

Groundfish Oral History: Paul Molyneaux¹
East Machias, Maine
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Interviewer: Kevin Athearn

Paul Molyneaux was born in 1958. He went groundfishing out of Stonington from about 1978 to 1996.

Athearn: All right. Please state your full name, the year you were born and where you live.

Paul Molyneaux: My name is Paul Molyneaux. I was born in 1958, and I live in East Machias, Maine now, but I've also lived in Trescott and Eastport and Downeast Maine.

Athearn: And how long have you lived in this area, in Eastern Maine?

Paul Molyneaux: I came down here in 1986 to run the fish processing plant, Passamaquoddy Quality Seafood and Fillet, Passamaquoddy Reservation.

Athearn: And in what year did you first start working in the fishing industry, even prior to coming to Eastern Maine?

Paul Molyneaux: 1975.

Athearn: And what was the nature of that work?

Paul Molyneaux: It was snapping heads off shrimp in Key West, Florida, for \$0.05 a pound.

Athearn: Wow. And so you said you came then to Eastern Maine in 1986?

Paul Molyneaux: Yeah, I'd been in Maine since 1981 fishing out of Rockland on the draggers.

Athearn: What kind of draggers?

Paul Molyneaux: Ground fish and sword fishing in the summertime, ground fishing and scalloping in the wintertime.

Athearn: All right. Did any of your family members work in fisheries?

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Paul Molyneaux: No. No. Maybe – no. Many generations back, but you know, 10, 11 generations back, but not in the recent memory.

Athearn: Do you expect that your children will be involved in fisheries when they grow up?

Paul Molyneaux: I don't know. I encourage them that you can get a leap ahead by building on your parents' work, but they've got their own minds, and they'll do what they want. I'm not actively fishing anymore, so their involvement – they go to the meetings with me, and they kind of analyze – they hear a lot about policy.

Athearn: Would you encourage them to go into fishing today?

Paul Molyneaux: It depends on what we can get done, but yeah, if they could line – get their ducks lined up, sure, it's a great – I still think it's a great life, even if they just did it temporarily as crew for somebody else it'd be good.

Athearn: So you said you started fishing in 1981 out of Rockland on ground fish draggers?

Paul Molyneaux: Yeah.

Athearn: Could you just tell us a little bit more about that experience, about were you part of the crew?

Paul Molyneaux: Actually in 1981, in Rockland, I was working on the docks. I was cutting ground fish. So they were, at that point, the boats that had been built in the late '70s were landing sometimes 100,000-pound trips in ten days, 80 to 120-foot steel boats were coming in to Stinson's and landing – oh, boy, huge catches of big fish. There were codfish there that I could barely manage on my cutting table. They were – weighed 50 pounds.

Athearn: Where were those boats from? They were landing in Rockland, but they were --

Paul Molyneaux: They were Rockland-based boats at the time. There was some – there was Richard McLellan's boats came up from Boothbay Harbor, and Lee Riley and the O'Hara boats were all based in Rockland. And they were landing big trips. And the boats coming out of Stinsons, they had built a big boat called the Cal Stinson, and they had a bunch of other boats, the [?], the, oh, geez, the McLellan's boats, Lee Riley's boats, they all took out there. And

we took out there. When I was fishing, I ended up fishing on one of those, getting on one of those boats and first with – well, with Bernard Raines, he used to take out there.

And then I got on with a guy named Billy Anderson and worked with him for quite a while. And then I made one trip on the Atlantic Harvester, a 90-foot steel boat.

Athearn: And what were they fishing for mostly? What kind of species were they getting?

Paul Molyneaux: What we were mostly getting was a mixed bag of flats, cod, hake, some haddock. There wasn't a lot of haddock around in the early '80s. It was mostly cod, hake and Pollock. Sometimes you'd get into Pollock really thick, and a lot of flat fish. That's where the money was. We were going after grey sole was where the big money was, so we fished nets that were – most of the time we fished URI high-rise nets that were for getting kind of a – that mixed bag. They kind of went up so they'd get the haddock, if there was much of that.

Anyway, we fished long ground tables to herd in the flats because that would herd your flat fish in, you see. But that was mostly – it was mostly just that mixed bag of ground fish. And we would come in – I worked in the hole, and you'd have a couple of pens of flats, maybe a pen of pure gray sole, a pen of mixed bag and black backs. And you'd come back and you'd have hake and cusk maybe, and then codfish, Pollock and maybe red fish if you got into red fish, monkfish.

Athearn: Do you remember where the boats were fishing most, how far offshore?

Paul Molyneaux: Well, it depended, like the smaller boats that I worked on with Bernard and Billy Anderson, those boats, we would fish, and we'd fish out on the outer falls, the inner falls, what they called the bowling alley, Larkins Ridge, before the Hague line. We'd come right down here. And in October and September, we would come right down here and fish right up into the St. Croix River.

Athearn: You said in October and November?

