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Location: Grist Mill Stream, Franklin, Maine

Interviewer: Julia Beaty

Interviewee: Darrell Young

Associated sound files: DarrellYoungInterview.wav

Darrell: Here we are at Grist Mill. I started fishing in '99 when the town had opened it up. They had it closed for ten years because it got overfished. I took it over. While they had it closed the dams weren't being taken care of, the beaver dams. They couldn't make it to the pond. I took it into my own effort to go dig the dams out and make sure the fish made it and started in fishing. I let an amount of fish go up the brook and four years, five years later we realized it wasn't enough so the next cycle come around we let a lot more fish go. I've been fishing it almost four cycles, three cycles now. Now we've got a good bunch of fish. 500-700 bushels going up in the pond. So it's good. The return on that ought to be phenomenal. And I guess Julia has some questions for me. Fire away!

Julia: You already answered some of them. So what makes this particular location a good spot to harvest alewives?

Darrell: Well this has been a fight for many years. I talked to the guy that fished here in 1943. He sold alewives for 50 cents a bushel. Back then there was plenty of fish and not enough fishermen to take the bait so they just let them run. In the '80s, 1985, '87 they had a factory for cat food. Then they started fishing it, overfishing it basically and trucking it all down there and selling it all down there for weight. Getting so much a pound or something. So then it started getting overfished. That's why the town shut it down. They estimated that 50 bushels were running in the brook. And now we've got it built up to where there's probably 1500, 2000 bushels. So it's made a big difference managing it. Well, just me actually, taking over and making sure the fish make it to the pond. It's an ongoing battle for sure with the beavers. We've definitely been getting the job done.

Julia: Do you need a special permit to take down beaver dams?

Darrell: I do, yes. I have to call the local Inland warden to get a permit to dig them out. And then I get a trapper that has a license - well I have a license too. But usually I'm too busy that I can't so I hire a trapper and he goes around and traps the beaver for me and gets paid so much a beaver.

Julia: Do they relocate them somewhere?

Darrell: Sometimes they relocate them but if it's a long walk or whatever they have to trap them and kill them. If it's close by like near the road he'll set a live trap and haul them off.

Julia: Do you have to do that every year?

Darrell: Every year. Sometimes now they trap them in the wintertime. This year we didn't have a big problem at all. He trapped in the winter, took care of the beavers. In the springtime we dug out the beaver dams. We had no problems. It was pretty good this year. Usually we end up trapping four or five, six beaver a year and taking care of them to clear the path for the fish.

Julia: That's a lot of work.

Darrell: Yeah. We were looking at closure back in 2004. They were saying it was endangered. If they had closed it then the harvesters would stop doing that work and that would end up killing it.

Julia: Yeah. You have to constantly keep maintaining it.

Darrell: Yeah. Staying on top of it. Making sure the fish make it up and the babies make it out.

Julia: And you keep track of that just by kind of like ...

Darrell: The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries makes me do 100 scale samples out of each brook. I take care of three brooks. And then we've got to stand somewhere in the brook for ten minutes a day or whatever you choose, sometimes I go back a couple of times during the day, and count for ten minutes and average it out for the hour and average it out for the whole day. It's not always accurate, but it gives a good estimate. Sometimes probably there's more, some days might be less. But it gives you a good idea.

Julia: So do you think the fish are coming in waves? It's not like a constant, steady stream?

Darrell: Right, right. Depending on the weather and tide. Like here the tide comes in at nine in the morning and the fish come in. Then I only take nine hours of the day when they started running. Or if it was noontime then I'd only say six hours, something like that. I went out to Donnell's, the other brook I take care of. It was noon time. 190 in ten minutes. I went out before dark and there were a lot more than that but it was just dark enough that I couldn't count them. It was too dark. But I know it was a bigger count. So there you go. I just took that number and averaged it out for the day.

Julia: So you count them at the other runs. Do you take scale samples there too?

Darrell: A hundred fish. I run three brooks taking scale samples. The state comes behind me and double checks on me on the scale samples. They didn't know that I might have been taking scale samples here and saying I got them there or over there. They found out that I was doing it right. I checked out okay.

