

Interview with: Tim Barrett
Occupation: Fisherman
Port Community: Plymouth, Massachusetts
Interviewer: Samantha Sperry
Date: February 16, 2012
Oral Histories Project – NOAA Social Sciences
Logger/Transcriber: Samantha Sperry
INDEX (minutes: seconds)
Pier, Plymouth, MA

[00:00]

SS: Alright, so for the record my name is Samantha Sperry. It is February 16th and we are down at the pier right now. And just to begin, can you please begin by stating your name, your home port, your residential address, if you are in a sector or the common pool, and how old you are?

TB: Okay, my name is Tim Barrett I own the fishing vessel *Odessa* out of the port of Plymouth, home port. And I live at 150 Lakeshore Drive, Duxbury, Mass. What were the other questions?

SS: How old are you, and are you in the sector or common pool?

TB: I am 46 years old and I am presently in sector 10. Last year I was in the common pool.

SS: So can you just provide a general context about your life, a little bit about yourself and your family, like where you are from, how long you have been here, if you have brothers or sisters, if you have kids and a little bit about your educational background?

TB: Sure, well my parents were children of the Depression. My father was a World War II veteran, who moved from the city of Boston down to Marshfield, Massachusetts, where we grew up by Green Harbor, Massachusetts. The family always had pleasure boats, my father did. I have a brother and a sister. We grew up on the water, basically a few blocks down from the harbor and a few blocks away from the beach. My brother during his time while he was going to the University of Pennsylvania would spend his summers being a lifeguard and commercial lobstering. So, he was 10 years older than me and at that time I was probably about 7 or 8 years old, and at that time I wound up going out fishing with him.

SS: So is there anybody else in your family that is kind of involved in fisheries or how did you get into fishing?

TB: Well, it was mostly because of our strong connection to the water with our family and my brother working in the commercial lobster industry. My brother also owns a commercial fishing boat, his name is Ed Barrett, he owns the fishing vessel *Sirius* and the fishing vessel *Phoenix*. And I started out working with him and when it came time for me to go to college, I wound up going to the University of Rhode Island Marine Fisheries and Technology and started in 1983

and from there on I got out of college and wound up going right into the fishing industry in the early 1980's.

[3:14]

SS: So what kinds of fishing have you done? And were you inshore or offshore?

TB: Most of the fishing that I have done has been with the inshore fleet, small boat fleet. I have done just about every type of fishing there is. I have scalloped, primarily commercial groundfish with nets, trawl nets, tub trawls, hook and line gear. Our harbor was considered one of the primary tuna fishing landing ports for bluefin tuna, and at an early age I started doing the fishing mostly to be in the commercial bluefin tuna industry. From there I have been involved in the lobster fishery as well. Primarily now we have been mostly fish trawling as well for the past 10 years for groundfish, cod, haddock, summer flounder, as well as squid; the squid and the summer flounder are state fisheries, inshore state fisheries for the state of Massachusetts. The rest has carried me everywhere from Manasquan, NJ all the way up to Prince Edward Island, so I have covered much of the water off of New England and the eastern seaboard.

SS: Awesome, have you and your family members' roles or positions in fishing changed since sectors began?

TB: Yeah, yeah we have had a lot of changes in life since sectors started. One of the primary things that has been a big change is the fact that we are now involved in the political process. The participation in the fisheries has gone from being an individual fishing and industry which is primarily a private industry of people that stay within their own fraternity of people, and now we have quite a bit of work that we wind up doing which is political in nature and have to spend a lot of time talking to our political appointees and elected officials.

SS: How many crewmembers are on the boats, and where do they come from?

TB: Well it's been tough to hold a lot of crew mates, crewmembers, because a lot of the fisheries regulations keep our incomes at a level that it is not really beneficial to have a crew mate. A lot of the young kids can find better employment doing other things, at times primarily in our small boat fleet which is about 50 feet and under, one or maybe two crew members but for about 90 percent of the time we wind up going alone and that's a big factor, and that's an important thing to remember. That the safety of us going out and participating in our fishery becomes very dangerous when you go out alone. There are a lot of people that can do it, but the risk factor becomes very, very high.

[07:14]

SS: Can you tell me a little bit about your neighborhood? Would you describe it as a fishing community and why did you choose to live here? How do you think fishing is viewed by the community?

TB: Our community very much supports the local fishing industry. Over the years the harbor front has become a very big place for people to come and visit. We have a number of people that enjoy coming down and using their pleasure boats as well as coming down and viewing our operations, what we bring in. A lot of times we try to be representatives of our industry and take a little bit of time in our day to show people what we do and how we are as well as the fact that we are our nation's food source, where our seafood comes from. We have a lot of people that we see here in Plymouth that come from all over the nation and we have a chance here in Plymouth that a lot of times people don't realize that fish aren't square and that the process of bringing the food source, of high protein, healthy food to the American public involves quite a bit of work, and that it's not all big factory fleets. There are, or should I say were, a number of small boat fleets that continue to bring the nation's seafood supply in, and each one of those boats represent a small business. Usually owner operators who are involved in that process.

SS: Do you hang out with other fishermen and their families, and are they mostly ground fishermen or involved in a variety of fisheries?

TB: Yeah, we do, we do, it's a small group and primarily it's been the same group for a lot of years. We do tend to socialize quite a bit together, as much as possible. We have a fairly good organization of people that we get to see, although usually with your friends you don't get to see them enough. We all have families and other obligations as well. The commercial fishing industry is one of those jobs, is one of those jobs where people will come down on their day off and hang around work and it's one of those things where you see.... People don't tend to do that in other industries as much as you do here, the big draw being that people love to hang around on boats and be down at the water front. There's always something going on. We do spend a lot of time going to political meetings and scoping hearings for various regulations and the formation of sectors and permit banks so we do get to meet up with our friends and co-workers quite a bit. We are all very much involved with keeping our families together and keeping people connected to how our families are doing.

