

Interview with Henry McCarthy [HM]
Occupation: Fisherman
Port Community: Scituate, MA
Interviewer: Angela Wilson
Date: February 16, 2012
Catch Share Oral Histories Project – NOAA Fisheries
Logger/Transcriber: Elizabeth Wetterhahn
INDEX: [minutes:seconds]
231 Boulis Road, Duxbury, MA

Interview

[00:00]

AW: Alright, for the record, this is Angela Wilson. It is February 16, 2012 and I am at 231...

HM: Boulis Road.

AW: Boulis Road.

HM: Duxbury, MA.

AW: In Duxbury, MA. Can you please state for the recording that you have read, agreed to, and signed the release form?

HM: I have.

AW: And can you...to start, can you state your name and your address?

HM: My name is Henry S. McCarthy. I live at 231 Boulis Road, Duxbury, MA, 02332.

AW: And your homeport and vessel name?

HM: Homeport...Scituate, MA. Fishing vessel, *Last Chance*.

AW: And are you in the sector or the common pool?

HM: Comical...sector.

AW: In the sector....and Sector 10?

HM: I am in Sector 10.

AW: And if you don't mind me asking, how old are you?

HM: 47.

AW: Okay. To provide...to start, I just want to get a general context of yourself and your family. For example, where are you from, how long have you been here...if you are married and have kids...what type of education you, and perhaps your wife, may have...how long you've been fishing...that sort of thing.

HM: I've lived at this address for over 30 years. I've been fishing for 25 years. And in the past two years, I didn't go fishing because of sectors...from the change of Days at Sea to sectors because the allocation I got as a longliner in the Gulf of Maine made it not feasible to run a business that would be profitable. So the boat has either been in the boatyard or on the mooring and hasn't fished. I'm actually inactive in the sector because of that reason.

AW: And are you married?

HM: I'm married with one child, yeah.

AW: And you mentioned...how long, I'm sorry....how long have you been fishing for?

HM: Over 20 years, I guess.

AW: And what types of fishing do you do...or have you participated in?

HM: I've participated in dragging, gillnetting, longlining, tuna fishing...the mackerel fishery, the squid fishery, shrimp fishing...dogfishing...I think that's it.

AW: And currently?

HM: Currently I don't do any fishing because it's not...economically viable. I started another business in order to feed my family 'cause NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) put us out of business, so....

AW: And were you fishing before sectors were implemented in 2010?

HM: Yes, I was.

AW: And what were you fishing in say, 2009.

[03:15]

HM: I was fishing Days at Sea. And with the two Days at Sea permits I held, at the time...if I went every day, and burned the clock as they had it, as you could run it...I could catch 120,000

pounds of cod and over a million pounds of haddock for a year. And then when I went to sectors, I ended up with 12,000 pounds of cod and 6,000 pounds of haddock. So you can see where you wouldn't be able to run a business with that.

AW: And how many crew members did you employ? 'Cause I'm assuming that since the boat isn't fishing, they're not under your employment anymore?

HM: I had one crew member.

AW: One crew member.

HM: Sometimes two.

AW: Sometimes two?

HM: Right.

AW: Okay. And they don't...do they work for you in your other business now?

HM: They do.

AW: They do.

HM: One of them does anyways.

AW: And where did you fish in 2009?

HM: Stellwagen Bank.

AW: Stellwagen Bank, okay. And we're here in your beautiful home and I was just wondering...do you consider this a fishing community?

HM: I used to consider this a fishing community, but there's no longer anymore...well...let me see...we have...our sector covers six or seven ports in total. And we have....right now...six or seven active fishermen. But probably, right now, only three or four really active fishermen. So it's not really a fishing community anymore. There used to be, you know, out of...just Plymouth and Scituate there were probably forty boats. And now, I know of one boat that fishes that out of Plymouth and two or three boats that fish out of Scituate.

AW: And in your opinion, what do you think the best years for this area...when it comes to fishing...were?

HM: Well, I think towards the end was, you know, some of the best, most consistent fishing because we, you know, we were charged with saving the last spawning biomass of cod in New

England. So we didn't...we went up to six months of rolling closures. Forty pounds of cod...up to 400 and then at the high we were at 800 [pounds]...but legitimately, I didn't even go longlining. We could go out, my brother and I, and jog up our 800 pounds before 10:00 in the morning. So I think that that was probably the best fishing.

AW: So like '06, '07, '08, and '09?

[05:59]

HM: Yeah, like that. As the fish started to come back around here before they let them get decimated as they moved to sectors and no weight limits. And you know, your ability to start in one area and end in another, basically turned the cod stock in the Gulf of Maine into a one stock thing where, you know, you could take Georges cod stocks and catch them in the Gulf of Maine... 'cause you'd go fishing there in the morning, tow down the backside 'til you cross the 42nd parallel, and then you're tripping Georges and call them Georges cod.

And if you don't have an observer onboard - which there often isn't - they become Georges cod. So there really isn't two stocks anymore. It's just the one stock in the ocean. That being said, most of the boats...well, anyone who owns a boat who has an ounce of intelligence, is going to go where the fish have been conserved for 12 years. That's what I would do if I had a 90 foot dragger. I'm not going to steam 120 miles for 'maybe', when I can steam 20 for a 'guarantee'.

Unfortunately, I think in the year or two since the beginning of sectors, and no weight limits and all of that...I think that they've wiped out 12 years of conservation. I think that it's probably too late. And I don't think it's by accident that NOAA came out with the stock assessments that, mysteriously, that the Gulf of Maine cod that had been building, you know, consistently being rebuilt for 8 years, are mysteriously not there. It seems like a pretty convenient way to protect themselves against saying, "We screwed up by letting the sector boats go in and catch whatever they want." Rather than saying that, you just say "Well, those cod really weren't there. Our science was wrong for 8 years." That's what they're doing. That's what they're doing right now. They just did. They said "Our science was wrong...well, we were off. We made a mistake. We reanalyzed that science and we decided that the cod stocks in the Gulf of Maine aren't there." Well, of course they're not there...they're all caught.

AW: And were they there, in your opinion...?

HM: Oh absolutely. Like I said, we used to go out jigging. Just my brother and I, with two rods, and catch 800 pounds in 2-3 hours and then come in. We'd leave in the dark, come in 3 hours, we'd jig up our 800 pounds every single day. And in all the trips I can think of probably 4 times where we didn't get our 800 pounds. And probably 6 times in 4 years, we didn't go...maybe more. Maybe a dozen times, in 4 years. And generally, that would be like February when the water drops below that certain magic number, when the fish leave, which is right around 39 degrees.

It's amazing to me that the science still hasn't figured out that the codfish move from point A to point B...and they'll do a trawl survey and not take into consideration water temperature... because that's what makes the fish move. So you could go...they go, "Well, we're going to make the tow on April 1st." Well, that's great except if the water temperature is still 39 degrees on April 1st. Even though you caught 'X' amount of cod or blackbacks or yellowtail the year before, they won't be there because the water's too cold.

[09:18]

AW: So...

HM: I ramble....which I will tend to do.

AW: That's okay, I want to hear about it. So you mentioned that a lot of boats aren't there anymore...people are just dying out of it?

HM: Oh absolutely...it's ridiculous.

AW: So has that also changed sort of the shoreside infrastructure and people?

HM: Oh absolutely. A friend owns, you know, I won't say the name of the fuel company because I don't have his permission...but fueled most of the boats around here...the majority of the fleet. And he told me that, well, you know...four or five years ago that the present rate of decline, that he was looking at a 40% reduction in the amount of fuel that he was selling. And, like Brewer's...that's a marina down there...I can use the name of it...they used to have winter tie-ups until the bay had iced in. But every single year, they would have a lot of slips filled. You know, draggers would go in there, just for convenience sake. So you could walk down to your boat after all the recreational boats were out. That was probably a nice little added source of income for them, along with selling fuel at their fuel dock.

