



2021

ANNUAL REPORT



Dear Network Members,

Every day we are humbled and inspired by the work you do to strengthen – in profoundly deep and meaningful ways – the health of our oceans and the communities that depend on them. The goal of the Local Catch Network is to help bring visibility to this work and provide a space for peer-to-peer exchange, learning, and relationship building. Never before have we felt so fortunate to be part of a community and this one in particular. In this report, we review our work over the past year and highlight several of our initiatives for 2022.

We look forward to continuing to work with you and invite others to be part of the next chapter of our work.

Sincerely,

Local Catch Network Executive Committee



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Join Our Community

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Network. Our Collective Work.

The Local Catch Network (LCN) is made up of fishing families, community-based organizations, researchers, and technical assistance providers who are working to foster resilience in diverse communities across North America by building stronger and more robust local and regional food systems. LCN is a hub for knowledge exchange, innovation, and research. Established in 2011, today the network is made up of over 500 members, including over 200 seafood businesses.

Vision

LCN works to strengthen local and regional seafood systems in support of healthy and resilient communities across North America.

Values



Community Based Fisheries



Fair Access



Fair Pricing



Eating with the Ecosystem



Simple Supply Chains



Honor the Ocean



Catch and Handle with Honor



Ecosystem Based Approaches



Creativity and Collaboration



Blue lobsters are said to bring good luck.

ARTIST: RACHEL STRADER

© Rachel Strader

Impact: Our year in review

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought into sharp focus the diverse roles that local food systems play in nourishing people, sustaining livelihoods and culture, and bringing people together. Endeavoring to help build the infrastructure, knowledge, and connections necessary to support local and regional systems and the seafood harvesters that contribute to them, our work centers on: **(1)** network building; **(2)** technical assistance; and **(3)** research.

#1

Largest network in North America dedicated to small-scale fisheries and local and regional food systems

811

Locations to purchase seafood on new LCN **Seafood Finder**

234,000,000

Projected audience reached from LCN media coverage

31,000

Visitors to the LCN website

51

New members that joined the network (**become a member**)

12

Newsletters covering highlights from the network and up-to-date information on resources, funding, and technical assistance opportunities (**sign up here**)

Network Building

Our network grew and grew and then continued to grow in 2021. Our current membership includes representatives from 18 of the 21 coastal states in the United States as well as Mexico and Canada. An estimated 75% of network members identify as seafood business owners and/or members of fishing cooperatives. Of these enterprises, nearly 40% are women-owned and 12% are owned by Black, Indigenous, or People of Color. When asked how they would describe LCN, network members most commonly use the term **community**.

“We’ve been fishing for generations, selling our own catch for seven years, and custom processing for ourselves and fellow fishermen in Cordova Alaska for four years. We’ve been making it up as we go along, but every step in our journey has been for sustainability, traceability, and premium quality. It’s been amazing to find the support of Local Catch and to realize we aren’t alone in this endeavor.”

– Sena Wheeler, Owner/Operator of Sena Sea

LCN’s continued commitment to community building is a direct response to our network’s open forums, which we held in early 2020 at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. While much of this work has been done at the individual level, through personal outreach, virtual coffees, new member orientations, and by facilitating connections between members, we also cultivated community through more structured activities. For example, to increase visibility of local and regional seafood systems and strengthen the network we launched a new **Local Catch Network website** and **Seafood Finder**, co-hosted the **Social Fishtancing Podcast**, and curated a monthly newsletter highlighting upcoming events, resources, research, accomplishments of our members. The latter reaches over 2,000 people. As part of the new website design, we developed a new membership “portal” that will help us better understand the composition of the network and the strengths, interests, and skills of our membership.

With the launch of our new Seafood Finder, which has been designed to help consumers source seafood from local and community-based seafood operations, consumers can filter listings by delivery method, accessibility, species, and ownership to best fit their needs and values. In 2021, we also launched a social media campaign (**#FindYourSeafoodWeek**) that aims to increase comradery between network members and raise public awareness about local and regional seafood systems across North America. Over 40 LCN members, partners, organizations, and individuals participated in the campaign and 12,000 people (110% WoW increase) engaged with LCN’s website, Seafood Finder, and social media channels over the course of #FindYourSeafoodWeek. With media coverage by CNN, Good Morning America, and other local, regional, and national outlets, our total potential media reach exceeded 234 million people.