[11:04]

SS: Have you or your family changed your long life term plans as a result of sectors?

TB: Yes we have, our plans have changed vastly over the past two years. Sectors for the south shore here in Massachusetts have been devastating to say the least. We have suffered a great deal of loss in our businesses and a great deal of loss in our income; many of us have lost at least 60 percent. In my particular case, under Days at Sea I was able to fish 40-50 trips a year and land about 40,000-50,000 pounds of groundfish during the wintertime. Now under sectors, my quota allocation is at such a low level, it's not even worth me going fishing. I have been allotted 500 pounds of Gulf of Maine codfish, which is basically the currency here. Where before I would be landing somewhere around 3,500 pounds of codfish. So I have taken at least a 70 percent cut in my income.

SS: That's very drastic.

TB: Very drastic. We have seen that happen in our harbors here in the south shore where in this particular harbor here in Plymouth, we had here at one point 7 or 8 full time groundfishing boats and now we are down to one. All of the rest of the groundfishing boats have been marginalized to the point that their business is no longer profitable. They are working now in a constant state of bankruptcy where we typically don't have enough money to get ahead of our bills. And a lot of bills have to do with paying our local vendors, our fuel supply, our net and equipment suppliers, our engine suppliers, where we have forgone doing scheduled maintenance and upgrades to our vessels because of the fact that we do not have enough money to continue on.

Our situation is very critical at this point in time where a lot of us are so far behind now in maintaining our equipment where we are not going to last another year or two under the current regime of catch shares. Our boats are going to need some more maintenance than we are able to afford. At this point in time, most people are looking for an exit, and most people are in very bad financial straits. A number of people have lost their houses, a number of people have lost their boats, and a number of people are unable to make their yearly contributions to their family.

[14:30]

SS: So when these people leave fishing what do they do?

TB: Well, that's a pretty tough thing to figure out. It's very hard because the fleet is overall aging, with the average age of the fleet being 55 or above, with most of those fishermen being involved in the fishery for 30-40 years. The ability for them to just change over and get another job is very slim. There are a number of very well educated people that are in the fishing industry now, when they started, but time has moved on at a pace, and it's very hard to market yourself as a former commercial fisherman to employers because employers realize that the commercial fisherman have such a strong connection to their community that they wind up going fishing again. As well as the fact that there is a whole host of skills that you need to run a commercial fishing boat.

However, in today's economy, in the United States, the amount of jobs that that is applicable to, those jobs just don't exist anymore. With the current economy, we are at a very bad situation as far as being able to pick up work, any type of work anywhere else. A lot of the people have degrees at various colleges. Most of the people that are in the fisheries now may have graduated [from] high school and college in the 60's. At that time there were a lot of athletic scholarships and most of the time the guys were big guys, they had some athletic scholarships and they went to some good colleges. We have a number of Harvard graduates, we have a number of Ivy League graduates, we have a number that have graduated from very good schools, but their choice in life was to continue on and go commercial fishing and provide the country with a viable resource.

Only at the last minute with the advent of sectors, to have that resource taken out from underneath them, to have their ability to fish taken away from them due to a bad allocation of their quota. There are a number of different reasons why that quota would be low; the fact is that over the past few 15 years we have been under a program to save fish and build fish stocks. We were promised by the government that we would be rewarded for this. As we chose our means of fishing or what fishery we would be in, a lot of people stopped concentrating on the groundfish and in turn went out and did lots of other kinds of fishing like lobstering, scalloping, bluefin tuna fishing, and some of the other state, squid fishing, summer flounder fishing, only to have the fact that we went and did not concentrate on groundfish have that be a detriment to what we were going to wind up receiving for a quota allocation. The people that did not concentrate on the fish wound up having a low allocation and now have not been rewarded with adequate quota to continue to have our business be viable.

[18:22]

SS: So what years would you say were the best for fishing?

TB: Well for us here on the south shore, even under the Days at Sea regime, we were still able to go fishing at regular intervals through the winter. And that regular interval, even though we had daily catch limits of 800 pounds typically, but some times as low as 50 pounds per day, we still had at least a maintenance amount of income coming in. We are unable to do that now in the sectors because once you have your quota used up, you now have to lease fish. So under Days at Sea, you could buy a Day at Sea for \$200 on the average so would be able to go out and catch \$1,800-2,000 maybe even \$1,500 worth of fish where now, under catch shares, you will have to go out and lease that 1,800 pounds of fish for a dollar a pound.

So now instead of costing \$200 a day it costs \$1,800 a day and you have to see ex-vessel prices which come in at almost double of what we would get under Days at Sea. Under Days at Sea, typically we would be working on about a dollar a pound average. Under sectors now, we have to see, we have to see a \$2.50 average on our fish, ex-vessel prices in order to be profitable. And if you wind up being on the leasing train, leasing the fish, you need to go fishing, you have one or two bad days of fishing, if you have one or two days of bad prices, you'll never make that money up. If you wind up with \$1.60 per pound and you leased that fish for \$1.20 a pound you will not cover expenses and you will not make enough money back to cover those expenses.

SS: So have you leased any quota at all?

TB: I have not been able to lease any quota. My allocation is so low that I do not have enough allocation to play that first hand in order to continue to lease quota. I was in the common pool last year, and those allotments are so low per day that it is not worth going. My intention at the beginning of this winter was to continue to go groundfishing for the year regardless of the cost, just to keep some sort of maintenance income coming in. However, after I put all the prices of joining the sector [together], being an active boat, and leasing quota, and what I would have to

get as an ex-vessel price on our fish, factor in one or two bad days which happen, quite often, I would have had to come up with somewhere in the tune of \$40,000. And of that \$40,000, after I had run everything through my operations cost, my leasing cost, my being in a sector, an active vessel in a sector cost, I would have only wound up making \$10,000.

