

Interview with Dan Shannon [DS]

Occupation: Fisherman

Port Community: North River (Scituate), MA

Interviewer: Angela Wilson

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Catch Share Oral Histories Project – NOAA Fisheries

Logger/Transcriber: Elizabeth Wetterhahn

INDEX: [minutes:seconds]

Dunkin Donuts, Scituate, MA

Interview

[00:00]

AW: For the record, this is Angela Wilson. It is February 16, 2012. I am on Front Street in Scituate, MA at Dunkin Donuts. I am here with Dan Shannon. And could you just please state for the recording that you've read to, read, agreed to, and signed the release form.

DS: Yeah, I did.

AW: And to begin this interview, can you just state your name and your address?

DS: My name is Dan Shannon and I live at 7 Island Farm Road in Carver, MA.

AW: And your homeport?

DS: North River, MA.

AW: And your vessel name?

DS: *Sorry Charlie.*

AW: That's a cool name. And are you in the sector or common pool?

DS: Sector.

AW: And Sector 10?

DS: Yup.

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

DS: 48.

AW: Just to sort of get a general context about you, could you tell us a little bit about yourself and your family such as where you're from, how long you've been here, how long you've fished for, your educational background, that sort of thing?

DS: Yeah. I've lived in Carver about 10 years. But I grew up in Marshfield, on the south route. And I've been fishing since I was probably about 15. [I] started out tuna fishing, then I fished out of Scituate Harbor when I got out of high school on a couple of gillnetters. And then I went to college at the University of Rhode Island for a couple of years. I'm a Rhody Alumni. Yeah, then when I was done there I went to... I've actually fished in Hawaii for a couple of years for spiny lobster and crab. I scalloped and dragged out of New Bedford for a few years and then fished out of Harwich Port, MA, jigging cod for 4 or 5 years. And I got my own boat in 1990. So I've had my own boat for 20 years now. Mostly longlining and tuna fishing, groundfishing, you know, dogfishing, cod, lobstering.

AW: And that's mainly been the primary species that you've fished?

DS: Yeah. Now it's lobster. I got into lobstering again like 5 years ago once, when the groundfish started closing... dogfish and stuff. I've also scalloped on my boat for 7 or 8 years.

AW: And do you still do that?

DS: I haven't done it in 2 years. I do have a license. I have the limited access general category license. I've been leasing that out for a couple of years.

AW: And are you married?

DS: Yes.

AW: And do you have any children?

DS: Yup. I have one son who's going to be 10 in a couple of days.

AW: Oh. And where do you primarily fish?

DS: Mostly Stellwagen Bank and Massachusetts Bay.

AW: And do you hold any positions within the sector?

DS: No.

[03:15]

AW: Have you ever?

DS: No.

AW: How about before sectors started? Did you have any sort of position in the fishing community?

DS: Nope.

AW: And how many crew members do you have?

DS: Just me and one guy, most of the time. And sometimes I fish by myself, quite a bit.

AW: You do?

DS: Yeah.

AW: And do you, when you do fish by yourself, do you go out with another boat or is it...?

DS: No, just on my own boat.

AW: Just you out there by yourself?

DS: Yeah, yeah.

AW: Did you ever do that before sectors started?

DS: Not as much as I do now 'cause of just not making as much money, so you couldn't really afford to have a guy, you know, full-time anymore, so....

AW: And how does your family feel about you fishing alone?

DS: They're okay. My wife is concerned about it, but she tries not to dwell on it. You know, she knows it's what I've got to do, so she... she's not too happy about it though. It's got to be done, you know?

AW: Now, do you, the place where you live, that's in Carver?

DS: Yeah.

AW: And do consider Carver a fishing community?

DS: Not really, no. I mean it's, you know, on the ocean there, but....

AW: And do you consider your friends other fishermen?

DS: Yeah, definitely. Yup.

AW: So your social circle is...?

DS: Yeah, yup.

AW: And how about your wife? Does she hang out with other fishing wives?

DS: Yeah, to an extent. She's in the fish business, too. She owns a small fish market in Duxbury and so, yeah we're all kind of interconnected in the area, you know?

AW: And has any of this changed since sectors were implemented in 2010?

DS: What do you mean, like...?

AW: Do you find that you hang out less with fishermen, other fishermen, or more with other fishermen?

DS: No, not really.

AW: About the same?

DS: Probably the same, yeah.

AW: And in your opinion, what do you think the best years for you were as a fisherman?

DS: I'd say a couple of years before sectors started. I was pretty optimistic, because the stocks out here, the cod and, you know, what I worked on was looking pretty good. The stocks were rebounding and I was able to get by jumping from fishery to fishery and I figured "Oh, things are looking pretty good. Maybe they're going to up the quota. [I] see it coming pretty soon and we'll get, you know, a few more days. Maybe they'll go to 1,000 pounds a day."