AW: I remember that, yeah.

HM: And they don't have that anymore. There's two boats there...one boat there. That place used to be almost full. And I'm sure it's the same thing at Taylor's in Marshfield.

AW: Would you say, personally, you're quality of life is better or worse since sector management started?

HM: It's much worse. It's, you know...not only the fact that I haven't been able to go fishing and do something that I love, you know...you're talking to a guy who went to college into his senior year at Suffolk University, went fishing with a friend of his, and then never went back to school. That's how much I loved fishing. And the important part of the...or the draw to most guys that I know, anyway....true fishing was the freedom, you know? The ability to say...say you

were fishing for one thing and it slowed down. You would just move on. Change what you were doing and go fish for something else. That's always been the 'modus operandi' for the fishermen from this area. If something didn't work, you moved on.

Like dogfishing. You know, a lot of people think that...like when they said that...when NOAA decided that the dogfish were endangered...they were never endangered, because I was fishing for them in my boat as a state fisherman and I never had a problem catching them. Myself and others firmly believe that that was just part of the systematic reduction of groundfish permits in New England, i.e., they took the catch reports that we had to fill out and said "How are these guys surviving? Well, oh look at that...90% of the guys in the summertime go dogfishing." Well, you pretty much have to around here 'cause in the summertime when the dogfish move in, you can't groundfish 'cause there's nothing but dogfish.

Even like I used to go longlining...you'd set longlines...even in the early spring and you'd say "Oh look." You know, you'd mark the fish and everything...and you might have a haddock on every hook, but even though you set it and hauled it right back, you'd end up getting haddock heads back, because the dogfish would devour all the fish, you know, on the line. So we ended up going dogfishing. And NOAA said "Well, how are these guys surviving?" Because, I believe, and a lot of other guys like myself believe, that fishermen from this area were targeted specifically to reduce the total number of groundfish permits in New England. NOAA decided years ago that they had become too outnumbered. And rather than buy the fishermen out, they squeezed out an area...and in particular, our area. That's the last spawning biomass of cod.

The Cape Cod yellowtail subspecies that came out of nowhere when the guys were catching mysteriously enough 4-5,000 pounds a trip...they said "Oh, they're endangered. We have to make them 250 pounds a trip." Well, I don't know how a guy can catch 4-5,000 pounds a trip and something can be endangered, you know? But that's what happened. And then everybody went to dogfishing, then mysteriously the dogfish became endangered. Mostly affecting the boats directly in these areas, these rulings. Because, you know, right here we concentrate on dogs. If I'm not mistaken, dogfishing started in P-town and in Scituate. Those were some of the first boats that ever did it.

[14:06]

AW: So why do you think this particular area was targeted?

HM: Oh, because we were the weak link. It was simple. You know, the Cape Cod Hook Association, I think, saw the writing on the walls for this stuff starting. They...to attack New Bedford is, you know, that's a lot tougher task than attacking Plymouth, Marshfield, Duxbury, Hull...places like, you know, P-town. If you start going after the guys in Gloucester and New Bedford, who are... I think, they were pretty well politically connected, we were basically the weak link. We weren't organized. We didn't really even have fishing groups. You know, we didn't have the Cape Cod Hook Association. We didn't really have any associations. We started associations, but by the time we did, and figured out what was going on...it was too late and

they had, you know...they had...there was a high number of permits per locality, you know what I mean? So if you wanted to eliminate a large number of permits, you would go to an area where there was a large number of small boat permits. And in the harbors that are in Sector 10, there was a huge number of groundfish permits. I mean, every lobsterman had a groundfish permit. A lot of just weekenders had groundfish permits. So, you know, they systematically set forth to eliminate us, and they did.

[15:32]

AW: Now do you think that sectors have helped people sort of organize? Or do you think that it's alienated more people?

HM: I think that we were much more organized...as organized as you could get prior to sectors. And then...nobody in this area wanted sectors. It was force fed to us, you know? And the ongoing joke at the Council used to be the 'Common Stool'...that's what they used to call it...unbeknownst, I'm sure, to NOAA. But that was the joke at the Council. If you were going to go in the 'Common Stool', then you weren't going to be able to go fishing, which, as you can see, that's what happened. I mean, they made the weight limits per day so small and....and there was three for one counting or something, so you couldn't make a living. A couple of guys tried it. There wasn't...you couldn't make enough money.

AW: And they couldn't...

HM: No, they all went out of business. Or they're still hanging on, but they're not...I don't know of anyone who goes in the general pool, 'cause its...

AW: ... in the general pool you can't lease or anything like that?

HM: No, you can't lease weight.

AW: Yeah.

HM: And the small percentage of weights of fish that you catch per day, you can't even pay for your fuel, so they basically made it a non-entity by doing that, you know?

AW: So...

HM: You can't go out and burn 100 gallons of fuel at, you know, \$4 a gallon and then turn around and make \$400 for the day and...

AW: Right.

HM: You know, you're not going to pay your bills.

AW: So do you feel like you had no choice? You had to join the sector?

HM: Oh absolutely. There was no choice for anyone. You either joined the sector or sold your permits and got out. There was no choice. They didn't give you a choice.

AW: And do you feel like the sector provides you any services?

HM: Well, not me in particular, no.

AW: No. And do you...

HM: And as a matter of fact, I'm on the Board of Directors of both the permit bank and the sector.

AW: You are?

HM: So all it did for me was make me go to a million more meetings and do, you know, take care of guys that couldn't go to it, you know?

AW: That was my next question...what is it...your official role within the sector?

HM: I'm on the Board of Directors of Sector 10 and on the permit bank.

AW: Now I heard that you did get a million dollars from the ___... your particular sector and you bought permits with a portion of that?

HM: Right.

AW: And that it got distributed to about 2,100 pounds per...

HM: Yeah.

AW: ... per person?

HM: Right. 'Cause several of the permits we bought when we got the information from NOAA on their landings...initially to give the bid to the person, didn't end up being what the final number was from NOAA. In other words, they sent us the information. We got the information via the fishermen, but it was, you know, printed on NOAA paper. It was supposedly the landings of that permit. And on more than one occasion, when the allocation's came out, they were far from what was on the permits, so...

[18:40]

AW: After you purchased it?

HM: After we purchased it, yeah.

AW: And that wasn't disclosed to you before you purchased it...by NOAA?

HM: No, it wasn't.

AW: Now do you feel that there is a concentration of quota in certain areas or certain groups?

HM: Oh absolutely. I mean...I hate to keep referring back to the Cape Cod Hook Association, but just the fact that their sector was based on a different set of years than say our sector...it is amazing to me, because it's supposed to be a fair and equal breakdown for all. This, to me, is the economic impact study that they were supposed to do prior to even starting sectors. By law, Magnuson-Stevens said you should go around and do what you're doing right now. They didn't do it. Because they didn't want to hear it, just like they don't want to hear...they don't want to see their recent impact study done by the state on Sector 10. They don't want to hear about that, because they...and when I say 'they' I mean NOAA and the environmentalists...they want sectors to work. And they're going to make them work, one way or another. And if some guys happen to go out of business and their families starve, they don't care.

I've seen...I've seen it to the point where a friend of mine...I can't use his name...we used to call him 'Man Child.' He was fishing well before I was fishing. He was running a 70-foot dragger when he was 14 years old. He no longer owns a boat. He had to sell his 55-foot Bruno, because the permit that he owned with a lot of history...all the years of him being in the industry...he ended up having to sell the permit 'cause his wife got cancer. But this was back when it was still Days at Sea and nobody knew that it was going to go to what it is...what you're going to get. Anyways, he ended up having to sell that permit and then in the interim we went to sectors, and he bought another permit that supposedly had history. But when the history came out, it didn't have history and, you know, that's rendering his boat useless. So he had to sell his boat and, you know, got a kid that...you know...I thought would be one of the last fishermen left was gone...just like that. And he had state Senators and Congressmen and special meetings with people at NOAA to see if maybe he could get some, you know, dispensation...a special circumstance...nothing. They just laughed at him. You know, his wife and kids were crying in the office at NOAA. They didn't even bat an eyelash...didn't care.