And for the small boats, typically we like to see 2, 3, or 4,000 pounds of fish at a time since most of us are working single-handed. For us to handle any more fish is quite a bit, so if you factored in having, taking a mate, you would have even less, would be around \$6,000. And after doing 50,000 pounds, 20,000, 30,000, 40,000 pounds of fish is a lot of fish to handle for a small-scale boat in order to make \$5,000.

[22:50]

SS: How would you say the industry has changed since sectors began two years ago?

TB: The industry has changed vastly, changed vastly. At a time here we used to go out to the fishing grounds where we would typically fish, we used to see in the number of 30, 40, 50 small boats out fishing at the same time. We would typically go out of our harbor here in Plymouth with 3, 4, 5 boats in a bunch, and a group. Most of us all being single-handed, we like to stick together. We would go out and see a lot of boats. Now most of our boats are tied to the dock, so we don't even get to go fishing. But in the rare time that we do team up with someone and go fishing, such as my brother, I went fishing with him 4 times this year. We would go out to Stellwagen Bank and there would be no small boats out there.

There would be typically no vessels out there at all. But the problem is now, what we see out there is a fleet of huge offshore boats working the inshore water, working very hard, taking small aggregates of fish that are crucial to the spawning biomass that we have spent 15 years aiding in the recovery of, suffering financial harm from that. Only to watch all of the work that we have done be taken by the bigger boats. And we also see a big influx of people that have sided with the environmental groups that have backed certain groups called the Cape Cod Hook Association, Sustainable Harvest Sector who are now bringing their boats up and fishing in waters that we traditionally fished, and we would never ever see them up here. They are able to trade their quota and they have money behind them and now they are the ones that are reaping the benefits behind this. We do not have access to the fish that we spent our time and loss of income recovering. We have spent untold hours talking to various political people about this and nobody seems to see the problem in that.

[25:34]

SS: Do you think that your quality of life is better or worse since sector management began?

TB: My quality of life is much, much worse. At this point for three months I have had absolutely no income that I'm bringing into my family. I have a wife, a daughter, 13-year-old daughter who will soon be facing college. I have not been able to do my part in terms of bringing money in to

the mortgage; I have not been able to bring money in for paying even basic bills. I have a problem even having enough money for gasoline in my truck to drive around. We have had hard Christmases because we wind up not being able to spend money on basic Christmas presents. It becomes a very important thing to figure out how are you going to do this with no money and most of us are not eligible for unemployment.

And we have no maintenance money coming in, in order to cover any of this. Our quality of life has suffered greatly because in a lot of ways as well, people haven't been able to afford basic health care, decent amounts of food, and yet we still have to maintain our boats, maintain our safety equipment, have our inspections for that, we have to pay for dockage, we have to pay for yard bills, we have to pay for maintenance that is still in the future of our financial needs, and we will not see that money. We have had two years of this and it has done nothing but go downhill.

SS: So how would you say that your earnings are distributed in your family, like what you contribute verses your wife? What kinds of percentages?

TB: Well, luckily for me my wife has a decent job. She is a dental health care rep[resentative] for Proctor and Gamble. She works in the corporate world. She has her whole life, and she contributes 90 percent of the money that runs our household at this point. With the lack of groundfish, there is no chance of me making any contributions to that. Luckily she has a job that offers health care, health care programs. That fact being said, she is also a breast cancer survivor and has recently been diagnosed with fibro myalgia, and the fact of her continuing to go out and work this kind of job which is on the road sales, takes a toll on her body.

And really it's tough to be unable to contribute financially to give any relief to the rest of the family in order to take up some of the slack. I have in this case, at this point in life, had to borrow a significant amount of money, in the thousands of dollars from my 85-year-old mother in order to make my bills at the end of each month and to the tune of probably around \$50,000 at this point. There's no going back; the boats still need maintenance and financially it's impossible to go into hibernation and totally suspend any of your income.

There is no safety net to even get a maintenance amount of money from this industry and as well as the fact that we have had zero compensation from the government even though this has been declared a state of disaster by the state of Massachusetts, by the governor of Massachusetts; every senator in Massachusetts is declaring this a disaster. We have never seen any disaster relief money due to the fact of catch shares, zero. No retraining, no offer to get trained for another job, no emergency money just to cover your bills, which we have seen in the past due to groundfish regulations. But at this point in time, sectors have come in and we have been cut loose.

SS: What advice would you give to someone who is starting out in the fishing industry today?

TB: Well, in order to join fishing today, you have to start with somewhere around a million dollars. You have to have at least a half a million in order to purchase a permit to have a sustainable amount of fish. Now with that half a million dollars, you are buying something that you will never own. It is the government's permit, with your name on it; you will never own it. At some point that permit can be pulled from you, which makes it impossible to get any funding from banks. A bank will fund a house. A bank will fund something with equity that they can repossess. They cannot repossess a permit from the government.

So you have to start with a high amount of money, that doesn't include any boats, fishing gear, or experienced crew. From there you are probably looking at about \$200,000 for a boat, and then hiring any crew that you have, so in order to take ¾ of a million to a million dollars for anyone entering the industry would be taking a great chance in losing everything they have, losing all of that money at least. It would be much easier to buy a quick-e mart, or to buy any other [business], to do anything else. It would be easier to do anything else in the United States other than to become a commercial fisherman.

And that's the problem. Is that these permits and these small business that come out of the local community, when they sell their permits, the people that have the money are not people that are young people looking to start out, and continue the small business, they are big corporations. The Moore Foundation, the Walton Foundation, Wal-Mart, Environmental Defense Fund, Conservation Law Foundation, who both already, already own quota. They own groundfish quota, they own scallop quota and you know it would be impossible, nearly I should say, nearly impossible for a person to continue with a small local business of commercial fishing. If any young person came to me and said he wanted to be a fisherman I'd tell him to go do something else.

We had a saying in the harbor that I grew up in back in Green Harbor: If you want to be a commercial fisherman the first thing you need to do is get yourself a job on the fire department. On the fire department you'll get your 40 hours in two days of staying at the station, you'll get a pension, you'll get health care, and then, only then can you go fishing. Essentially, your alternative job whatever it may be will support your commercial fishing business.

