Columbia Pacific Economic Development District
The Columbia-Pacific Economic Development District (Col-Pac) is a private non-profit organization established to assist in diversifying and strengthening the economy and livability of Northwest Oregon. The District covers all of Clatsop, Columbia, and Tillamook counties and the western part of Washington County.

Governed by a 17-member volunteer Board of Directors, Col-Pac consists of local public and private leaders including representatives from county commissions, cities, ports, the private sector, workforce, and the minority community. Col-Pac also has a seven member Loan Administration Board that oversees the District’s Revolving Loan Fund.

Certified by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) as a recognized Economic Development District, Col-Pac offers a range of economic and community development services, technical assistance, and referrals in carrying out its mission.

Ecotrust
Ecotrust creates and accelerates triple-bottom-line innovations to benefit our region and inspire the world. On the farm, at the coast, in the forest, and across our cities, we work in partnership towards an equitable, prosperous, climate-smart future. Our home is Salmon Nation, the region from California to Alaska that holds productive lands and determined people. We recognize the legacy of colonialism and the deep inequities of this place, and we believe that radical, practical change is possible and necessary. Since 1991, we have created durable change and sparked ideas across the globe. Join us at ecotrust.org

Rural Development Initiatives
Rural Development Initiatives, Inc. is a private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization based in Eugene, Oregon. RDI was formed in 1991 in response to the timber industry crisis facing the Pacific Northwest. Today RDI is continuing to support rural communities as they work through challenging economic conditions. RDI’s nationally recognized programs and services help communities help themselves with effective and results-oriented training and resources necessary for individuals living in rural communities to build and sustain a better future in their communities. Our work is based upon our genuine commitment to help rural people and communities build rural capacity through Leadership Development programs and strengthen Rural Economic Vitality through moving capacity into action.
Nestled beneath a verdant forest at the north end of Oregon’s Tillamook Bay, the city of Garibaldi is bisected by Highway 101, with the port south of the highway and the rest of town to the north. Like many small coastal port towns, Garibaldi is looking for ways to improve conditions for their residents and workers following industry declines in both fisheries and forestry. Fisheries provides substantial economic opportunity and is the foundation of Garibaldi’s identity and heritage. In 2018, an initiative guided by Rural Development Initiatives (RDI) was formed to enhance the local fishing economy and generate deep and lasting community wealth of Garibaldi and the Tillamook County region.

Specifically, this project is focused on increasing the wealth and well-being of small commercial fishing boat owners, crew members, fish processors, and retailers in the Garibaldi-Tillamook area.

This initiative brings together a broad partnership of organizations interested in supporting a vibrant future for the seafood industry in Garibaldi. Partners include Columbia Pacific Economic Development District, The Port of Garibaldi, Economic Development Council of Tillamook County, RDI, and Visit Tillamook Coast. Ecotrust joined the initiative as a WealthWorks\(^1\) value chain coordinator.

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1. *The WealthWorks approach to economic development aims to build multiple forms of wealth (individual, intellectual, social, financial, cultural, built, political and capital), increase local ownership and control of assets, and improve livelihood opportunities, particularly for people and businesses struggling economically. For more information, see WealthWorks.org.*
THE ROLE OF THE VALUE CHAIN ASSESSMENT

In the WealthWorks value chain coordinator role, Ecotrust undertook an intensive assessment of the region’s seafood value chain. The process drew together a wide array of information to better understand opportunities for building community wealth and well-being, including important information on recent shifts in the seafood landscape, and incorporating newly acquired data.

This assessment included detailed research on the community and its economics and qualitative information gathered over the course of more than 35 meetings and interviews with local fishermen, fisheries managers, and business owners and stakeholders throughout the seafood supply chain from sea to plate.

FINDINGS

The resulting 50-page value chain assessment, summarized here, documents critical challenges and key opportunities present for Garibaldi’s small-scale seafood sector, which includes boat owners, crew, processors, and retailers.

Socio-economic context

Economically, Garibaldi and Tillamook County are struggling as compared to Oregon overall. Tillamook County’s median household income, at $41,161, is well below the state average at $52,270 (2016 US Census American Family Survey). Tourism and retirees are predicted to contribute substantially to the regional economy, and the average age of 51.5 in Garibaldi and 48 in Tillamook County compared to Oregon’s average age of 39.2 supports this premise. The unemployment rate is also higher than the state average (6.2% vs. 4%), and the poverty rate is more than 25% in the area surrounding Garibaldi, compared to 16.1% in Oregon overall.

Garibaldi and the surrounding area is home to a number of multi-generational, family-owned fishing operations. Each active commercial boat represents an independent small business that hires crew members, creating direct jobs for the region. In recent decades, this way of life and business model has been declining, with most fishing families relying on a second income outside of the industry to support their livelihood.

Recent trends

Recently, Garibaldi has seen an improved buying environment for fishermen landing their catch at the port. Two additional selling options have emerged since 2014, one through a modest infrastructure investment made possible by a grant from RDI intended to broaden opportunities for fishermen. These options have increased selling flexibility for the fleet, and are likely contributors to increased sales volume and price seen between 2016 and 2018, which set records for landings revenue going back to 2002. While there is good reason for optimism, the plummet in Dungeness landings in 2015 due to domoic acid shows the fickle nature of Oregon coast fisheries.
Dungeness crab is Garibaldi’s main catch, totaling 60% of the harvest since 2014. Albacore, Chinook salmon, clams, and groundfish are responsible for an additional 36%, which along with crab, account for the bulk of the catch in the last five years. Albacore tuna has seen dramatically higher revenue harvests recently, and is a key contributor to Garibaldi’s improved catches. Another recent bright spot is the bay clam harvest, which has increased nearly 10x in the last 10 years. Unlike Albacore, a highly migratory species and an international commodity, bay clams are very local, and nearly all of the bay clam harvest in Oregon comes out of Tillamook Bay. There is an excellent opportunity to develop a stronger local market for this unique food product, which today is predominantly used as crab bait.

