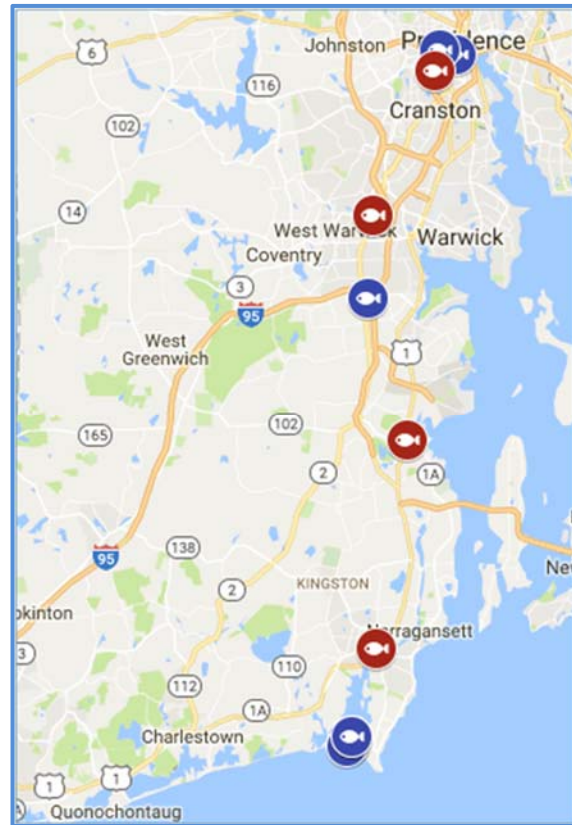


Appendix B: Scup Workshop Report

“It’s sc(up) to us” - Matching local demand & supply for scup in RI
October 3, 2017

RI Sea Grant Project 2016-PD-R-1618-221-03



THE
UNIVERSITY
OF RHODE ISLAND
GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF OCEANOGRAPHY



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Introduction

On October 3, the Coastal Resources Center (CRC) hosted a workshop at the Graduate School of Oceanography campus of the University of Rhode Island about scup to share findings of a recent Rhode Island Sea Grant-funded project to better understand markets for scup in Rhode Island, specifically, how the fish move through local markets, and of the demand and current supply of seafood among local diverse urban populations.

The workshop brought together fishermen, representatives from the fishing community, potential buyers of underutilized species, and leaders from diverse urban communities to contribute their knowledge to our findings. Many of the attendees had been involved with their own research on scup and they were encouraged to provide input from the research they had conducted.

Attendees were treated to a lunch of scup with salsa, rice and veggies, and asked to contribute throughout the workshop. The research team presented three sets of information to provide context for the conversation to follow. The first presentation was a summary of regularly collected data regarding scup catch, prices, markets and quota allocation. Secondly, the research team presented results of surveys they conducted at the Armory Farmers' Market to understand seafood preferences and access for patrons of this farmers' market who largely represent an immigrant urban population that is often overlooked in food justice considerations in Rhode Island. Finally, the research team presented findings of an effort to document scup market chains in Rhode Island to describe where scup is currently going and how decisions are made by actors in those market chains.

This report provides a description of workshop activities with a focus on participant feedback. The complete agenda is included as Appendix I. Below is a summary of the feedback that was received throughout the workshop.

Participant Feedback

The Scup team placed questions around the room for participants to address during the workshop. Below follows a description of each of the points brought up during the workshop with regard to these questions.

1. What needs to happen to overcome those barriers?

With regard to the market flow of scup presented during the "Following the Fish" presentation, several barriers were identified where fishermen were not providing scup where market demand was identified by consumers. Responses to this question were as follows:

- Fishers get retail permit (buy back from dealer): There was extensive discussion about how to provide fishermen with the ability to sell their fish to consumers directly (or more directly). One suggestion for how to do this is that if fishers get a permit to be retailers, they can sell their fish to a dealer, then buy it back and sell it on to consumers. While this is not the most direct or convenient way for fishermen, it does provide an avenue by which they can sell their catch to consumers. From a regulatory perspective, this statement suggests that the current regulatory environment could be improved to allow fishermen some avenue to sell their fish directly to consumers without having to sell and buy back. Massachusetts has recently passed regulations to allow direct-to-consumer

sales for fishermen and it was suggested that we in RI could learn from their effort and legislation.¹

