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Contact

Katy Rexford, katy@akmarine.org, 907-277-5357

Brett Tolley, brett@namanet.org, 718-570-2377

LOCAL CATCH NETWORK OFFERS SOLUTIONS DURING COVID-19 CRISIS

North American network of community-based seafood businesses steps up during a time when consumers are relying more on local and direct seafood supply chains.

This week, the Local Catch Network launched a coordinated effort to support the growing demand for locally caught and direct-marketed seafood as well as the growing challenges spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic. With an increasing number of U.S. households seeking out local sources of food and home delivery options, the network - comprised of over 500 fishermen, organizers, researchers, and seafood eaters - is helping make it easier for seafood producers and consumers to connect as well as adapt with innovative online seafood locator tools and digital forums.

“In just the past ten days we have seen a significant increase in direct to consumer sales of both shelf-stable and frozen seafood. It’s encouraging that even during this difficult time a growing number of community-based fishermen and organizations like ours can still provide healthy, wild seafood for families to enjoy at home,” said Katy Rexford, Director of Catch 49, an Alaska-based community-supported fishery and member of the Local Catch Network Executive Committee.

In response to COVID-19, the Local Catch Network is expanding its web-based [Seafood Finder mapping tool](#), which consumers can use to find seafood suppliers based on location, species, delivery method, and business values. Seafood eaters are encouraged to use the Seafood Finder to search for and procure sustainably caught, fully traceable seafood. Fishermen and seafood suppliers with the ability to direct market their products are invited to join the Local Catch Network and add their business to the Seafood Finder at www.localcatch.org.

“We are seeing more and more consumers looking for direct access to safe, healthy, local seafood. In New York we are responding by launching the largest Community Supported Fishery program the state has ever seen,” said Elise Gilchrist, Director of Communications for Dock to Dish.

In addition, on March 31st the Network is launching a series of video forums during which seafood harvesters, processors, and distributors will be able to discuss experiences, trends, challenges, and solutions related to COVID-19. Forums will be complemented by a member’s Facebook Group. For more information about these upcoming forums, industry members can visit the [Local Catch Network Facebook page](#) and Local Catch Network [website](#).

“This time of hardship has been an important reminder that the people providing our food as well as local and regional supply chains are essential. For several years the Local Catch Network has led the charge toward a more values-based seafood supply chain designed to be more resilient and beneficial to everyone, including our ocean and waterways. We know it's time to step up even more and that’s why amidst this crisis the Network is doing everything it can to ensure that seafood eaters and community-based seafood businesses have the information and support they need to feed people well,” said Brett Tolley of the Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance.

“These recent changes in the seafood marketplace make the work of the Local Catch Network especially important and relevant. The last few weeks are clear evidence that American consumers want to trust where their fish is coming from and want to feel good about the fish they are buying. Thanks to Dock to Dish’s community-based supply chain and others in the Local Catch Network, we are uniquely positioned to be resilient and help ensure that Americans continue to have easy access to nutritious seafood during this time of crisis,” Gilchrist added.

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ABOUT THE LOCAL CATCH NETWORK

Established in 2011, the Local Catch Network is a community-of-practice that is made up of fishermen, organizers, researchers, and consumers from across North America that are committed to providing local, healthful, low-impact, and sustainable seafood via community supported fisheries (CSFs) and other direct marketing arrangements. At the heart of community-based fisheries are community-based fishermen who live and work in the communities where they fish. They are typically independent, owner-operators, and are inherently committed to the long-term health of the marine ecosystem. The network is coordinated by a volunteer Executive Committee with backbone support from the Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance and the University of Maine. More information is available here: www.localcatch.org.