[21:30]

AW: So do you feel that some people have been excluded from sectors or excluded from the fishery because of sectors?

HM: Oh absolutely. Any...anybody that - primarily the people in this area, because we were told by National Marine Fisheries that we had the last spawning biomass of cod. First, they said in the Gulf of Maine and then they said in the ocean. And, you know, as patrons of the ocean,

they put it upon us to save that cod...to repopulate the ocean. So we had 6 months of rolling closures...we had permanent closures in our best areas. The western Gulf of Maine closure was one of the best longlining and gillnetting spots there was. That was permanently closed. And then we found some fish in state waters and the state stepped in. And they had a permanent closure. They called it a spawning closure, a year round closure on some of the best bottom, once again. And then, you know, they turned around and said "Well, what you catch is what you get." Well, you know...we were penalized for saving the fish, where we should have been rewarded.

And then, of course the people on the Council manipulated it so when we did go away, they were able to go in there fishing. And this isn't being made up...its all documented because every boat that's ever made a trip, you know where they went by SkyMate, and you know how much they caught. They may not have said they landed it...oh, it came out of the Gulf of Maine...but if you track them on SkyMate, they made tows in the Gulf of Maine and then they went around to the back side. It didn't happen by accident. The Council did it on purpose 'cause the Council is made up of the 'haves' and they don't care about the have-nots...like the guys in Sector 10.

AW: And so, I notice that other people have said that they've seen a lot of big boats fishing in places where they've never seen big boats fishing before.

HM: Oh absolutely, big boats and small boats. The boats that are fishing out on Stellwagen aren't the boats that were fishing on Stellwagen prior to sectors. Because if you have a 90 foot boat...it was not economically feasible to go out and catch 800 pounds of codfish and 250 pounds of yellowtail and fuel up a 90 footer. But that being said...they have great representation on the Council, so they made it so when we went to sectors, they were able to go in that area, because they had heard rumors of guys having to dump fish overboard and draggers that were catching so much that in 10 minutes the net would be full. So, you know...they...it didn't happen by accident, let me just say that. It's not accidental that they're there now.

[24:13]

AW: So right now you don't fish, personally? You lease your quota out?

HM: I do, yeah.

AW: And...

HM: I would like to fish, but you can't run a business on 18,000 pounds.

AW: And so you have leased your quota out both years that sectors were...?

HM: Yeah.

AW: ... were implemented?

HM: And firmly believe that before it's said and done, that NOAA will take my allocation away because I didn't catch it. Five years down the road again they're going to turn around and say "What you caught is what you get again." And because I leased my quota out, they'll take it away from me.

AW: And...

HM: Mark my words. I haven't been wrong yet, in fifteen years. Every one of the predictions I've made has come true. Like the first time I went to a meeting and said...when they jammed this down our throat and I said "What do I do as a longliner in the Gulf of Maine?" And they said "Go find something else to do, because you can't target cod." And of course there wasn't any haddock back then, so I was essentially out of business. And I stood up at the meeting...and its still on tape...15...12...15 years ago...and said "Yeah, and then 10-12 years down the road, you're going to turn around and say "What you caught is what you get." And they said "Oh, we couldn't do that. We wouldn't do that." When, in fact, that is what they did.

AW: And without...have you ever considered other people's quota to...?

HM: No, it's not economically feasible.

AW: It's not?

HM: No. It's ridiculous. How can you lease codfish at \$1.20 a pound on a gamble, when you have \$4.00 diesel prices and...a fish price that isn't set? You know what I mean? You could legitimately go out and end up getting \$1.50. A lot of guys have done it...and they went and caught the fish for free. Didn't make a dime on it. And the mates don't, you know...then...the infrastructure is going to where you can't keep a sternman. How can you keep a sternman, even with the guys who made out...that might have 50,000 pounds? At \$2, that's only \$100,000. How does that pay for two families? Do you know anyone that can survive on \$100,000? \$50,000? Or what does the mate make...\$30,000? He doesn't make that after expenses...not on a fishing boat.

AW: No. That's less than I made when I was in college.

HM: Right. Well, that's what it comes down to. I think that...I forget what our average is in our sector, but I bet it's like 12,000 pounds or something, for every boat, maybe a size, 14,000 [pounds].

AW: So obviously if you were fishing right now, it would have a severe economic impact on your family?

HM: Oh absolutely. I wouldn't...yeah...I wouldn't...I don't know, I wouldn't be able to go fishing because I don't have any allocation, but...

AW: And you...

HM: ... if I did... even the guys that are going are having trouble catching the fish now because of the increased efforts in the area. I mean, you know...

AW: And so has the...does your wife work?

HM: Yeah, she does. That was...

AW: And did she work before sectors?

HM: Yeah.

[27:16]

AW: And has that changed...

HM: Probably the only reason why we didn't lose everything.

AW: And has that changed at all....does she work more now or is it the same?

HM: Well....she works about the same.

AW: How about...does she contribute more or...?

HM: Yeah, she's got raises and contributes more.

AW: And obviously, I can see why you're frustrated about the whole situation and I know that you love fishing and you haven't been able to go for the last couple of years...has this caused any stress here at home?

HM: Oh absolutely. Yeah, yeah. Especially in the first...as I was trying to develop my other business. Stress...did it cause any stress...? I don't know. My hair color three years ago was the color of yours. Take a good look at it now. What color is it now?

AW: Yeah, it's grey.

HM: White.

AW: And how about...

HM: Oh, of course it could of just been an age thing....probably not the stress.

AW: And how about dynamics with relationships...either personal or friendships?

HM: Oh yeah...I don't, you know... I still have most of those guys as my friends, but...

AW: And do you consider most of your friends to be fishermen?

HM: Oh yeah.

AW: Yeah. And you're still friends with them?

HM: I try to be, yeah....but obviously I don't see them nearly as much as I used to. But like I said... you know, you pretty much volunteer to be on the Board of Directors. It's a... you don't get paid to be on the Board of Directors of the sector, or the permit bank. And I go to meetings all the time and Council meetings... even though they're a waste of time.

AW: And did you go to more or less meetings when... before sectors?

HM: I probably go to more meetings now.

AW: Now.

HM: A lot more meetings now, yeah.

AW: And you mentioned you had one child?

HM: Yeah.

AW: Boy or girl?

HM: A girl. She's 9.

AW: She's 9.

HM: Yeah.

AW: If she came to you... say she was 18 instead of 9, and she came to you and she said "I want to go fishing." Would you let her?

HM: No.

AW: What would you advise her to do?

HM: I would advise her to get a job at NOAA.

AW: Okay.

HM: She could get her degree in marine biology so she could sit on her ass and get paid to do nothing.

AW: Alright.

HM: Maybe in the Science Center. That would be a good place to work. They don't seem to do anything and they get paid.

AW: And what would you...what advice would you give young people who want to get into the fishing industry nowadays?

HM: My advice to them would be to have very rich parents who could buy them into the fishery. Or get on the stern of a scalloper, I guess. Or one of the... there's a few 'haves' groundfish boats... I guess if you get on the stern of those and... for 20 years you might have enough money to get into it, but I kind of doubt it.

AW: And...

[30:21]

HM: I would not recommend anyone get into the fishery because it's so unstable.

AW: Okay.