And then when sectors came in I took about a 50 to 60 percent cut in what I could catch in the groundfish, so... and now that's like a permanent thing. And so I took a financial hit there, so its kind of emotionally and.... It's kind of... I've had a tough time coming to term with how, you know.... We struggled out here with stocks for 15 years under trip limits and closed areas and then it all kind of got thrown out the door when sectors came in, you know?

[06:41]

AW: So you felt that you were sort of getting through the lean years in order to get to better years?

DS: Yeah.

AW: And those better years never materialized?

DS: Right. And ... right before sectors, I really thought they were going to, it was going to materialize. Like, you know, there's so much fish, things are looking good. They're going to have to, you know, give us, start giving us something back. And then all of a sudden, you know, we get nothing. We're taking, [they] cut you 50-60 percent. You know, it looks like another 20 percent next year, you know?

AW: So what is your allocation now?

DS: I get 15,000 pounds of cod and 8,000 pounds of haddock.

AW: A year?

DS: A year, yeah. So I've pretty much caught my, I catch my, the last 2, the first 2 years of sectors here I caught my cod quota in about 8 days of fishing. I used to have my 48 days. I just had one permit. You know, one permit, one boat. I used to be able to fish my 48 days and I could catch my 800 of cod. In 48 days, I could get through the winter. I could spread it out over like 3 to 4 months, which is all I've been doing as they were cutting me back, you know. Now I've got 8 days, you know? I've made a little bit more money on the 8 days, compared to you know, the 800 pounds, but I mean it's tough to get by a winter in 8 days. Now I'm buying fish for \$1 a pound.

AW: And do you find that it's, so you're leasing other...?

DS: Leasing, yeah.

AW: ... people's quota?

DS: Right.

AW: Do you find that to be financially worth it, to lease people's quota?

DS: Not really, no. What I'm doing now is paying. I've been paying about \$1 a pound, and it's.... I have to catch like roughly a couple thousand pounds now to make the same money as I used to make on 800 pounds. So I have to work harder, spend more money, gross more revenue, to make the same amount of money as I did on 800 pounds.

AW: So your yearly quota, you said you have 15,000 pounds of cod and what was the other 8,000...?

[09:13]

DS: 8,000 of haddock. Under Days at Sea, haddock was unlimited, so.... And I used to catch, some years, you know, I caught up to 20 to 30,000 pounds of haddock in the winter. Now, you know....

AW: So you went from 30,000 to 8 [thousand]?

DS: Yeah.

AW: And how about cod?

DS: Cod, I used to be able to, you know...

AW: Fish 800 a day?

DS: Right. 800 a day roughly, I'd make 40 to 48 trips or 50 trips a year.

AW: So 40,000 pounds of cod.

DS: Yeah. I took roughly, you know, 50 to 60 percent hit on....

AW: And how do you compensate for that?

DS: Well, I've been jumping, jumping around the other fisheries. I've gone back lobstering. Luckily the dogfishing came back. They've allowed us to go dogfishing the last couple of years. But when they close dogfishing, when the groundfish closes and dogfishing closes.... I started scalloping in 2000 when I saw the writing on the wall. I didn't think they would ever close dogfish. I used to groundfish, you know, from November right through 'til June, 'til the dogfish got too thick, then I would switch over and just go dogfishing all summer and fall til, you know, the groundfishing, the dogfish left and then when they closed groundfishing.... I mean dogfishing, with the groundfish closures, I went scalloping. That got me through a lot of years. And then they came up with the quota, IFQs (Individual Fishing Quotas) on scallops, which I took a hit on that, too. But luckily, they've allowed us to go dogfishing again, the last couple of years. So that's helped out.

AW: And so have you had to make any big life changes since sectors started?

DS: Not, you know, I've been able to kind of roll with the punches, but it's like my wife will tell you, I'm always saying it drives me crazy, the unfairness of the sectors. It really has, you know, has aggravated me and kind of emotionally it's, you know. I'm able to deal with it, but I just, it really, you know, makes me mad and pisses me off the way everything went down.

It's like all the guys around here who suffered for all these years, nobody got any quota cause of the closures and the restrictions on us and then.... Now I'm out there fishing and I see boats that I never saw for 15 years, all around me. They never fished here, and they have access to all

the quota, and they.... There's no more trip limits and they've reaped the benefits of all the guys who suffered around here.

[12:12]

AW: So these bigger, are they bigger boats?

DS: There are smaller ones, too. There are a lot of boats from, smaller boats from different areas that have access to quota.

AW: And so they're just buying up people's quota?

DS: Yup. They've got money, you know, grant money from the government. A guy was out when I was out fishing yesterday, there was.... I didn't see one boat from Scituate, Plymouth, P-town and I had 5 boats fishing around me from Cape Cod that never fished up here before catch shares. And I know for a fact that they all have 3-4 times quota as I have. Or anyone that I even know in my sector, 'cause they have grant money and quota to trade.