- Define as a social justice issue: This comment is directed at the consumer end of the market chain. The results of this work suggest that people in urban RI are less likely to be able to access seafood and that inexpensive, whole fish, of which scup is one example, could meet the nutritional and culture preferences, especially for recent immigrants and lower income consumers. If the issue were to be addressed from a social justice standpoint, there may be ways to increase access for the parts of the population that don't currently have this type of access to inexpensive seafood.
 - o Connect dealers with food bank: One way in which this is already being addressed as such is through work that Eating with the Ecosystem² is conducting. They have a project in which they have worked with RI Food Bank to package scup in a way that it can be served to their customers. The food bank is paying fishermen a price (\$1) that is higher than what they would sometimes get if selling to dealers.
 - Example: Tony's Seafood and Town Dock: These two dealers are participating in this work by helping to package the scup for the Food Bank.
 - o Packing requirements: Required packaging for food banks is very specific which was one of the obstacles that Eating with the Ecosystem had to address when working to provide access for RI Food Bank to scup (and other underutilized species landed in RI). There may be ways to work with the regulations for food banks so that packing and packaging requirements are more easily followed for fish in addition to consistent supplies of scup or other underutilized species to RI Food Bank.
- Dept. of Health → brownbag with our ideas and information: There was a suggestion to offer to present these regulatory barriers and concerns to the Department of Health in order to begin a dialogue about how to ease the regulatory burdens identified as barriers to accessing markets in RI where demand has been identified and there is already knowledge of food handling. The African Alliance of Rhode Island (AARI) has approached Dept. of Health with regards to smoked fish, it would be useful to follow their progress.
- Connect recreational fishing → to the market: Scup is often caught (and eaten) by recreational fishers which could be some of the same sectors of the population (urban, recent immigrants) that do not currently access these fish. The suggestion was to connect recreational fishers to the market so that consumers who are looking to buy it could get it from them.

¹ NOTE: As of Nov.2017, efforts are underway through RI Department of Health to clarify & reorganize regulations that pertain to sales of seafood, including direct-to-consumer pathways currently permitted.

² <https://www.eatingwiththeecosystem.org/seafood-for-all-ri/>

- Outreach: There is anecdotal evidence that some of these fishers are not aware or disregard catch limits and other regulations for scup. The suggestion was made that outreach is needed to these fishers to educate them about these regulations.
- But why would they buy it if they can catch it? The group discussed that the recreational fishers themselves would not look to buy scup if it were available for purchase, however, they are likely to be connected to others who may be willing to buy this kind of fish in local markets if it were available.
- Can you just get a dealer license? But lots of steps: One participant suggested that another alternative could be for fishermen to obtain a dealer license so that they could directly sell to consumers. Although this is a possibility, other participants shared that there are many requirements for this license which would be difficult for fishermen. One example is that the fish must be processed in a HACCP-certified facility and by HACCP-certified employees.
- Eating with the Ecosystem → Hope & Main – F/V Matrix: Discussing ways to connect fishermen (i.e., F/V Matrix³) with consumers indirectly. Eating with the Ecosystem and Hope & Main are options for this because they are certified to sell to consumers. Although this is not direct sales, it is closer to consumers than other options and less burdensome on the fisherman.
 - Collaborate: RWU law student to look at laws/rules surrounding fishermen direct sales. This may be an opportunity to understand the barriers and opportunities for moving forward. Additionally, student could look to Massachusetts where they have recently passed legislation allowing some types of direct sales.
 - Erika’s business model → share Hope & Main membership: 1. Erika’s business model is to connect with institutional buyers with larger demand instead of directly with consumers. This may be a way for fishermen who want to sell underutilized species as well. 2. Because Erika is producing a value-added product using a commercial kitchen, there may be a way to share her membership to provide access for fishermen to sales through Hope & Main.

2. What are the barriers to increasing local consumption?

- RI should use existing models...how? Discussion centered around using increased awareness in purchasing local vegetables and meat, farmers’ markets, and RI Department of Environmental Management local food promotions. See here for more information: <http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/agriculture/findfood.php>
- Filletting: There are different regulations for fishermen if they sell non-altered seafood products off of their boats. This most often takes the form of filletting, in fish. For some fishermen, they get a license which allows them to sell this kind of fish off their boat when it is docked (e.g., lobsters, crab, and sometimes whole scup), which they catch and then keep in the water off of their boat.

³ NOTE: Since the workshop, F/V Matrix has become a member of Hope & Main and is pursuing various direct-to-consumer sales venues and opportunities in the state.