Julia: So is the idea that those other two brooks might be able to have a harvest?

Darrell: Oh yeah. Definitely. The one over in Surry is open to harvest but it's a landowner problem over there and a fishway problem. So I told them I wouldn't harvest. Not unless they got that straightened out. It's been an ongoing battle with that. NOAA's going to step in and hopefully help out, get some grants and get a fishway in. They're working with the landowner but they're afraid that he's going to tell them yes, yes, yes until he has to sign and then he's going to say no. That is what he did to me when it was time to fish over there. He made me think that I could fish it right up until the day that I wanted to fish and he said no. So I talked to Claire and she did feel that way that he was going to do it to her. There's some act that they can take the land and get it done if they have to. They don't want to, but if it is necessary the town could actually do it. When they have a town meeting the whole town could vote to take part of his land to get the job done. It hasn't come to that point yet.

Julia: Yeah. Do you think the town cares enough about alewives?

Darrell: Oh, I think they do. But they just as soon see the state take over and do it because they think there will be a lawsuit involved and they don't want to get into that.

Julia: Yeah, definitely. Yikes. So have you ever harvested at any other locations besides here?

Darrell: I did do Card Mill. When the town bids it out they bid out two brooks. I think I've fished it four times through the 15 years and I just realized there isn't enough fish to fish on so I stopped fishing. Why pick at a little fish when that's enough to stock, to make it happen. But the last four years have been around 450 to 500 bushels running in that pond. I'm excited to see the return on that. Claire said that she was going to put a proposal in to open it. I said let's just hold off and see what the return is on that. If the return isn't like we like to see it then maybe we should let it run another four or five years and then open it.

Julia: Then it could be even bigger.

Darrell: Then it would be even bigger and it would be worth fishing. There's no sense to pick at 500 bushels, taking a couple hundred bushels out and letting 300 run. It ain't worth it. I think most ponds, I think they need 500 bushels to a thousand. I think your percentage, if you let a lower amount of fish, say 300 bushels go in the pond, your return on that would only be two or three percent, meaning two or three bushels. For every bushel that goes up there's going to be two or three bushels coming back. But when your numbers are higher, 700 to a thousand bushels, your percentage will be up to four or five or six percent for every bushel because of the mortality rate of all the things that feed on them. You've got your fish in the pond. You've got your seals out here. You've got your birds that feed on them. Then you've got your bluefish and stripers and god knows what feeds on them in the ocean. It's amazing they even come back!

Julia: Yeah. Lots of predators.

Darrell: Right.

Julia: Does the size of the pond that they're spawning in determine how many will survive and come back?

Darrell: Well, I don't think that's been figured out yet. I think you can't let enough fish go. Every year I let fish go on my own fishing time to make sure that plenty of fish make it to the pond and regulate it that way. But I've got it so now the three days a week that we let run, I think plenty of them are making it because they're not fished now. That's what I'm hoping. When I lose this brook to someone who outbids me, I won't have to worry about it. There will be plenty of fish.

Julia: As long as they keep doing all the stuff that you are doing.

Darrell: Right. But this is going to be mandatory for them to do. I'm going to re-write the town plan, work with Claire to get it done. We've done a little bit. We've done this brook already. Yeah. It's a lot of work, definitely a lot of work. It's not mandatory yet but it will be when the bid comes up again.

Julia: How often does the bid come up?

Darrell: I've had it for ten years. When I first started I had it for one year and they said, 'Did you make any money?' I said, 'No I just made enough to pay for my equipment and stuff like that.' So they gave it to me for another year for the same price. And then I asked them to put it up for ten years so I could regulate it for ten years. It's a five-year cycle. I said I'd be stupid not to let fish go to fish on it in my last five years. So they allowed me to have it for ten years. I had to pay a pretty good dollar. But then my term ran out and then they put it up for five years. That's probably how they'll do it, every five years now.

Julia: So do they get a percentage of the profit that you make off of the fish? Or is it just -

Darrell: Well, I do a flat rate bid on it.

Julia: So your profit depends on how many fish are coming through?