So I'm in direct competition with a whole fleet of boats that never even fished here before catch shares, which is crazy. It's like, they're sitting there going, you know.... I mean, a month ago, there was 80 to 90 foot draggers. I haven't seen them in the last week or so here, but on one side of me I had a whole group of boats that I never saw that I'm in direct competition with and then a mile on the other side of me, I had 80 to 90 footers that were never here. You know, 'cause it wasn't worth coming fishing up here for 800 pounds a day. And after loading up, you know, 5,000, 10,000 a day....

AW: I can see why you would be frustrated.

DS: Yeah, it's like, "Geez, what the.... What happened to fair and equitable?" And I've got no problem with someone... I don't own the ocean. Like "Oh, don't come and fish in my area", you know? But if everyone was on the same equal footing, it'd be another thing, you know? At least with the Days at Sea and stuff, when it was in the trip limit, everybody was on the same footing, you know? But when they let people have access to capital, you know. All the guys I know and in my sector, no one has any money. Everyone's struggling to get by. And to see other people coming up and enjoying the benefits of everything we struggled for all those years to rebuild.... I've really been depressed the last few months 'cause I've seen the fishing's a fraction of what it was last year.

AW: It is?

DS: Yeah. You know, maybe that's weather related or water, whatever you want, but I personally think its cause of the fishing pressure, you know? I've never seen, never seen this much fishing pressure in 15 years on Stellwagen.

AW: You mean on the resource itself...?

DS: Yeah.

AW: Right out here?

DS: Resource itself, yeah. And it's all boats that weren't here for 15 years.

AW: But because they have the quota, they can come fish here.

DS: Right, yup.

[15:11]

AW: But before, when it was Days at Sea, they wouldn't come fish here because 800 pounds a day wasn't worth it?

DS: Because the 800 pounds wasn't worth it, yeah.

AW: And so what was the stock like then?

DS: Well, it took a few years, but the last, you know, the last, the few years I'd say the 5 years leading up to catch shares, we, you know, everybody knows the stock was rebounding unbelievably. You know, I could go out and jig my 800 like it'd be done at 11:00, 10:00 in the morning. Set a couple of bundles of gear, be done. Guys, all my buddies that dragged, you know, little draggers, they'd go do a 20 minute tow and have their 800. Now you can tow out there all day and you'd be lucky to get 1,000 pounds.

AW: Really?

DS: Yup.

AW: So I can see why you'd be frustrated in this situation. Now has your frustration translated at home? Like do you...?

DS: Well, I.... Yeah, I think I'd be lying if I said it doesn't. I try to, you know, I try to keep it, keep work and home... but, you know, at times it's tough.

AW: And has it caused any stress on your relationships? Either with friends or with your family?

DS: Yeah, it has, yeah. You know, I, .like I said, I try to but sometimes I find that it starts to... you can let it consume you, you know? But you've got to stand back and say "Listen. You know, things are, in the big picture, things are good", you know? My wife and I've got my

family and my house and my... I'm doing okay. A lot better than other people, you know? So I try not to, you know, try not to let it ruin your life, but....

AW: And I understand that the situation is stressful.

DS: Yeah.

AW: Have you had any stress-related illnesses in the last couple of years?

DS: No, no.

AW: Okay, well that's great.

DS: Yeah, for the moment, I guess.

AW: And how about your quality of life? Would you say it's better or worse in the last couple of years?

DS: I'd say, I'd say it's, overall, it's worse because of the stress from, you know, dealing with the.... Like I used to love to, I looked forward to going fishing in the winters. That was my, I looked forward to December. "Oh, I get to go hooking and jigging!" And now, the last 2 years, I want it to be over with. It's like I hate the.... I'm like "Oh, man." I don't look forward to it anymore.

AW: Yeah.

DS: Where I used to. It was my favorite time of the year. For 20 years, I loved it. You know, going to catch my cod in the winter. It was always, everybody was on the same level playing field. It was, you know, 800 pounds was tough to deal with, but we had years when it was 400 pounds, 30 pounds, you know? But now it's just crazy. I don't understand how someone like me and my friends in my sector can take a 50 percent cut, and someone else is allowed to catch 100 percent [more] than they ever did, ever caught and there's no history here.

[18:31]

AW: Now, word on the street is that Sector 10 is a very fishing poor sector?

DS: Yeah.

AW: Why do you think that is?

SD: Well, it's 'cause of the rolling closures and the 800 pound limit. So a lot of guys did other fisheries, you know? And I think a lot of people thought when it was all said and done that we wouldn't get penalized for that, you know? But obviously we did, so....

AW: So you let off of the cod stocks?

DS: Yeah.

AW: And then when you, when they rebuilt themselves...?

DS: Right. We don't have access to it.

AW: Do you know your total sector allocation?

DS: Well, I'd say roughly, I think we have roughly about 500,000 pounds of cod. I'm not sure about... 'cause I mostly just catch cod and haddock. I don't know about flounders and stuff like that.

AW: And you're a day boat, is that correct?

DS: Yeah, yeah.

AW: And when sectors started, can I ask you why you decided to join?