Building connections outside our network and with synergistic groups, institutions, and organizations has also been a critical part of our work in 2021. LCN has continued to be part of the US Department of Agriculture's **Local Food Systems Response to COVID-19** initiative. A central element of this work has been helping USDA better understand how seafood fits into local and regional food systems and to identify ways we can strengthen small-scale and community-based seafood harvesters through funding and technical assistance.

We have also joined the Wallace Center's Food Systems Leadership Network, Food Solutions New England, and North American Food Systems Network, in addition to deepening our connections with the National Marine Fisheries Service and universities across the United States and Canada.



SWINOMISH SHELLFISH COMPANY



Technical Assistance

LCN offers technical assistance to help seafood companies and fishing communities access the information and resources they need to thrive. A key way we are doing this is by connecting network members to resources, including targeted outreach for four federal grant programs.

In May 2021, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced \$92.2 million in competitive grant funding through the 2018 Farm Bill's Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP) as part of USDA's Pandemic Assistance for Producers Initiative. Funding included \$77 million for the Farmers Market Promotion Program and Local Food Promotion Program. While these programs have been instrumental in strengthening local and regional food systems around the country, seafood businesses and other related organizations have not taken full advantage of them.

To bring greater visibility to the importance of seafood in local and regional food systems and directly support fishing communities who sought to apply for LAMP funds, we invested 150 hours in outreach, education, and technical assistance over a two-month period. With this effort we reached more than 36,000 people through our listserv, newsletter, and an **op-ed** in *National Fisherman*. We also hosted an informational session for prospective applicants (147 people) and a targeted proposal development workshop that was led by a former USDA staff member with more than 25 years of experience (60 people). In addition, we offered direct 1-on-1 technical assistance to 36 fishing businesses and organizations who applied for funding. Our technical assistance included providing answers to questions about the application (n = 26), including eligibility requirements, pre-consultations to help develop project ideas (n = 19), and technical reviews of draft application materials (n = 16). In total, 12 of the 36 businesses and/or organizations we worked with ultimately submitted proposals and 7 received funding totalling more than \$3 million.

LCN also collaborated with Ecotrust to develop and launch a nation-wide training and technical assistance program designed to help existing seafood businesses increase direct seafood sales, Scale Your Local Catch (**SYLC**). SYLC provides small- to mid-scale seafood business owners with tools to build knowledge, skills, and networks needed to scale up their operations to increase their capacity and viability for long-term resilience. As part of the SYLC program, cohort members have the ability to deepen relationships with like-minded peers and build skills that are essential to operating a direct marketing business including, business structure/entity formation, concepts and issues in fishing labor, necessities in insurance and understanding risk, taxation, accounting for managing liquidity and building wealth, contracts and partnerships, credit and accessing capital, and marketing. In 2021, 17 **participants** joined the inaugural SYLC cohort.



RED CLIFF FISH COMPANY



YANKEE FISHERMEN'S COOPERATIVE

Research

LCN is actively involved in multiple research initiatives that aim to bring visibility to our collective work and offer new insights about how fishing communities contribute to and enhance local and regional food systems.

Early in 2021 members from the Local Catch Network published a paper in **Frontiers** examining the role of direct marketing during the first few months of the pandemic. To further strengthen local and regional seafood systems, we also launched a new collaboration with the **National Sea Grant Law Center** to review regulations that govern the direct sale of seafood in the United States. Through this work, we will be developing a legal framework that is based on best practices from around the country that states and municipal governments can use to support safe and sustainable direct-to-consumer sales.

Finally, we are working with the University of Maine, **NOAA Fisheries**, and the **US Department of Agriculture** to support a new national assessment of local and direct marketing practices to understand the scale and number of participants involved in local and direct sales of seafood nationally. Although USDA has been collecting similar data on direct agricultural sales for decades, this represents the first-ever attempt at enumerating direct seafood sales. Making this sector more visible will help policymakers, funders, and technical assistance providers make targeted investments in your collective work.

