination team and sufficient financial resources. This section reflects on several core aspects of the planning support structure: the role of funding, the role of a fiscal entity, the role of paid staff, and the role of a steering committee. It also discusses options for defining the boundaries of the planning community and designing networks of communication among its participants.

BUDGET & FUNDING

The financial resources used for a resilience planning effort are likely to vary greatly depending on local context and availability of funding. When assembling a budget, planners may want to consider the following questions:

- Is there an existing mechanism for reaching a broad and representative spectrum of commercial fishery participants (e.g., listserv, mailing list, newsletter), or do fleetwide communications mechanisms have to be built from scratch before dialogue can take place?
- Are an ethos of collaboration and a shared identity present among members of the fishing industry, or do they have to be established before a planning process can gain momentum?
- Do local fishing industry members communicate well via electronic methods, or will the planning process require extensive face-to-face communications? While in-person

dialogue between industry members should be part of any planning process (due to the social learning and social capital that these methods help induce), some locations may be able to economize on their planning budgets if industry members are able to communicate effectively via phone and email. In places where that is not the case, travel and staff budgets should include adequate funding for periodic port visits.

- Are any of the issues that are likely to be discussed during Step 2 of the planning process contentious enough to benefit from professional facilitation? If so, facilitation should be factored into the project budget.
- Is there a local scenarios facilitator who is able to coordinate Step 3 at a pro-bono or low-cost rate? If not, scenarios facilitation is likely to be one of the more costly components of a planning process. Where budgets allow, however, investment in this part of the process is well worth the expense.

The source of funding used to support a resilience planning process can make a difference to the project's legitimacy in the eyes of different audiences. Some funding sources may be seen as bringing a bias to the project, while some may bring an aura of prestige. Sometimes the same funding source can have both of these effects, with different audiences. Having a firm understanding of your audiences and how each one thinks about legitimacy may help you decide on the optimal funding source.

The Resilient Fisheries RI project spent approximately \$24,000 on the project coordinator's time, \$15,000 on stipends for the steering committee, \$10,000 for professional scenarios facilitation, \$5,000 in tie-up stipends for scenarios process participants, \$1,500 in food for workshops, \$2,000 for rental space for workshops, \$500 in postage, and \$2,000 in printing. One major oversight when planning the budget was the absence of travel funds. The Resilient Fisheries RI project's fiscal agent charged an indirect rate of 13.6% to cover expenses associated with managing financial aspects of the project.

The Resilient Fisheries RI project was funded by a Saltonstall-Kennedy grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). For a few fishermen, this funding source invoked to a sense of mistrust; these individuals (incorrectly) perceived the grant as a money grab for a government handout. However, this sense of skepticism did not prevent most fishermen from engaging in the project. Moreover, the funding source brought significant benefits in terms of reaching government audiences: because NOAA funded the project, the agency had a predisposition to treat the project's outputs as worthy of serious consideration.

THE FISCAL ENTITY

A resilience planning effort belongs to the fishing industry at large. But for a project to receive funding, some qualified entity must agree to handle the money. There are a number of considerations that come into play when selecting a fiscal agent for a resilience project. Ability to responsibly manage accounts and stay on top of grant reporting is one, but not the only, priority. For a resilience plan to be perceived as belonging to the fishing industry - not just part of the industry, but all of it - the entity handling the money must be trusted, credible, and impartial.

If there is a fishing industry body available in an area that is representative of, and trusted by, all members of the area's fishing industry, it may be the ideal entity to spearhead a fishing industry resilience plan. However, if there is no such entity

- or if there is competition between more than one entity - it may be preferable for a resilience planning process to seek out a fiscal sponsor whose primary purview is not related to commercial fisheries. This is because there is a chance that a fishing organization's history might open the door to perceptions of bias or "baggage" that would dissuade some industry members from participating in the planning process.

The Resilient Fisheries RI project partnered with a fiscal sponsor that had no previous involvement in the fishing industry: the Rhode Island Natural History Survey, a nature science organization with a mostly terrestrial portfolio of activities. The Survey's lack of history with the fishing industry turned out to be an advantage, because it removed the possibility for the project to be seen as biased or agenda-driven. Moreover, the Survey's hands-off attitude throughout the project preserved a sense that the project truly belonged to the fishing industry.

PROJECT STAFF

Resilience planning can involve an extensive workload, and whenever possible, it is sensible to hire one or more qualified staff people to perform the day-to-day labor of coordinating the process. Two roles are ideally played by paid staff: the role of network coordinator and the role of plan writer.