Paul Molyneaux: Yeah, and Bernard quit doing that when I – just like the year or two before I started with him. But every year he would come down here to Downeast and fish. I didn't come down here with him. As far as Downeast I used to fish when I was on those boats

was the Larkin Ridge, which is down off like Jonesport maybe east as far as Jonesport. I should have brought a chart. I have a chart with all of these little fishing grounds.

Athearn: Have you shared those with anybody?

Paul Molyneaux: No. No, and I have diaries from Bernard's grandfather and father, but that's in Penobscot Bay, fishing in the – it's really interesting. You can look at Bernard's grandfather, Dell Raines, he fished around Eagle Island, Isle of Hope and up in the Inner Bay. And then his father fished in the Outer Bay, and then Bernard fished offshore. So the fishery – you could see in the three generations, the fishery, over the course of the century, just moving offshore.

Athearn: Interesting.

Paul Molyneaux: Yeah.

Athearn: Was that because inshore the fish were depleted or weren't there anymore?

Paul Molyneaux: Right. They started to dragging in the '30s, but I think they were moving off before that. I guess perhaps they started dragging and using gill nets in the early 20th century, but they didn't really start dragging down here – according to Bernard's ancestor's logs, they weren't dragging down here until the '30s, small draggers.

Athearn: Mm-hmm. And what time of year was fishing mostly for ground fish? Was it summer and fall?

Paul Molyneaux: No, in the summer we would go sword fishing, and prices were a lot – so it was better right up until Christmas was the good times. And then after Christmas the weather would get so bad you could go weeks without getting out when I was fishing on those smaller boats.

Athearn: And when you say smaller boats, what size are you --

Paul Molyneaux: Sixty – fifty, sixty feet. Yeah, Bernard's boat was 58 foot. But we would fish in the summertime 200 miles offshore in that boat for swordfish.

Athearn: And – well, and how long were the ground fish trips?

Paul Molyneaux: On those boats about a week, and then in the colder weather we would stay maybe out ten days. But that was rare. But on the bigger boats ten days every time.

Athearn: And how many crew members did they typically have onboard?

Paul Molyneaux: Bernard ground fishing we used to go three-handed, the captain and the two crew. Yeah, that's mostly what we did on those small boats. On the bigger boats we would go four or five hand, so depending on what we were into. Back when I first started I worked on older boats to the west of Portland and around in Rhode Island, we used to use Eastern rigs and pull the twine in by hand. So then we would always have five. It's hard work to get the net in.

But as things got automated, you didn't need so many people. And then as costs went up and the price of fish held pretty kind of steady, we just went fewer and fewer until we were going two-handed. By the time – when I quit ground fishing on the draggers in 1985 – '86 when I came down here is the last time I worked regularly on the draggers up there in Rockland. Because when they drew the Hague Line, they cut off the best ground fish grounds for the O'Hara fleet, and these big boats, they kind of supported the infrastructure in Rockland.

And so they didn't – they lost their grounds. They started fishing inshore, pounding what we needed to work on. And then they just took off and went off to Gloucester and Alaska in places right up through Alaska, and that's where they're fishing now, those draggers.

But that Hague Line, are you familiar with that?

Athearn: Yes.

Paul Molyneaux: In 1985 they put that line through there and cutoff the grounds. Rockland only existed to fish those grounds really as a fishing port. And so when they cutoff those grounds, Rockland's comparative advantage and location, they lost it. Then they had to go even further to fish down there. So you could fish there easier out of Portland Gloucester than they could out of Rockland.

Athearn: I see. Do you remember much about the markets or the ground fish that was landing in Rockland?

Paul Molyneaux: Yeah, we would count on getting \$1.00 a pound average, between \$0.80 and \$1.00 a pound average in the early 80s. If we got less than \$0.80 average. And cod, market cod, was always around \$0.90 or \$1.00, and that's what I used to pay down here, anywhere from \$1.05 to \$0.90, what I could get away with.

Athearn: Was that for the fresh market?

Paul Molyneaux: Yeah, that was – most of the fish then – okay, so in 1981, when I was cutting, we were cutting for the fresh market fillets, and that was going right out. Boom. And maybe some of that got frozen, but that was coming in on the draggers, getting cut, getting put into the typical plastic 25-pound container or 10-pound container and put into boxes covered with ice and off to the market. That's how.

Athearn: And do you remember which markets they were being shipped to?

Paul Molyneaux: Well, I don't remember. I was a fish cutter, so I wasn't up in the office. But when I was working down here then in '85, we were shipping mostly to the New England fresh market. We had a real high-quality product, and we were going to all the local supermarkets. We had a native – whatever you call it – priority. So we were the first ones in. The University of Maine had to buy our fish first, and any government institution had to buy our fish first.

And then we had a lot of market down as far as Rhode Island and a little bit of air freight out in Chicago. And a guy called me one time, one morning. I was getting fish from the day boats in Eastport, and they were landed that afternoon, cut in the evening, and the truck went out that night. So they got to – when they got to the market in Rhode Island, the fish weren't even 24 hours out of the water, and there they were filleted. And the guy called me and he said, "What's wrong with these fish?" I said – it was Carter Starr. And he said, "Hey, what are you sending me here? What's wrong with these fish?" I said, "Carter, take a good look. That's a fresh fish." I said, "Let it sit on your shelf for a week and you'll recognize it." But no, he'd never seen a fish that fresh.

