



Courtesy RDI

► The catalysts

Capitalizing on assets: Nestled on Tillamook Bay along Oregon's North Coast lies the small city of Garibaldi, population 815. At the center of town is the Port of Garibaldi, the physical and cultural heart of the community, where around 60 small commercial fishing vessels are docked when they aren't out on the ocean in search of seven types of seafood, including Dungeness crab, Albacore tuna, and Chinook salmon. These boats represent local, independently-owned small businesses, often employing a number of deckhands as workers and supporting an array interconnected local businesses. This small-scale fleet primarily uses low-impact fishing gear and catches small volumes of fish on daytrips allowing for delivery of high-quality, individually handled seafood. The Port of Garibaldi, which dates to the early twentieth century, is the nearest seaport to Portland, Oregon, located about 85 miles west of the city along Highway 101. It is part of the Tillamook County port area, considered the second largest of the state's smaller ports by revenue generation, though it still brings in a small fraction

Lifting All Boats in Northwest Oregon

of income when compared to Oregon's larger ports.

Challenges to the small-scale seafood industry:

Like many other small fishing fleets across the country, the Garibaldi fleet is facing a variety of challenges caused by both internal and external forces. The workforce in the fishing industry is aging (the median age is 51.5 years) and there are barriers to succession planning as well as in attracting younger workers to the field. The impacts of industry consolidation can pose threats to small boat operators like those in Garibaldi, resulting in fewer options to sell their product and having to settle for lower prices because of a lack of competition. Other challenges include those caused by a changing climate and its impact on sea life, the high cost of fishing permits, and the general operations of running a fishing vessel.

Strengthening the economy: A stronger small-scale seafood value chain for Garibaldi and wider Tillamook County has the potential to improve the economy in a place where the unemployment rate is over 6 percent and median income is 77 percent of the median for the rest of the state. By expanding economic opportunities for selling their product and providing stability for North Coast fishermen, a well-functioning value chain can improve the livelihoods of boat owners, crew, processors, retailers, and others living in the area, all while keeping the community's strong maritime identity alive.

► The value opportunities

Efforts to develop the small-scale seafood value chain in Garibaldi and Tillamook County date back to 2013 when Rural Development Initiatives



(RDI), an Oregon-based nonprofit that supports economic development in rural communities, launched a pilot program to encourage rural regions throughout the state to explore the principles of WealthWorks, including building value chains and identifying assets and different forms of wealth.

A diverse group of partners serving the area came together to drive this initiative and explore the possibilities for the North Coast. In addition to RDI, these included the Columbia-Pacific Economic Development District (Col-Pac), a private, nonprofit organization focused on encouraging economic diversification and resilience throughout Northwest Oregon; the Port of Garibaldi, which promotes local economic development and manages the waterfront and supports vessels; the Economic Development Council of Tillamook County, the county-wide economic development organization; Visit Tillamook Coast, the local tourism entity; and the Tillamook Bay Community College Small Business Development Center. The strength of this coalition is its breadth of expertise and the mix of resources each organization brings to the initiative.

In January 2017, with funding from the Ford Family Foundation, Col-Pac contracted with two staff members from Ecotrust (with over 20 years' experience serving fishing



communities) to serve as value chain coordinator. Ecotrust, located in Portland, is a nonprofit focused on advancing social equity, economic opportunity, and environmental stewardship. “Fishing communities across the country are grappling with the interrelated challenges of maintaining or reviving their economic, social, cultural, and ecological wellbeing in the face of change,” says Kelly Harrell, one of the value chain coordinators with Ecotrust. “WealthWorks offers a different, more enlightened model of economic and community development that addresses root causes that are at the core of thriving fishing communities. For example, the WealthWorks focus on local ownership gets at the heart of the struggle to empower fishermen and reverse consolidation within the industry.”

With the value chain coordinator in place, the partners took a deep dive into analyzing and understanding the intricacies of the local seafood industry. This included conducting research, organizing partner meetings, carrying out interviews and surveys with fishermen and regional partners, participating in local events, and mapping out the value chain. Through this effort, key priorities emerged for growing the value chain: improving seafood industry infrastructure; monitoring and enhancing local fisheries access and ownership; and supporting fishermen and seafood businesses in business development and connections to markets.

