

DRAFT

MINUTES
MEETING
CT SEAFOOD COUNCIL
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES, MILFORD
May 6, 2009
1:30 P.M.

Co-Chair Larry Williams called meeting to order at 1:45 p.m.

Members present: Tessa Getchis, Eric Smith, Bill Clayton, D.J. King, Mike Theiler, Larry Williams, David Carey, Don Bell, Linda Piotrowicz, and Barbara Gordon, Executive Director.

Representatives from the U.S. Congressional offices were present as follows:

- Bill Ciotto, from Cong. John Larson's office
- Jenny Contois, from Cong. Joe Courtney's office
- Kim Junior, from Cong. Rosa DeLauro's office
- Ed Mann, from Senator Chris Dodd's office

Executive Director Barbara Gordon introduced each representative and thanked them for their attendance.

Regular agenda was suspended in order to proceed with the conversations with the Congressional representatives.

Bobby Guzzo, speaking for the Stonington fleet, spoke of Amendment 16 which reduced days of groundfishing to 40, but for example, in the case of flounder, every hour counts for 2, virtually cutting hours down to 20. There are plenty of fish, according to Mr. Guzzo, more than are being reported. These regulations in effect are only putting the fishermen out of business. The process needs to be slowed down. Nothing is being mentioned about the effect of striped bass as predators on the population.

The Magnuson Act needs to be administered as it was meant to be. Fish are coming back, especially yellowtails.

Jennie Contois read recently released rules and regulations, which took effect on May 1.

Fishermen do not want a hand-out. They simply want to work, according to Mr. Gambardella. His business cannot survive if fishermen don't fish. Now, the Feds want a "watchdog" on the boats 100 of the time.

“Enormous, Immensely Complicated Intervention” is a book tracing the history of how fishermen got into this mess. Should be read, (Dykstra – Amazon.com) Only 6 out of 17 members of the New England Fisheries Council are from the industry
Jenny Contois mentioned having met with Sally McGee of the Council.

Eric Smith, who served as chair of the New England Council for years, said the issue goes back to the Magnuson Act; Council has become advisory; Act was good. “Don’t overfish”. – good goals and objectives. Environmental lobbies always win and more restrictions are placed on fishermen. Law leans heavily on replenishing stock – hurting fishermen in the meantime.

Solution is with Congress. We need our delegation to bring economic assistance to industry; need to coalesce with Massachusetts delegation.

Ed Mann, of Sen. Dodd’s office said delegation needs to know what fishermen like and what they don’t like.

Further discussion re: Magnuson Act. Bill Ciotto from Rep. Larson’s office, said perhaps fishermen should take money from government, but representatives from the Stonington fleet said “we don’t need bail-out we need butt-out!”

Mr. Mann requested specific facts from the fisheries as to their needs. Response was: “We want an equal playing field.”

Bill Clayton mentioned that licensing is now closed; no mechanism to obtain a license at present. Mike Theiler talked about the vanishing infrastructure. Once it is gone, the industry goes, as well. Now a fisherman has to travel to get bait, for example.

Joe Gilbert of Briarpatch Enterprises said the scalloping industry is healthy at the moment, but other fishing needs to be rebuilt. Asked that regulations be changed. No one is happy with management.
Perhaps data coming off brand-new federal boat might bring improvement to statistics.

D.J. King, speaking for the lobster industry, said that a new gauge increase would cut 40% off catch. This would also hurt restaurants who like to offer less expensive deals on their menus.

Eric Smith responded that Atlantic States Commission regulates the lobster industry. Basis of the V-notch program is to avoid a gauge increase in January. However, if there is no money for the program, target numbers cannot be reached.

Suggested list of specific goals coming out of today’s meeting:

- 1) Supporting Rep. Barney Frank’s proposed legislation to help industry.
- 2) Getting rid of unrealistic goals.
- 3) Continuing V-notch program
- 4) Future meetings.
- 5) Specific list of needs.

Larry Williams suggested we consolidate needs and put together a letter from the CT Seafood Council doing so.

Although basically shrimp, 85% of fish and seafood is imported from other countries. Bill Clayton: Those in need should be offered federal licenses to enable them to fish for their own food.

Eric Smith reiterated that industry does not want a hand-out, but that where a piece of infrastructure is needed, such as a dock repair, or an ice-machine, that would be acceptable economic assistance.

Ed Mann suggested the economic stimulus program might be used for these matters. He distributed copies of the program. He agreed that sometimes government does get in the way.

Larry Williams spoke of the long standing frustration of fishermen who have the need to be heard.

Executive Director spoke of having a Congressional hearing in Washington, D.C. with Mass., RI, and Maine to inform Congress of industries problems. Will work on a plan to do this.

Delegation will be invited to subsequent Seafood Council meetings. Restaurant Association should attend as well.

Meeting temporarily adjourned while delegation representatives took leave. Resumed at 3:15 p.m.

Minutes of previous meeting of April 1,2009, accepted by motion of Bill Clayton, seconded by D.J. King, approved.

CO-CHAIR'S REPORT – MIKE THEILER

Spoke of New London Day article written against the V-notch program. Editorial angered many. Executive Director submitted response, as did others – but Day did not print any.

Bureau Director Dave Carey informed the members that there is an attempt by the Commissioner of Agriculture, per Governor's orders, to terminate the Seafood Council contract. Suggestion made that letter go out to Commissioner, OPM, and Attorney General opposing this termination. Motion made, by D.J. King, seconded by Larry Williams, approved, to send said letter.

Next meeting of the Council will be on June 3, 2009 at 1:30 in Old Lyme

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Gordon, Executive Director.