- Wholesalers: Generally, wholesalers discourage fishermen to sell directly because they lose business that way.
- Changing terminology, turn fishermen markets as temporary food facilities: Wholesalers can rent space to fishermen to allow fishermen to process their fish in an approved facility and then sell on their own. (This was found to be happening during interviews with wholesalers and fishermen.)
- RI Department of Health: This department proves to be the major hurdle in changing regulations. There have been efforts to work with them to streamline permitting and regulatory processes but they have been stalled. One suggestion is to mirror regulations for meat grown on local farms which is much more easily sold directly to consumers.
- Form a cooperative: Dawn (with Trip) is trying to do this but the regulatory burden has been high. She had been in the process of revitalizing an old cooperative (at least to use the name and include as many old members as possible).⁴
- Scale (larger markets): There is a question of scale which is also reflected in survey results and interviews to – 1. Markets for whole fish are primarily immigrant communities at small farmers’ markets (and retail stores); and 2. To scale up to the level at which scup are being caught, institutional buyers have to be secured. (This is where CFRF’s work is really focused, e.g. a filleting machine.)
- Fin fish license harder than shellfish: Shellfish growers (aquaculturists) are more easily able to secure a dealer’s license and sell their product more directly to consumers. Often these businesses become a dealer and essentially sell the product to themselves. RI Department of Health concerns regarding public safety are less for grown shellfish because the product can be kept/returned to the water and less perishable when properly refrigerated.
- Regulatory hurdles for direct sales (State and Federal) – This is connected to review of permit/regulatory requirements in conjunction with RWU.
- Needs a study → CFRF (DEM/DoH): This is being undertaken by CFRF⁵.
 - o E.g.: CA markets (needed to pass state law, Pacific to Plate Bill) – look to CA example of opening certain markets for fishermen
 - o E.g.: There is demand for studies on community fishing with links to new markets, for example, fisheries that represent communities yet can’t sell to them

3. Where are the places in the supply chain where underutilized species, like scup, can be redirected to local markets?

- Fishermen markets, not just at the port. That’s why it works in San Diego. Our entire population isn’t on the coast (e.g., can’t see to urban RI from Point Judith). Often they go to the coast for recreation but not necessarily to buy fish.

⁴ NOTE: Since the workshop, Dawn has formalized the Ocean State Community Seafood (L3C organization).

⁵ <http://www.cfrfoundation.org/ri-seafood/>

- Food bank needs vs. specific labelling/packaging: Eating with the Ecosystem is paving the way to overcome barriers to selling to food banks which require specific labelling/packaging so that they can give out the fish at appropriate sizes and with correct information, to their customers.
 - o Underutilized parts or underutilized species...Town Dock, Sea Freeze: Eating with the Ecosystem has set a precedent which wholesalers are helping with for this type of packaging and labelling so this can be replicated and potentially expanded.
- Small-scale (not large because of inconsistency) needs consumer education: This also can be connected to local farm consumption and farmers' markets where consumers are learning to eat what is in season and not to expect the same thing year round. However, institutional markets are harder to break into given inconsistency of supply and sizing.
 - o Not dealing with freezing for "inventory": Freezing the fish is a strategy that wholesalers use to deal with high levels coming in but the price of scup for this purpose is very low.
- Fish cakes (and food insecure populations): Fish cakes for food insecure populations could be a good value-added product for scup.⁶
- Healthcare: selling to healthcare-related institutions could be a good place to start due to high volume and their need for nutritious, inexpensive food.

4. Are there any lessons learned from ongoing efforts that should be shared more broadly?

- California seafood markets – example of seafood direct sales, capitalizing on local food interest, changing regulations for temporary markets (may be easier than straight direct sales.
 - o Fishermen markets at "temporary food" it's happening elsewhere, there are models out there including in Massachusetts and California as further discussed above. Efforts are underway in North Kingstown to establish a seasonal fishermen's market.
- Why do we need these antiquated rules about "facilities" (sink, etc.)?
 - o "established dealers" as a barrier, actually work to not allow fishermen to sell directly
 - o DoH is supposed to deal with health, not increase the price for dealers – Department of Ag is on board but not DoH.⁷
- Environmental justice, social justice – Seafood for all: Framing the issue of access to inexpensive, healthy, local seafood is one way to approach the issue and potentially

⁶ NOTE: This is happening through Eat Seconds First, a RI business combining imperfect vegetables with local fish to make fish cakes. There is interest in expanding the reach of these products. See: <http://www.eatsecondsfirst.com/>

⁷ Since the workshop, DoH has been working actively with state partners to re-think and re-organize many of its regulations regarding seafood sales.

provides a new avenue for thinking (and making policy) about local seafood. This could potentially connect with the idea of working with food banks.