DS: Well, it was, I really had no other choice because, with the common pool, the way the common pool was setup, it was pretty much a non-fishery, you know? I think it was shut down within a couple of months. It was 100, 200 pounds a day, or something crazy, which was not.... And I was where I was only going, where I was down to fishing just from December, groundfishing December through May. And by the time December came around, common pool was definitely closed. So I had no choice, if I wanted to go fishing in the winter, I had to join the sector, you know?

AW: And was it easy to join the sector?

DS: Yeah, it was fairly easy. First it was going to be, I think it was going to be like 2,500 bucks for every year, and then it was just a onetime \$2,500 fee to join, you know?

AW: And would you ever consider going back to the common pool?

DS: You know, I would if it was a viable.... I would love to go to the common pool, if they gave me an option where, you know, if I could go, I'd go back to 800 pounds a day and take 30 days a year or something, 40 days if I could have.... If I could get through my winters again and do that, I'd be happy, you know?

[21:27]

AW: And would you ever switch sectors?

DS: I don't see any reason to. You know, the point I'm at right now... actually no, it's a good group of guys and everyone's just trying to make the best of what, you know, we're stuck in. So no. I really, at this point, I don't see any reason to change sectors, you know?

AW: And does Sector 10 provide you any services?

DS: Well, yeah as far as, you know, they have.... Our sector manager's a good guy. Jim, Jim Reardon, and he kind of, you know, does his best to keep everybody in line with what's, you know, the rules, and what your quotas are and all that. But as far as any other type of services, not really. But I wouldn't expect anything else, you know?

AW: And have you, do you participate in any meetings and things like that?

DS: Yeah, yes I do.

AW: You do?

DS: Yeah.

AW: And do you participate more or less or about the same as you did before 2010?

DS: Probably, I'd say I participate more, actually. Yeah, 'cause my feeling is, you know, guys like to bitch a lot and this and that, but unless you want to get involved and try to do something you really, you know, you don't have a gripe unless you really stand up and let your saying be heard, you know?

AW: And do you find that, do you feel that your voice is heard when you stand up?

DS: Yeah, especially, yeah, sector-wise, yes I do. Yeah. Whether we, you know, are trying to get through to NMFS [National Marine Fisheries Service] and the Council is a whole different thing, but....

AW: Do you feel like they hear your voice?

DS: Not really, but I think they're starting to 'cause we just keep, we keep beating the bee's nest so we're hoping that maybe if we just keep, keep drumming, you know, keep saying what's up and telling our story, then maybe someone will realize the injustice that's been done here.

AW: Do you feel that anyone has been excluded from the, during the, excluded from quota? Or from fishing? Due to sector management?

DS: Oh yes, definitely.

[24:18]

AW: And in your opinion, who was being excluded?

DS: Well, most of the guys in this area. Like, you know, we're fishing under all kinds of effort controls for all those years. You know, when they did the allocations, it wasn't done fairly, which for me, National Standard 4, which says "fair and equitable for all fishermen" seemed to be ignored, you know? When they went with the 100 percent catch history, it was, that alone is, to me was just illegal and unfair because you didn't have, you had different areas that weren't under the same limits, so how could you go with the same...? If you were south of the 42 line, you had, you could fish 9 to 10 months of the year, 11 months of the year, at 2,000 pounds a day. And then if you were north of the 42, you had 800, you know? One year we had 30 pounds and we had 6 months rolling closures, you know? And so, and then that was based, you know, that was in one of the years that was....

AW: That was counted toward the...?

DS: That was counted, yeah.

AW: So where do you think the quota has been concentrated?

DS: I think the quota has been concentrated in the people that are well connected on the Council. I think catch shares was thought up, catch shares was actually first implemented from the Cape Cod Hook Association down in Chatham. They were the original sector. And they were supported by the enviro-groups, EDF (Environmental Defense Fund) and they benefited immensely from the initial allocations and the way it was set up and they had people on the Council. And then they got other people on the Council on board. And those are the people that benefited. I mean, that's just the fact, I'm not trying to bash anybody here, but it's the... for someone to deny that, it's just, its beyond, you know, common sense when you look at the facts of who made out. They're well represented on the Council, they're well represented with the enviro-groups, they have funding from EDF and other, you know, non-government and environmental organizations and they had.... They control a large share of the quota.

AW: The Association...?

DS: The Hook Association, the Sustainable Harvest and there's also like, you've got different, when you look at the Gloucester permit bank, they got a bunch of money. They got \$10 million from the LNG (Liquid Natural Gas), which our sector got \$1 million from and we bought some permits. And the Gloucester [fishermen] have a nice permit bank up there. And I'm not bashing it all, I think it's great for the community. They were fortunate to get that, help the fishermen because they bought a lot of permits and they distributed evenly amongst their fishermen and its good for them, but at the same time, when you look at that, they have an advantage. Same with the Hook Association, with quota they can get it for cheap, more quota than anybody, you know, who don't have that. You've got guys in P-town and Rhode Island

that, you know, don't have access to quota banks and stock piles of quota that they can get for cheaper money then they can't compete.