Athearn: So how long did you work – you said you started out in Eastport in 1986. How long did you work – did you stay out there in Eastport working in the ground fishery?

Paul Molyneaux: In Eastport, I got there in '86, and basically I was running the fish plant. So I was buying from local hand liners, who were going out of Eastport, what they called the mosquito fleet. It was a guy

named Reed Wilson. He was kind of the king of the mosquito fleet. I should have brought his – I have his obituary. They were great. They would come in with 700 pounds of Pollock or codfish.

Athearn: Per boat?

Paul Molyneaux: Per boat for a day out there in Head Harbor, hand lined. And to go out and get 200 pounds was no problem. And that was in 1986. And they were big cod, large, and whale – cod come scrod, market, large and whale, okay. And the whale is the one that they cut the ear bones out of to make jewelry out of and stuff, the [?]. Have you ever seen that?

Athearn: I'm not sure.

Paul Molyneaux: Yeah. And so anyway, they – these would be large and whales, a few markets, but never scrod.

Athearn: So how many fishermen do you remember was fishing out of Eastport at that time?

Paul Molyneaux: There were like a dozen. There were a dozen boats there. And I wouldn't say they're all hard fishermen, so maybe half of them were fishing hard. And they were selling to a guy named Rick Cole, and if he didn't have – they were pretty loyal to him, so I had to bid up the price to get those fish. But I had market. I was processing them, where Cole was just shipping whole fish. So I had market, I had a fillet market, so I could bid up the price a little bit because we were adding value, and we could pick that up on the other end. But Rick, gosh, I'm still in touch with Rick. He's living on a boat down in the Caribbean someplace.

Yeah, yeah, we were friendly competitors. But he bought a lot of the fish there too. But anyway, like I say, it was mostly Pollock and cod. They say that before there was haddock as well, but it disappeared.

Athearn: So the fishermen that were all landing in Eastport, were they based in Eastport as their home port, or did some of them come from other parts?

Paul Molyneaux: No, they were local. They were right in town. Yeah, they would walk to their skiff.

Athearn: So how big were their boats that they were using?

Paul Molyneaux: They were these 18 to 24-foot Eastporter skiffs. You still see them down there. It's kind of its own unique design. They're wide in the stern, and usually had pretty decent-sized engine on there for these old guys, right. Maybe like 40 horse or something like that, 50. And they'd buzz out to Head Harbor in Canadian waters, and they fished pretty much Canadian waters in those boats.

But they fished – they jigged. They just had jigs, so they'd have like two guys in the boat, and they'd drop over – there was like a big silver spoon with a treble hook on the bottom, and they'd have sometimes ten hooks on there. And they'd load that up. And they had those nippers, you know, the old – like an old inner tube here on your hand for pulling that line up so you didn't wear – cut your fingers off. So they'd take an old inner tube and put it here, and they'd grab that to pull that line up. And they'd know what they had. They were pretty savvy guys. They were pretty interesting.

Athearn: Mm-hmm.

Paul Molyneaux: Yeah.

Athearn: You said there were about a dozen of them fishing out of Eastport?

Paul Molyneaux: Yeah, when I came in '85. I remember I said, "Where's your fleet?" And they said, "That's it." And I said, oh, my god, because I was coming from the draggers. I saw that they were – it was beautiful. I was excited that they were actually making money and catching that much fish with those tiny little boats. It was impressive.

Have you talked to Butch Harris?

Athearn: I haven't. He's well known. I've heard of him.

Paul Molyneaux: And his older brother, I can't remember if he's still alive. His older brother too, they lived great. They lived that whole sort of end of an era. I came in at the tail end of it.

Athearn: Did they all fish?

Paul Molyneaux: Yeah, very involved in the fishing business. They were involved in everything. If there was \$1.00 to be got from the water around Eastport, they had been in on it. They started scalloping -- Butch's father George was the one who started scalloping in Cobscook Bay. And they had the Quoddy Dam, which they took out as a head boat, and that was a – that was actually a Lowell designed

boat. It was ugly as hell, but it was like a famous designer. Have you heard of that?

Athearn: I've seen that.

Paul Molyneaux: Yeah, I've always thought that boat was ugly as hell, but somebody was telling me it was a Lowell design or some famous designer designed it. Anyway, they took people out to go catch fish, the head boat. And they fished too. When they didn't have passengers, people, they'd go out there and hand line cod and bring it in and stuff. So they were very involved with fishing in there for a long time.

Athearn: So for that hand lining out of Eastport, what time of year did they do that?

Paul Molyneaux: Well, I came down in May of '86, and they were – there was – I think it was more in the fall that the cod really came in. They'd be getting Pollock, kind of like all summer, but more towards the late summer and fall when the feed would come in, when the herring would come in later in the summer, and then the mackerel, and then the bigger fish would be in. Maybe there'd be some up there in the summer chasing, and the Pollock would come up chasing the alewives.