HM: Anyone who would get into this would have to be somewhat touched. I mean, you had to begin with...you're a little touched to want to be a fisherman. But you really have to be sick in the head to want to get into it now because, you know, NOAA...they won't even give you...you can't get a 6 month plan, never mind a 5 year plan. How do you run a business that...?

Like, 2 years ago the Gulf of Maine cod was rebuilding. Last year, the Gulf of Maine cod was rebuilding, right? So, say I had went out and reinvested in this industry, right? Say because I had some money from other businesses that I've done. Say I said, "You know what? I'm going to keep fishing. I want to go fishing. I'm going to go buy a permit." Well, all those permits last year were based on how much cod that permit had. Pretty much, you know? Some of the flats mattered like blackbacks and yellowtail...but basically the base price that a permit was based on codfish. So, say I did...I went out and I said "You know what? I want to stay in the industry. I'm going to go out and spend a half a million dollars." And I bet you it was, probably even back then, \$5 a pound. Right? So, you'd have to spend almost a half a million dollars to get enough weight to justify a 40-footer. So say I did that, right? Now I own this permit based on their cod

allocation. With a wave of their wand, all of a sudden “Oh, our science was wrong.” Now I own this permit that...as of right now they’re talking about a 17% reduction in the upcoming year, and as much some ungodly number. So now I just spent a half a million dollars on a permit that isn’t worth shit anymore.

AW: So you can’t...?

HM: Now you know why I wouldn’t recommend anyone getting in this business.

AW: Because you can’t plan?

HM: You can’t plan 6 months ahead. They don’t know what they’re going to do from minute to minute. Like at the start of sectors... here’s a for instance... I call it NOAA’s magic wand. They break it out on occasion, when it suits them, you know? It doesn’t matter what the science is... they don’t care what the science is; they’ll break out their magic wand. Like the pollock. You know, the pollock was going to be a choke stock and was going to make sectors really not work. So what did they do? They waved their magic wand and the pollock allocation for everyone multiplied by 7. Now, was the science off by 7 times? Were they sleeping in the Science Center again? Could be. Or it could just be NOAA’s magic wand again. Like...they’ll wave their magic wand once we’re all gone too, and they’ll say “Oh, we made a mistake. The cod in the Gulf of Maine are recovered!” They like to use that magic wand.

[33:13]

AW: So, because you lease and you don’t...you don’t consider fishing, and even if you did, it wouldn’t make any financial sense for you?

HM: No, I would lose a ton of money to even try to go. Just the insurance alone... keeping the boat.... I don’t even know why I keep the boat. I should probably sell the boat, but...

AW: Do you have it insured right now?

HM: Oh yeah.

AW: Yeah.

HM: You have to have it insured.

AW: Yeah.

HM: Still have a note on the boat.

AW: Oh you do?

HM: Oh yeah, I don't own the boat outright.

AW: Do you at least take it for a pleasure cruise now and then?

HM: Oh, once in a while... yeah. Well, last year I put it in... let me see, I paid for storage... \$178 a month. I still, because I have a permit, have to pay for SkyMate every month, even though my boat's in a boatyard. They deduct the amount of money though... it's less money than you'd pay if you were on the water. But they still ping you in the boatyard. It works good too, if you were wondering. Two years ago... a year and a half ago... my SkyMate... well, two years ago my SkyMate wasn't working for four months... and I wouldn't have known that except that I tried to use it and I spent a day and a half on the phone with them, and they told me "Oh, I see that you haven't been sending a signal for three months." Which I thought was funny, 'cause I thought maybe NOAA would have called my wife, or at least SkyMate call my wife, seeing as I thought that's what I was paying for... but apparently I wasn't. Yeah, I still pay for that.

I still pay for insurance. And I paid for hauling and splashing twice last year, because I had to splash it to keep my mooring in Scituate. So I steamed down and put it [at] another mooring for a couple of weeks, just in case what I'm doing now fails....you know, I'm not really trained to do much else except...I'd have to...I guess I'd have to go back to fishing, one way or another.

AW: And is your boat in the water or is it on the hard right now?

HM: No, it's in the boatyard.

AW: It is?

HM: Yeah.

AW: And your other business that you talk about...can you tell me what that is?

HM: I can.

AW: Okay.

HM: I started an oyster farm... my brother and I started an oyster farm 10 years ago.

AW: And...

HM: Notice how I said around 10 years ago?

AW: Yeah.

HM: Right when NOAA started to get involved in the fisheries and I knew that it would be the beginning of the end and...guess I was right.

AW: And so that helps to compensate your...?

HM: It does, but it's very, very unpredictable. Its farming, you know? You could hit... you could think that you're having the greatest year... it just happened. We thought we were going to have a couple good years and... we got ___ in the bay and all the stuff died.

AW: Are there any pros of sectors? Or is it all bad?

HM: Oh, there are plenty of pros for sectors if... if you're one of the 'haves'. But if you're from Sector 10, there are no pros to sectors.

AW: Not even like, that it brings you guys together or that you talk more to each other or...?

[36:16]

HM: No, because like I said, there's no one fishing.

AW: Now...

HM: They decimated our area. As far as who's... the fishermen who were out here pretty much always communicated, you know what I mean? They do... I think maybe they communicated a little bit more, but they always communicated. Nobody wants to go, the fishermen from this area, nobody wanted to go fill their bag with 6,000 pounds of cod and shovel it over when it was 800 pounds. Guys don't want to do that. I know NOAA thinks that all fishermen are pigs, but not all fishermen are.

AW: No, I heard that you guys actually...some people had holes in their nets and when the cod got up to a certain level it would...

HM: Absolutely, and use the biggest cod ends they could.

AW: Yeah.

HM: And, you know, guys would tell the other guys "Hey, stay out of this area, there's way too much. Or tow for 4 minutes and you'll have plenty."

AW: And that's how they kept it...

HM: Right.

AW: ... around 800 [pounds]?

HM: And we...you know, we used to go to NOAA and say "Well, why can't one guy go catch it? And if he got more than that, why...the other guys could just go home and then you'd split it up at the dock?" And that would do away with discards. But, you know, they didn't want to hear that. That made too much sense.

AW: And have you ever thought...have you thought about changing sectors?

HM: No, not really. No. Most of the guys from this area...stayed in this area. I think we've only lost one guy since the start of it. And he might even come back...

AW: Yeah.

HM: ... to our sector... yeah.

AW: Where did he go? New Bedford?

HM: No, I think he went to a sector in Maine.

AW: In Maine?

HM: 'Cause I think he thought he was going to be able to lease fish for less money. I don't know if it worked out for him or not.

AW: Now you mentioned that a lot of people have gotten out of fishing?

HM: Yeah.

AW: Where have they gone? What's happened to them?

HM: I don't know. The handful I know wander around. But... some of them went lobstering, which, as you well know, is not a great industry right now. Not with, like I said, \$4 diesel prices. The price of lobster hasn't changed in 12 years, yet the price of fuel's gone through the roof, the price of bait's gone through the roof. I don't know...I guess they....once you make a living out on the water, you kind of are stuck doing that.

AW: Yeah.

HM: I mean, I suppose they could go do something else, but the timing would be a little bad. Right now wouldn't probably be the best time to go out and find a job, I wouldn't imagine... seeing as most of the carpenters, electricians, plumbers that I know are all loafing, so....

AW: Yeah. Do you think that you'll just continue to lease your quota? You won't fish it?

HM: Yeah. Like I said, I don't have enough quota to run a business.

[39:13]

AW: And the price that you lease your quota out...do you think it's fair for you? With the price that you're getting for your quota...?

HM: Well, yeah... yes and no. I could get more money for my quota....

AW: Right.

HM: ... if I went outside my sector. Because there are certain groups that are willing to pay a lot more for the allocation because they're getting backing from environmental groups...they're not spending their own money, you know? They buy allocation up left and right because they're being subsidized by environmental groups. You know...I don't know the exact numbers... but it's a lot less, you know? I've heard the prices are 65 cents... they end up paying... after they get subsidized.

