

Professor promotes fisheries worldwide

By Sam Bari

Jamestown resident Dr. Cathy Roheim is a professor at the University of Rhode Island in the Department of Environmental and Natural Resource Economics at the College of Environmental Life Sciences (CELS). Her research program broadly covers the area of seafood marketing and international trade in fisheries products. She is heavily involved in promoting ecolabeled seafood from sustainable fisheries on the world market.

A CELS newsletter reports that Roheim was recently elected co-chair of the Stakeholder Council of the Marine Stewardship Council, (MSC) a nonprofit worldwide organization founded because of widespread concerns about overfishing. The MSC oversees a certification program that identifies seafood products from sustainable fisheries to consumers through the MSC label of approval.

In her prestigious position, she represents the public interest sector, whose members are from various environmental and scientific organizations, academic institutions, and consumer groups, on the MSC Board of Trustees.

Her co-chair counterpart is An-



Cathy Roheim

nie Jarrett of the Australian fishing industry, who represents the catching, processing and retailing sectors of the global fishing and seafood industry.

The report went on to say that Roheim became interested in the MSC because of her research, which covers the area of seafood marketing, international trade, and most recently, consumer demand for seafood from sustainable fisheries. As far as protecting fisheries is concerned, Roheim says that will only work if consumers are interested in supporting sustainable products.

In 1998, she was awarded Rhode Island Sea Grant funding to conduct a national survey to find out from consumers whether they would buy sustainable seafood products if they were available. The survey showed a significant proportion would, and would pay a premium as well.

In 1999, she and a colleague obtained funding from the Norwegian Research Council to do the same survey in Norway, as a comparison to U.S. consumers. Norwegians were also likely to buy sustainable seafood, but at lower premiums.

With that sort of research, it was a natural for Roheim to become involved with the MSC and its mission.

The MSC developed an ecolabel, which appears on the packages of seafood that come from certified fisheries. The process is based on independent, third-party certification, fully compliant with the United Nations' guidelines for eco-labeling. Thus, independent certifiers conduct the assessments of fisheries, using scientists as part of the assessment teams. The certification is good for five years at which time a review of a fishery's operation is conducted. Annual reports are required throughout the five-year period.

"So far so good," says Roheim. Of the 19 certified fisheries. Some are well known such as Alaskan salmon and pollock, New Zealand hoki, and South African hake. Over 500 MSC-labeled products are currently being sold worldwide. Fisheries that are not certified will soon feel the pressure from the marketplace, she says.

"If consumers can be made to understand the purpose of eco-labeled products and the importance of purchasing from certified fisheries, the world will continue to enjoy seafood in the future," Roheim says. If overfishing continues, seafood for dinner will be a thing of the past.

Dr. Roheim was born in Great Falls, Mont., where she grew up. "However, my entire family now lives in Norway, as that is where my parents are from, and they moved back once they retired. I'm the only family member in the States," she says.

Roheim attended Montana

State University, where she earned a bachelor's degree in economic science in 1990. She then attained a master's degree in applied economics from Montana State University in 1984.

"Montana State is in Bozeman, 90 miles from Yellowstone Park, so my friends and I used to do road trips to the park a lot when the tourists weren't around, go cross-country skiing, and actually being bonehead college kids, we'd get up close to the bison," she says. "Wonderful place to be, but darn cold. I calculated once that RI is less than one-third the size of Yellowstone Park if you don't count Narragansett Bay, one-half if you do," Roheim adds.

She then moved to California where she studied for her Ph.D in agricultural economics at the University of California. After college, "I came straight here to Rhode Island as I was offered a job at URI upon completion of my Ph.D. in California. At first it was a bit of a shock for this 'Westerner' to move to the East Coast, where there are no big mountains, but it didn't take long before I fell in love with Jamestown and the sea. Now it would take a crowbar to get me to move away from Jamestown," Roheim says.

Reflecting on her inspirations for her academic success, Roheim credits "my high school second year biology teacher who told me that I should never let anyone tell me that girls can't do math and science; and my father who never let it occur to me that I couldn't accomplish whatever I set my mind to," she says.

Last September, Cathy Roheim was appointed to the Jamestown Conservation Commission. "We're glad to have her," says Conservation Commission Chairman Chris Powell. "She has so much of the kind of experience we need. She offers a wealth of knowledge and insight in her many areas of expertise," he adds.

Planning

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problem with the general plan, adding, "I think it's wonderful."

In old business, the commission unanimously accepted a plan for a two-lot subdivision with a street extension on Hull Cove Farm Road. Quentin Anthony, the attorney representing applicant Norton Reamer, noted that the neighbors had reached an agreement with Reamer concerning all restrictions and maintenance of the private road.

Anthony asked that a bond be approved in the amount designated by the engineer "to guarantee acceptance and completion of road improvements" of Hull Cove Farm Road.

In other old business, the commission continued a development plan for a new house on Hull Street. Town Solicitor Larry Parks asked applicant Lawrence Peltier to confirm that the location of the furnace in the modified design would meet the fire code.

In a pre-application conference, Raymond and Karyn Bazzano met with the commission to seek advice about the required steps for their plan to re-structure the building at 24 Narragansett Ave. to house six residential units and one retail space. The application noted that four of the six units would be designated affordable housing. Bruce McIntyre, the attorney representing the applicants, said he would obtain a letter of eligibility for affordable housing from the state.

Robert Ornstein, an architect with Arris Design, presented a model of the plan.

According to Town Planner Lisa Bryer, the applicants will submit the plan as a comprehensive unit under state law.

Last year, the town's low- and moderate-income housing, article 17 of the Zoning Ordinance, was amended to be consistent with state law, which allows the commission to be the permitting authority on all local permits when reviewing a comprehensive permit application. "You will be looking at and approving zoning variances, the water and sewer application, as well as the development plan," she noted in a memorandum to the commission.

Commission Chairman Gary Girard told the board no time limit was set at present. "It's a new responsibility and a big responsibility," he said about the process.

Commissioners Richard Ventrone and Victor Calabretta were absent.

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