But it was mostly summer and fall, yeah. You know, by – once the snow came, things were pretty much dying down, once the feed fish left.

They say that they used to have red [?] used to come in because of the algae blooms off of Campobello and all up into the bay, and that there'd be these huge flocks of red [?] would come back in the '70s, up until the early '80s when I came. It was indicative of the plentitude of the feed here. But then the – they don't come anymore.

Athearn: What are those?

Paul Molyneaux: It's a type of bird, migratory bird migrating up to the arctic.

Athearn: Okay.

Paul Molyneaux: Yeah. But they don't come anymore. That was part of the ecosystem was those birds coming through every – in the spring

and coming back in the fall and counting on these algae blooms, I guess.

Athearn:

Hmm. What condition do you think the stocks were in at that time in the mid '80s, up this way and in the Eastport area?

Paul Molyneaux:

Well, you've heard a graduated sort of perception, like the grandfather says there ain't no more fish, and the son says there's plenty of fish, and a few years later the son says, "There's no more fish," and his son says, "There's plenty of fish," because your sense of abundance changes. So I would say when I came I was impressed. I thought there – it seemed like there was a lot of fish, but if you talked to the old-timers it's like it ain't nothing compared to what it was. So it was sort of last refuges maybe of inshore – of good, healthy, inshore stocks. And who could say what's depleted them. Has it been the absence of feed, of change, climate change, or did they get gobbled up by the draggers offshore in the winter refuge?

Because there was a lot of things going on at that time. There was a sort of recognized temperature shift in these waters out there, and there was a – well, not in these waters per se. These waters have been pretty steady because the Labrador Current just keeps them pretty cold. But warming up elsewhere, and that changed things. Then there was developments in gear. They got – the rock hopper gear really got cranking in the mid '80s and late '80s, and that's when they really started figuring out how to dig in to the refuges of the codfish offshore, fishing hard bottom. There were some people who got really savvy about how to fish hard bottom, and they got good twine then.

So you'd have two nets on the boat. You'd come in. You'd make a tow, an hour or two through hard bottom. Come up. Your net's in shreds. Your cod is full. And you dump that cod in, put those fish down, and you set the other net, you see. When you bring that net up, you set the other net right away and go right back on it. And so you've got these guys putting fish down and mending that net in time to get the next load aboard. So they're putting that fish down and mending. I mean, we fished that way in the mid '80s. Two nets, one in the water, one on deck being mended.

I went to the University of Rhode Island Fishery School in '83 to '85, so I was fishing vacations and summers at that point, but I was a good twine man. And so that's what we did. We went out there and mended nets and fished hard bottom. And so that just got more and more, so who knows if these fish from Eastport got

gobbled up.

It was also a pretty regular showing off Western Head, off Cutler. That was a real popular spot. If you talk to some of the Cutler people, the older guys, they'll talk to you about fishing codfish around Cross Island and Western Head there. There was – there used to be huge schools of codfish around there. There's a great mixing of currents there and depth changes and whatnot. I don't know. It was a pretty popular place.

I was there when Vicky Bickford came in, I think. No, Vicky Ramsdell came in with his boat just loaded.

Athearn: Into Cutler?

Paul Molyneaux: With the lobster boat, with the stern of it with those fish totes stacked two or three high with codfish, hand lined out there, and he was giving them away. He had no market – it was no market for them. It was like they used to be here all the time. They showed up, and he went wild. He probably shipped them out for \$0.30 a pound or something. They were a bit scrawny looking. I took a tote home and dried them. Salted them and dried them, right.

Athearn: And so they – the fish that was caught, the cod and Pollock that was brought into Eastport, you said you filleted them there at the processing plant, and then they mostly all went to the fresh market in Southern New England?

Paul Molyneaux: Yeah, Boston, Portland. We shipped to – we filled our local markets as best as we could. That was our best prices and most profit for us. And then we shipped for Boston, Portland, Rhode Island, Gloucester occasionally, and like I said we air freighted to Chicago, a bit of it. I had some market out there. That was really – those were very lucrative for us.

Athearn: And it was always fillets?

Paul Molyneaux: Yeah, once in a while I would get some fish out of Canada, give it an American kiss, say it was U.S. fish and ship it.

Athearn: Filleted or --

Paul Molyneaux: No, ship it whole. Yeah, that was easy money. That was like an easy \$0.10 or \$0.05 a pound just by turning it with my magic wand from Canadian fish to American fish. Yeah, that was – they – I was an honest fish dealer. Even I – you know, if you admitted that

the fish was Canadian, you lost a dime right there, even though there was nothing – same fish, right, because we would buy it from – we could buy – in the ‘80s we could buy from Canadian fishermen too in Eastport, right. It was just sort of – nobody – they just turned a blind eye to it. They turned a blind eye to us fishing over there, and turned a blind eye to Canadian boats unloading fish in Eastport. So those were American fish.

Athearn: Do you think U.S. fishermen ever offloaded in Canada?