- Tony's Seafood: sea robin, cod chunks, scup: these are all underutilized species and parts that could be provided in conjunction with an effort to increase access to local seafood as part of a social justice initiative.
 - o Food bank? Tony's is smaller than Town Dock and may be more amenable to including different species parts to meet social justice needs.
- Is there another angle → through recreational fisheries (education, small scale, outreach to communities → get your own fish?): This goes back to the idea that there is little known about who, how, how much and for what use the recreational catch of scup is used. Understanding more about these questions could direct outreach (i.e., informing about current regulations, nutritional information, etc.)
- A pilot 'test' → wave fees, etc. "what's good", gain momentum: Could see if DoH would wave fees to show proof of concept with a fisherman selling directly.
- Law student research project

Follow Up

The scup team has learned a lot over the first nine months of implementation. Key lessons learned include:

1. Regulatory summary – RWU law student to undertake examination of permits needed/regulations applicable/and potentially 'antiquated' rules that could be changed with a focus on DoH
2. Forming a seafood Cooperative - Dawn Mcallister has recently formalized the Ocean State Community Seafood as an L3C organization. CRC could potentially help facilitate activities through this entity.
3. Review of other states' approaches – CA and MA have potential examples for RI to emulate and to point RI regulators to look to as well.
4. Re-examine weekly average price data: This would need to be conducted in collaboration with RI DEM. If Dan Costa has another summer intern, maybe we could try to work on this.
5. Recreational fishing contribution – quantify? Look into MRIP data: MRIP data would be a good place to begin to understand the recreational fishing contribution. Then, expand to learn more about the catch, maybe as an add on to MRIP data. This has the potential for a student project and then could inform a larger proposal, perhaps with recreational fishing funds.
6. Re-invigorate "working group" to address regulatory hurdles for direct sales. Since the workshop, much work has been underway by workshop participants through their respective organizations to re-invigorate actions towards direct sales for seafood. Research and funded efforts through CFRF and Eating with the Ecosystem, as well as personal business investments by Eat Seconds First, End-O-Main Lobster, coupled with DoH and Governor's office-supported regulatory reforms, poises the state to make

significant strides in the near future towards many of the discussion topics presented at the workshop. CRC/RI Sea Grant has been active in these conversations and is currently helping these entities develop a pilot project for direct sales.

Recommendations & Future Scenarios

The project team has crafted the following list of recommendations and possible future scenarios that the state should consider in supporting more direct-to-consumer seafood sales strategies. These recommendations reflect the needs and concerns brought forward through this project and subsequent workshop and can be incorporated into different efforts currently underway in the state.

- Contribute to blogs, such as Eating with the Ecosystem and their newsletter
- Share results from implementation with the NOAA Fisheries - Northeast Regional Center.
- Engage Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative to brainstorm about outreach activities that would help facilitate distribution of underutilized species
- Continue engaging the AARI by making a community presentation of this research

Conclusions

The workshop was an opportunity to learn about some new issues and to solicit feedback about the research we had conducted. The event also provided an avenue to brainstorm potential ways forward in providing increased access for Rhode Island residents to underutilized species and parts that are otherwise going to more distant markets and providing Rhode Island fishermen with lower prices than if they were consumed locally. Attendees were interested, engaged and forthcoming about comments, constructive criticisms and new ideas. The ideas for follow up could provide a way forward for student engagement, outreach, and continued research into increasing access for Rhode Island residents to Rhode Island-landed seafood.

Appendix I – Workshop Agenda

“It’s sc(up) to us.” Matching local demand & supply for scup in RI

**** October 3, 2017 ** 12:30 - 3:30PM ****

220 South Ferry Road, Narragansett, RI

Mosby Center, Graduate School of Oceanography, University of RI

Workshop Objectives

- Understand why and how scup currently moves through market channels in Rhode Island
- Recognized market demand for scup in Rhode Island that is not currently being met
- Collectively identify:
 1. Places in the existing market supply chains where scup could be redirected to local markets; and
 2. Needs to overcome barriers for executing those changes.

Workshop Agenda

12:30 - Scup Tasting

12:30 – 1:00- Introductions

- Project Team at Coastal Resources Center/URI – Elin Torell, Dawn Kotowicz, Kristine Beran, Azure Cygler
- Participant introductions

1:00 – 1:15 – How have catches and prices for scup changed since 2010?

1:15 - 1:30 – Consumer preferences for locally abundant, underutilized seafood species in Rhode Island

- Questions & Discussion

1:30 – 1:45 – How does scup currently move through markets in Rhode Island?

- Questions & Discussion

1:45 – 2:00 - Break

2:00 – 2:15 – Working groups

- Questions to consider:
 - *What are places in the supply chain where underutilized species like scup be redirected to local markets?*
 - *What are the barriers to increase local consumption?*
 - *What needs to happen to overcome these barriers?*

- *Are there any lessons learned from ongoing efforts that should be shared more broadly?*

2:15 – 2:45 – Discuss with whole group

- *Each group to discuss their ideas*
- *Identify overarching ideas and next steps*

2:45 – Wrap up and thank you