**Challenges for small fishing businesses**

Nearly all of Garibaldi’s most important fisheries have moved from open access to limited entry models with catch shares and individual fishing quotas. Only Albacore tuna remains open access. These programs tend to make it difficult for small-boat community fisheries to stay in the community, reward higher capital enterprises, and result in consolidation. In a small port like Garibaldi, catch diversity is important to fishermen as insurance to steep declines in their primary fishery, and the increasing cost of licensing and permits is often a barrier to achieving this. The high permit costs (as high as $210,000 for a 300-pot crab permit) also make it difficult for new and often young fishermen to enter the market in Garibaldi. To be successful in the current fishing industry environment, one must have a high level of business acumen, financial discipline, and be able to comprehend and navigate complex and often-times rigid policy and management frameworks.
Seasonal crew members have an even greater challenge, with pay that depends on the overall catch, dependency on the skill of the captain, and personal responsibility for managing finances as an independent contractor. Unless a young crew member is able to chart a path to own their own boat or fishing business, it is extremely difficult to make a reliable living in this work.

**Recommendations & next steps**
Garibaldi and Tillamook County are well-positioned to capitalize on the many social, economic, and ecological strengths and assets that exist within the community and region to increase the wealth and well-being of commercial fishermen, crew, and the seafood businesses. There are many reasons to hold a positive outlook for the regional seafood industry, which is not the case for many fishing communities across the country today. The region’s fishermen and seafood industry have demonstrated tremendous resilience in the face of numerous stressors over the past 108 years. Strengths include a relatively diverse portfolio of fisheries; a fleet profile of many local owner-operators; revitalization and leadership efforts of the port; and accessibility to the Portland market. Weaknesses and threats that the community and seafood value chain currently face are common in many of fishing communities nation-wide. These include environmental threats like climate change and ocean acidification, insufficient infrastructure, the graying of the fleet, high cost and difficult fisheries access, and challenges implementing cooperative efforts.

Collaboration with other fishing communities will expose many shared challenges and has the potential for developing shared solutions. While there are associations in Tillamook County for fishermen (the Fishermen’s Advisory Committee of Tillamook County, the Pacific City Doryman’s Association, and the American Albacore Fishing Association), there is not an entity to sustain priority activities that would contribute to overall wealth and well-being, a significant gap for the future. A vehicle for the type of collaboration necessary for building out many of these opportunities is crucial.

Efforts to improve the region’s seafood value chain should be considered long-term in their nature. The issues that face the community are persistent and plague many fishing communities, and there are very few, if any, easy short-term solutions to be found. Next steps in this effort for initiative partners include working alongside fishermen, crew, seafood businesses, and other stakeholders to consider larger capacity building questions and working to determine near-term opportunities.

Fortunately, the substantial energy of local partners and fishing businesses in combination with interest from an array of governmental and nonprofit entities, as well as consumers, can all be harnessed to support a thriving local fishing industry.

Download the full report.
PRIORITIES
In the course of conducting the seafood value chain assessment, we identified the following priorities:

1. **Improve seafood industry infrastructure in Garibaldi and Tillamook County**
   Particularly for small boat fishermen and smaller seafood companies, costs associated with addressing infrastructure needs such as cold storage and ice are a burden, often requiring trips to other ports or cost-prohibitive infrastructure investments. Investing in shared resources or creating incentives for businesses to fill this service gap is one of the highest priorities we identified in the course of our analysis. Through a USDA grant, we are assessing infrastructure solutions, and have completed an extensive survey of the fleet to identify needs and priorities.

2. **Monitor and enhance local fisheries access and ownership**
   Sustaining a local, small-boat fleet depends on current ownership conditions. We recommend building capacity and coordination within local organizations to track and share information about permit ownership. Creating programs that put fishermen on a path to ownership and catch diversification, and gain the knowledge and skills to do so, will be critical to their success in this challenging business.

3. **Connect fishermen and seafood businesses to business support and enhance access to capital**
   Fishermen and seafood businesses have unique challenges, which require tailored solutions. The combined costs of purchasing a boat and acquiring the necessary permits and quotas prevents many people from building their businesses. These small businesses and entrepreneurs need access to both tailored business support and capital for starting or expanding operations.

4. **Expand connections to new buyers and markets**
   Consumers value access to locally sourced, high-quality seafood, but there are still gaps in meeting this demand in the marketplace, with potential to build stronger connections through off-the-dock sales or the Portland restaurant market. In addition, Garibaldi has products that could open new markets, like clams and black rockfish.

5. **Promote regional fisheries tourism and increase local purchasing of seafood**
   There are opportunities to increase awareness and access for local consumers and visitors with fisheries tourism experiences that strengthen the bond to local seafood.

6. **Brand local and regionally caught seafood**
   We recommend assessing the value of branding and marketing to increase awareness of Garibaldi seafood locally and regionally.

7. **Fish waste solutions**
   Addressing fish waste through economically and/or environmentally productive uses such as biomass or compost could simultaneously reduce waste streams and create income.