I forget what I sold mine for, but it was two days later, my friend sold it who really needed the money... he sold his allocation because he couldn't catch the weight this winter. He waited to catch his codfish in the winter time, but by the time he went, all the big boats being around and the huge increase in effort... he wasn't able to... for the first time ever... like I said, we used to be able to go catch it like nothing. But he panicked... he wasn't catching enough every day, so he thought he was going to end up eating it. So he went and sold it and... he sold it for 40 cents more a pound than I sold mine for. But he went outside our sector, because he had no choice. I don't even think he knew where it was going. Because it went to another sector, and then I'm pretty sure got leased out of that sector to the sector that he really wouldn't have wanted to go to.

AW: And can you look up where your leased quota is going? So, say you're going to lease it, do you know who you're leasing it to when...

HM: Oh yeah, absolutely.

AW: You do?

HM: Right.

AW: Okay. So...and can you say "I'm not leasing it to you if I don't want to?"

HM: Yeah.

AW: You can.

HM: I can pick and choose who I can to lease my fish to.

AW: And can you pick and choose who you lease from?

HM: Pretty much, yeah.

AW: You can?

HM: Yeah.

AW: And do you see some people leasing...?

HM: If you have the money, you can lease from anyone.

AW: You can?

HM: Yeah... within reason. Like there's a grace period within the NESSN (Northeast Sector Service Network) community, you know what I mean? Say I want to lease my sector out... my weight out. And I made a deal with someone. And wanted to go outside the sector... so I can make my price higher than anyone wanted to pay in my sector... but then they still have right of first refusal. In other words, somebody could come back from my sector and say "No, I do want to pay that price." And I would have to sell it to them.

AW: From your sector first?

HM: Right.

AW: Okay.

HM: And then NESSN after that.

AW: Okay. And so then anyone from New England could...?

HM: Right. Anyone in that... that falls into the Coalition [Northeast Seafood Coalition].

AW: After Sector 10 says no?

HM: Right.

AW: And do you find that that happens often? People sell their quota for high prices in your particular sector?

[42:21]

HM: Yeah. I mean, I consider what I got to be a high price. Like I said, I think I let mine go for \$1 and I wouldn't lease it for \$1 to go fishing. Not when you could get \$1.50, you know? They'd like you to believe that it's where this is all working out hunky dory...that you can go buy fish. Well, we used to go catch those same fish starting at zero and having trouble making a living.

AW: Right.

HM: You know it costs a lot of money to keep a boat on the water, as you well know. So if you... now, instead of starting out at zero on a \$1.50-\$2 codfish... you're starting out at \$1. You know, even if its \$2... that's 50%, right? Gone again. So, you know... how do you make a living at that? You're not going to make a great living, I can tell you that. Even if you're scratching and you're surviving on leased fish, you're not putting any money away for retirement. You're not doing any additions to your house. You're not buying a new truck or buying a new... or you're never going to be able to go out and be able to buy a new boat. You're going to be using that same antiquated vessel that most of the fleet is now anyways, to the point of it being dangerous around here. A lot of the boats are so old.

AW: So has sector... has sector management caused safety concerns with...?

HM: Oh absolutely.

AW: Not just with the old vessels, but you know, the way people are fishing now?

HM: Yeah, I think it has. Because I think if you get into the fish now, even on a small boat... if you're able to get into the fish, you're so afraid that with all the other boats around that you won't be able to get into them again. I know I'd be apt to put as much on the boat as I possibly could, to the point of sinking if I had to... just to make sure that I caught my allocation. Especially if I knew the price was high, you know? If the... you know, 'cause the market does tend to flow in a certain direction. If you know like the holidays are coming up, or something like that...you know its going to be a strong price, and you can catch the fish...well, you're going to put as much on your boat as you can. That's what I would do.

AW: And do you think that the maintenance on some of these vessels is sort of lacking?

HM: Oh absolutely.

AW: Yeah.

HM: Absolutely.

AW: And people...

HM: Like I said, even when the...I forget what the average price was pre-sector... but it was probably around \$2 you got for groundfish, right? An average price. So if you take half of that away, you know... are the bilge pumps being replaced? Is somebody coming down and doing the maintenance on the boat? No, they're not. I know guys that, you know... they haven't even been changing their zincs. They just... they don't even haul out, they just lean their boat up against the seawall. If they're putting zincs on, they don't put bottom paint on... they lean the boat up against the seawall and they pile wash the bottom and throw some zincs on it and keep going 'cause...a haul out can cost you \$1,500 or \$2,000 easy on a small, 40 foot boat.

[45:16]

AW: And they just can't...?

HM: And if you don't have the money, I mean...you can't tell the guy at the boatyard 'See you next week.' He doesn't want to hear that.

AW: Yeah.

HM: I'm sure they've felt the bite too... I know they have.

AW: So what do you think the future holds for people that are in Sector 10? Just the general community?

HM: I think that National Marine Fisheries has got their way and that... they're not going to be happy until... like I said, the target area has been eliminated. And they're continuing down that same road. They could make... they could have made stipulations... they could have come to our aid. They could have said, "Hey, we understand that you had 6 months of rolling closures. Permanent year-round closures...both state and federal. And that maybe we made a mistake." Of course, that would be the first time in history that NOAA's ever admitted making a mistake.

They still, to this day I hear... to this day, they still use that phrase "Due to overfishing." Due to overfishing... seriously? Seriously? Aren't you in charge of managing the fishery? How can it be due to overfishing? Don't you mean, due to mis-management? If there's no fish in the ocean, don't blame the fishermen. Blame the person who was in charge of managing it. Because if it was outside a government agency... if it was a regular corporation, the whole Board of Directors would be fired by now, because you haven't done your job. But because it's a government agency, they get away with bloody murder, you know? They're still saying that the ocean isn't fixed. How many years will it take to fix the ocean?

You could have put somebody with an IQ of 80 points, 15 years ago...and said "Listen, what do you think we should do?" And they would have fixed the ocean by now. Not NOAA. They don't care. I firmly believe that they don't even care. I used to think that they actually did care about the ocean, but with this last move of letting everyone go out and wipe out 12 years of

conservation, and then pretend it's not going on.... When Jane Lubchenco came down to Scituate and we met with her... and we pleaded with her and told her that this was going to happen... that this is happening and its going to happen again next year and you can't let it happen.

And then I went to a groundfish meeting 3 months later, I went over to her and asked her what she was going to do about it, she didn't even know what I was talking about. Didn't even know what I was talking about. Sat in that meeting. Didn't write a thing down. Didn't pay any attention to it. And it took me at least 3 minutes to refresh her memory on what it was. And when I asked her "What have you done about it?" And it fell completely silent. And I said "Well, I guess that means you did nothing, huh? You didn't even address it, did you?" And it's painfully clear now, some 14 months later, that nothing was ever done, you know?

David, from the state of Massachusetts... David Piece... he pleaded with them at the last two groundfish meetings to do... take some emergency action to stop this from happening. This conservation that we suffered... guys lost their businesses because of this. And now... not even that is enough. Now, even the fact that about everyone I know is out of business to save the last spawning biomass of cod, they're still turning their heads and looking the other way and let it get wiped out. It's just so frustrating. It's beyond belief.

[49:09]

AW: Is it too late for Sector 10 or for the communities like Scituate and Plymouth?

HM: Yeah.

AW: It's too late?

