

Commercial Fisheries News

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NOAA FISHERIES
NAVIGATOR

CFN Women in the Fisheries profile: Fishery policy analyst Katie Almeida

NARRAGANSETT, RI – If you've attended Mid-Atlantic or New England Fishery Management Council meetings over the last few years, you have likely heard Katie Almeida providing comment on behalf of the fishing industry – typically on longfin squid – but on mackerel, fluke, herring, whiting, scup, or black sea bass, too.

In fact, that's her job as a fishery policy analyst for The Town Dock – a Narragansett, RI-based seafood wholesaler – to track regulatory changes and offer comment on key fisheries that the company relies on.

Almeida, who attributes her love of the ocean to watching the movie *Jaws* at the tender age of seven, came to the fishing industry via a different path than most.

While many may inherit their seafaring ways, Almeida's interest was sparked from spending summers at the beach on the Cape and from volunteering at the New England Aquarium in Boston. That led her to working toward and earning a degree in marine biology at the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth.

As Almeida was finishing her degree in 2002, one of her professors suggested she apply as a portside biological sampler. At the time, Hampton, VA-based Remsa, Inc. had contracted with National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to provide independent catch sampling at the docks.

She got that job and found she liked the work. "The work often consisted of long hours spent in cold fish coolers, but I understood the importance of the data being gathered so I didn't mind."

WOMEN IN THE FISHERIES

In 2009, she was promoted to associate project manager for the Northeast biological sampling program, a position she held until 2014 when Remsa lost the NMFS contract. Almeida's territory had included The Town Dock. As she stopped in to say thank you and goodbye, Mike



Photo courtesy of Katie Almeida
Katie Almeida, fishery policy analyst with The Town Dock, based in Narragansett, RI.

Roderick, director of purchasing and fresh sales, asked her if she might be interested in a position they were thinking of creating – a fishery policy analyst position.

"They found they were unable to get to all of the meetings and were missing out on important information and decisions," Almeida said. "They'd been considering the position for awhile."

Formed in 1980, The Town Dock was growing into one of the largest suppliers of longfin squid in the country, with seven small mesh bottom trawlers and a processing plant in nearby Johnston, RI.

As it was expanding – to include a workforce of nearly 50 employees – the company recognized the need for having someone attend industry meetings and stay on top of the myriad of constantly changing regulations on quotas, permits, and reporting.

Switching over from biological sampling to regulatory analysis was a bit of a learning curve,

We're in a very interesting time environmentally. With changing temperatures and species on the move, it will be interesting to see how regulatory agencies handle that.

Almeida said, but she knew she could do it.

"Staff at the council and at The Town Dock, and other members of the fishing community, were eager to help me learn more and tell me where to look, who I should talk to.

"My vessel manager, Donald Fox, made sure I talked to the other captains and crew to see how changes would affect them."

In addition to attending council meetings, Almeida sits on the advisory panels for three fisheries in the Mid-Atlantic region: the Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass AP; the River Herring and Shad AP; and the Mackerel, Squid and Butterfish AP.

She also sits on the New England Fishery Management Council's Small Mesh Multispecies (Whiting) AP.

"We rely heavily on the APs in the Mid since Rhode Island doesn't have a (voting) seat on the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council," Almeida said.

Yet, Rhode Island fits into that gap where its fisheries fall into both (New England and Mid-Atlantic) regional fishery management council jurisdictions, she says.

"As we see more southern species head north it is becoming more of an issue," she added.

Some of the other challenges regulators face is how to manage new species not seen before which may be expanding in large numbers into new areas as climate change warms the ocean.

"We're in a very interesting time environmentally. With changing temperatures and species on the move, it will be interesting to see how regulatory agencies handle that," Almeida said.

"We're seeing some species showing up in areas in greater numbers than before. Fish don't pay attention to jurisdictional lines.

"People who depend on those species have a limited say in the regulatory decisions that affect them," she said. More recently, Almeida has been involved with the

Fisheries Working Group (FWG) on offshore wind energy in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. That group is an offshoot of the Intragovernmental Task Force formed in 2011 by the Massachusetts Clean Energy Commission and the Executive Office of Energy and the Environmental Affairs.

"The fishing industry will definitely be affected by wind energy development," Almeida said. "For us, we need transit areas north and south, and east and west."

The Town Dock vessels typically fish off Nantucket, in the north by day for longfin, and then head south for whiting at night. Vessels transiting to and from the grounds going east and west will have to go around the turbines.

"This will change their fishing patterns and increase fuel consumption. And there are safety issues to consider as well," Almeida said.

At the Sept. 6 FWG meeting, wind energy industry representatives showed development plans with turbines one mile apart and transit lanes one-to-two miles wide.

Almeida said the fishing industry is requiring four-mile-wide transit lanes.

"We're not going to be able to fish in and amongst the turbines with our particular gear in those areas. Even if they say they won't kick us out, effectively we won't feel safe fishing in those areas."

Almeida said they have a number of concerns with the turbine placement, beyond transiting to fishing grounds, which Almeida says creates unanswered questions.

"Squid anchor their eggs on the bottom. How will construction affect the spawn, not just of squid, but other species?"

"How will the eggs be affected after construction and during operation?"

"And are there noise impacts on fish from construction and operation?" were among the



Katie at work, early in her career.

questions she posed.

Responsible Offshore Development Alliance (RODA) is another group Almeida hopes will help the fishing industry

improve its relationship and communication with the wind energy companies.

A broad membership-based coalition of fishing industry associations and fishing companies, RODA is proposing a collaborative approach with NMFS and other partners to coordinate efforts in policy, science, and research to minimize conflicts between development of the Outer Continental Shelf and traditional and historical fishing.

"It's very important that the fishing industry be involved every step of the way regarding wind energy development," Almeida said.

"We are very concerned about how this development will affect fishing and the species we rely on.

"We hope that the industry can become more engaged and be more effective in voicing our concerns and advocating for research that we feel will help study the effects of construction and operation of the wind farms.

"A lot of industry members don't feel we're being listened to. But we're still trying and hope that changes soon," Almeida said.

Joyce Rowley



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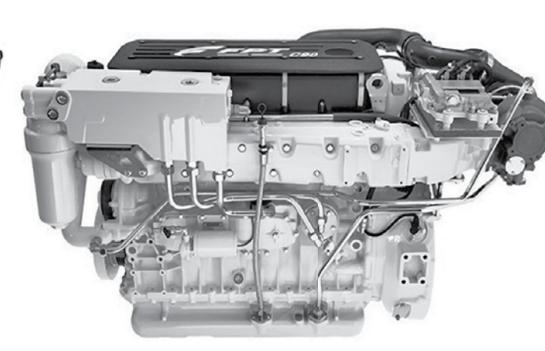
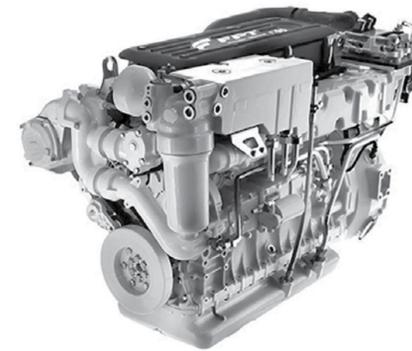
Two original RP 40s: Butterfly Kisses (left) and the Designer's Daughter at right, which was used as a plug for our brand-new mold. Future models include the Willis Beal 35/38 and the 31.

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