Paul Molyneaux: No, what would be the point? You would get a lower price. I mean, an automatic lower price coming out of Canada. For one thing, they have so many fish and so few population, they have to export. They have to. So their anxiety level to sell is high. And yours, if you've got a supply from American fishermen, your anxiety is low, so they lose in the bargain there. It's a dime off coming from Canada. Same fish.

Athearn: So what other infrastructure supported or made this fishery possible, these dozen guys going out and hand lining fish? Do they need ice or do they --

Paul Molyneaux: Yeah, we had ice. Everybody had little ice machines. We had ice at Passamaquoddy Seafood and Fillet. We had the best ice-making machine of anybody. Rick Cole had a little one, and they had one at Ocean Parks too because they were experimenting with growing salmon. They were one of the first people that were trying to grow salmon down here, and I think that was subsidized and whatnot. They started in the mid '80s. So there was ice.

And the fuel trucks would just back down, but those guys, those mosquito fleet, they would just fill a gas can and carry it on the small boat. With the small boat, you don't need that much infrastructure. With the larger boats, they would have a heating oil truck just back down there and fill them up, same [?] gas. Jimmy Lowe there at – and there was another guy across from – do you know where the Eastport Art Center is now?

There was a guy there had that garage, and he had a tank trunk, and he'd come down and fill up people . Yeah. And then what else would happen, see, around September, black backs and cod would fill the river. I mean, they would really fill the river, and they'd be all around here. And that's when the draggers would come from the Westward. And when I was there – do you know Ted Ames, the guy who won the Macarthur Award? He came down. That was the – the last year that he came down was the year he was

buying, and I bought his fish while he was fishing out of Eastport, and he used to come to my house and shower and whatnot.

Athearn: So some of the guys fishing out of Eastport were from other areas?

Paul Molyneaux: Yeah, this is a whole different fishery in a sense because you've got your mosquito fleet, the little 18 to 24-foot Eastporters. They're fishing as much as they can, and they're fishing a variety of species. They're going to fish the Pollock, the mackerel, the cod and whatever they can get coming in. These draggers are coming in, they're after the black back and the cod, right. And that's what they're getting for the most part.

Athearn: And they were dragging up this way?

Paul Molyneaux: They would drag right up past the reservation. They'd come right up the river. They'd drag all the way up to Calais if they were getting fish. Because there would be black back, flounder, what they call winter founder is the official name. We used to call them black back or BBs. They'd be right up the river. The Passamaquoddy used to spear them in the shallows. They'd be all the way up to the falls. And the codfish were coming up. I don't know what they were feeding on.

But these draggers used to come from the Westward – a lot of them used to come. The year I was here it was only – Benny Crocker came from Cutler in the little wooden boat that he had at the time, and Ted came in the Dorothy Marie, another little wooden dragger, 45 footer. And they would drag out in the channel there, the Grand Manan channel, and they'd get tore up very bad out there, but they'd load up with codfish. And then they'd hang around here for a month, month and a half. And they'd fish right up into the river, and then the fish would take off, and then they'd take off.

But then all of the time, the hand line fleet would still be going, and that would be a whole different – so those guys came in. They didn't have any allegiance to anybody. They were allegiance to price, so I would get their fish easy, right.

Athearn: The dragger fleet.

Paul Molyneaux: Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I did, but it was only the one year, but I got their fish easy. But they never came back. I don't think they did. Benny sold his boat in '86, and I actually went to work for him scalloping on his new boat in the wintertime. And Ted Ames, he

kept – he started gill netting offshore. And he quit dragging, and rigged her over for gill netting, and they started gill netting out there, and they didn't come down here again, not that I know of.

And then the last big showing of codfish that I saw was Vicky Ramsdell off Cutler around '89, 1989. But then too we would lobster here, see, and you'd get them in your lobster traps, the scrod, the small cod. And sometimes a pretty good load. Sometimes I would come home with 100 pound of scrod out of the lobster traps.

Athearn: Now, the guys that you call the mosquito fleet, the guys in the 18 to 24 foot Eastporters.

Paul Molyneaux: Yeah.

Athearn: Was that their predominant fishery for the year, or was that like a fill-in fishery between other species, lobstering and --

Paul Molyneaux: No, that was pretty much their thing. I don't know what they did when they weren't fishing in the other months, in the spring, if they went to – these are guys who fished, went tipping, went clamming, went wrinkle picking, went blueberry raking if the fish weren't biting or something. They lived the Downeast economy, and that's how I lived when I first came down here too.

After I left Passamaquoddy Fillet, I had my dory out there in Haycock Harbor, and I raked blueberries, picked periwinkles, hand lined out there for whatever I could get. And --

Athearn: Which harbor?

Paul Molyneaux: Haycocks Harbor in Trescott.

Athearn: Oh, okay.

Paul Molyneaux: I lived in Trescott.

Athearn: So that was also in the '80s.

Paul Molyneaux: Late '80s, early '90s. Yeah, '87 to about '94.

Athearn: So you did some hand lining also yourself?