[34:05]

SS: What do you think the future holds for the fishing industry?

TB: The future for the fishing history, under the current regime, under catch shares, under president Obama and the head of NOAA, Jane Lubchenco? This industry is full steam going towards corporatization and big business owners where the fleet will be dwindled down to a fragment, a tenth, or I would even go as far as saying 2 percent of the size of what it used to be. The corporations are the only ones who are going to be able to afford buying into this. The corporations are the only ones who are going to be able to afford to put those big boats out, and quite frankly that's where the industry is going. Seafood has become a big business, and big

money and the big corporations want to control that and catch shares are nothing more than a capacity grab for outside investors.

In the United States now you have something like 30 percent of the salmon quota owned by Asia, Japan being the main holder of that. Japan owns 20 percent of the salmon quota, when the 200-mile limit was enacted, it was enacted to keep foreign fishing interest out of our waters. We had Russians, and European countries that would come over and be fishing off of New England. Now, those same people can own our quota without ever going any closer than the keyboard of a computer. They can lease their quota from there, they can get their money back from there and that money leaves the United States and it never comes back. It doesn't go to the local community, it doesn't support local vendors, and it doesn't support anyone in the commercial industry and that's where this is going to wind up going. It is the only direction it can go the way this catch share program is set up right now. We will see that if this continues the way it is.

Fleet diversity is a very important factor, however the Council here in New England and the Northeast Council [Northeast Fisheries Management Council] is so overwhelmingly owned by corporate interest who own big corporate fishing boats, they will not allow anything to happen other than that. There will be no groundfishery in three years. There will be no groundfishery in three years even for the people that think they have something now; in three years they will be sold out.

[37:09]

S: So do you fish, do you do day trips or multi-day trips?

TB: Primarily now we do day trips. The level of the fish is so high. I started fishing in the '70's and in the '80's we used to go fishing and try and catch about 3,000 pounds of fish. Sometimes it would take 36 hours, a day, night and a day. Sometimes it would take 48 hours. The level of fish wasn't as high as it is now. So yeah, we would go out for more than one day, in other words we would be sleeping over on the boat. However now, our typical trip would be less than 16 hours. Our typical time fishing with our nets on the bottom is typically less than an hour. For the year before catch shares before they came in effect, my typical fishing time where the boat was actually catching fish was less than 10 minutes.

SS: Wow.

TB: [Within] 10 minutes we would have our daily allotment of codfish and flatfish a lot of times. In those ten minutes we would have far, far, far more than we could handle. A lot of times in that time period we would be cutting our tows back to two minutes and in that two minutes we would wind up always, every time, catching our quota.

SS: That's crazy. So what does your typical day look like and is that different now than it was two years ago before sectors started?

TB: Yeah, typically now, before sectors started, and under Days at Sea, our days go out and our primary objective when we go out is avoiding fish. Now the Days at Sea and sectors had it set up so that we couldn't catch a certain, too much of a certain fish. If you don't have adequate quota for the correct amount of fish, you cannot land that fish without getting yourself in a situation where we would have to make up that quota. So our day kind of goes to a lot of avoiding fish and not going to certain areas so that we can catch what we feel our limits are for that day so our day doesn't particularly feel limited to a lot of bottom time fishing. We catch our fish very quickly.

So a lot of the time isn't spent fishing. A lot of the time is spent cleaning the fish and going home. We really don't spend any of the time fishing at all. We don't have very much impact on the bottom, and that's one of the problems with the big boats coming in to our traditional fishing areas. Those boats tend to move a lot of those fishing areas around and have quite a bit of impact on the area that we fish, which is primarily Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary. We are now seeing quite a big impact from big boats on the make-up of the bottom in that area. In most of our days spent fishing, most of our day's spent driving. If we don't have to fish, we don't use up our gear as much, we go to safe tows that we have gone to over and over so we know there's no ghost gear, no static gear and we wind up just not fishing, and that has impact on the people that supply us our fishing gear. We have enough nets in our yard that will last 20 years at this rate.

[41:42]

SS: Can you tell me a little bit about your sector? How many members, your position, how many boats, your total sector allocation, and your allocation?

TB: Our sector is sector 10; sector 10 is the sector that involves most of the harbors on the south shore, south of Boston extending out to Provincetown. I believe there is between 30 and 50 members. Of those members, I believe there are only 15 boats that are active. What was the rest of the question?

SS: What is the total sector allocation and your allocation?

TB: Not quite sure the total sector allocation. One statistic would be that the Chatham Cape Cod Hook Association, their average codfish allocation is 60,000 pounds. Gloucester's allocation for their sector is 50,000 pounds. And sector 10's allocation is 20,000 pounds, so we do not have a lot of quota down here. Typically, our waterways were closed seven months a year as well, so again our sector is primarily made up of boats 50 feet or under, so each one of those persons in our sector represents a small-scale community business that has been greatly impacted from this. Again, the average age in that group is 55 years old. So at a time where most of those guys should be looking towards retirement, they are looking at trying to get themselves a new job, a new career. It's kind of hard to come by.

[44:00]

SS: What do you think about other sectors versus your sector? Do you think that they are more successful?

TB: Yeah, I think that there are plenty of other sectors that are much more successful. A number of the sectors have had financial backing for a number of years from environmental groups. Other sectors did not have the seven months a year of closures to deal with, and they had access to more fish. They had more days allowed fishing. Some of the other sectors were fishing in areas where they were allowed 2,000 pounds a day where our sector was only allowed 800 pounds a day of codfish. Some of the sectors are set up where they would traditionally fish other areas, in other states for that matter. Where now they have come down to areas that were not their traditional grounds.

