In July 2016, Ecotrust received two $5,000 grants from the Nell Newman Foundation to support our Fisheries and Food & Farms program initiatives. Specifically, support from the Foundation was requested to expand the Food & Farms movement to include community fishers.

Small scale fishermen face obstacles and challenges that mirror those faced on the terrestrial side of the food system. Over the past several decades, coastal cities have become increasingly disconnected from the food available to them from local fleets. Currently, over 90 percent of the seafood Americans consume is imported from abroad. Global industrial seafood markets control most of the critical seafood processing infrastructure (including ice machines and hoists on the docks, as well as processing and distribution infrastructure), and dominate retail and institutional markets. At the same time, consumers’ appetite for clean, healthy proteins is growing, along with a broader interest in knowing where their food comes from. With the Nell Newman Foundation’s support, Ecotrust expanded our fisheries work, and adapted our work with farmers and ranchers to support community fishermen and seafood producers. Recognizing “fish as food” is crucial to building our vision of what healthy regional food systems look like in the Pacific Northwest.

On behalf of the staff and board of Ecotrust, thank you for your support and partnership. The report below details the activities that occurred during the grant periods, as well as progress made toward the goals and objectives outlined in our proposals. It also includes a financial report showing expenditures made during the grant period and other funds raised for the work.

**Project Objectives and Outcomes:**

Over the past year we have successfully created space for the Food & Farms and Fisheries departments at Ecotrust to leverage our robust network of partners and considerable experience with local food systems on behalf of community fishers. We hired two new fisheries staff in 2017, starting with Tyson Rasor as our Fish and Food Program Manager in January and then Kelly Harrell as Fisheries Program Director in October. Tyson and Kelly’s unique skill sets and experiences working with coastal fishermen in Oregon and Alaska are allowing us to expand our reach to better serve more local fishermen and strengthen our network within fishing communities throughout the northwest to address food system challenges.

**Objective 1. Strengthen relationships between community fishers and regional wholesale buyers.**

Conduct outreach with community fisheries to connect them as suppliers to the NW Food Buyers’ Alliance.
**Outcomes:**

Throughout 2016 and 2017, Ecotrust conducted a deep dive into researching the limitations of institutional purchasing (schools, hospitals, corporate cafes, etc.) in the Pacific Northwest region. We then worked to create opportunities to overcome or work within those limitations to support institutional purchasing of local proteins, including seafood. While price points and available supply continue to be a challenge for connecting community fishermen directly with institutions, successful connections have been established and relationships are being curated.

- Local Link is the NW Food Buyer’s Alliance (NWFBA) signature event for wholesale food buyers interested in making connections with local producers. In 2017, 11% of the vendors were seafood producers. Notably, amongst larger local seafood companies such as Fish People, local community supported fisheries businesses were also in attendance. Tre-Fin Foods (Ilwaco, WA) and Kenai Red Fish Co. (Portland, OR/Homer, AK), were able to build connections with institutions as they work to scale their businesses through increasing wholesale purchasing from institutions. Although sales relationships often take time to develop, the vendors surveyed after the event reported successfully increasing awareness of their business and brand to institutional buyers who had not heard of their business. As well, 100% of vendors reported successfully establishing new sales leads.

- Ecotrust staff conducted a series of in-person surveys with institutional buyers from the NWFBA (hospitals, universities, elderly living homes, k-12 school districts, and juvenile detention centers) to learn more about these institutions’ price points, purchasing needs, and preferred cuts and types of proteins to use for service (chicken, beef, pork, and seafood). Amid many of the research findings, some institutions (universities and corporate cafeterias) identified the need to purchase within Bon Appetit’s “Fish to Fork” standards and from certified vendors. Through closer dialogue and relationship building, a university and a corporate cafeteria are sponsoring two local distributors, Sea to Table and Wilder Land and Sea, in becoming certified “Fish to Fork” vendors for regional institutions.

- An interactive “Fish Cooking Demo” with the NWFBA will be held for the first time ever in March 2018, and our team has been hard at work to plan the event. The purpose of the cooking demo will be to introduce and educate institutional buyers and chefs about local seafood and best options for responsible purchasing. This event will provide recipes and demonstrate how to cook with undervalued and underutilized species in an institutional setting, while hosting lively discussions with seafood industry professionals regarding seafood seasonality, fisheries management, and sustainability. Participants will be connected in person to local seafood purveyors, Jessie’s Ilwaco Fish Co. (Port of Ilwaco, WA) and Sea to Table (Astoria, OR), and be provided with additional resources for local and regional seafood purchasing.
Objective 2. **Build capacity at the intersection of fisheries and food & farms.** In response to clear need from community fisheries, create a framework for collaboration and sharing to help meet volume demands through enabling access to critical infrastructure.