Darrell: I bided 2500 bucks, what I pay them now, a year. So I have to catch 100 bushels to pay the town, or better, 120 bushels to pay the town before we even make a dollar. And not to mention I have to work all the month of April to clear the way. Off and on we go back once a week to check on the dams to make sure the beavers don't plug them up. If they do we have trappers do all that. So we do this before the fish start running, get the path cleared.

Julia: So it starts in April -

Darrell: Well, the end of April. A lot of times May first is when they start. But this year it was April 21st. It was the first brook that was running in the state of Maine.

Julia: This one was?

Darrell: This year for the first time ever. Yeah, it was amazing. It was six days after the ice went out. I was shocked.

Julia: Wow. I wonder why this was the first one?

Darrell: I have no idea. I figured it was just returned fish that had been coming for a couple of years or whatever. I took a couple of scale samples off of them to see how old they were. I think they knew where they were going and they were on a journey.

Julia: Were you extra proud that it was yours that was the first one that started?

Darrell: I was. Claire had come up. She couldn't believe it either. She asked me why they were running so early. I said, I don't know. I think I've created an early run here, letting fish go when the first show up. Just let them go, the first fish that come. I think it's created an early run.

Julia: When does the run usually end?

Darrell: Oh it probably ends the first of June here. But other places are later. Sometimes they don't get going, like over in Surry they're just getting started running. The water's colder. So they'll run in June, probably right up till June 10th, June 15th. They always run around four to five weeks.

Julia: I didn't realize that places that were that close together had that different -

Darrell: It's water temperature. I've been running over to Surry for the last two weeks and it's just starting over there. Every year over there with the weather it's been right around May 8th. It's right on the money, usually. But they're a little later this year. So it will carry a little later into June usually.

Julia: Does it reach a peak at some point?

Darrell: Yeah. Probably half way through, three quarters of the way through the season, it reaches a peak, yeah. A lot of fish show up. Here it's like around the 20th of May, the 25th. You'll see a lot of fish, usually.

Julia: Do you notice, in terms of changes in abundance - it sounds like you've been maintaining it so they're pretty steady or increasing, but how does the abundance change year to year? Is it a steady increase?

Darrell: Well, every four years we let somewhat the same amount of fish go and when that cycle comes around we fish on that cycle. We see what there is. There's always more fish

coming back so we end up letting more fish go. So every cycle that goes around we're going to be letting more fish go every time. So say another fifteen years, it will be huge.

Julia: That's encouraging.

Darrell: Yeah. And with every brook that people are taking care of, the harvesters are building it. No doubt about it. Because we're doing it right now. Years ago in the '90s, or '80s actually, they overfished it because you could fish six days a week and let them go one. Well that wasn't enough. That could have been a stormy day and they don't even run.

Julia: So do they just kind of hang out near by and wait for good conditions to come all the way in?

Darrell: Yeah. So they'll come in the bay, sometimes milling around, for like three days to get acclimated to the water. Then once they come in they'll feel a little bit of the fresh water, go back into the salt, and keep doing that for like two or three days. And then all of a sudden they'll decide to go. This is the brook that they come up. The old-timers told me they caught 420 bushels one day. I told them, 'Well I hope to beat that someday.' We've had 307 was our biggest day. That was pretty exciting. And with this little brook it was quite a sight. And fun too. Fishing's the fun part. Taking care of all the other stuff is the work. I was here and the stone step way was never here. We always had to have a wooden ladder go down and it was pretty dangerous. All the stone men back years ago could never figure out why they didn't build a stone step way here. So 14 years later I finally got permits and stuff and built a stone step way to get down there easier.

Julia: It's very nice.

Darrell: Yeah. It came out good. We used all the granite that was right here.

Julia: Oh. Cool.

Darrell: We had a stonemason come in and cut it. It was good. We got it pretty reasonable. The rope was pretty expensive. But we got her done anyway. So basically I can say all the money that I made here I just put back in the brook. I think the town appreciated it so much they put it right on the town book cover.

Julia: Oh. Wow! Nice.

Darrell: So they were pretty proud of it. So that was good.

Julia: Can you explain your setup down there to me?