Paul Molyneaux: Yeah, and lobster, hand lined, picked periwinkles, harvested seaweed, tipped, raked blueberries and planted a big garden and

cut my own firewood and lived on about \$6,000.00 a year, which a lot of people down here did, even in those years, right. And nothing from the government. Screw the government. *[Laughs]* A lot of people lived like that here right up until, I don't know, mid '90s or something when the raking machines came and the fish disappeared and all of that.

Athearn:

Yeah, so what do you recall in terms of how that fishery – what happened to that fishery after the late '80s?

Paul Molyneaux:

Well, I think it takes a certain kind of mindset to be content with – these were old guys, and I think it takes a certain kind of mindset to be content with that lifestyle and that level of – that standard of living that they could maintain with that kind of fishery and that low income. So I think like, for instance, Butch and the younger Harrises and – there's another crowd out of Pembroke, I can't remember their name, who fished in Cobscook Bay and...Premier, and the younger guys, they wanted more than that. They don't want to go handlining.

So they were into building bigger boats and exploiting new fisheries and doing – moving on to the next thing. They were the first ones to have the first aquaculture, salmon aquaculture leases down here. And I don't think that helped the fishery any because I heard a lot of talk about when a salmon pen was near a weir, that weir would just stop fishing and the herring wouldn't come anywhere near.

See, there's a thing about herring. If you say – if you have a seiner, and you get a bunch of herring, and you smother them and you kill them, and they go bad on you, and you just drop them out of a net in that spot, you won't catch herring in that spot for years. They don't go there where all that dead herring funk is. So what's under a salmon pen? It's basically herring funk, you know.

And so I think that salmon farming changed the ecosystems up there, for one thing, and it was the younger people – people wanted that. The younger generation wanted that. They didn't want to be the mosquito fleet. I was the odd ball in that respect. But I think that there is a lot of stuff going on.

Like I said, I think the fish was – something was going on with the fish, whether it was pollution, overfishing offshore. Certainly overfishing wasn't going on here, right, because they'd been fishing for years, just hammering, with hooks. But I think something else was going on, either climate change or a

combination of many things. Climate change, some ecosystem shifts in terms of how the herring were behaving, the impacts of the pollution, the salmon farms and what was happening offshore with how the boats were fishing, who was fishing, where they were fishing.

They were – like I said, the Hague Line cut them off, so they started going other places they hadn't gone before, these really big boats, 100-footers fishing within 50 miles of the shore where they never were built to be. They didn't belong, and nobody stopped them. And like – and there was that with the fish, it was just this sort of – the vanishing of them. It was just sort of not showing up anymore. Then there was the guys getting old, you know, the guys who did it and who were content with it, getting old, and the younger guys not content with it.

And then you had just other opportunities coming in, the salmon farming looked better and stuff like that, so that's where they put their energy. And then there was just – in other fisheries, it just kind of went – I think when the ground fish went too, that was a moneymaker, and people – there were a lot of marginal people. You didn't need a license; you could just go out there and fish. There were a lot of people that just went and fished when things were really good and came in and sold and made some money, and then they didn't have that money, so then they started wrinkle picking or clamming, and then they put more pressure on that.

And then there's this whole raising of the lifestyle and the standard of living, and what you – what you're expected to live that, if you want to have a girlfriend or a wife or whatever. So then I think people generally started putting more pressure on resources to maintain a higher standard of living. Yeah. And taxes go up, shorefront property sales, taxes on everybody goes up, now I have to pay more. Or this bigger boat mentality. Got to have a bigger boat; now I have to fish more. It's all got to be paid for with fish. I used to be able to live off the water here, the dory that I rowed – I didn't even have a motor on there. The guy says to me why don't you put a motor on there, and I said there's a 5 knot tide here. I said – I go with it, do my thing and come back with it. I said every cent I make is in my pocket, just about, except for painting the boat once a year.

But it just went that I couldn't make it anymore. We used to go out scuba diving for sea urchins out of the dory. A friend would row, right, and we would make – together we would make \$700.00 a day out of a 16-foot boat rowing two miles, loading it up with sea

urchins and rowing back. Can you imagine? I worked so hard to keep that fishery from going down. That was the first time I got politically involved, but it went down anyway.

Athearn: And how much success did you have hand lining out of your dory?

Paul Molyneaux: None. I'd go out there – there was a couple of spots that I'd go out there and get the occasional cod. It was mostly subsistence. I did better when I would go fishing with Bill Anderson out of Moose River when he went and hauled his offshore gear out on the line between the Grand Manan and our coast here. I'd do better out of his traps than I would hand lining. Because inshore, they just weren't showing up anymore.

Bernard told me that his great-grandfather and great-grandmother used to come down east here and camp on Cross Island all summer and catch cod and dry them and take them back and sell them. Yeah.

Athearn: When was that? What years?

Paul Molyneaux: That would have been in the 1800s, late 1800s. Yeah, his grandfather's parents used to do it.

Athearn: So thinking back to the Passamaquoddy processing plant where you worked in the 1980s, what happened to that plant?