[28:06]

AW: Has any association like that tried to be formed here in Scituate or in Sector 10?

DS: Well, no. Well, I mean we do have a permit bank, yup. And we got \$1 million from the LNG money for... 'cause, you know, guys around here fished the Natty area and stuff and we spent I think about, what was it, about \$650,000 on permits. But there's not really a lot of fish. Sorry.

(Recorder was shut off at [28:44])

(Recorder turned back on)

[00:00]

AW: Alright, so you said \$650,000...?

DS: On permits, yup. And, but they weren't, there wasn't a whole lot of great permits around when we got our money and so like what it equaled out to me for the year, for my permit bank, I can lease 20, 2,500 pounds of cod.

AW: So \$650,000 equals...?

DS: 2,500 pounds of cod.

AW: Around...?

DS: Yeah, 2,500.

AW: A person really?

DS: Per person, of cod. And then there's, you know, there's flounders and, you know, pollock and....

AW: And you can lease that quota?

DS: You can lease that quota from our permit bank in Sector 10.

AW: And where does the money that you pay to lease from the permit bank, where does that go?

DS: That goes into the, back into the permit bank itself.

AW: And so they just keep buying more?

DS: Well, no. But it's used, they use that to, I'm not sure, actually what they use it for. But, like I got 2,500 pounds this year. 2,555 pounds I got leased.

AW: And that's yours? That's not leased?

DS: No, I leased it.

AW: Oh, you leased it?

DS: For 50 cents a pound, yeah.

AW: Oh, ok.

DS: 'Cause otherwise I couldn't, you know, you can't lease cod for 50 cents a pound.

AW: Oh, so it's discounted prices.

DS: Yeah, it's a discount right. Like the Gloucester guys have, I think, I heard roughly they all got maybe 18,000 pounds from their permit bank. They can lease that at a discount rate.

AW: Oh, alright.

DS: Yeah.

AW: So that's a nice service that's come out of the sector?

DS: Right, yeah.

AW: And then I assume that they would take that money and invest it to buy more quota in the future.

DS: Right.

AW: Okay.

DS: Yeah. I think there's, I know they have... there's like \$350,000 in the account, you know, that they can use for whatever. To buy it if another permit's come up, for litigation or whatever, you know?

AW: Whatever they need it for.

DS: Yeah, yeah.

AW: Have sectors influenced how you view your relationship to the fish or to fishing? I mean, has it changed the way that you discard bycatch or fish cod in general?

DS: Myself, not really. 'Cause I mostly jig and longline, so even when I'm fishing now, I don't even go, I don't try to catch a whole lot more than I used to when I had my 800. My average trip is maybe 12 to 1,500 pounds, cause I try to, I just try to go get that much so I can spread my quota out over a longer, you know. [I] try and go like 2 days a week so I can keep my bills paid for the course of the winter, you know. Instead of trying to go out and catch as much as I can in 1 day, which you could do that. I could go catch my whole quota in 3 days and be done, but I've nothing else to do all winter, so I'd rather, you know, go out and catch my 1,200, 1,500 2 days a week so I can pay my bills and get me through a few months, you know?

[03:16]

AW: So what convinced you to stay in Sector 10?

DS: Just, to be honest with you, for lack of any other job in the winter. I was actually, been racking my brain this winter, whether I was going to go back scalloping maybe and, you know, just cause it's driving me crazy.

AW: Prices are up, they got 12 bucks last week...

DS: I know.

AW: ... in New Bedford.

DS: I know. I used to go, when I went, when I first started we got \$3.74 a pound, you know?

AW: Yeah, day boats got 12 bucks a pound last week.

DS: Yeah. There was one year, one year we got 10 bucks, I remember. And we used to, that was, you know, 6 to 7 years ago. It shot up to 10 bucks one summer and that was like great, you know? Oh my god, it was....

AW: Going on vacation?

DS: Yeah, you know? And the fishing was good, too. You know, you go get your limit in 8 tows and things were good, you know? Then it went back to 7 bucks and fuel went to \$4.50 a gallon. It wasn't so good.

AW: So what is your scallop quota?

DS: I have 3,800 pounds of scallop quota, which isn't much, but you know, at 10 bucks, 10 or 12 bucks, that will get me through the winter, you know?

AW: Right, yeah.

DS: So....

AW: Now how about your family? Does your wife work?

DS: Yes.

AW: Did she work before sectors started?

DS: Yes.

AW: Does her percentage of income that she contributes to the family, has that changed since sectors started?

DS: No.

AW: Do you have health insurance?

DS: I do, yeah.

AW: Is it through her employment or is it through a private company or...?

DS: Yeah, through private. We pay, we used to be on the Fishermen's Partnership plan and then that was also.... [We] got onto the Mass Health Connector.

AW: And do you have boat insurance?

DS: Yes.

AW: Now other, the people that you're friends with that are fishermen, do you ever work on projects together in the sector?