HM: I believe it is, yeah. Yeah, it's too late... of course it is. I believe that they've wiped the codfish out that they could have brought back... even if they said "Okay, now you can go fishing again. Alright, we made a mistake." Well, the mistake... that was... the first mistake was just picking on us. And the second mistake was saying "Oh yeah, you know those fish you guys spent 12 years conserving? We're going to let the big boats go in..." And not just the big boats now... the Hook Association has been on top of the bank. Every one of them, bringing 50 bundles. 50 bundles. That's 15,000 hooks a boat. We used to be at 2,500 hook limit. They're letting now...because of sectors, they're out there with 15,000 hooks a boat. Fishing night and day. On fish that were, like I said, the last spawning biomass of cod in the ocean. And NOAA themselves just came out with a report that they're not rebuilt. And yet there's more effort on that area than there ever... than there's ever been as far as... well, as far as I know. I suppose there was that much effort years and years and years ago, but in recent times there hasn't been that much effort.

AW: If you could go back and remove sector management and catch shares as a management tool, would you?

HM: Absolutely.

AW: And what would you replace it with?

HM: I would replace it with Days at Sea and a running clock. Like we originally had, at the very beginning. But NOAA said, and I quote "The reason why that won't work is 'cause it promotes stealing." That was the reason they gave for doing away with Days at Sea and a running clock. See, with Days at Sea and a running clock, like we had...you had 'X' number of days and 'X' number of pounds that you could catch of every species. So if you went over whatever that amount was... say it was... say you only had... I think back then it was 500 pounds of cod a day... so say you went out and caught 2,000 pounds of cod. Well, you couldn't leave the dock 'til the days... the corresponding days aligned with the corresponding weight.

[51:31]

AW: So like 4 days later, you could go...?

HM: 4 days later, you could go fishing. So rather than dump that fish over dead, you had to keep that fish and then your boat had to stay tied up. But you got that money. Even though you were tied up, you got the weight, you got the money... the business was viable. But they said it promoted stealing. Of course, not like sectors promotes stealing... when you can... let me see, swap quota from western Georges to get Gulf of Maine cod. Eastern Georges to get Gulf of Maine cod. You can start a trip in the Gulf of Maine and end it at Georges. That doesn't promote stealing, does it?

AW: And call it Georges?

HM: And call it Georges. I mean, you can go out... and in the very beginning I'm sure they did it. You can go out and tow for a couple hours and have a hundred thousand in your net, haul the net back, and steam to Georges, and go catch some haddock. Give the guys something to do on the way out. Here, rip these codfish on the way out. Catch some haddock or whatever out at Georges, [and] then come back in with a whopping trip. Those guys have made a killing, I would imagine. I know I would have if I was running one of...

AW: The boats with big quota?

HM: Oh yeah. They made a fortune.

AW: And do you think that they were given big quota because of their history, or did they buy their quota?

HM: No, I think it was because of their history. They weren't... the size of their boat enabled them to move better. They've always gone beyond their area, you know what I mean? That's

what that boat is designed to do. A 40 foot boat or a 30 foot... we have 20 foot... we had 30 foot boats, you know?

AW: You guys are local?

HM: We are local fishermen and we always have been local fishermen.

AW: And so you're really dependent on this stock?

HM: In this area, right.

AW: And so these boats...?

HM: That's why when we were asked to save it... although we did a little bitching, we all said "You know what"... and a couple of... the ongoing joke... Danny, you interviewed last... and I always said "A couple more years." A couple more years, couple more years, couple more years, couple more years, couple more years.

AW: And now?

HM: Now?

AW: No more years?

HM: No, it's all over. No. And it was funny, because him and I used to talk about how we'd be tied up as hook boats around here, and that the Hook Association would be hooking on Stellwagen. Boats that have never fished there before. And low and behold, that's what happened.

AW: When really that was your fishing ground?

HM: Yeah, well they never fished there before.

AW: And so even if they did enact Days at Sea and rolling... what was the... rolling clock?

HM: The rolling closures... if we didn't have those...?

AW: No, I mean... you said you would replace...

HM: Oh, if you replace Days at Sea...

AW: ... with...

HM: Days at Sea and a running clock.

AW: Running clock, yes. If they stopped sectors right now and replaced it with that particular management scheme...?

HM: And give us back our 88 Days at Sea?

AW: Or your... how many did you have... 40 something?

HM: Yeah, well... even if they went back to that... yeah.

[54:30]

AW: Would it... would it save the local communities?

HM: It might. It would be if we...

AW: If the fish were there?

HM: If the fish were there. I believe there is still a lot of fish there, but they're just smaller year classes. Because of the 6 inch mesh, you don't catch some of the small ones. So it'd probably take a couple of years to see those fish come to maturity. They haven't totally decimated them yet, at least that's what I try to tell myself. I think there's other year classes there, you know what I mean? From like...

AW: Yeah.

HM: ... 21 inch down cod. I know there is, as a matter of fact. So it could eventually come back.

AW: It could?

HM: It could.

AW: If...

HM: Because, after all, there are a lot of spawning classes that have... you know, in 15 years a lot can happen. That's 15 years of spawning. Every year they spawn, you know what I mean? That's 15 year classes. Whether NOAA says they exist or not, they exist.

AW: And so...

HM: It would help if they eliminated some of the dogfish in the area.

AW: It would?

HM: Oh yeah.

AW: The dogfish eat the spawning...?

HM: Yeah, they eat the small cod. They can catch a free swimming mackerel, I'm pretty sure they can catch a codfish.

AW: And...this is a little off topic, but... have you or anyone you know had any health issues due to sectors being implemented?

HM: I don't know.

AW: Like has stress caused any health issues for you in the last couple of years?

HM: Does the increased flow of alcohol among the fishermen count as... a health issue? Because if that's the case, it certainly has. [I've] seen a lot more guys stumbling around than I ever used to see.

AW: You do?

HM: Oh yeah. Yup, yup. A lot more young kids... mates that were on stern and that are drug addicts.

AW: Really?

HM: Oh absolutely, yeah. Scituate especially.

AW: And because they have nothing to do now?

HM: Oh, I think they have too much free time on their hands. You can't... if you're going fishing every day, it doesn't give you a lot of free time.

AW: Now they have land sickness, right?

HM: Right. Now they're home all the time, stumbling around, trying to find a job. Here, try this. I don't have to tell you how it goes.

AW: And have you had to change your future plans? Because of sectors?

HM: Absolutely.

AW: You have.

HM: I planned on retiring by the age of probably 50. Because it would... common sense told me... well, common sense told me that Marine Fisheries was never going to let us go fish again... go fish again. But my heart hoped and prayed that we'd be able to fish on... that 12 years of conservation with, you know, higher weight limits... so you know, I could have made... I would have had a couple years where I made \$3-400,000 in a row. Because technically, if I was able to have reaped the benefits of my suffering; I would have had enough to retire. Like Danny... was probably thinking the same thing. About the "couple more years" comment. But in reality, I knew that...

[57:51]

AW: And so...

HM: ... they weren't going to let us do that.

AW: And so now... you know...?

HM: So now I'll probably never retire.

AW: Never?

HM: I'll be working 'til the day I die. Well, I have a daughter to put through college, you know? And paying, you know... mortgage payments and all that, so... as it is, you know... you're scraping to get by. I suppose... maybe someday I'll retire, but I tend to doubt it.

AW: And so of course that affects your whole family, and...?

HM: Oh yeah.

AW: ... you know...?

HM: I know that there's many families around here that have been affected, you know... because of divorces and... "when the money's gone, the love goes out the window", as they say. And I've seen it, unfortunately.

AW: Is there anything that I haven't asked you that you'd like to add to this session?

HM: I think I already made... mentioned to the fact that this should have been done prior to sectors being instilled. I think by law they were supposed to do it, and didn't. No, I think I've pretty much said everything that... you know... it's tough for me to think back on it all now. It just was so many... just so many things were jammed down our throats that... you just... if you try to tell the average person the story of the fishermen from this area, they don't believe you, because it's unbelievable.

