

THE FISH LOCALLY COLLABORATIVE CORE VALUES

The purpose of this document is to identify common ground, express what we stand for, and strengthen our collaboration efforts.

The Fish Locally Collaborative (FLC) is a diverse network of fishermen, crew, shoreside workers, academics, scientists, activists, seafood dealers, students, engaged citizens, and other allied networks united in our mission to support the recovery and maintenance of marine biodiversity through community-based* fisheries. Diversity* is an asset and we celebrate it in the ocean and among our participants.*

In contrast to top-down economic and political models that prioritize capital consolidation over livelihoods, we support ocean and people centric models that result in a healthier and more sustainable future for all of us. The FLC is committed to an ecological responsibility of fisheries that are in balance with nature, provide healthy, highest-of-quality fish, shellfish, and other foods from the sea to the public, and that rebuild vibrant and resilient fishing fleets and port communities.



1. LAND & SEA CONNECTIVITY

The well-being of people and the planet are inextricably linked.

Humans are part of the ecosystem, not separate from it. We acknowledge the wildness and intrinsic ecological value of the ocean ecosystems, and aim to match our seafood consumption to its rhythms. Everything we do on land and at sea has an impact. We seek solutions to these impacts that protect and replenish marine ecosystems, enhance the coupled wellbeing of society and nature, and operate in concert with the complex and dynamic character of our wild food-producing ecosystems. We strive for systems that value and foster stewardship by all communities and provide opportunities for meaningful public participation.

2. COMMUNITY BASED FISHERMEN & FISHING

Community-based fishing, like family farming, is more than a job. It's part of our economic, social, and cultural fabric, and it is an important link to the ocean.

We value, respect, and seek continual support for fishery-based livelihoods. We work to restore the voices of fishermen in their communities, and support efforts that empower those who are dependent on vital coastal resources to survive and thrive. We advance the value of self-determination by empowering fishermen to shape their destinies through community-based, fair and accountable governance.

3. PUBLIC RESOURCE

The ocean is a public resource.

We affirm the Public Trust Doctrine, and support efforts to restore, reclaim and steward the ocean as a public commons. We guard against policies and governance that convert access* to marine resources into monetary, tradeable, private property rights*. Too often these policies result in a concentration of wealth into the hands of a few along with negative social, ecological, and economic consequences. We work to counter these impacts by promoting policy alternatives wherever possible. Access to fish and ocean resources should be determined using community-based, co-management principles*. We emphasize the creation and maintenance of good independent jobs and livelihoods over wealth concentration. Fishery managers should ensure opportunity for all future generations of community based fishermen.

4. FOOD

Seafood is part of our food system.

Amongst its many functions, the ocean ecosystem is a valuable and irreplaceable food production system and our last major wild food source. Marine animals cannot be treated as infinite resources, nor reduced to commodities. We support policies and education to uphold the renewable wild food production function of marine ecosystems. We guard against uses of the ocean and land that may harm the ocean's long-term ability to provide food. We believe that food is a basic human right and that food from the sea should not be only accessible to the wealthy. Consumer demands must be balanced against the needs and limits of the ocean, while ensuring that fishermen, crew, and fish workers are able to sustain a livelihood with dignity.

5. LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

Local knowledge is necessary to accurately understand and steward fisheries and oceans.

Indigenous and community-based fishermen have unique knowledge about complex ocean ecosystems and are often the first to observe and the first to suffer from changes. This fine

scale knowledge together with scientific knowledge, can achieve a better, less costly, and more adaptive assessment and management of marine ecosystems. Along with cultural knowledge, local ecological knowledge can be used to connect and create relationships among scientists, fishermen, consumers and other decision makers. We must retain and restore access to these forms of knowledge. We value multi-disciplinary science and the inclusion of voices that are typically marginalized from research and management.

6. ACCOUNTABILITY

Sustainable fisheries require accountability and transparency at all levels.

We support accountability and transparency in decision-making processes that affect fisheries. Transparency includes easy access to all publicly collected fisheries data and decision making processes. We acknowledge that partial and illegitimate representation, funding opacity, and conflicts of interest are present at all levels of the fisheries sector and have a crippling effect on the necessary reforms promoting fairness, marine conservation, and collaboration.

7. FAIRNESS IN THE SUPPLY CHAIN

All workers along the seafood supply chain deserve fair, living-wages and work with dignity.

We promote seafood supply chains that embody transparency, fairness and respect. Supply chains must ensure safe working conditions as well as fair prices to fishermen, crew, fish workers, and all other workers involved. We support policies that ban discrimination. We support access, by people of all incomes, races, and cultures to seafood as a livelihood, and we empower the public to make seafood choices based on social, cultural, economic and ecological values. We acknowledge that various types of oppression in our society including economic exploitation, racism, sexism, and classism also manifest in and against our fishing communities and all workers in the seafood value chain. To dismantle these systems we seek to elevate the intersections and build cross-movement collaborations.

8. FUTURE GENERATIONS

Fishing opportunities for future generations are vital.

We support policies and educational efforts that retain and restore access to fishery resources for future generations of community-based fishermen. We value sharing and building knowledge in the next generation of fishermen to have the tools and resources necessary to steward the ocean and lead a livelihood with dignity.