DS: Yeah, yeah we do. Yup.

AW: And did you work on projects together before sectors started?

DS: Yeah, we did actually, yup. You know, we did some cod tagging and, you know, stuff like that. Some haddock tagging and there's been some gear projects through the sector.

AW: And do you do more research work now or less or about the same?

DS: Yeah, probably about the same.

[06:12]

AW: And how about, you keep your boat here in Scituate, is that right?

DS: Yeah.

AW: How has Scituate itself changed over the last couple of years, when it comes to the fishing community?

DS: Well, there's a lot, a lot less, a lot less activity in groundfish around here, that's for sure. I haven't actually... I've been driving my own fish this winter cause of, you know. I used to use the local guy at the pier here for years and then with all my expenses and everything else, I just figure its better to save myself 100 bucks, 150 bucks. I've been driving my own fish, you know? So now he's, I know that guy's lost, you know, there used to be 8 or 10 day boats that unloaded to him and I don't even... there's, there's maybe 2 or 3 left, you know, that are even groundfishing anymore.

AW: You know, they say for every tote, there are 7 jobs on land.

DS: Yup. Yeah, it's sad really. Like, I don't even see all.... I used to, we used to have a group of 6 or 8 of us that always used to be jigging in, you know, in the winter and stuff and now most of them are gone now. 4 or 5 of them that leased out their quota cause they're, you know, they're ready to throw in the towel. They didn't get much quota to begin with and like I don't see those guys out there at like... the last 2 years....

AW: Now what do you recommend to other people that you know about joining a sector?

DS: Well, I would say they have no choice, if they want to go fishing. The common pool is just a non-alternative, you know? I mean, I wouldn't recommend it, but as a... what's your other choices, you know?

AW: So you mentioned that there's this pool of quota that you can lease from at discounted prices throughout the sector, but then you can also lease quota at a higher price, correct?

DS: Yup.

AW: And do you have to lease quota in order to make ends meet on your boat?

DS: Yup, yup.

AW: [You] have to lease.

DS: I have to, like I would have been, I would have been done. I would have done fishing 3 weeks ago, yup, for the winter.

AW: And so do you lease quota from the same person?

DS: No, I bounce around, yup. Different guys.

AW: And do you, are a lot of people just leasing their quota instead of fishing it?

DS: Yup, quite a few of them are, yup.

AW: Yeah.

DS: Not as many, the first year of sectors, there was quite a few more. There was a few more guys fishing this year then the first year, but its still, you know, a good amount of guys that just leased out their quota.

[09:18]

AW: And they just leave their boats tied up?

DS: Yeah, pretty much, you know?

AW: Now I've also heard reports of a lot of people getting out of the fishing industry. Selling their boats and getting out of the fishing industry. What happens to them? Where do they go?

DS: I don't know. That's a good question. A lot of them, like I, I don't know what you, you know, unless they have an alternative job, you know? To me, what else, you know, unless you've got something else lined up, it seems kind of crazy. But I understand their frustration, you know? After all those years of struggling and then to get this thrown at them. I know quite a few guys that are on the verge of, they've just had enough, you know?

AW: Now did you, did you start fishing here in Scituate?

DS: I did actually, yeah. When I got out of high school, in the summer time I was working on a gillnetter out of Scituate, yeah.

AW: One of the things I've heard about Scituate is that there's sort of like a built in apprenticeship program here, where you start off as a deckhand, move up to captain, and buy your own boat.

DS: Yeah.

AW: Did you find it to be like that for you?

DS: Yeah, yeah. There's a lot of that, yeah.

AW: And there are certain behaviors that aren't tolerated in the fishing community here?

DS: Yeah, yeah.

AW: Like, you know, high discard rates and things like that. Is that true?

DS: Yeah, yeah. Well, there, you know, and there was on the, when it was at 800 pounds a day, there was a, there was a, you know, there were some boats that were fishing. That wasn't the greatest, you know, that were doing a lot of discarding and stuff and it was frowned upon. You know, there wasn't a whole lot of it going on, you know, in Scituate itself, other Scituate boats, you know?

AW: So people have said that Scituate was a sustainable fishery for a few years before sectors started?

DS: Yup.

AW: Would you agree with that statement?

DS: Oh yeah, I think so, you know. You know, guys, guys were able to figure out how to, you know, get their 800 as easy as they could without, you know? You know, I know guys who have little draggers and they would put little zippers in their bags and some of them were even, they would take the zipper out and just had a hole cut in their bag in a certain place where, when the fish filled up to it, at that point, then they would start spilling out. You know, guys gillnetting would set, would only have to set one string of nets to get their 800, you know? And the same with jigging, you would just go jigging. [You would] set a bundle or two of gear, you know, if you got 400, then you could set one more bundle and you got your 800 and you go home, you know?

[12:12]

AW: So people were putting their own restrictions on themselves so they didn't kill more than they needed to.

DS: Yeah, yeah. To a point, as much as it was feasible for them, you know?

AW: Yeah.