I think in a lot of ways any of the sectors that were not allied with the environmental groups are still suffering. There are a number of winners but that number is small and there are a number of people that have taken a great cut in their ability to provide an income. I don't see success for very many of the sectors anyhow, either of them, the business plan just won't continue to support the industry. Eventually there will be a number of people in the sectors that will sell out and that will erode away the sectors ability to maintain [themselves] financially.

The sector is a financial institution in itself, and the sector requires a great deal of money, a great deal of money to continue and stay in business and without active fishing boats, they will not be able to stay in business. There's a great amount of bookkeeping that goes along with it, that's very hard to support. A very good friend of mine manages sector 10 and sector 10 does not have enough money to pay what he is worth for the amount of work that he does.

SS: Do you think that sectors have changed the way that you fish?

TB: Oh yeah, absolutely, sectors have put me out of business personally. The sectors have made it... there has been at least a 60 percent decrease for everybody, straight across the board. Except for those sectors that are allied with the environmental groups, we have lost 60 percent right from the start. We were promised, we were promised that this would be better for us. We were promised by the government that there would be flexibility, availability in the amount of fish, flexibility when we would land our fish, and a higher ex-vessel price. None of that which has really happened. For me it's been..., [it's] brought my business from being a viable business to a little more than a hobby.

It's very hard to escape this business; you can't just hang up, hang everything up and go home. You have a boat that's now worth nothing, highly specialized boats, such as commercial fishing boats don't have a huge market to sell on and the fact that there is a whole bunch of boats that is up for sale makes the boat's [value] very low. There are boats that two years ago would have gone for a quarter of a million dollars that are now going for \$50,000. That red one over there as a matter of fact, \$50,000.

SS: That's crazy!

TB: That's got everything you need on it too. At a time where maybe we might have some value to our business, it's turned it into a point where there is no value to the business, there is no value and very little value in the permit so we are not going to get any money out of cashing ourselves out of this business. And it's very sad, un-American way of going about managing our fisheries. To throw all of our hard working people in the commercial industry to the wind.

[49:13]

SS: So what do you think the pros and the cons are of sectors?

TB: Well, the sector plan is a good plan. The sector plan and the idea of sectors is a good idea. There is flexibility, there is the ability to make a decent income if you have the money behind you. It does lend to better marketing of the product. The cons would be that the government has used this as a means to significantly reduce the amount of vessels and permit holders in the fishing fleet and these are words that come direct from Jane Lubchenco, the head of National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, a time where the level of the fish is at a historic high, higher than at World War II or the advent of the diesel engine. Some species are at their highest ever-recorded level.

I think that the cons go on further. The government hasn't allocated us a decent amount of fish. The government hasn't stood by and kept the lease price for certain species of fish. The government hasn't allocated enough of various species to each permit in order to continue fishing. You have a port here in Plymouth where traditionally we wouldn't have caught certain other fish like haddock, or red fish, or pollock because our fishing grounds don't access those kinds of fish. Yet under sectors, you still have an Assumed Discard Rate which is applied against your quota so, we were not allocated those fish. So we would have to buy those fish in order to cover our Assumed Discard Rate, for fish that we have never caught in our history. We have never caught pollock, we have never caught red fish, we have never caught hake in any certain amount, but now, we have to find enough quota to meet our Assumed Discards in order to continue our business.

The whole con about catch shares is that catch shares were not well thought-out before they were implemented. It was a hastily put together program that was forced onto the fleet when the system wasn't ready to handle 19 different species under one catch share program. And the problems that have arisen from it have continued to dog the whole catch share system. It sounds like a good system on paper, it could work if it was well thought-out. And there is too much input from various groups that were looking to corner the commodity market of Northeast seafood. This is nothing more than a commodities grab. Nothing more when you have the backers of fishing groups, Conservation Law Foundation, Environmental Defense Fund, telling their investors to invest in our quota, to buy our quota because they will get a 400 percent return on their investment. Then it's a prime exhibit of how this is nothing more than a

commodities grab. It's like cornering the orange juice market and trading places with Eddy Murphy. No different, no different, and it shouldn't be handed down to the American working public. It's a big problem I have with sectors, and the current administration.

[53:44]

SS: So can you tell me a little bit about your involvement in the sector? Like when and how did you join? Was the process pretty easy or straightforward?

TB: Well, I helped be part of the Planning Board on the development of our particular sector. We wound up spending a lot of time, two years trying to form our business plan and all that. Although, at the last minute when it came down to developing the sectors, there were a number of plans on how to allocate the quota. At the last minute the allocation came down to one that was not very positive for the south shore sector. It was during a time when we were unable to access the fishing grounds and most of us have gone off and done other things. What was the rest of the question?

SS: Do you think that it was pretty easy to join the sector? Was it pretty straight forward or a difficult process?

TB: No, it wasn't a difficult process to join it like I said, the first year I spent in the common pool, I didn't join a sector. It was easy enough to join a sector. As it was, you had to sign various amounts of forms, get it notarized; it's a binding contract. I did not decide to be an active vessel. Our initial fees were waved. There has been constant conversation on sectors assuming the cost of observers on vessels, and dockside monitoring. So far we have not been able to do that. If we did have to do that in sector 10, it would bankrupt the sector.

It's still the same group of people that we associate with, and have grown up with and fished next to for decades, so it was fairly easy to put together the group of people. It was kind of, you want to be in, your in, just pay the money and your in. Essentially the way it came in, you want to be in, your in, we will make any amends. If you want to join, we all know each other, we all know each others situations and they would make it very easy for people to join.

SS: What services does your sector provide or assist you with?

[56:39]

TB: Such as?

SS: Insurance, support groups, representation?

TB: Our sector manager has been very active in supporting our problems and important situations that have arisen in our sector. We don't have any insurance from our sector; we don't have access to that. Our sector doesn't have a lot of money for a lot of different things,

support groups. We do wind up meeting along with each other, at various sector meetings to discuss some of the policy issues and what's coming up in the sector. Not quite sure you would call that a support group when everyone in the place is going out of business. You show up at these meetings and there is not good news from anybody. There are not even many people in the sector that you could say, "I'm glad he's doing well."