AW: No, they don't.

HM: They don't believe you. They think that you're lying and that you're making it up. And I say "Well, if you wanted to take the time and effort, all of it is documented at National Marine Fisheries." The whole debacle. And minutes of the meeting of the Council and catch reports at NOAA and SkyMate.

AW: Is it public...?

HM: It's well documented.

AW: Is it public record?

HM: I imagine it would be a matter of public record. Most of it. I'm sure that any minutes of the meeting of the Council is a matter of public record. I don't think... I think that's one of NOAA's... I don't think they released what you caught. That's not on the public record. But... you know the guys around here will release it. They would be happy to, I know. I think they've signed waivers before. I think they signed waivers on the economic impact study that the state did. And that we still haven't heard anything from NOAA about. They... I mean, maybe they've said something but... as far as doing anything, they haven't done anything, you know?

[60:39]

AW: So is there...in conclusion, because we are also doing an oral history here...would you...is there anything that you'd like to add about your career in fisheries? Or a story you'd like to share or anything that you'd like people to know?

HM: Only that this... the story of Sector 10 and the fishermen in this area is going to make a hell of a movie someday. Because, like I said, it's all documented. And I think that maybe someday some of the people on the New England Fisheries Management Council will go to jail. At least, that's what I hope for. They're being investigated right now by the Inspector General. I think... that's what I heard. I don't know for a fact. But I know some of the stuff they've done is criminal. They still do it to this day. They still raise... vote on things that aren't on the agenda. They just did it at the last meeting.

They... believe it or not... voted and passed to open up the western Gulf of Maine closure, which is the area that we're not allowed to fish in that's been closed since the very beginning. Just a little piece of it is going to help us get through codfish reduction. In an area that I just was told by NOAA again, that is in danger and the stocks are down. I don't know if NOAA will adopt what they voted on, but they voted to open up that western Gulf of Maine closure. And I know for a fact... well, I can't... I'm not going to speak for my sector, but I know through hearsay that we don't want it. Once again, the fishermen from this area...we don't want to open up the closed area. It doesn't make any sense.

AW: Now one of the things that I've heard from interviewing local fishermen here is that the fishery in Scituate specifically sort of had a self-regulating... you know, way about it. Different things...

HM: Oh absolutely.

AW: Different things...

HM: It just goes back to what I said before, we, small boat fishermen have always been the same, pretty much the same type of guys. In other words, there was never enough of any one species, so we always jumped around. And, you know... like I think one of the first guys to ever go monkfishing was out of Scituate. They developed the monkfish nets down there. One of the first places that dogfish were brought in was Scituate. I know a guy... a friend of mine who doesn't have enough monk allocation and he was the first or second boat ever to go monkfishing. Because the years when he went monkfishing weren't the years they picked from. This is a guy that used to bring in 70,000 pounds of pollock. But I think...

[63:41]

AW: How did they decide what years to use?

HM: Because it was convenient for the people on the Council. Those are the years that fit within the parameters of the people... the voting people on the Council. That's how the decision was made. How do you think that only in New England does the recreational and charter party group end up with 38% of all the codfish in the Gulf of Maine? That's what they get, 38% of all the codfish in the Gulf of Maine. I think the next closest number is like 2% somewhere. Worldwide.

AW: The recreational...?

HM: And charter party boats in...

AW: New England?

HM: ... New England, in the Gulf of Maine, get 38% of all the codfish.

AW: And no where in the rest of the world is it like that?

HM: Nope. And not only do they get 38% of all the codfish in the Gulf of Maine, but they have no science done on that. It's all done by random survey and catch reports. In other words, whatever the charter captain decides to write down, that's what was caught that day... whether or not it's the truth or not. And then I guess they do some phone call random sampling. On what would be 40%... or close to 40% of all the cod stock in the Gulf of Maine.

AW: And then...?

HM: So in other words, 60% of it has science and 40% of it has no science. No legitimate science.

AW: And that 60% is for the commercial sector?

HM: Right. The 60% that's commercial has science... has At-Sea Monitoring, SkyMate, catch reports, dealer reports... but the other 40% has no science. Don't... they don't take observers out and all... they don't have any science at all. So 40% of all the codfish in the Gulf of Maine has no science. They just...

AW: No one really knows what's going on?

HM: No. Nope, they have no idea. How did they end up with 40% of all the codfish in the Gulf of Maine is still beyond me... because they certainly didn't do any part in saving the codfish in the Gulf of Maine. That was the commercial fishermen that did that. Thus, they had... thus... that's how they actually ended up with the 40%... well, 38%. Because they said, "Well, see we've been catching all this fish." Well, that's because they were allowed to go fishing when we weren't. We were tied up when the charter party boats were out catching the fish. 'Cause apparently when you catch those fish... and bear in mind, I have my captain's license and can do charters... apparently, in NOAA's eyes... this is what I always thought... when you go out and you take a boat out and they pay you \$1,200 or \$1,400 to go fishing that day... and you catch those fish, you bring them on board, you cut their throat and rip their guts out of them... that isn't commercial fishing. Even though you get paid and the fish die... NOAA still doesn't consider that commercial fishing.

[66:50]

AW: Because they don't sell the fish to market?

HM: Right. I would... I would have made the assumption that if you get paid to go fishing and the fish die... that's commercial fishing. But apparently they don't see it that way. A lot of bad stuff went on. It's... it's amazing to me that someone hasn't gone postal, to be honest with you.

AW: Yeah?

HM: Honestly. Not me, but I know a few guys that...

AW: Yeah.

HM: ... aren't all there.

AW: I mean, I know...

HM: Honestly I thought...I'm like "Oh god, I hope they don't."

AW: You know, just from talking to some of you, I've realized how dire this situation is. And I think you're right... I think people just don't believe this story, you know, and...

HM: No, it's unbelievable.

AW: Yeah.

HM: I lived it and it's unbelievable to me. They continue to do stuff and I go "How...they're going to do what?" Like I just said, the last groundfish meeting, they opened up the western Gulf of Maine.

AW: And so do you think it's like this for other sectors?

HM: I think that we were the targeted area. There's no doubt, like I said... and even in their mission statement, NOAA has said in years past that the only way to fix the cod... the problem with groundfishing, is by the total reduction of the number of permits that there are. So there's... so as a lay person, there's only a couple ways to go about reducing groundfish permits, right? I mean, you either buy them out... which they had some of the most ridiculous buy backs I've ever seen in my life. That was no more than... the first buy back, that was no more than guys buying a bunch of shit boxes, taking the money and going out and buying bigger and better boats. So instead of taking guys out of the fishery, they ended up revamping the fishery with new boats. 'Cause...

AW: Inadvertently?

HM: Inadvertently. They didn't do it intentionally, obviously. But that is in fact what happened. The guys took the money, sold all their old shit boats and lousy permits, put them in the buy back, then took that money, and reinvested it in better permits and bigger boats. It's what happened. I know guys that did it.

AW: Now if you... if you had the money, could you go and buy a permit?

[69:13]

HM: Yeah.

AW: You could go buy quotas?

HM: There are permits that are going to come up for sale. And they'll be a lot more permits coming up for sale now.

AW: Because people are getting out?

HM: Because they're being squeezed out. They're not getting out. They're being pushed out, yeah. They can't survive. 'Cause we got another reduction in cod. 17% next year and then as high as, I don't know, 60% the year after that.

AW: And so do you find all these regulations easier or harder to understand? And like to deal with? I mean...

HM: Well, I think that... that if you were just... if you were of average intelligence, you would be put to the task... it would be a... it would be extremely difficult for you to keep up with the changes in regulations and certainly to keep up with the amount of reading that NOAA sends me in the mail every day. I mean, it's unbelievable. And if you... you could miss one piece of correspondence or just be so sick of it that you don't read it, and then get the next piece of correspondence and you wouldn't even be able to understand it because they've all... it would have already gone to the abbreviations of each word. So if you miss the one before that, where they gave you the abbreviation 2 weeks earlier, then you try to decipher the code, which is National Marine Fisheries' letters. You know, chapter and verse, law....