Paul Molyneaux: Well, the owner, Calvin Nicholas, came to me said I got this market in Gloucester. Sell to this guy. He's good. And at the same time we got a load of fish that was not so great from Canada, and I should have rejected it, but I didn't. I thought maybe we can squeeze it into this market, and we shipped it to them, and they lost it, and everybody lost. So they never paid for it, and we couldn't pay for our next purchase. We were living hand to mouth.

The company was basically bankrupt when I came down here, and they said, look, if you think you can turn it around give it a try. So I did, and we were doing okay, but we were getting fish on credit and then paying for each load, and then getting the next load on credit. And we were inching up to be able to buy, but we got socked for \$5,000.00 down in Gloucester, and that was the end of that. But maybe they might get it started up again.

Athearn: Think so?

Paul Molyneaux: Yeah, there's some work going on.

Athearn: Really?

Paul Molyneaux: Yeah, those articles I sent you the links for, the Passamaquoddy have fishing rights that they've never surrendered, so they said we're going to fish, and we're going to fish seriously.

Athearn: And they want to process them locally.

Paul Molyneaux: If they can, yeah. Yeah.

Athearn: What do you remember about the reporting and recordkeeping, especially working at a processing plant? Do you remember how they recorded landings or what was sent to the government?

Paul Molyneaux: Well, nobody bothered with the mosquito fleet for one thing. The draggers that would come down here, they would probably have – see, in the '80s, right, we would have somebody come aboard the vessel and ask us questions. That was it. It was just voluntary and just give the information, as far as I recall. And of course nobody paid much attention to the mosquito fleet, and as far as us, I don't recall anybody ever come in and asking us what we're doing because we're on the reservation, so we're kind of off limits to a lot of things. So I guess they left us alone.

There wasn't a lot of action down there for them to get excited about. There's boats in Rockland coming in with 100,000 pounds, and we're shipping out 10,000 three times a week, and that's with Canadian fish included, so they're not going to – I don't think they had that much interest in what we were doing down here. I mean, I don't recall them coming down. The only ones who used to come would be the inspectors to inspect the plant, the health inspectors, Jay McAllen, but he didn't talk about landings or any of that stuff. No, I don't recall ever filling out any paperwork on that in the '80s.

I can remember in Rockland we did but not down here. It's the end of the world, right? Yeah. Right. No, it was kind of strange. I remember every year I'd go over to Eastport and [?] in August, and there'd be fewer boats, fewer skiffs, and I'd hear about the cod now, there's no more big cod coming in, and it'd be like where'd they go. They just kind of drifted on like that all through the late '80s and into the early '90s. The old timers who did it for whom it was just a habit they couldn't get out of still went out there and caught Pollock. They still caught Pollock, but that's what they were catching. The price was never great for Pollock. For codfish

it was better. Haddock it was the best.

So things just petered down like that. I guess just many factors at once working on us. I mean I'd love – I mean, if there were fish, I probably would never have written a word. I probably would have just fished because it's a nice way to live, in my opinion.

Athearn: So in your opinion, what would need to happen to revive a ground fish fleet in Eastern Maine again, looking to the future?

Paul Molyneaux: For one thing, I think one of the big problems with fisheries is what's expected of them. People expect to live with a \$30,000.00 pickup truck and a \$100,000.00 house off the fishing business, and I don't think that's realistic. I think it should be more of a something that you do in a mix, in a basket of enterprises for your life's – for the way you make your living. You shouldn't put everything on those fish because that resource can't always sustain you. The resource fluctuates. And when it's down, you can't go out and say I've got to pay my bills and go out and take the fish because then they're not going to come back. You're shooting yourself in the foot.

So, I mean, I think you've got to have some flexibility in what you do, either many different fisheries, so it's not just the ground fish have got to come back, wrinkle picking has got to come back, clamming has got to come back. You've got to have some aquaculture that works for people. I mean, maybe I want to have a land-based thing or something like that, or do some aquaponics. I mean, I want to be an enterprising person who is not just codfish, ground fish.

The other thing is that your estuaries are vital to the lifecycle of these fish, and if they're polluted and if we don't look at what's – we have to look at ground fish as a watershed issue. So what's going on in our watersheds, and how – what's the condition of our estuaries. Are they able to provide what these fish need to move through their juvenile – various stages of their lifecycles that they need to be in estuaries. If the estuaries are crap, then these fish aren't going to come back, in my opinion.

Ted Ames talks about alewives in a lot of ways, driving the ground fish industry. And I think there's something to be said for that. I went to his talk a few weeks ago down in Bar Harbor, did you see that?

Athearn: No.

Paul Molyneaux: Anyway, so I mean, that's one thing. It's got to be dealt with on an estuary – from the watershed on down. The estuaries have to be clean for the fish to come back. And there's got to be protection in their winter refuge. So these tagging studies that they were doing in St. Andrews, there was a guy named Cook, who was doing, not Cooke Aquaculture Cooke but a different Cook, without the "E". And they were doing tagging studies of the codfish that come up here, where do they go? They need to be protected in their winter refuge.