There are very few winners in our sector. Our sector has some people that are sustaining themselves deservedly so. They worked hard and invested a lot of time and money, but I'm not quite sure they are doing any better. After sectors, I think that for the most part, we don't have any support group for us. We don't have any means of venting our feelings. We do talk to our political representatives; same old story same time every time we see them. Many people have gotten fed up and no longer participate in the process. They just can't take it emotionally.

You go to these meetings and you say the same thing over and over again and you never get listened to or have anything you said implemented and it comes a point where it is so stressful to a lot of people they no longer participate in the process. They don't go to sector meetings, they don't go to council meetings, they don't write their Congressmen or Senators, Representatives because it just dredges up bad emotions that their family has seen to much of and they no longer need to see any more of [it].

SS: Do you think your voice is being heard at all or do you think that all of this effort isn't really making a difference?

TB: I don't think that this effort is making much of a difference at all. I don't think that our voice is being heard at all. I think that the people that are the winners in sectors, the ones with a lot of quota, and a lot of permits and a lot of backing are the ones that are calling the shots. Anything that we say always, always, always, always is shot down by them. They have the money to lobby the political representatives and nothing ever gets done to support our concerns on the small community boats.

[01:00:17]

SS: Do you think that being in a sector has influenced your friendships or interactions with other fishermen?

TB: I think that it certainly has. There are a number of people that I no longer wouldn't speak to that have participated in some of the under-handed ways that they have gotten quota through their association with the environmental groups. There's a number of harbors that I used to go to that I will no longer go to and use a lot of the facilities, the ice machines, the docking, landing facilities, the fuel facilities, the hotels in places to stay and the restaurants that I will no longer go to. I just absolutely will not go there if my life depended on it. There's a number of people that I can no longer even look at because the look of them.... I would call them traitors, and they are traitors to the American way and the community that they worked in.

And certainly it has, it certainly had. I am not the only one that feels that way. There's a number of people that feel the same way. There is a very distinct divided way of the 'haves' and the 'have nots'. And the 'have nots' and the people that were screwed, and they were screwed. The people that 'have' are willing to fight to keep what they have and to continue to take more of what we have and it has created quite a bit of problems in the community. Not to say the community didn't have this tension with certain other people, but you used to be able to row them around and go to any harbor, but now, no. There are people that won't come to our harbor, and people in our harbor that won't go to other harbors.

SS: So do you think that a lot of other fishermen share the same view and opinions on sectors as you do?

TB: Yes I do. I thinking for the most part, the winners will say the same thing I say. They are winning and they will keep what they have got and the losers are going to say they didn't get enough and they are losing their shirt. And overall I think that the words that I am speaking right now are really the way it is. I don't wish the winners any bad; they won. They are lucky. But there should be enough for everyone. There should be a basic minimum for people to play that first hand. There should be a basic minimum for sustainability of the small boat industry. We are coming up on an election year and the president is shouting, "Jobs, jobs, jobs", but he has eliminated thousands of jobs both in the commercial fishing boat owners, and the people that support them through what they sell and it has caused those people a lot of hardship too.

The boats don't run without a lot of shore side support. I was recently talking to a friend of mine, that we buy our fuel from and he has had the worst year in 20 years. A big part of that is the fact that he doesn't have \$20,000 per boat, per 7 boats in Plymouth that he is selling fuel to. That's a big chunk of money and it's a significant part of his business. He is a small business owner and I went to school with him since grade one through high school, his mother was my den mother in Boy Scouts and it's a great loss for him. It's at the point where he's laying off people now too, so yeah, you know so it's created great differences.

[01:04:20]

SS: How often do you interact with other sector members? Do you work on projects together through your sector, or work together at all?

TB: We see a lot of the sector members down at the harbor front. We try to work on projects that are significant. Typically it's a political statement that we will try to put forward or trying to even out some part of the process that would make this work better. How often does that happen? 3 to 4 times a year. We try and get together for sector meeting 4 or 5 times a year. As far as any outside projects, a lot of times we used to support a lot of local community and some of the things we did through various harbor front activities, Blessing of the Fleets, donating money to some of the non-profit groups in the town and the community which we no longer do because there's no longer boats around.

There's no longer people that have enough time and money to go towards that kind of thing and that's a great loss because we really are losing contact with the local community. If there's no boats going there are no boats that are going to participate, and there's no more extra money. We are at a deficit. There's no chance of any participation. Our sector group is trying to stay afloat, trying to keep the process going and going down hill constantly so, we spend most of our time trying to stay solvent.

SS: Would you consider other sectors members as friends and do you spend personal time with them outside of fishing?

TB: Yeah, yeah, I consider them all in sector 10, I consider them all friends. I have know them all a long, long time. My brother is a member of sector 10. We still talk to each other and see each other and we do have social times together from time to time and we try to keep it together and share life and the ups and downs of life with each other.

That's one of the reasons that a lot of us are still here; this is our support group, this is our fraternal organization you might say, and part of the only group of people that we can talk to that somewhat grasp what we are going through. It's a complex issue and you start talking to a lot of other people about it and they lose their concentration quite soon. Either that or you are going to have a very long conversation with them going through the nuances of how we are in this situation.

[01:07:48]

SS: So would you say that your relationships have been enhanced or detracted from since sectors began?

TB: It's about the same, I wouldn't say that it has been either. I would say that we were all close friends ahead of time. It's a community that always bands together and helps people out. You have a break down, they'll tow you in. You have a spare part that someone else might need, you lend it to them. The group of people, they are all good people. I don't think that sectors have really caused anybody to not like anybody else especially in our sector, maybe for the fact that I know that people don't like people in other sectors because of the way that they have participated in the sector system. I think that there is, amongst our sector, everybody is still the same. We still try and keep in touch and we are still friends.

SS: Do you think sectors have changed the dynamics in the port?

