

**Port Meeting Summary:**  
*Charleston, SC*  
*April 22, 2014, 10 a.m. session*

The meeting was held at the Geechie Dock on Shem Creek in Mt. Pleasant, SC. Participants were primarily local chefs and commercial fishermen. The meeting was a discussion of fisheries management and its impact on local seafood supply and the viability of commercial fishermen in the area.

**Issues --**

- Magnuson Stevens Act constraints limit the commercial fishing fleets and product availability for restaurants.
- Seafood availability is too uncertain.
- Product quality is critical to chefs; they want fresh sustainably harvested seafood.
- Chefs want to offer seafood that is unique and not something that is available on every menu across the nation (like salmon, tilapia, etc.)
  - Consumers want a food experience and having variety of fish to offer is critical.
- Chefs are concerned about fishermen being able to continue fishing under current regulations (current structure is not economically viable for fishermen).
- Chefs need access to information on product availability (i.e. fishery openings/closures, quota monitoring) so they can plan their purchasing, seasonal menus and overall business.
- Differences between working directly with dealers vs. wholesalers.
  - Chefs emphasized how building a relationship directly with fishermen (vs. a dealer) is key to being able to purchase and offer species that are not typically found on menus.
  - Dealing directly with fishermen promotes access to alternative species with provides variety to customers.
- Consumer demand can influence fishing pressure on certain species.
- Trip limits are beneficial to a steady supply of seafood (i.e., vermilion snapper split season and step down.)
- Size limits for fish are no longer a limiting factor for chefs; Any size limit of fish is commercially viable to a chef; they use the whole fish no matter what.
- Timing of stock assessments takes too long.

**Solutions--**

- Need to develop a faster process for stock assessments to ensure availability of product.
- Need spawning information on triggerfish to determine appropriateness of split seasons and other management measures.
- Need to consider trip limits and measure that will ensure reliable supply of seafood to chefs/consumers.
- Need to have 3-5 species of fish available year round (even if they are different species throughout the year; having 3-5 allows chefs flexibility in their menus, purchasing practices and ability to plan).

- Need to address latent effort in the commercial fishery to determine the true capacity of the fishery. (Manage the commercial fishery for full-time fishermen.)
- Need to address and consider the value of owner-operators when making management decisions for the commercial sector.
- Develop a “one-stop shop” for chefs/consumers to access region by region information on available quota, fishery openings and closures.
- Consider working with the Department of Agriculture (state and federal) and use their promotions models for farmers and crops in the seafood/fisheries realm
- Consider the value of programs like the SC Aquarium’s Sustainable Seafood Initiative in educating both chefs and consumers about fisheries issues that lead to seafood availability and sustainability.