

*Interviewer:* How are you, and what is your name?

*Jay Tucker:* My name is Jay Tucker, and I'm a Fisheries Biologist with Fisheries-Dependent Monitoring, working for Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

*Interviewer:* What do you think is the most effective form of fishing, and why do you think that is?

*Jay Tucker:* The most effective way of fishing? It's got to be nets. I mean, it just catches everything. It isn't the most ethical fishing, but it's the most efficient way.

*Interviewer:* What steps do you take to ensure your safety while you are fishing?

*Jay Tucker:* At work, we usually are on a for-hire vessel, and they have regulations, usually, that are stated by the Coast Guard. Me personally, within my boat, I make sure that I have all the safety equipment on the boat, that someone knows where I'm going, and roughly what time I will be coming back, so that, if I'm not back by that time, someone can notify the proper authorities to find us, and a lot of fishing is done offshore.

*Interviewer:* What kind of fishing would you find more obliging to say beginning fishermen, and what kind of fishing would oblige more experienced fishermen?

*Jay Tucker:* Beginning fishermen should probably use live bait in smaller ponds for smaller fish. As they learn to feel how the fish react to whatever they are feeding them, they can work their way up to larger fish and maybe start using artificial bait, as the angler finds that the artificial is more of a challenge, and, to me, you're more closely connected to the fish.

*Interviewer:* What is your best experience at fishing?

*Jay Tucker:* Best experience at fishing? I've got to tell you the best experience was two years ago on Father's Day. I took my wife and my son and my daughter down to the Everglades, and they all got to see manatees and dolphin and bald eagles, and we got to catch snook, redfish and trout. It was just a great weekend of fishing and sharing it with my kids.

*Interviewer:* In your own words, what the definition of a sustainable fishery?

*Jay Tucker:* Sustainable fisheries is a lot of what I do at work, and a sustainable fishery is removing no more fish than can be taken and sustain the numbers that we have now, or the numbers that we should have now, meaning what we had probably back in the 1940s in our fisheries and getting back to some of that level. What kind of stinks for us is one generation is going to have to give up keeping fish to keep sustainable fisheries.

*Interviewer:* How did you get into fishing?

*Jay Tucker:* I have always loved the water, and I grew up near the water, and I was always going down to the water fishing, and it's just a peaceful way for me to pass time, and it's nice to come home to a nice, fresh-cooked meal every once in a while.

*Interviewer:* Have NOAA limitations affected your everyday fishing and yearly profit? If so, can you explain?

*Jay Tucker:* Actually, I am one of the few that I would say is affected positively. Because of NOAA, I actually have a job. National Marine Fisheries looks at fisheries, and we can only pull out so much, and my job is to audit specific industry and specific for-hire headboats and making sure that their catch is measured and weighed, and nothing on legal size or that, but just being able to give NOAA better accurate information on what's coming in from out there.

*Interviewer:* How do you feel that other fishermen feel about this?

*Jay Tucker:* I feel that there is both sides of this argument, and I see both sides of the point. Guys are making their money, and I can totally understand them being mad at NOAA, and somebody is going to be mad at anybody who is making rules, because, when we make rules, somebody doesn't like them, and it's because they have had to bend them to their advantage, and so hopefully I've answered your question as best I could.

*Interviewer:* Does a lot of the Tampa Bay fishing affect your profits?

*Jay Tucker:* I don't work for profit. I work for the state, and so it's kind

of a different way of looking at it. Really, there is a good and a bad, and I work either way, and so it doesn't affect me in a negative or positive way.

*Interviewer:* Why did you choose to get into fishing as a career, as opposed to say other careers?

*Jay Tucker:* That's an interesting thing that you ask. I am not your typical biologist, and I have a degree in marketing. When I was twenty-one, and I went out and did what everybody said, to let's go join business and make a million dollars.

I did it for nineteen years, and I sat chained to a desk, and I hated every day of it, and I sat and looked out the window at these guys fishing, and then my best friend laid me off, and I lost my job in 2009, and I went back to school and got a degree in biology, because my wife said, you've got a second chance, and what are you going to do? I said, I'm going to do something I love, and so I never truly work. I go out to play, and someone pays me to do it, so to speak. I don't go to work. I enjoy my work so much.

*Interviewer:* What do you enjoy most while working as a fisherman?

*Jay Tucker:* Talking to the people and educating the people on the fisheries, and I'm someone who likes to look at the oddity fish and not the ones that everybody is fishing for, the grouper and the snapper and the redfish and the snook. I like the oddball fish, the smooth pufferfish and the smaller fish that nobody knows that they are. I like to educate the people on them and show them something interesting about the fish.