**Outcomes:**

- In 2017, over 20 seafood community-based fishing organizations were introduced The Redd on Salmon Street. The Redd is a centrally located food hub, and is Portland’s only food hub that is wholly dedicated to offering both the infrastructure and amenities essential to a growing enterprise, as well as a vibrant community where urban food producers connect with the rural farmers, ranchers, and fishers that supply them. Currently, 14 seafood producers are utilizing the Redd as a strategic resource to help grow their businesses.

- Ecotrust has taken on the role as “Value Chain Coordinator” for the Port of Garibaldi, Oregon. From December 2017 - June 2018, Ecotrust’s fisheries program will lead a small-scale fisheries value chain development initiative in partnership with the Port of Garibaldi, Rural Development Initiatives, Columbia Pacific Economic Development Council, and others to increase the wealth and well-being of small commercial fishing boat owners, crews and fish processors/retailers in the Garibaldi area through enhancing sales and distribution for small North Coast fishermen. Creating access to key infrastructure such as ice machines, cold storage, hoists, and delivery vehicles will play a vital role in value chain development. More information on that partnership is here: [https://www.rdiinc.org/news/building_garibaldi%e2%80%99s_local_seafood_economy](https://www.rdiinc.org/news/building_garibaldi%e2%80%99s_local_seafood_economy)

Objective 3. **Identify specific fishermen or groups of fishers poised for growth.** Support them in individualized regional market development (e.g., branding, marketing strategy, website development).

**Outcomes:**

- Through Ecotrust’s “Agriculture of the Middle” business accelerator program, three community supported fisheries-based business are participating in a mixed cohort of 13 farmers, ranchers, and ranchers to receive professional insight and support to help them scale their businesses. Curriculum content in this pilot year includes business structure and taxation, credit and finance, market development, and more. Additionally, with assistance from Ecotrust, 9 of these participants (two fishing businesses) have applied for United States Department of Agriculture “Value Added Producer Grants” worth a total of $1.5 million. Grant funds can be used to help these producers 1) develop planning documents, such as business and marketing plans, 2) support implementation of marketing strategies, such as developing brand books and websites, and 3) support key staff salaries and the procurement of supplies and products needed to scale their businesses.

- Ecotrust staff are also working in southeast Alaska to bolster the businesses of fishermen in the region who direct market their catch. We are diving deep into their challenges and successes,
directing them to business resources, and providing targeted business support to a select number of promising businesses. Ecotrust staff are also playing a leadership role in the national community supported network, Localcatch.org, that aims to support a growing movement of CSFs and direct marketers through a community of practice.

Objective 4. Implement creative, effective communications designed to influence consumer awareness of and demand for local fish.

Outcomes:

- In 2017, Ecotrust conducted a new study that tested consumer preferences for “fresh from the grocery store” vs. high-quality flash-frozen fish fillets. Along with our partners (Oregon State University’s Food Innovation Center, Seafood Analytics, Port Orford Sustainable Seafood, and Alaskans Own) we found that despite the moniker “fresh is best,” fresh fish purchased at the seafood counter might spend several days in the case before being purchased. Thanks to Seafood Analytics, we could apply a quantitative “fresh-test” or quality test to both the fresh and frozen fish that was sampled by consumers, and the flash frozen product ranked significantly higher. Eaters preferred frozen fish samples from the community supported fisheries businesses, Port Orford Sustainable Seafood and Alaskans Own, to fresh fish purchased from grocery stores in Portland. Results from the study were used to create a host of supporting materials such as recipe cards, postcards, slide deck, media toolkit, and an op-ed by authored by Nell Newman. A blog post detailing the project and its results can be found here on the Ecotrust website.