DS: Yeah.

AW: And they weren't required to put holes in their bags or to...?

DS: No, but it was, you know, just, you know, guys were thinking about the future. Nobody wanted to catch the last fish and, why, who [would] want to go catch a 10,000 pound bag and take your 800 out, dump, you know, 9,000 over dead? So people tried, you know, to make sure that didn't happen, you know?

AW: Do you think that, if your son came to you...?

DS: Yeah.

AW: ... and said "Dad, I want to be a fisherman." What would you tell him?

DS: "You're crazy!" No. I'd, I don't know. Part of me would like to see him, if he wanted to, but another part of me is like "I don't even know what the heck to think what the industry's going to be like at that point," another 10 or 15 years.

AW: What if he was 18?

DS: I don't know. I don't think I'd be too psyched for him to, you know, as far as groundfishing, maybe if he, you know, lobstering and stuff. There's still... yeah. There's still other ways in the ocean, if he loved it and that's what he wanted to do, you know, I would support him, you know, but, it's, I don't know. Groundfishing, it's, it's not looking too optimistic in the long picture, you know?

AW: So for fresh blood coming in, what advice would you give them?

DS: I don't know, man. It's at this point, I would.... It doesn't look too.... I wouldn't be too optimistic about it, as far as groundfishing goes, not after seeing... after struggling for 15 years, watching the resource come back, and then after 2 years of catch shares, watching it get annihilated. Like the whole, the whole Gulf of Maine cod quota's being caught out on Stellwagen for Christ sake right now, with no limits. No, there's no, there's no effort to control the place. From an area that used to be, it used to be identified as an aggregation of cod, that's why we had the specific rolling closures here in April and May and October to November.

They took the wrong closures out, trip limits out, and I still can't understand it. So now there's no restrictions like, fish that used to be caught offshore in the Gulf of Maine can be caught right inside. There's no... so what I've seen, especially in the past year.... I didn't see it as much the first year of catch shares, 'cause I don't think the big boats and, you know, guys from other areas, hadn't quite figured out it yet but then word got out, like where they concentrate. Everybody knew the concentration of fish is in where that Stellwagen, where it's been closed and limited all those years. So then once there was no limits, everybody came here and went nuts the past year.

You know, like I was out, you know, in October there were some days there were 30, 30 80 foot draggers fishing on Stellwagen. In one day. Like day, after day, after day. And it's like, we never saw that for 15 years. And the resource can't sustain it. It's totally unsustainable fishing. And these are all the guys who have somebody on the Council. They're well represented, they have the money, the quota, the backing and they don't, they don't want, when you say "Hey, this isn't right" they don't want to hear it, so.... We're going to be back to square one. Like in another year when there's nothing left out here. They're going to....

[16:31]

AW: So then...?

DS: They're all going to take off again, go offshore or go wherever they were before. And the little boats here in Scituate and P-town and Gloucester and everywhere else are going to be left to bear the brunt. We're going to get closed again and shut down for another 15 years.

AW: And where are you going to fish?

DS: I don't know.

AW: You'll still have your quota. Where are you going to go?

DS: I don't know, but the way it's looking, they might... they're going to, who knows? Our quota's going to get cut again, and again and again, 'til where there's nothing, you know. It wouldn't be worth going.

AW: So instead of regulating the big boats, they're putting the small boats out of business?

DS: Yeah, that's what I see.

AW: Is there anything that you want to add to this interview that I have not asked you?

DS: No, I guess I think we've covered a lot and I could rant and rave I guess for hours here, but you know, it's....

AW: Well, is there anything that you want on the record that you haven't said yet?

DS: No, I think I've, I think I've covered pretty much....

AW: And if you could go back in time and remove catch shares as a management tool, would you?

DS: I would, yes.

AW: And what would you replace it with?

DS: Well, actually, you know, I know if catch shares.... One thing I, one big problem I have with catch shares is it, it takes a, it's a public resource and it's turned it into a private, you know.... It's a natural resource that was in the public's, belonged to the public and now it's [been] made into a private resource and I don't think that's right. But I could see catch shares working if there was, if it was tailored where it was morally more fair and equitable and also had an opposite where if you had, like a common pool or, wasn't just your only choice. Where, you know, you don't own a chunk of the resource and then if they said, "Well, okay this is all you could catch for the year." Well, let me catch it in another, you know, I don't need to own it. Give me a Days at Sea program. But where catch shares seems to, it's like a, the one and that's it. This is the way it is and nothing else is going to be viable, you know?

[19:10]

AW: You feel like you have no options.

DS: Right, there is no option. To me, I don't approve of catch shares because of that. That's my big gripe, too it's, it took what was a public resource. Like when I had a fishing permit, before it was for, you know, it gave me the right to go fishing but I didn't own the resource. But now, catch shares you basically own the resource. And people that designed it say "No, you don't, it just gives you...." But, you know it is. You can sell, you can sell your permit, based upon how much quota you have.

AW: And have you considered doing, leasing out your quota?