I swear to god, they think most fishermen have a law degree. Or that most fishermen wanted to have a laptop in their boat that they have to log in and log out of. Or a spy device in their boat that tracks their boat 24/7. I don't know what country you grew up in, but where I come from, that's unconstitutional. And people would say "Well, you know, it's different...it's a fishing boat." It's not different, it's not a fishing boat because a lot of times in a lot of the fisheries that I've participated in, I lived on that boat. For as much as 4 months. I mean, showered on the boat... lived on the boat. So to me, that was like putting a tracking device in my living room. Because that's where I lived. I showered there, I watched TV there, I cooked dinner there....

AW: Yup.

HM: ...I went to the bathroom there, I lived there. I don't know how much of the general public would like to have a tracking device on them 24 hours a day, but I would bet you the majority of them wouldn't like it, and that they would think it's unconstitutional... which I'm sure it is. And if anyone had the money to challenge them, they would lose, and we'd get those things taken off the boats. 'Cause a fishing boat is no more than a means of transportation to get back and forth to work. And we own that means of transportation. It's not a fleet of trucks. I own that boat.

AW: Right.

HM: You know? They started with the, which I thought was comical, if you wanted to keep your general category scallop permit, which had a 400 pound a day thing... and a lot of guys did want to keep it 'cause they could see the writing on the walls of the groundfish industry, getting

tougher and tougher... you would had to have gone out and purchased a laptop and the SkyMate out of pocket... they did reimburse us down the road, but initially you bought it out of pocket. In order that when you re-upped your permit... your scallop permit, you could keep it. So like me, like many others... went out and bought a laptop, put it on the boat... put the 'SpyMate' on the boat.

[72:48]

AW: The 'SpyMate'?

HM: Yeah, well 'SpyMate', that's what we call it... 'SpyMate'. Put 'SpyMate' on the boat and allowed the government to track us, 24/7. And like I said, it's not... they don't use it for safety, 'cause mine was out for 4 months and no one even called my house. Maybe call the wife and say "Hey, your husband's boat's missing... we assume it's not sending a signal, it might be at the bottom or...." You know... I mean, you're paying for it. 4 months went by... I didn't get a phone call. You know, they just... it's just all that stuff... that's why a lot of guys are still getting out of it. Even some good guys that have allocation want out. I have another guy... a guy just came to us who has a decent amount of allocation, wants to sell his permit to the permit bank.

AW: Really?

HM: Yeah, 'cause he can't handle all the...

AW: He's just done?

HM: It's not... yeah, there's no more freedom in it, you know?

AW: And that's why people got into being fishermen in the first place.

HM: Right. Well, who would... that's why you're fishermen, to go be free out in the ocean. Now all of a sudden you've gotten some puke from college, and I hate to use the terminology, that gets on the boat and says "Oh, I want to check your safety equipment." Well, don't I just... don't I have a Coast Guard sticker on the side of my wheel house that's 2 weeks old? I just had the Coast Guard rectally exam me to make sure all my safety equipment's up to date. And now they want some kid, some trainee, that may have only had... what... I don't know what the course is they take. 2 days, maybe. Now he's going to tell me whether or not I can go fishing? He's going to re-do the Coast Guard's job and inspect the vessel before he sails?

And wants to climb on the roof of the boat? Now who pays when that kid falls and breaks his neck on my boat? You know what NOAA tells you? They'll tell you "Well, he's got a million dollar liability policy." Well, you tell me what you would do if I was your husband... fell and broke my neck and died on the boat. And someone said... and the lawyer said to you "Well, yeah they have a million dollar liability policy... you're going to get a million dollars. But I can sue the boat and the owner for another \$3 million." What would you do if you were married to

me and you didn't have a husband and you had a kid? You'd sue that boat and you'd sue him for his house and everything else, wouldn't you? That's what I would do if I was a woman... or a man that lost... you know, that lost their husband... or daughter or mother, father... some girl observer gets killed out on the boat. Well, they have insurance. They're not insured completely... they're only insured for a million dollars. And I don't know about you, but my daughter would be worth a lot more than a million dollars to me.

Its just more of the same, you know? Terminating your trip... some kid that trained for... they can terminate your trip. And then... then they have the ability to terminate your trip but they don't have the ability to reinstate the trip. So, in other words, if... say the kid came down to the boat and you're getting ready to sail. He climbs on the boat and he says "Oh, I want to check your raft." Well, I have the sticker for the Coast Guard right there... they were just down the other day. "Yeah, but I want to look at your safety equipment myself." 'Cause the Coast Guard obviously doesn't know how to do their job. So the kid goes and he checks your safety equipment, right?

"Oh, I see that your... that the hydrostatic release is now one day expired. I'm going to terminate your trip for the day." Now, for some of these guys, you know, there's certain times when the fishing's good, the fishing's bad... it might be a time when the fishing's good and you sure as hell don't want to miss one of those days. So he can terminate your trip, right? "Oh, hold on a minute"... "your trip's terminated"... "let me run down the street... I'll get a hydrostatic release." He can't reenact... he can't... you have to have the Coast Guard come down and re-inspect your vessel before you can sail again. So in other words, that kid can terminate your trip, but he can't say its okay to go. He can only terminate your trip. In order to go again, you have to have the Coast Guard come down and re-inspect your vessel. You starting to see the pattern here?

[77:01]

AW: So that seems to be a whole lot more complicated?

HM: Oh yeah. And then you have observers... and then you bring an observer with you and they ask you the same questions every single time. Economic impact questions... you know, I didn't buy a boat to go out fishing to have some kid, you know, talk to me. I don't want to talk to you. I don't want you in my wheelhouse. I don't want you on my boat. I'm mean and miserable, like most fishermen. I want the guys on my boat working and no one else talking, 'cause I'm trying to concentrate on what I'm doing. I don't need some young kid chirping in my ear.

AW: You'll catch the fish and go home?

HM: Yeah.

AW: Yeah.

HM: I want to get back to my family. And the time I spend dilly-dallying with them is time that I should be concentrating on what I'm doing. Even when I'm steaming out in the morning, 'cause I'm thinking "Should I go here, should I go there? What's the water temperature doing?" I want to be on the radio talking to the other guys. I don't want somebody barking in my ear. Certainly not when I know after they take all the information, measure all the fish, and come in, National Marine Fisheries will say "Oh"... when asked by the fishermen "Are you going to use the observer information?" And I quote, National Marine Fisheries said "That information's anecdotal." Absolutely. I quote them. That information is anecdotal. And I don't think to this day, even in sectors, that they use that observer information in their science. You have to take them, even though they don't use it. Can you see the frustration building?

[78:38]

AW: I can. So is there anything...

HM: And I'm not taking it out on you... you know I'm talking directly to them?

AW: Oh, I completely understand that. Yeah. Is there anything else that you'd like to add before we conclude this interview? I mean, I know...

HM: Only that... I'll say the same thing at the last two Council meetings.

AW: Okay.

HM: And I'm going to say it... I'm going to say it to NOAA, even though there was NOAA's representatives at the Council meeting. That, not only should the Council be ashamed of what they let happen, but NOAA should be ashamed of it as well. And I said...I said "I don't know how they sleep at night to be honest with you." They must not have a conscience to have let what happened in this area happen. A complete disgrace. It makes me want to puke.

AW: Well, I do appreciate you talking with me. And I thank you for your time. Again, this is Angela Wilson with Henry McCarthy on February 16, 2012 in Duxbury, MA. Thank you very much, Henry.