Darrell: Yeah. This is what we call the catwalk that we go around the brook there. We set a great big net in there. We make a little doorway. We funnel the fish in the doorway. When we

get ready to fish it we pull the net up and pour them in there. And then we purse it up and get the fish right in a group. And then we get a great big dip net and pull it though. A vehicle pulls it up. It pulls it up over the box here and we have a little quick release that we pull on the bottom and all the fish drop right into the box. When they all die we put them in a can down there that measures three bushels. We hoist it up and put it in the back of lobster trucks.

Julia: So people just line up here in their trucks -

Darrell: They line up. There's a truck here now waiting for bait. It's first come, first served here.

Julia: Rick was telling me they do a numbering system.

Darrell: They do numbering over there.

Julia: But here it's just whoever gets here first?

Darrell: First come first served.

Julia: Are you competing with one another for buyers?

Darrell: Well, when Ricky fires up, yeah. He catches a lot of fish in Ellsworth. Probably one of the biggest catches in Maine, I think. So when he gets fired up, he's a little less money than we are. When he starts filling everybody up around here it does compete with me. We took it on ourselves to start trucking them to people. When that happens we'll just start trucking them. Some people don't want to deal with it. They'd just as soon have us truck them right to them, pay a little extra money and be done with it.

Julia: Do you truck them to individual people?

Darrell: Individual lobster fishermen. It works out all right. Ricky works with us too when there's a lot of people there, people that don't have bait and I have bait he'll send them over here and vice versa.

Julia: Cool. That's good that you help each other out.

Darrell: Yeah. We've known each other for years so it works out pretty good. He's always worried about me bidding on that over there, taking that over. I said well, maybe when I get old enough and you retire, I might.

Julia: So I've heard that there's two different kinds of river herring. There's the alewives and the bluebacks and they're very similar in appearance. Can you tell them apart? Do you try to keep track of how many of each -

Darrell: I think in the 15 years, well I haven't been doing scale samples that long - I started in

2005, I think, and I've had one blueback out of all those years. But you cut them open and you can tell. Claire showed me the other day. I wasn't aware of it, but you cut them open and the pink ones, the pink belly inside, are the alewife. If they're black then it'd be a blueback. She was here the other day. We cut open 25 and they were all alewives.

Julia: So you can only tell if you cut them open?

Darrell: Well, there's other ways too, but that was the easiest way.

Julia: But you're normally not paying attention to it unless you're doing scale samples?

Darrell: No. I can't even tell doing scale samples. I can't even tell, to be honest with you. I'm sure there's some special dot where you could tell. Cutting the bellies open was the easiest way, I guess. The most sure way.

Julia: Yeah. But you've got to kill them to do that.

Darrell: Right. Well, when we take a scale sample we end up killing them anyway.

Julia: You may have already answered this, but what do you think is the biggest threat to alewives in this river?

Darrell: Beaver dams, for sure. If we don't clean the beaver dams they can't get up. I've seen them stick themselves in the beaver dams just like toothpicks. They'll kill themselves trying to get up there. It happened here. When the town had it closed they thought they were doing a good thing to build the brook back up. But if you're not digging the dam out you're killing them. You're killing it. If they can't make it up to the pond to spawn, they're not going to survive too good.

Julia: Okay. That's what I thought you were going to say. I just wanted to make sure that you thought that was *the* threat.

Darrell: I've seen it where you had a beaver dam and the water spillway right on the shore. I've seen alewives jump right on the shore and die.

Julia: Yeah. Because they're so determined to get up there -

Darrell: That was when I first started. When I was cruising the brooks and checking it out. Sometimes the beaver will get a beaver dam in while you're not paying attention too. They build one pretty quick. Now when we let them go, the day we let them go we go check the beaver dams to make sure the path is clear for them. We go up in the pond and make sure they're going in the pond. We're more on top of it now than when we first started. We learned. It took years to learn it. More like a routine for us now. But if a new harvester took over, we'd have to explain everything to him. He's not going to get everything over the first year. It's going



to take him a couple of years to figure it all out. That's why it's good to keep with a harvester if he wants to do it.