DS: Yeah, I have. Yup.

AW: Do you think you will?

DS: I hope not. I still like, I still love to go fishing in the winters, but like I said, it's tough to, you know, I go and catch my quota in 8 to 10 days and then I've got to start leasing fish. I have to catch a lot more fish and work harder to make the same amount of money, you know? So, I don't know. Part of me was thinking next year, you know, once the aggravation gets to a certain point, it's just like maybe I'd be better off leasing it and I'll go scalloping. Go catch my scallop quota and get through the winter 'til I can go lobstering again or something, you know? It might help my sanity a little to do that.

AW: Well do you see yourself holding onto your boat though?

DS: Yeah, yup. I'm, yeah I like to think that, you know, they want me gone. They want to get rid of me, and just that fact alone that I'm not going anywhere. You can do whatever you want, but I'll find a way to get by, you know?

AW: Principle.

[21:07]

DS: Yeah, I hope anyways. I mean, I'll keep trying, but....

AW: So is there any, any story or anything you'd like to share with future generations about fishing?

DS: No, not really, just I guess I wish, I wish that the Council.... The way the Council system, how it's been corrupted and manipulated for special interests, you know? I wish that never, I wish the laws were followed more so that couldn't have happened so that didn't happen, you know? 'Cause we sat here and, for the last 5 years, watching this start to come about and everybody was saying "Oh, this can't happen, it's illegal, you know?" And oh, low and behold, it happened, you know? It's it just seems very corrupted and self-serving and special interests. As some people have said, it seems it [is] an end-run for special interests, you know, it's become....

(Recorder was shut off at [22:19])

(Recorder turned back on)

[00:00]

AW: So what would bring Scituate back to a healthy fishing community?

DS: Well, just you know, speaking out for myself and quite a few of the guys that I know, I think that going back to the Days at Sea with the, you know, more access as the stocks were recovering, you know, a few more days. Maybe going to our 50, you know, where we used to be 88, then 56, and maybe going back up to 56 and 1,000 pounds a day, you know? Increment it up. Because guys were able to get by under the system, as tough as it was we were still getting by and making it work. And then when catch shares came in, it just changed, you know, it changed to... everybody took a huge hit. Even, I know guys who were trying to, who were optimistic about it, thinking "Oh, I can make this work." And two years into it, they're beating their heads against the wall too now. It's just, you know, it's crazy.

AW: So its, you know, under the Days at Sea program that was implemented before [they] allowed the stocks to replenish themselves, but then they changed the program so that...

DS: Yeah.

AW: ... you couldn't go and fish that resource again...

DS: Right.

AW: ... like you could have with Days at Sea?

DS: Yeah.

AW: And do you think that a Days at Sea program would work now?

DS: For me it would, personally. I don't, you'll see it happen because of the Council and with the enviro-groups and the whole, you know, discarding and.... Excuse me, a lot of people they rant and rave about going back to Days at Sea. We'd return to discarding fish but I saw the fishery rebuild. The codfish fishery on Stellwagen was rebuilt under a Days at Sea program, with discarding going on and what I've seen is all those fish that used to get discarded and maybe have a chance to spawn, they all went to the market the past year. They're all gone, you know, so it's, I don't know.

AW: Do you think the stocks are healthy enough to go back to Days at Sea?

DS: I don't know. I saw, I've seen a lot of, a lot of damage to the stock out here, the past year. More than I ever thought, more than I've ever seen in 20 years. So [I] don't know really. I'd like to think it's.... I don't know what the effects of the pressure that was put on Stellwagen and Massachusetts Bay the past year will have, future consequences.... I know that if something isn't done pretty quick, it's not going to be good. I know that.

AW: Are you going to have anything left to fish?

[03:07]

DS: In the future years you mean?

AW: Yeah. I mean, right out here, close to shore.

DS: I don't know. I hope so, but I saw this year's, this year was tougher than last year and I said the last, the last few years of Days at Sea, the fishing was awesome, you know? I mean, there were huge piles of fish, of codfish out here. The guys, there'd be 20 boats sitting there jigging, guys setting some nets, towing around there and piles, the big piles were there. I haven't seen a big pile in 2 years, I know that. They got scooped up, caught, brought to market, you know?

AW: Now do you think it's too late for Scituate or do you think that there's still some hope there?

DS: I don't know, to be honest with you. I don't know. I don't want to be too totally pessimistic and say it's too late, but when I go to, I went to the last Council meeting and watched how the powers that be run the show and I don't know. It might be too late by the

time something gets squared away. The thing's so, such a giant messed up thing now that, you know, by the time they can get it squared away, it might be too late. I, I don't know.

AW: Is there anything else you'd like to add to this interview before we call it quits?

DS: No, I think I'm good. And thank you for your time.

AW: Thank you. I really appreciate it. And for the record, this is Angela Wilson with Dan Shannon on February 2, I'm sorry, February 16, 2012. And thank you very much.

END INTERVIEW

[4:54]