TB: Oh yeah, we have lost quite a bit of infrastructure. We have lost regular fuel deliveries, regular ice deliveries, we have lost infrastructure, we have lost waterfront property, we have lost the fact that we have a big enough fleet to support having our infrastructure maintained such as the dockage, the wharfs. We have wharfs that are falling in to the water because no one uses them anymore. We have lost small scale businesses that used to support us. Since

sectors have begun we have lost a lot, a lot of ground as far as maintaining a tenuous hold on the waterfront which we all know is valuable property.

SS: Based on your experience in your sector, would you recommend other fishermen to join a sector?

TB: No. Yes. I guess, I don't know, it's the only method you have. The common pool is not an option. Trying to maintain something in the common pool is not possible. I have tried it; it is not economically viable. If you are in the industry you are left with no other viable option other than being in a sector. They call this a voluntary program and it's not voluntary at all. There is nothing voluntary about this. You are either in business in a sector or you are out of business. There will be no in-between. There are no outside rouges that have stood outside and participated in this. I tried and it did not work, and it wouldn't work; there was no way to make it work.

[01:11:09]

SS: Are you involved in the fishing community? Do you attend fundraisers or different things, or are you involved in a wider community, school board, town council, stuff like that?

TB: We participate in the fishing community. A lot of times we have had instances where somebody has needed support. We have had fundraisers for them. We have had birthday parties. We have had times where we have supported people that have needed things. As far as the rest of the community, I'm part of the Duxbury Bay Maritime School, part of the boat building community in Duxbury. Not part of any town board yet or anything like that but do attend town meetings, and do attend town hall meetings when various Senators or [with] political people to discuss with them, which are I guess a social scene too. [I] have a rapport with all of those people now.

SS: Has your general outlook on life and well being changed for the better or worse since sectors started?

TB: It has changed for the worse. There's no other way to put it. You cannot have a good outlook when you have no money, and if you have no money you are not going to be part of society. It has gone downhill physically and emotionally. There's a great toll that's been taken on me. I have a stress level that I have never seen in my entire life. It does affect my marriage, it does affect my life. At this point I have kept it from having too much of an effect, but changes will have to be made, you know. I have come to a point in life where I have never taken any mood enhancement pharmaceuticals but I have gotten to the point where you know it may be time to be seeking counseling. And some of the mood enhancers that people do take... we certainly are at that level and our industry here that there is a very big health problem due to that.

I have been lucky. I haven't gone to any abusive use of alcohol or drugs, but I know people that have, and I know people that have lost everything that they have because of that and it is all a result of not being able to be a fisherman. Fishermen are fishermen; fishermen can be a good carpenter but they are still a fisherman even though they may be the best house builder in the world, they are still a fisherman and there is no getting the industry out of the person. There are certain people that are meant to be doctors, and certain people that are meant to be fishermen, and fishermen are meant to be fishermen and they no longer have a place to go. There's a toll, there is a very big toll in that.

[01:14:25]

SS: With sectors in place do you think the future of fisheries is brighter or less bright?

TB: Less bright, this industry will be wrapped up by the big broker commodity industry, it already is. The industry will be gone, and I am giving it three years. Without any significant change, I do not see a small-scale fishery on the east coast. The Obama Administration is continuing to push catch shares on to the rest of the fishing industries on the east coast, not necessarily groundfish but with the other fish as well. And that will have the same affect as it is here. This industry is doomed if it continues on the path it is now.

SS: Has there been a concentration of quota ownership by state, region, or communities?

TB: Oh yeah, oh yeah, it's already happened quite a bit. There are a number of groups, a number of environmental groups that have significant quota. A number of individuals that have significant quota and permits, there are people that own... we have one person that owns 25 percent of the groundfish quota for southern New England, one person. That's not right; that's taking the port of New Bedford down from 50 boats to 12 for groundfish. That's a significant number because those were big offshore boats that continually went and employed a lot of people and they are gone. They are all under one ownership, of one guy and that's not right. I doubt he made his own money too.

SS: Who is included or excluded under sectors? Do you think it is certain communities or geographic regions or different sized vessels?

TB: I don't know. What do you mean, what's the question now?

SS: Who do you think is included or do you think people have been excluded under sectors, like different communities or different vessels, different size boats?

TB: Yeah, yeah I think here in Plymouth we are greatly excluded due to the fact that we don't have the allocation, you know, and I think that our allocation is so low that we have been excluded from the industry. And we are not about to be a participant in it unless we have a significant increase. And again some of the bigger harbors that had boats that were more concentrated on groundfishing have made out better.

Gloucester has more groundfish. Their boats traditionally only worked on groundfish, didn't participate in other fisheries and rightfully so they have more quota. However, I don't see them having enough quota to survive as well. A lot of the small boats up there, single permit, single boat, single owner, it's not the recipe to be successful under sectors. It has excluded a lot of people and it has gone to big boats, to big owners.

[01:18:04]

SS: How have sectors influenced safety at sea? Do you think that people take more risks or less risks under sectors?

TB: I think that in a lot of ways people are taking a lot more risks under sectors due to the fact that they really are not able to maintain their vessels in a proper manner and they are not able to maintain their safety gear in a proper manner. It's a significant amount of money to maintain the safety gear per year. That suffers. We do need to have valid gear on board, but still, I think that there's a number of vessels that are in need of maintenance and upgrading and work that they are not as safe as they were before sectors.

SS: How have sectors influenced your view and relationship to the resource? How much you have to discard, or your bycatch or the fishery in general?

TB: My view of the resource is that it is well recovered. Our resource is at a level that I have never seen in my entire life. I think that my view of it has changed and the fact that the ones that were rewarded are the ones that kept fishing on the fish that we were trying to save. And the lesson being learned there is: if the government says the fish are in danger, you have to keep on working on it or you will not be allowed access to it. It has happened to me with scallops, it happened to me with other fish and the resource is not being managed in a proper way by the government.