So I don't think that's going to happen politically. You can't – our economy is so based on technology having a sort of assumed right to the resource, whoever has the best technology for getting the fish most effectively, even if not most efficiently because if you want efficiency, the mosquito fleet is the most efficient. They're not using any bait. They're using very little fuel per pound of fish landed. I mean, let the fish come to us in the weirs, in the hand line fishery, local fisheries, right. Let the fish come to us. That's efficient.

These draggers are effective. If you look at the amount of calories burned to get those fish, land those fish, transport those fish, I don't know, I would say I would put the mosquito fleet up against a 100-foot dragger anytime. So I'd say the number one – right, number one, look at the watershed. Right. Number two, protect them in their refuge. And number three, when the fish do come back, lower expectations about what that resource can sustain economically and let it build. Let it build its own economy, like just take the interest and don't take the principle because you've got bills to pay.

This is when things always bother me. People go, "I made an investment. I've got bills to pay. You've got to let me fish." Why? That was your stupidity. If you overestimated what this resource could sustain economically, it is not my problem. You need to go out of business in our economy. Are you putting me out of business? No, you put you out of business by overestimating what you could take from this resource.

Athearn: Hmm.

Paul Molyneaux: I don't know if you've heard that.

Athearn: And assuming the ground fish stocks did return and become more plentiful in this part of Maine, in Eastern Maine, do you see any

other issues or obstacles related to fishing services or infrastructure?

Paul Molyneaux: I think the infrastructure will come. If the fish show up, the infrastructure – the infrastructure is here, it really is, and it will come. There's a political wind that will shift, you know, and suddenly there will be money for public landing spots and working waterfront. It'll – I think it will happen.

Do you think? I mean, you're an economist. I mean, if the resource comes. That's why I'm excited about what the Passamaquoddies are doing. They're going to bring the resource here. Once you've got the raw material, man, that drives employment, everything and the politics.

Athearn: So what do you mean they're going to bring the resource here?

Paul Molyneaux: They're going offshore, and they're going to bring the resource here to Washington County. They're not going to go into Gloucester. They're coming here. I think that's great, you know. And the other thing – there was something else. Oh, yeah, one of the things that I want to see is a subsistence law in this state that everybody has a right to go out – everybody who lives here on this coast has a right to go catch fish, as much as they want, you know, within a certain limits, technology limits, let's say from a dory or what have you, as much as they want. To dry, fill their freezer, what have you, or sell informally.

Because I mean, I think the Passamaquoddy have it right. They say – Fred says you see that osprey out there? He's fishing. If you can convince that osprey that he needs a permit, I'll be in line. I'll be right behind in line to get a permit because I get my rights the same place he does. We're all born with a right to certain resources to sustain us, and our own local resources. And I think that we need to have that in our law in the state of Maine that if there's fish out there, we have a right to go get them, we the people who live here. The Passamaquoddy granted us the right to go get them, and we lost that, surrendered our own sovereignty and turned that right to get these fish over to these industrial and even to the mosquito fleet.

But I say back in the days when I got here, which was only 27 years ago or 26 years ago, the – anybody could go out there and fish for their freezer, and people – even in the mid '80s, were still drying fish around here. I was drying them. You could buy dry fish from your neighbors. So that needs to be codified into law and

documented as part of our economy down here because if there's ever an oil spill or ever some event that kills that – that takes that resource from us, we need to have a right to say, hey, this belongs to us first, and you guys, you industrial fisheries, et cetera, second.

Look what happened in the Gulf of Mexico? Those guys, the people who fished for their freezer and fished as part of their lifestyle, they were called recreational fishermen, and they were given nothing. If something ever happens here, we need to be able to say this is part of our life, our lifestyle and our economy, and you pay now, you know. And what's the price? People say, well, it's hard to put a value on that, so then it's priceless – people say when it's hard to put a value on something, they say it's worthless the way our economy works, but it's actually priceless, right, that lifestyle. We're losing it. There's very few people left who think in terms of fishing for their freezer.

And fishing is part of the connection with this environment where we live, and I would love to see it codified into law and supported in lots of ways, to reconnect people with their environment, and say, “Hey, you have a right. Go fish.”

[1:04:28 to 1:06:11 not transcribed per request]

Athearn: Okay. Is there anything else that we haven't talked about that you think is important for us and others to know about the ground fishery in particular, in Eastern Maine?

Paul Molyneaux: Well, the subsistence thing is what I really think is important, and that is what I added because I don't think it's even in the framework of people's thinking. But it's like we have to establish a right to those fish if we can get them back. So yeah.

No, I would just go – I'd just reiterate the sort of step by step, first we take responsibility and clean up our ecosystem on a watershed wide point, from a watershed wide point of view, and then protect them in their offshore. Protect their refuges, and then get them when they come to us and have a right, have access rights to get that.

Anyway, that was my – that's my brief plan A.

Athearn: It's been very interesting and enjoyable, Paul. Thank you very much.

Paul Molyneaux: You're welcome. *[End of Audio]*