Julia: But like you were saying earlier before the camera was on, you have to continually convince the town that it's important?

Darrell: Yeah, the selectman. It's usually up to the selectman to bid it out and do it that way. I think I'm going to have to go up to the town and explain to them, basically what I've done with you, and tell them the consequences. If another harvester takes over he might not do quite so good of a job. I think the town would vote me in to keep running it.

Julia: Even if there's a higher bidder they could say well -

Darrell: They put that in the bid anyway. They can avoid any bid.

Julia: It could be in their interest -

Darrell: It would definitely be in their interest that I keep running it, yeah. Just for the state reason. Like I said, they don't know how easy they've got it right now. Once I get done Claire is going to be down. Claire works with me and I'm up front with her. I let her know what's going on. Like I said, they've double checked on me on the scale samples and all that. They know I'm doing a good job. They see that I don't need to be bothered and then they go continue with somebody else that needs help.

Julia: Can you describe the role that this fishery plays in the local area here, in the community?

Darrell: There never was a lot of money into it. We just took enough fish to pay for ourselves to do the work and let the rest of the fish go. That's how it all started out. I felt bad that there wasn't enough fish here. But now it's built up a little bit. Me and my wife and my son - my son's 22 - I have another guy that's been helping me for six years, we're splitting it four ways. There isn't a lot of money still in it. You take ten thousand dollars and spilt it four ways, it isn't a lot of money really, for the month. But it pays for ourselves, for what work we do. We actually work two months of doing this. Then we go back in the fall and make sure the path's clear for the babies coming out. It's quite a job really. Fishing is just the fun part. Lots of other work goes with it, not including paper work too!

Julia: So what do you do for the rest of the year?

Darrell: Of course I do the eeling and I'm a sternman on a lobster boat. I took last year off. I used to tend divers for scallops and urchins.

Julia: So all fishing stuff?

Darrell: Yeah. We do that in the winter. We pick our days to go. We might not even go! But I try

to save up enough money through the summer to coast through the winter. When I started the alewives, it was a good thing. We weren't lobster fishing then. I picked up eeling and then I picked up the alewives and do it at the same time, so that helps out.

Julia: This question is a little strange. But I'm going to try it out. What would Downeast Maine be like if there were no river fisheries?

Darrell: I think the lobster fishermen would be pretty upset. They really rely on us to get their bait. Herring is hard to get right now. They're all on a quota. You can only get so much. There would be a big impact on the lobster fishermen, for sure. Plus my livelihood and all the other harvesters. It generates a lot of money. I say that I only make ten thousand and split it four ways, that's only a couple of thousand a year. But the lobster fishermen take a whole truckload of alewives, say ten or twenty bushels, gets to haul through all their traps, they could make thousands.

Julia: So for this area it's bringing a lot of money in in multiple ways?

Darrell: Oh yeah. Definitely. Yeah. We would see the impact, for sure.

Julia: I think I asked all my questions. Is there anything else that you think I should know about alewives?

Darrell: No. I think we pretty much covered it. If I didn't I'm sure someone else will. My crew is starting to show up now. So maybe you'll get to film us doing a little fishing.

Julia: Yeah, that would be good.

Darrell: That would be awesome. We're definitely going to start fishing here. Let's check it out.

Julia: Yeah. For eels I want to ask some of the same questions, but we can do that later.

Darrell: No. Fire away! Go ahead. Let's get it over with.

Julia: So you also harvest elvers in this same stream?

Darrell: Yeah. My wife has one net here. I jump around. I fish down on Card Mill where I do the other alewife brook. It's easier for me to fish the brook plus play around with the fish, you know? But right now I'm over at the Union River fishing, just a little ways away so it's not too bad. Sometimes, like last year I went to Bangor to fish in the Penobscot.

Julia: How do you decide where to fish?

Darrell: What we do is we start out in the little brooks and we end up in the big rivers. There's more eels in the big rivers, of course. But the little brooks warm up quicker so we start out

there. Not that they don't stop running, they're still running in the little brooks. But to take the pressure off the little brooks we go to the big rivers. There's more eels anyway. I think Maine has done a super job regulating this elver industry. Especially now with the swipe cards and personal quota. They've pretty much eliminated all the poaching. They've done a super job there. This swipe card is something else. Everything is accurate. There's no mistakes. It's going to show good data.