I am one of the people, and the fishermen are a group of people that have given up more for the environment than a lot of people in the United States today. There are not a lot of people that have given up a significant part of their income in order to bring back a fish stock or a number of fish stocks. Tens of thousands of dollars that we never took. It also winds up giving you a little disrespect for the resources. If I had to go fishing again I would continue to go fishing again and I would.... We never discarded anything anyways. As far as discards were concerned we were able to trim our equipment down to... we would have a discard rate of 1/10 of 1 percent or less. It was a very clean fishery and we are now able, with the technology that we have, to be very selective with our fishery. It's just that it's very hard to respect anything that the government says as far as what the condition of the resource is when you know that they are not right.

SS: Do you think that regulations are becoming easier to understand or harder?

[01:21:30]

TB: I think that they are very complicated to understand. I think it's a situation where the level of regulation is at such a high level and so short-sided that it is very hard to maintain your fishing operations and stay in compliance with the regulations. I think that there are many unneeded regulations that they are trying to impose even further regulations on us that are draconian in measures. It rivals George Orwell in 1984. They are talking about putting cameras on our boat in order to count our fish, which to me is very ludicrous. There is no need for that.

We have environmental police. We have dockside monitors. We have monitors. We have paper work we have to fill out. We have reporting that has to be done by the fish dealers and overseers all through the process. And I think that the complexity of it all is 100 times more than what it used to be. I think that it has become much more complex. It's a hard way to make a living now, a lot more things to think about even before you leave the dock.

SS: Have you experienced any life changes that you attribute in whole or in part to sectors or the general downturn in the economy?

TB: Yeah, well the sectors have caused a great economic harm of course. I have said that. We have put plans on hold, as far as retirement funds. We now do not travel as much, and do not spend as much money on things other than the bare necessities. I know other people that have wound up losing relationships and houses and marriages, and going off and losing their businesses. But as far as me, I am still here, I am still here. I haven't left yet, I don't want to leave, but it's the only option for me now, but I am still here. I don't know for how long, but I am still here.

SS: If you could go back in time and remove sectors as a management tool would you do it and what would you replace it with?

TB: I would remove sectors in an instant, instantly. This program is not working and it is not the way to do this. It is ill-conceived, and there is no doubt in my mind that there is a better method of doing this. Before sectors we had Days at Sea, effort-based controls which were effective in re-building the stocks to the highest that they have been in over 50 years. [Days at Sea] kept people going, kept maintenance money running through the whole time. I would replace it with a program that the government has already said they are not going to do.

Before, under Days at Sea, we were able to have what was called the "running clock". We would have a set amount of Days at Sea with our permit. We would be able to run the clock in advance so we had a set amount and a set amount of poundage per day. We were able to start our clock days before we were going to go fishing. If we knew that we had 800 pounds a day and we wanted to go catch 8,000 pounds, we would let our clock run for 10 days and go out and catch 8,000 pounds in one day. If we happened to go over, then we would let our clock run until that catch caught up before we could go out fishing again. Very effective, led to zero discard of legal size fish and it was very effective in rebuilding the stock the way we had.

That to me was better than sectors. You use less fuel, less ice, less work on the boat, made the same amount of money and we were allowed to bring our discard rates down to a near zero level. How much more effective do you expect to get? I think that I haven't gone too far in master-mining another plan. That's the business of the managers. Fishermen get paid to fish; they don't get paid to manage. In fact, legally they are not allowed to manage. It's called price fixing. We all have our little different wishes on how this would be run, but we're not responsible for management. We are not trained in management. We're trained to go catch the fish. The government has dropped the ball on the management, that's the reason we got into this problem. That's the reason we are still in this problem, inaccurate management.

[01:27:14]

SS: Have you considered returning to the common pool at all?

TB: Yes, I have. Yes, I have, I may join it next year. I don't know. Under sectors I wasn't even able to go fish one day. I went fishing with my brother. We mopped up his quota in three days, three days. Typically we would have done 40 trips each. I don't know about the common pool but that is a sector in itself with its own allocation. When you have a low allocation, the amount of people that are going to be in the common pool are going to have a low allocation; it will be a low allocation overall. I consider, I consider going to the common pool but I don't think I will. I think I'll just sell my permit.

SS: Is there something else about sectors that I haven't asked you that you would like to add to the record?

TB: Geez, I don't think so. That was a pretty extensive survey. I think that we have covered a lot and I think that the overall thing that I would like to say is that it just doesn't work. It was an ill-conceived program and there is no benefit to this in any way, and there is especially no benefit to the fish. I don't know if we have touched on it, but the fish population has struggled. The small scale aggregate fish spawning biomass in the National Marine Sanctuary has been hammered to the point, it has been hammered down to the point that it shouldn't and I think that we have lost a lot of ground there. This is nothing to do with 'save the fish'; it has everything to do with the commodities grab.

SS: To conclude is there something else that you would like people to know about your career in fisheries, your views, or even a story to share for those in future generations that might read this?

TB: I don't know, I don't know, I don't think so. I touched on it a bit; it's a fraternal organization of people that are meant to be where they are and there's a certain group of people that... this is not a new industry. This isn't some sort of computer-based model. This is an industry that survived since before the Pilgrims came here. This was a secret fishing hole for Europe in the 1500's, and it has been what made America great. Codfish was worth more than gold. Codfish is

what made the state of Massachusetts, Massachusetts, and what made the colonies, what made the North American colonies survive because of what was here.

I think that it's a vital part of the fabric of the community here, in the costal community of Massachusetts, New England and throughout the United States and I think that's a vital thing to hang on to, very vital. People don't come down here to see a fish that's brought in from China, you know? So I don't know, there should be a face on the product. It's very important to see a face on the product of the people that are producing the food that feeds the nation, and we are losing that in the United States. We have already lost that a lot with the small-scale farms, and I don't think that we should lose it with the fishing industry.

[01:31:02]

END INTERVIEW