The network coordinator role includes:

- Establishing a database (with contact information) of local commercial fishing participants
- Explaining the project to fishery participants
- Notifying fishery participants about upcoming workshops, feedback periods, and deadlines
- Establishing lateral connections between fishery participants by convening workshops and working groups
- Updating participants on project progress and findings
- Organizing workshops, scenarios planning events, and plan delivery or launch events
- Compiling notes, audio, and/or video from workshops and making them available to industry members

- Making sure that all industry members understand the project and recognize it as a tool for industry empowerment

The network coordinator should be a person who has extensive familiarity with the local fishing industry or is willing to cultivate this familiarity through the project. Personality is important: the way that this person comes across to the industry can be important to the success of the effort at engaging the broadest possible spectrum of industry members. An ability to listen without expressing judgment is critical. Understanding the history and internal politics of the fishing industry can help assure that this person does not inadvertently take sides or alienate particular groups.

The writer's role is essentially that of a ghostwriter for the industry. It is not just about weaving words together, but about listening, incorporating feedback, and finding a balanced and inclusive voice for the fishing industry.

The project coordinator and writer can be the same person. However, there may be benefits to splitting the role across more than one individual. Doing so can provide a system of checks and balances while also making each person's workload more manageable and accentuating each person's unique skills.

In the Resilient Fisheries RI project, the role of network coordinator and writer were played by the same person - a person whose career up until this point had been a combination of commercial fishing, freelance writing, research, and public education around fisheries issues. This person's independence from any employer helped assure industry participants that she was not serving an external agenda. Her history in the fishing industry helped her understand the internal dynamics and fault lines within the industry, but her lack of previous involvement in industry politics meant that she did not have any "baggage" that could have been detrimental to the project. Additionally, her positive relationships with many members of the fishery support community helped build legitimacy and buy-in for the planning process and its outputs among audiences outside the industry.

Nonetheless, some industry members felt skepticism towards her because they did not know her and they tended to assume she was connected with the government or some other outside group. Others felt a sense of mistrust towards the project because of its federal funding source. Building trust with these individuals took time. In the end, it was not possible to convince everyone to participate in the project, but the project coordinator's consistent outreach to all industry members, even those who remained cool towards the project, helped assure the most representative plan possible under the circumstances.

STEERING COMMITTEE

A steering committee is an optional role in a resilience planning process that may be critical in some cases and superfluous in others. The main purpose of the steering committee is to keep the project accountable to the fishing industry at large. Another function is to supervise project staff and provide them with guidance, personal connections, and background information on the local industry. Steering committee members can also use their connections within the fishing industry to engage industry members in the process and can leverage their own reputations within the fishery support community to bring legitimacy to the process.

If the planning process is coordinated by an established fishing industry body or if project staff are experienced and trusted within the fishing industry, then a steering committee may be redundant. In fact, a steering committee can slow down the process by involving an extra set of steps and approvals. On the other hand, if the project would falter without the guidance of a knowledgeable and reputable group of industry experts, then it is worth the trouble to appoint and assign responsibilities to a project steering committee.

If a resilience planning effort has a steering committee, the committee should be made up of a broad and representative group of fishing industry members. Each member should have a

positive reputation within both the fishing industry and the fishery support community, and be willing to leverage this reputation by reaching out to his or her personal network repeatedly during the process to engage its members. Additionally, steering committee members should demonstrate a willingness to put the interests of the entire industry above their own, and should show a commitment to transparency, collaboration, and cultivation of new leaders.

The Resilient Fisheries RI project in its initial formulation (a climate change adaptation plan; see page 5) was instigated by the project coordinator, who recruited eleven fishing industry members to sit on the steering committee. When forming the committee, she began by reaching out to directors of all of the established industry associations in Rhode Island, asking if they or another member of their leadership would be willing to serve on the committee. Rhode Island has about a dozen associations, each one representing a particular gear type, fishery, or ideology. She then filled in gaps in geography by reaching out to individuals in specific ports with leadership experience.

She also filled in gaps in gear type; for example, since there is no association that specifically represents the floating fish trap sector in Rhode Island, she reached out to a few floating fish trap operators and asked if one of them would be willing to serve on the committee. Finally, she involved the seafood dealer sector by recruiting a representative from one large and one small seafood dealer for the committee. As a result, the steering committee included representation from every port, gear type, and primary fishery type, as well as both fishermen and seafood dealers, in Rhode Island.