The demand

“The seafood industry is very mature with lots of channels that make it a hard value chain to transform,” says Amy Hause, RDI’s Rural Economic Vitality Consultant and value chain coach. “[It operates] in a system that is extremely complicated.” Because of the many factors that affect this value chain, Hause notes that the team had



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to do considerably more assessment upfront than initially anticipated and will continue to do so throughout the process. “Assessment never ends,” she says.

Because of the complexity and the nature of seafood, this value chain has its own set of unique characteristics that require special consideration. “WealthWorks value chains, like other value chains, are focused on demand. Yet, because wild fisheries are a natural resource whose supply is highly variable based on an array of environmental and political factors, it is important to consider supply when determining value chain opportunities,” notes the recently completed Seafood Value Chain Assessment for Garibaldi and Tillamook County. Supply can be affected by a mix of factors, including regulations related to permitting and conservation, the impact of climate change, weather, and the unpredictability of what each fishing expedition will reel in.

Fortunately, the research, conversations, and surveys conducted as part of this ongoing value chain effort demonstrate that there is a demand for high-quality, local, and sustainable seafood that the Garibaldi fleet targets. Retailers and the public at large are demanding this type of seafood, and an informed public now wants to know where their food comes from, who is catching it, and what fishing practices are employed. “Shop the Dock,” an event

organized periodically by local and regional partners, is an opportunity for participants to meet local fishermen, purchase fish directly off their boat, learn more about the fishing industry, watch cooking demonstrations, and get a behind-the-scenes tour at local seafood markets. Visit Tillamook Coast’s “Crave the Coast” event in September 2018 brought in 700 visitors to Garibaldi, nearly doubling the size of the town for this event which featured 40 local chefs, fishermen, business owners, and winemakers. These events, along with ongoing branding and marketing of the Tillamook coast as a destination and increased food-based tourism, are generating a growing interest in Garibaldi’s “artisanal fleet.”

Putting it together: Creating opportunities for the fishing fleet and the wider community

This multi-faceted effort to lift up Garibaldi’s local seafood economy seeks to improve livelihoods for small seafood businesses by opening up local and urban markets for the region’s sustainably-sourced, high-quality product. The initiative is aiming to nurture the value chain in such a way that it will also boost wider economic development and workforce opportunities in the region, particularly for the area’s low-income residents.

Following initial research and identifying priorities, it became clear



that for this value chain to reach its full potential, the fleet would need additional infrastructure and services to enable it to compete in the market. An upcoming feasibility study, funded by USDA, will look into the viability of expanding services and infrastructure at the Port, including cold storage, an ice machine, and fish grinder. The importance of these services cannot be overstated and have the potential to transform the local seafood industry. Garibaldi only has one privately-owned ice machine and freezer space in general is minimal, severely limiting business opportunities for fishermen whose product is extremely perishable. Additionally, access to a fish grinder could both reduce the cost of removing fish waste and open up opportunities for converting fish waste into compost.

The feasibility study will be carried out in 2019, building on the information gathered through a 2018 value chain assessment that captured the current state of the local fishing industry. “This effort is drawing the fishing community together to start looking holistically at how we can make this industry within the community work better,” says Mary McArthur, executive director of Col-Pac. The results of the feasibility study “will give the Port solid data that it can use to pursue funding for improvements,” she says, rather than just relying on anecdotal evidence to demonstrate what is a very real need on the waterfront.

The long-term vision for this value chain is to have a positive ripple effect that reaches the entire community, particularly those struggling to make ends meet. Efforts are underway to explore ways to get to fuller employment in the region and fill in the gaps that may exist for workers in a seasonal economy. The value chain partners are also aware of and interested in addressing larger structural challenges facing workers, including better access to transportation.

The bottom line: Replicating successes

The seafood value chain work that is underway in Garibaldi and Tillamook County is being driven by a diverse collaborative of partners that all contribute a critical piece to build capacity for this effort. The hiring of a non-local expert organization to serve as coordinator has created both opportunities and challenges for nurturing the value chain. Says RDI’s Amy Hause, “The advantages are sector knowledge, a fresh outside perspective, and other programs and resources that the community can access. The disadvantages are in building trust through a consistent on-the-ground presence, and maintaining sustainability” in the effort. Generating trust as an outside entity entering any community is difficult—and it is particularly challenging in close-knit and competitive fishing communities like Garibaldi that have had to be self-reliant and independent for decades.