Researchers, students, and others who are interested in collaborating can contact Joshua Stoll at joshua.stoll@maine.edu

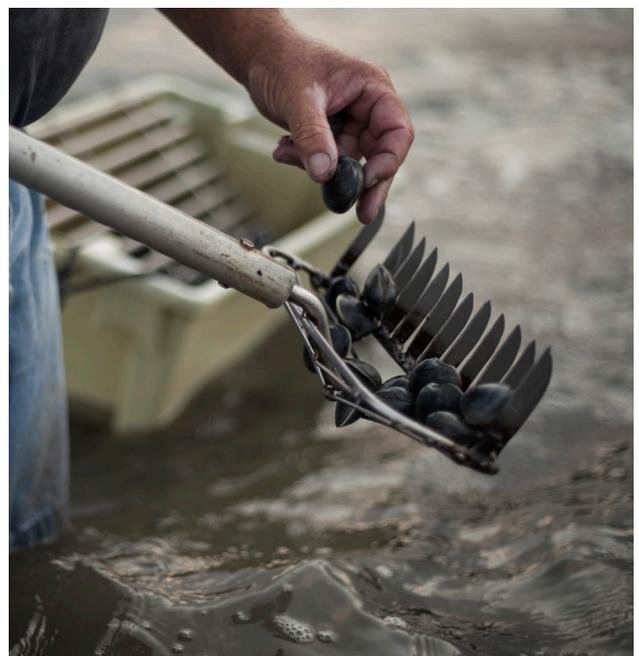
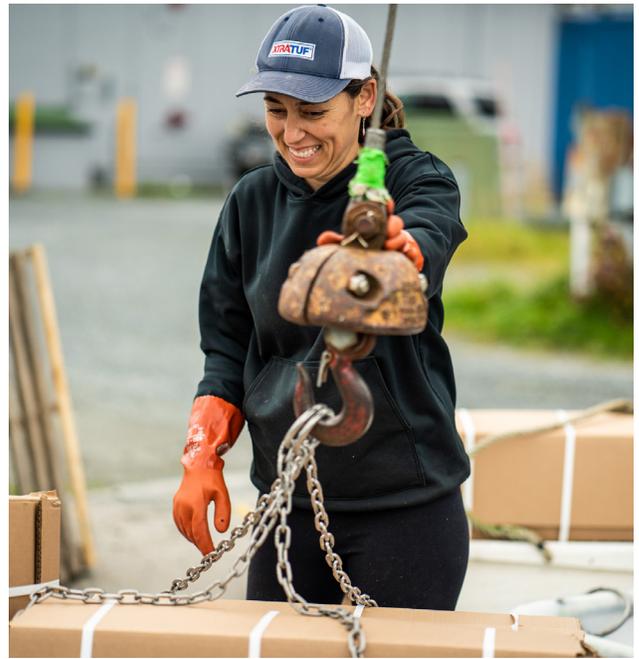
Future Outlook

If there is one thing we've learned from the past two years it's that it is hard to predict the future. Nonetheless, from our vantage point, it seems that the need for cultivating connections will remain strong. We feel fortunate to be in a position to help build community among small-scale and community-based fishing families and between them and those who work in support of healthy communities and the oceans that so many of us depend on.

As we look ahead, we are positioned to continue to work to strengthen local and regional seafood systems in the following ways:

- LCN is partnering with the North American Marine Alliance to co-host a bi-monthly webinar series designed to provide critical information to seafood businesses engaged in direct marketing technical assistance and training.
- LCN is hosting our fourth Local Seafood Summit! The theme of the summit is "building the future of local and regional seafood systems" and will be in Girdwood, Alaska in October 2022. Our last summit in Portland, Oregon in 2019 drew 160 participants from across the United States and Canada. Our summits facilitate knowledge sharing, networking, and technical training.
- LCN will host the annual #FindYourSeafoodWeek campaign to continue to strengthen ties between network members participating in similar work, and raise community awareness of small-scale and values-based seafood businesses.
- LCN will be accepting applications for the second Scale Your Local Catch cohort, beginning in late summer. We will recruit up to 15 seafood businesses to participate in the program to assist in expanding their support networks and deepening their business acumen.
- LCN will continue to partner with Coastal Routes and support their efforts to raise awareness and provide solutions to mental and physical health challenges associated with commercial fishing via a monthly podcast.
- LCN is adding a new core value, which the network adopted earlier in 2021, that focuses on increasing diversity within our community.

ALASKANS OWN



WALKING FISH

Funding Support

Our work is made possible by the generous support of the following organizations:

University of Maine

North American Marine Alliance

Oak Foundation

U.S. Department of Agriculture

National Marine Fisheries Service

Sitka Salmon Shares

Join Our Community

Support Our Network

localcatch.org/support

Join The Network

localcatch.org/join



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