The role of the Resilient Fisheries RI steering committee was to help conceptualize each project phase, review first drafts of project documents, and help connect their networks of peers to the project. Steering committee members helped provide the vision for the seminar series in Step 2, carefully reviewed the first draft of the Blueprint for Resilience, helped outline the Blueprint's dissemination strategy, and played speak-

ing roles during the launch event that celebrated completion of the planning process. The steering committee was instrumental in navigating the project's gradual (and sometimes confusing) shift from a climate change adaptation planning exercise to an overall strategic planning effort.

The Resilient Fisheries RI steering committee remained involved throughout the process and brought many good suggestions and connections to the project. However, reliance on a steering committee made up of full-time active fishermen with competing demands on their time slowed progress down and cost the project a lot of time. The project deadline had to be extended (in part because of time spent waiting on steering committee members to provide input on key decisions), which caused a loss of momentum within the broader industry and a certain amount of burnout for the project coordinator. In retrospect, it may have been possible to capture many of the same benefits by relying on an informal, fluctuating group of active project participants to drive the project forward by providing oversight on an as-needed and as-available basis, rather than a pre-defined steering committee.

THE NETWORK

The "network" refers to the broader industry - beyond the project staff, fiscal entity, and the steering committee - whose members provide most of the insights and ideas that go into resilience planning. The network is the true owner of the plan.

As stated on page 12, resilience planning provides both tangible and intangible benefits to fishing industries. The primary tangible benefit is the resilience plan itself; the primary intangible benefit is the crystallization of a communication network among fishing industry participants. The network produces the plan but is also produced by the planning process. Ideally, the network that is established via planning can have a useful life long after the plan is complete.

Unlike a conventional, formalized organization,

a network is decentralized and non-hierarchical. A network itself does not take stands on issues; rather, it provides a space for dialogue among its participants so that they may come together and advocate on common concerns. A network has clear boundaries explaining what types of people are qualified to participate in it. Within these boundaries, all participants have equal influence over outcomes and equal access to information.

The importance of an inclusive planning process has been stated many times throughout this document. Making a strong effort to include the highest possible number of fishery participants (across areas, gear types, ages, shoreside and waterside, and other relevant factors) can: increase the project's relevance, completeness, and accuracy; enlist more people who can subsequently act as implementers of the plan's vision; and maintain balance, representativity, and trust.

However, it can just be important to know whom to exclude. Each project will draw its boundaries differently. No matter where they are drawn, boundaries must be clearly articulated and consistently maintained, in order to promote a common understanding of who "owns" the project. Being inconsistent on boundaries can lead to feelings of alienation or perceptions of bias.

Individuals excluded from the planning network should be brought into the process in other ways. For example, if only fishing industry members are included in the planning network, project coordinators should make sure to leave "breadcrumbs" along the way for non-industry members to follow, so that when the plan is finally released, it can readily be taken up and acted upon by the fishery support community. Letting members of the support community know about the project early and often is key to building legitimacy. It can also be beneficial for project coordinators to seek one-on-one advice from members of the support community from time to time, to both assure that the resilience plan remains realistic and relevant to the broader community, and to prime members of the fishery support community to eventually accept and act upon the resilience plan when it is complete.

The Resilient Fisheries RI project defined its planning network as "individuals with a financial dependence on the harvest of wild fishery resources in Rhode Island." Participation in most workshops, the project list-serv, and the draft review process was limited to individuals meeting this criterion. Members of the fishery support community were not included in the process as planners; rather, they were invited to join forces later as implementation partners.

These boundaries made the planning process a private space where fishing industry members could chat amongst themselves without fear that their plan would be co-opted by outside agendas. It gave them a place to get their ducks in a row before presenting their thoughts to members of the support community, and built a sense of ownership over the project and its outputs.

To maximize inclusivity, the Resilient Fisheries RI project utilized frequent "dock-walking" visits, portside posters, mailings to members of fishing industry groups, social media, email, phone calls, announcements at state fisheries council meetings, a project list-serv, and use of third-party list-servs whose membership includes fishing industry participants. Face-to-face interaction proved to be the most productive form of communication. However, meeting face-to-face is no doubt easier in a small state like Rhode Island than in many other places.

The Resilient Fisheries RI list-serv was one of the most impactful aspects of the project. The list-serv is open to all fishing industry members, and all members may post notifications to others. Although the list-serv was created as a tool to convene fishing industry members for planning purposes, its value soon exceeded this purpose. For example, fishermen have repeatedly used it to share information about wind farm developments and water quality concerns in the area. As a result, the list-serv continues to operate even after the completion of the Rhode Island Commercial Fisheries Blueprint for Resilience. Its membership stood at 250 individuals upon completion of the planning process, and additional individuals are continuously added even after the end of the planning process.