- Local Catch, Ecotrust, and the Community Fisheries Network created a short PSA-style video, “Know Your Fisherman,” and launched a corresponding “mini campaign” in July 2017 to amplify the “Know Your Fisherman” mantra. The aim is to boost support for and awareness of our coastal communities and community-based fisherman providing wild, sustainable, healthy, traceable seafood across the nation. The short 1.5-minute video has been viewed over 5,000 times across multiple platforms. Ecotrust also provided support to LocalCatch.org and revamped its https://localcatch.org/know-your-fisherman/ landing page to highlight the video and connect viewers with their “Seafood Finder” to demonstrate options for purchasing directly from fishermen. A second, longer “Know Your Fisherman” film has been completed, which runs 4 minutes in length. This longer version is comprised of interviews from fisherman and CSF business owners. Over 500 associated images taken by professional photographer Jason Houston have been made available to interviewees for use in their own marketing projects. The film is scheduled to be released in March 2018.

Objective 5. Exploring opportunities for ecologically appropriate (place-based), community-owned aquaculture enterprises.
Outcomes:

- November 12-14th, 2017, Ecotrust hosted an in person convening of the Community Fisheries Network (CFN) to deepen the connection among members and develop connections with other networks, people, perspectives, and ideas. During these sessions, and after much discussion, the CFN came to some agreement that appropriately scoped and sized community-based aquaculture programs are the most appropriate form of aquaculture, particularly as it relates to shellfish and kelp farming. Ecotrust is currently supporting one such business venture by Larsen Bay Aquaculture in Kodiak, AK, working with them to submit a grant application of $100,000 for “Marine Aquaculture Pilot Projects” to the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission. If awarded, Ecotrust will play a role as a Project Leader responsible for coordinating a feasibility study and engaging project partners.

- Ecotrust is engaging with Oregon Aquaculture Association, who has taken leadership of the Oregon Aquaculture Advisory Group. Ecotrust’s role in engaging with this work is to guide the conversations regarding “fit” for aquaculture in Oregon and to ensure social, cultural, and ecological considerations are being taken equally to that of economic considerations. Ecotrust realizes a key to social-ecological resilience during times of change is allowing for diversification. Responsible, well-managed aquaculture may play a part building economic resilience, while also replacing some imports with local sources of seafood.

Next Steps

Your catalytic support laid a solid foundation for this effort, and Ecotrust intends to continue growing the depth and breadth of this body of work going forward. With new staff and leadership on board in our fisheries program, our goals for the next year include:

- Develop a strategic vision for Ecotrust’s fisheries program with a focus on high-impact innovations in the fisheries access/ownership and seafood market space, that emphasize their intimate ties to local economies and food systems.
- Re-position Ecotrust as a thought leader and catalyst in the movement for ecologically responsible, community-based fisheries.
- Transform seafood markets and bolster values-based fishing businesses in the Pacific Northwest in a manner that strengthens local communities, supports long-term ecological integrity, and contributes to robust economies and thriving local food systems.

To meet these goals, we will continue current high value activities including collaboration with the Food & Farms team on incorporating fishing businesses into the Ag of the Middle Accelerator program, bolstering institutional purchasing of seafood, and linking seafood purveyors to needed infrastructure including elevating use of The Redd. The fisheries team will also:

- Utilize our role as value chain coordinator in the community of Garibaldi to bring about measurable impact for small-scale fishermen and advance a community-based seafood value chain model that can be replicated across the northwest.
• Elevate our role in the community fisheries movement through a significant presence at Slow Fish San Francisco in April 2018 and through speaking and communications opportunities that help raise the profile of fisheries and seafood in both the local foods and regenerative economy movements.

• Expand strategic relationships from Alaska down to California with an array of fishing, business, government, and NGO partners.

• Conduct a series of 1:1 and group meetings with tribal representatives, fishermen, fishing industry representatives, agencies, organizations, and other potential partners to further identify and understand their needs and priority issues.

• Research and explore issues around ownership and privatization of fishing rights as they relate to equity, ownership, economic, and environmental impacts through a regenerative economy lens with an aim to identify a unique niche and potential Ecotrust-led projects.

• Support scaling and strengthening of business models for direct marketing and community supported fisheries through research and hands-on technical assistance.

• Provide leadership in relevant networks and projects including Localcatch.org, a revamped Community Fisheries Network, and the Alaska Ocean Cluster.

• Engage with tribal and rural fishing communities to help cultivate ecologically sound models of aquaculture and develop strategies for addressing harmful impacts of large-scale, corporate models of aquaculture.

We look forward to continued collaboration with the Nell Newman Foundation as Ecotrust works to deliver visionary, trusted, and effective leadership for more resilient fishing communities in the Pacific Northwest.