Due to personnel changes, the value chain partners are now looking into a new coordinator model where Ecotrust will subcontract part of the role to one or two locals while still providing oversight. This hybrid approach may be able to strike a balance by capitalizing on local knowledge while also building capacity with outside expertise and resources. Future lessons learned are certain to be gleaned from this hybrid model and are worth future analysis.

Finally, because of the complexity of value chains in general—and this one in particular—Kelly Harrell from Ecotrust recommends that coordinators “document everything” and “create a system for tracking documents and putting everything in one place so everyone involved in the effort can be on the same page.” It takes time under even the best circumstances to plan, develop, and implement a value chain. Planning meetings, engaging with stakeholders, mapping the chain, and more can



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become a logistical challenge. Therefore, staying organized and keeping everyone on the same page is critical to maintaining momentum and sustaining enthusiasm around the process.

Funding the value chain

A mix of funding sources were utilized to both launch and maintain this value chain. Supported by a \$116,000 grant from the Ford Family Foundation, the Columbia-Pacific Economic Development District hired staff from Ecotrust to act as the value chain coordinator beginning in January 2017. USDA provided \$15,000 through a Rural Business Development Grant that will fund a feasibility study that will explore options to expand infrastructure services including cold storage, a fish grinder, and ice machine. This feasibility study is expected to be carried out in 2019, following the completion of the needs assessment in 2018. The core partners on this effort—RDI, Col-Pac, the Port of Garibaldi, the Economic Development Council of Tillamook County, Tillamook Bay Community College Small Business Development Center, and Visit Tillamook Coast—have all provided matching funds through staff time to support the overall value chain effort.

- **Individual capital:** Increasing local access and ownership for fishermen and improving business management skills and practices in a dynamic and highly competitive business environment will expand business growth and opportunities; Growing the market and receiving higher prices for seafood will better serve captains and crews.
- **Intellectual capital:** Knowledge of the fishing industry and practices will be passed on to a new generation of workers, continuing a decades-long tradition in the region; Launching branding, marketing, and tourism-related initiatives will better market this artisanal fleet's product.
- **Social capital:** The value chain is building bonds and trust between the fishermen and buyers; Events such as "Shop the Dock," "Crave the Coast," and others support placemaking in Garibaldi and bring residents together to celebrate local industries and mingle with fishermen and other workers.
- **Natural capital:** Alternative ways to reduce fish waste and new uses for fish waste as compost are being explored; Fishermen employ environmentally-sound fishing methods and gear; Opportunities to sell the fish locally will limit CO2 emissions from road transportation; Engaging fishermen in the management and policy to sustain the health of fisheries resources and the marine ecosystem they depend on will lead to better environmental outcomes.
- **Built capital:** Waterfront and port improvements and services are currently being considered through a new feasibility study; Supporting the industry and creating tourism opportunities can lead to main street redevelopment and additional amenities for residents and tourists alike.
- **Political capital:** Elected officials have shown much interest in supporting projects and initiatives such as this value chain that would benefit the region; Increased knowledge has allowed the Port to respond to fishermen's needs and have greater leverage to make changes to benefit the community; Col-Pac's role as an economic development district allows it to nurture strong relationships with legislators, as well as state and federal officials.
- **Financial capital:** The value chain and infrastructure assessments are positioning the Port to access greater investment and grant funds for Port development; More tourism, local events, and other programming that showcase the seafood industry will benefit multiple sectors of the community as more visitors are attracted to the region; Competitive markets will help generate a higher price for fishermen at the dock.
- **Cultural capital:** Local fishing traditions and culture are transmitted to a new generation of fishermen and fishing industry workers, maintaining a maritime culture in Garibaldi and the North Coast region.
- **Local ownership and control:** Fishing boats in Garibaldi are small, locally-owned businesses. Supporting local fishermen through this value chain sets them up to be more competitive and in-demand, despite the challenges resulting from fishing industry consolidation and the impacts of larger, outside economic forces.
- **Better livelihoods:** Positive ripple effects emanating from the Port as a result of new services and markets for fishermen will ensure that there are better wages and improved quality of life for those who work on the boats, on the docks, and in the community.

Information sources:

Seafood Value Chain Assessment for Garibaldi and Tillamook County: A Guide for Building Wealth & Well-Being Within the Region's Small-Scale Fishing Industry (2018)

Port of Garibaldi USDA Rural Business Development Grant Application (2018)

<https://www.rdiinc.org>

<http://www.nworegon.org>

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<https://ecotrust.org>

Personal communication with Kelly Harrell, Amy Hause, and Mary McArthur

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