*** DEFINITIONS**

We care about the words we use to communicate our beliefs, values and practices. We recognize the limits of language, and want our collaborators and allies to understand the intent of our speech. To that end, here's what we mean when we use certain terms:

Fishermen

For the purposes of this document and being concise, we use this as an inclusive and gender-neutral term, in keeping with standard usage among most people who fish. It encompasses terms like fish harvesters, fisherwomen, watermen, fishers, intertidal gatherers, as well as those practicing aquaculture.

Diversity

This refers to the variations of culture, marine biology, and fishing fleet attributes that embody the fisheries in which we work. Cultural diversity means the various economic, racial, ethnic, geographical, and experiential backgrounds represented within the FLC and beyond. Biodiversity refers to the variety of life forms within the ecosystems in which we work. And fishing fleet diversity refers to different forms of gear types, species caught, boat sizes, and geographical locations within a given fishing community.

Community-based fishermen

Community-based fishermen live and work in the communities where they fish. They are typically either crew members or independent owner-operators and the bulk of the boat's earned income circulates within close range of the community. This contrasts with fishing operations that extract money and resources from coastal communities and circulate them elsewhere, often carried out by large corporations or investors without community ties. Community-based fishermen fish at a scale that matches the scale of the marine ecosystem. They are ecological experts attuned to the nuances of ocean rhythms, fish migration patterns, and spawning habitat. Community-based fishermen are part of the social fabric that builds identity and culture within a community.*

Owner-operator

Owner-operators are holders of fishing rights (through licenses or other legal means) who also operate the vessel fishing, thus ensuring a direct connection between fisheries resources and the fisherman. Examples of non owner-operators who hire captains and crew include: speculative investors, retired fishermen financing their retirement plan, or industry processors looking to secure access.

Although we believe fisheries access should not be privatized, in regions where privatization policies have been implemented, the owner-operator principle has prevented some of the most negative effects, keeping speculation and consolidation somewhat at bay, and keeping fisheries access in the hands of community-based fishing fleets, which for many rural coastal communities is the largest private sector employer.

The owner-operator principle also applies to businesses along the seafood supply chain whether it's processing, operating a Community Supported Fishery (CSF), or a wholesale operation. We value control over these businesses remaining in the hands of those who are working the business, rather than far-away investors or companies that have no stake in the health or welfare of the fishery.

Access

Access refers to two distinct concepts. The first is related to access to fisheries resources for community-based fishermen. Due to regulations (e.g. area closures and privatization) and non-fishing impacts (e.g. climate change and pollution), access for community-based fishermen is constantly threatened. Access also refers to food accesses for low-income and working class communities as well as communities of color.

Privatization

Privatization is the conversion of a public resource into private property that is owned and controlled by an individual or firm. The act of transforming fishing access rights into monetary, private-property assets, consistently allows those with access to capital to purchase and consolidate permits and quotas. Similarly, privatizing the ocean's bottom and/or water column to accommodate extractive industries such as oil and gas exploration compromises the health of the ocean commons. The ocean and its resources should be held in public trust for current and future generations. Policies should be designed to prevent further consolidation and ensure that coastal communities maintain access to marine resources, and protect against extractive non-fishing activities.

Local Seafood

Defining "local seafood" is difficult and complex because "local" means different things depending on location, ecosystem, and more. Therefore rather than propose an all encompassing definition of "local seafood," we provide some considerations we make when defining local in the context of our individual fisheries and communities.

- *Customer proximity to where the fish is landed*
- *Customer proximity to where the fish was caught*
- *Customer proximity to the fisherman*

- *Distance traveled by product in the supply chain*
- *Management boundary of the fishery*
- *Relationship (even when mediated by a fishmonger or a fish transformer) between the fisherman and consumers*
- *Fairness and dignity within the entire value chain*

Community-based Co-management

Based upon our network's discussions and relying heavily on research aligned with Nobel Prize winner Elinor Ostrom and many others, we offer the following definition:

Community-based co-management is an approach toward managing fisheries resources as a public commons. This collaborative approach centers around local ecological knowledge as the backbone for decision-making. Emphasis is placed on both the fishing community and the government having an equal voice and vote throughout the decision making process as well as an increased sense of co-responsibility amongst the full range of people affected (typically the government and/or regional authorities, fishing communities, scientific community, and the public). Core attributes of this management approach include:

- *Clear management areas.*
- *Rules that govern and protect fisheries resources are matched to local needs and conditions.*
- *Those affected by the rules can participate in modifying the rules.*
- *Rulemaking and rules are respected by outside authorities and third parties.*
- *Rulemaking includes monitoring members' behavior and is carried out by the community members themselves, sometimes with the help of trusted others.*
- *Graduated sanctions for rule violators.*
- *Accessible, low-cost means for dispute resolution.*
- *Responsibility for governing the fisheries resource is nested in tiers from the lowest level up to the entire interconnected system.*
- *Prominent community leadership, verified legitimate representation, and social cohesion.*
- *Clear incentives that, for example, include a fair and accountable system where fleet diversity is respected and collaboration is emphasized.*