Julia: So do you think the elver runs are doing well?

Darrell: I think the elver run is doing super. I've definitely seen an increase in that. The last two years have been phenomenal. I think it all has to do with what we did in '99. We made a 75% cut in the gear. 75% cut in the fishermen. 50% cut in the season. That allowed a lot more eels to go up the brook. We let them go two days a week. We did that back in '99. We used to be able to fish seven days a week but we'd only fish a third of the brook so depending on the size of the brook, and in a river you're not fishing a third. You're only fishing a piece of it. You're only taking a small percentage. A brook like this here, say it's only 30 feet wide and you take two ten feet and you've got ten feet in the middle, it's a little more pressure that way. But like I said a lot of the guys will start out in a small brook and they'll pull a net and go to a big river because there's more eels. And let these little brooks run.

Julia: So, I think you already said this off camera, too, but just to make sure that I have it on the recording, what's the timing of when the elvers usually start showing up and when they stop?

Darrell: So I always say the ice has to be out of the pond before an elver will run. It was April 15th this year before the ice went out. But as a rule by the first of April the ice is out. The water has to warm up to the same temperature as the ocean, usually. So if the ocean is at 40 degrees the fresh water has to warm up to 40 degrees for them to come in. They like it a degree warmer so when they come in they feel warmer. A lot of times though when the elvers come in and they'll go up the brook and settle down and it gets really cold at night, say down to 20 degrees, that water cools right down and it ends up killing them. So there's a lot of death at the beginning. But as the season goes on the water warms up and it doesn't get cold, there isn't any death that way.

Julia: And when does the run usually stop?

Darrell: I think it continues on right up through July, I really do.

Julia: But you're only allowed to harvest them through the end of May, is that what you said?

Darrell: End of May. We used to be able to fish until July 4th and they caught eels right up until July 4th. But they cut the season back to the first of June and we let them run the whole month of June. They run. My best catches were in June. When we fished in June, my best catches were in June and now we can't fish in June. The bulk of the year runs in June, especially this year where it's going to be late. We started out fishing last year, I've never seen it as long as I've

been fishing for 20 years, I caught eels on the first day, March 22nd. But the last two years, the winters have been so mild that we started catching eels on the first day and we caught right until the end of it. So it was a ten-week season. I think eels still run after we get done fishing. But this year it's going to be about a five-week season for us and I think the eels are really going to run hard in June and we're going to miss them.

Julia: It's good for the eels -

Darrell: Good for the eels, right.

Julia: Maybe not so good for you.

Darrell: Exactly. But that's the management part that Maine has done. They've done a super job. No question about it.

Julia: Do you use just the fyke net? Some people use dip nets, right?

Darrell: I use just the fyke net. Some people, that was their choice, they could have had the fyke net if they wanted too, but they chose the dip net so they could ride around and go fish the other brooks and stuff.

Julia: It's more transportable?

Darrell: Right. With a fyke net you're locked into a spot, basically, for that night anyway unless you want to move it.

Julia: What do you think is the biggest threat to the eels in this area?

Darrell: I don't think there's any threat to them, to be honest with you. I mean trout, brook trout, any fish with teeth, they do damage on them. But if you take a bass or a cat fish that doesn't have any teeth, they'll swallow an eel and the eel will go right out their gills.

Julia: Wow! Cool.

Darrell: But a brook trout has got teeth. When they bite, they kill. So any pond that has brook trout or anything, that's probably the most death that you're going to see as far as damage on the eels. I think it's been kind of proven that the eels run - the guy's like, 'Oh the eels are going to be thicker there, to go catch silver eels.' Well it was a trout brook, a trout pond. He didn't do too good catching silver eels. But there's places with only bass and perch and stuff like that. I think they make out pretty good. I think we have trillions of eels in these lakes, streams, and rivers. Trillions. I'm hoping to prove it. I'm hoping to file a grant, do a study on the glass eels in June to prove that there are plenty of them running then and I'd like to do a silver eel study. But right now it's money. There's no money.

