



**Regional Food System Action Plan
Community Advisory Board Meeting
December 10, 2025, from 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m., virtually via Zoom**

Attendees

Alyssa Papantonakis
Bill Napolitano
Cassandra Thayer
Chris Heffernan
Debra Roberts
Frank Basler
Howard Randall
Jill Slankas

Josiane Santos
Karen Barry
Liz Wiley
Michael Jackman
Molly Vollmer
Nathan Brown
Rita Higgins

Summary

- Theme 4 of the Plymouth County Food System Action Plan focuses on distributed and democratic leadership in the local food system
- The fishing industry is an important part of Plymouth County's food identity, particularly along the coastal areas
- There appears to be a lack of formal food policy councils specific to Plymouth County, though some organizations like South Shore Community Action Council are beginning to host regular stakeholder meetings
- Few formal cooperatives exist in southeastern Massachusetts compared to other regions, which was identified as a potential gap in the food system
- Several organizations were identified that support the local fishing industry, including Massachusetts Fisherman's Partnership and Mass Lobsterman's Association
- Faith-based organizations play a significant role in food distribution throughout Plymouth County
- The Sheriff's Department's aquaculture program was highlighted as an innovative initiative that provides training and distributes tilapia to local food pantries

Discussion

Local seafood/food policy bodies

- Frank: Plymouth has a vibrant fishing community, particularly growing in aquaculture.
- Michael: Southeast Massachusetts Agricultural Partnership (SEMAP) includes aquaculture and seafood groups
- Frank: Town of Plymouth does significant work with aquaculture through Natural Resources with David Gould and his team
- Molly: Massachusetts Shellfish Association includes all shellfish officers in municipalities
- Michael: Mass Lobsterman's Association has strong presence in Marshfield/Scituate
- Howard: Town permitting authorities regulate oyster bed access
- Karen: Massachusetts Fisherman's Partnership board of directors was recommended by Chip Terry
- Liz: New Bedford Ocean Cluster has an aquaculture subcommittee led by Dale Leavitt
- Michael: Mass Seafood Collaborative works across the state
- Frank: Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) with Brad Chase works on restoring fish
- Frank: Central Plymouth County Water District Commission purchased a water dredge to help fish movement
- Multiple organizations represent fishing interests but may not fully include marginalized voices
- Plymouth County has a long coastline with active fishing communities
- Native American fishing rights need consideration (Herring Pond Wampanoag, Mashpee Wampanoag)

Leadership and policy training for fishers/aquaculture

- Michael: The Fishing Partnership likely provides training for fishermen.
- Howard: Boys and Girls Clubs provide training for young people in aquaculture
- Karen: Quincy College may have had an aquaculture certification course
- Karen: The Sheriff's Department provides certification for participants to take into the marketplace
- Karen: Massasoit was working on the curriculum as part of associate degrees
- Several educational institutions provide training, but may need more formal programs
- More outreach needed to determine extent of training opportunities

Representation of BIPOC and small boat fishers in decision-making

- Michael: Herring Pond Wampanoag tribe should be consulted about their involvement.
- Howard: Mashpee Wampanoag and other Native American groups have traditional fishing rights
- Howard: A Native American woman was trying to revive seaweed harvesting
- More information needed about the representation of marginalized voices
- Indigenous perspectives are particularly important to include

Food policy councils in Plymouth County

- Karen: South Shore Community Action Council hosts stakeholder meetings.
- Karen: Nikki has hosted two meetings and is planning another in March
- Frank: Plymouth Economic Foundation runs the Blue Economy conference annually
- Liz: South Coast Food Policy Council (Marion Institute) works with some Plymouth County towns
- No dedicated Plymouth County food policy council exists
- Some organizations beginning to fill this role
- Liz noted the goal is to eventually have a unified Food Policy Council for Southeastern Mass

Cooperatives and collective infrastructure

- Frank: Conservation groups are adding infrastructure like oyster beds.
- Karen: Wellspring provides support services and distribution in Brockton and Hull
- Karen: St. Vincent de Paul hosts many food pantries in churches
- Karen: Shane Gives Thanks and Kava do large distributions
- Karen: Middleborough has a multi-town distribution
- Molly: Coastal Food Shed services some Plymouth County towns
- Karen: Find Help website and South Shore Community Action Council provide information on food resources
- Michael: Mass Lobsterman's Association advocates for lobstermen
- Howard: Town of Plymouth Natural Resources and environmental subgroups support fishing industries
- Faith-based organizations play a major role in food distribution
- Few formal cooperatives exist in southeastern Massachusetts compared to other regions

Local food retail and distribution

- Karen: Mulaney's Fish Market in Scituate processes locally caught fish.
- Frank: Plymouth Farmers Market is popular (on hiatus for winter)
- Karen: Horner (?) Farms sells products from multiple local producers
- Karen: Vicenti's in Brockton partners with Brockton Neighborhood Health Center and has a test kitchen
- Michael: Ocean Spray is the biggest cooperative in Plymouth County (cranberries)
- Howard: Old Colony Y Stoughton Branch has CSA-type food distribution in summer
- Karen: Island Creek Oysters has expanded to scallop production
- Karen: Sheriff's Department grows tilapia that gets processed by Mulaney's and distributed to food pantries
- Several farm stands and markets sell local products
- Some innovative models exist combining retail with other community services
- Local fish often don't stay in the region

Mentorship and business development

- Karen: There's collaboration between farmers and mentorship in the aquaculture industry.
- Karen: Sheriff's Department provides certification for jobs
- Karen: Cranberry Growers Association and Cape Cod Growers Association provide collaborative learning
- Informal mentorship exists in farming communities
- More formal programs may be needed