I get invited a lot of times when people go fishing, just because I am their Cliff Clavin of useless fishing facts, and I don't know if you guys know who Cliff Clavin is from Cheers, or you're a little too young for that.

*Interviewer:* What are some types of fishing techniques you dislike, whether it could be way too aggressive for the animal or just catches too many fish?

*Jay Tucker:* I have to say the nets is something that I don't agree with, but it's needed, because we need to feed the people in the world. Longlining, I'm not a super big fan of, because of bycatch, but I understand that it's a very economical way of

making a business for those guys.

Me personally, I try to target fish when they're not on the spawn. When they're spawning, they're there for other reasons, to make more fish for me to catch for the years thereafter, and I can wait. I am patient. You have to be patient to be a fisherman.

*Interviewer:* How do you spend your time while you're not fishing?

*Jay Tucker:* I'm a dad, and so being a dad is most of my time after I'm not fishing, or dreaming of fishing and cooking fish that I've caught. I'm an avid chef, also.

*Interviewer:* What do you see as the most rewarding part of fishing, whether it be the business aspect or a moral reward?

*Jay Tucker:* For me, it's being outside. Unfortunately, the camera is not pointing the right way, but there's a manatee behind you, and I may not have contact with as much of that, but it's seeing those little things like that and going out fishing and watching a huge shark eat a fish in half, that excitement of seeing a wild animal do what it normally does and know that, if I was in the water, I could be his meal, and it's just the excitement of joining the food chain, so to speak, and just seeing it.

*Interviewer:* Do you prefer to fish in fresh or salt water?

*Jay Tucker:* Fresh water is for drinking and not fishing in. That's my theory. I'm a saltwater -- I grew up on the beach, and I will never leave the salty water, and so fresh water is for drinking. Sorry, bass fishermen.

*Interviewer:* If you could control the fishing regulations, what would you change in them?

*Jay Tucker:* That's a tough one. There is so many things that I would like to change, and so many things I would probably be very unpopular for changing, and I don't know what I would say the one thing I would change. I think I would like to change everybody's attitude about it, saying that you don't need to catch your limit, but you need to catch what you can eat that day, or your fair share, and not the limit. That would be what I would change most.

*Interviewer:* Can you tell us your couple of fun memories you have while you were out fishing with your family?

*Jay Tucker:* Obviously, I said going to the Everglades and taking my kids down there, where I fished for twenty-five years, and can know like the back of my hand the Ten Thousand Islands down there, and be able to show them that, and they're going, where are we, and, all of a sudden, they turn around and say, oh, we know where we are now, because they see something that they recognize, but just being able to take my kids and fish with them and show them the love of just the outdoors.

*Interviewer:* What is the biggest fish you have ever caught, and can you explain that experience?

*Jay Tucker:* The biggest fish I've ever caught has to be a tarpon out on the Skyway. I wasn't actually the person on the rod, and I was running the boat, and I had my nephew and a good friend of mine, and they hooked into what I estimate was well over 150 pounds, and probably 180 would be what it would come out at, and they fought that fish for about an hour-and-a-half.

Then they finally gave up, because they couldn't fight it any more, and they handed me the rod, and, ten minutes later, I had the fish boat-side, and I pulled the hook out and let it go. Just watching them suffer that whole time and not understanding true technique on how to fight a fish.

*Interviewer:* Can you tell us a couple of fond memories about you when you were fishing?

*Jay Tucker:* Fond memories? I have to say the fond memories are usually the big mistakes, being the young kid, and young kid being early twenties, and going down to the Everglades with some friends and fishing way back in the back, and one friend had taken his shirt off, and I said, don't take your shirt off, and you're going to hook yourself with a lure eventually.

Not two minutes later, he put a hook right here in his chest. It's an hour ride back to the nearest road, and we just grabbed a pair of pliers, two of us, and just pulled it out of his chest, and a friend was just sitting there screaming and laughing at the same time about us just pulling this hook

out of him, because that was the only option. It's the danger, slight danger.

*Interviewer:*

Do you think the goliath grouper should remain on the Endangered Species list?

*Jay Tucker:*

That's a tough one. Have they made an incredible recovery since the 1980s? Yes. Can I, as a scientist, say they should be off the Endangered Species List? I don't think I have enough information. Do I think, as a fisherman, there is probably a sustainable harvest that we could do? The fish are so easy to locate. Go to any big wreck, and you will find one. If you start using big enough tackle, you will get one up to the surface, and so they're really easy to target. If you open them to spear fishermen, that's even easier, because they come right up to you like a puppy dog, and you can shoot them, and so that's a tough one. I personally think they should be. The numbers have come way back, especially if you fish the Everglades. There is lots of little ones down there

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