Julia: There's a lot less survey effort for eels than for alewives, right? Because it seems like there's a lot of monitoring for alewives. Everybody's out on their individual streams -

Darrell: Yeah, well we got organized a lot earlier. We just got organized for the eels. For the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries we go down to lobby for the fishermen, basically, to explain to them that this is a nice clean industry. It's too bad that the poachers had to ruin it for us. Really that's what happened. That was the bottom line. The poachers are why we're getting cut back. So hopefully we get it straightened out and get on a nice narrow path and maybe gain a little quota back.

Julia: So are you part of both the Alewife Harvesters of Maine and the Maine Elver Fishermen's Association?

Darrell: Yeah. So I started the Maine Elver Fishermen's Association. I'm the co-director. I hired Jeffrey Pierce as the executive director to go to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries with me because he'd done it before and I was (*inaudible word at 0:33:15*). He knows everybody down there and it made a big difference. He's been doing it with the alewives. He knows how to manage stuff. He's done a super job for us. No one else wants to step up to the plate. I lobbied for a year for somebody to step up to the plate and nobody would. I asked Jeff and it blew my mind that he said he would do it. He said, you hold a meeting and we'll get it done. I did and we got it done. We probably had 200 members last year. Everybody got cut 41.8% and they are all leery now about thinking that we might have had something to do with that, which we didn't. We went down to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries to get the best quota we could. We came home and the commissioner ended up divvying up the quota how he felt it should be, you could say.

Julia: So it could have been a lot worse if you guys hadn't been lobbying.

Darrell: Yeah. We were looking at 5,000 pounds or closure. Basically we got glass eels taken off Addendum Three to go to Addendum Four. It basically bought ourselves another whole year of time to re-hash it all over. They did a good job listening to us. I'm very impressed with that. They worked with us very well. I'm very impressed. They heard us out. We heard them out. We understand them and they understand us. Hopefully we can carry on and do it right and manage it right.

Julia: It seems like things are going a lot better.

Darrell: The fishermen, everybody hates changes. This is their first year adapting to it. But it's done well. The Marine Patrol last year at this time I think wrote 240 tickets. They wrote 14 this year. So that's a big difference.

Julia: So maybe people will realize that and start appreciating the changes?

Darrell: Yeah. Those 14 tickets, there were no licensed fishermen. It was somebody that was

trying to bring poached eels in or tried dipping. People without a license got caught.

Julia: So is the price lower this year than it was last year?

Darrell: The price started out at 500 bucks and then worked up a little bit. Right now it's a thousand.

Julia: Oh. Okay. So that's pretty good.

Darrell: That's not bad, no. I was doing jumping jacks when it hit 500 a couple of years ago. And then it went to 2200 there once. It was like, wow! It was amazing. It helped this state out big time.

Julia: It's the number two income generator for fisheries now, right? Next to lobster?

Darrell: Yeah. It was the second biggest. Not this year it won't be, no. Those two years, yeah.

Julia: Do you think some people will get out of it as the price gets lower?

Darrell: Well, some people have got like a four pound quota. Those guys, if the price goes down, they won't even fish. That happened back in 2001, 2, 3, somewhere around there. The price went to like seven bucks a pound, 25 dollars a pound. No one fished. Then they had data where we only caught like 1600 pounds and they were like, jeeze that was a bad year! Well it was a bad year because the price was bad and no one even fished. We just let them run. So now we're fishing back on those eels too and seeing our results. Of course, that was back in the '90s. I don't think anyone's sure what the cycle really is. It could be 12 years or 20 years, or 6 years. I think down southern they figured out it was six, where the water's warm all the time but it gets cold up here.

Julia: Oh, you mean really far south. Not like southern Maine south.

Darrell: No. So I think where it's cold up here it probably takes a little longer.

Julia: I think you answered all the questions about that too. There's some overlap. Do you want me to let you get to work?

Darrell: Yeah. I guess we'll get to work and you can film a little bit of that.

Julia: That would be cool.

