**Meeting Location:** State of CT, Bureau of Aquaculture & Laboratory Services, 190 Rogers Avenue, Milford, CT 06460

**Members Present:** Barbara Gordon, David Carey, Larry Williams, D.J. King, Nancy Balcom, and Mike Theiler.

**Guests Present:** Linda Piotrowicz, Office of the Commissioner, and Melissa Bruni, intern, Connecticut Department of Agriculture.

**Members Absent:** Tessa Getchis, Paul Formica, David Simpson, William Clayton, Chad Simoneaux.

**Meeting Scribe:** Barbara Gordon, Executive Director CT Seafood Council.

The Seafood Council Meeting was convened by Co-Chair, Larry Williams at 2:50 p.m.

Co-Chairman Williams announced that the meeting agenda would be condensed due to time constraints, and turned the floor over to Linda Piotrowicz for her presentation on the Farm-to-Chef program. Ms. Piotrowicz works in the office of Commissioner Steven Reviczky at the Connecticut Department of Agriculture, focusing on the Governor’s Council for Agricultural Development as well as other planning, policy, and legislative issues. She previously worked in the agency’s marketing division, where she developed the ongoing Farm-to-Chef program.

Ms. Piotrowicz spoke on the Department of Agriculture’s Farm-to-Chef program in an effort to inform the shellfishing industry of the program’s objective and goals and to promote the use of this program for product marketing.

* The Farm to Chef Program began in 2006 via the Community Investment Act with the purpose of working with restaurants and institutions. At this time, the kick-off event was held in the Town of Stonington, adjacent from the docks.
* A weeklong promotional event, Farm-to-Chef Week, was first held in 2010 to help showcase chefs’ use of Connecticut Grown ingredients. Since 2010, it has been an annual event held each September. Event registrants are those who serve the food (e.g., restaurants, markets, schools, etc.); producers are encouraged to reach out to those businesses that have signed up to participate regarding use of their products in menus.
* Ms. Piotrowicz is currently working with a consultant to design a stand-alone Farm-to-Chef website that will be more user friendly and enable both agricultural producers and foodservice buyers to enter their company and other information quickly and accurately, creating an online venue for marketing product. Farmers can use the website to find foodservice providers who would like to use their products.
* Ms. Piotrowicz praised the work performance of Melissa Bruni, who is finishing up a summer internship at the Department of Agriculture. She hopes to have a paid intern position approved and filled soon to provide additional assistance with the Farm-to-Chef Program.
* The Department is in the process of selecting and hiring a new director of the agency’s Bureau of Agricultural Development and Resource Preservation, which includes marketing, farmland preservation, and the Hartford Regional Market.
* Distribution challenges associated with restaurants and institutions include product volume and seasonality.
* A company called Farm Fresh Express was one of the first to address this challenge within the program, providing delivery of local farm products from and throughout the state. The company is in its 6th or 7th year providing this service.
* The Seafood Industry has the opportunity to brand and market shellfish and seafood as part of an overall Connecticut Grown branding and marketing effort, using the Farm-to-Chef program to develop restaurant customers.

Larry Williams inquired if Ms. Piotrowicz had outsourced information from other states doing a similar Farm-to-Chef project. She responded that she has spoken with other states over the past eight years, primarily those who have contacted her to learn more about Connecticut’s program.

Scott Miller of Max’s Restaurant Group has expressed an interest in helping to promote Connecticut oysters. Larry Williams said he has noticed that shoppers are using more discretion when shopping and that they are doing more reading of ingredients.

Mike Theiler commented that fishing is a very competitive industry, making it more difficult for fishermen to form relationships and work together.

Melissa Bruni spoke of her outreach to Farm-to-Chef Week participants and the opportunity to continue to help educate chefs about where food comes from.

No further business.

Meeting adjourned at 3:26 p.m.

The next meeting will be held \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.