

Narrator: Melvin Lopez Jr, Bradley Saito and Anthony Acain represent the next generation of the Maui Cooperative Fishing Association, better known simply as the Maui Co-Op.

Melvin Lopez, Jr: I been bottom fishing for at least 15 years. I learned from (mumbles) Oshiro, Norman Tan, Bobby Gomes, Clayton Carvalho - a lot of the old timers. From some of the new timers, like Tony, showed me some of the tricks himself.

Bradley Saito: I'm not sure how long I've been bottom fishing. Maybe half my life, maybe or so, I'm not sure. But, I learned from Uncle Basil, Uncle Norman. Learned stuff from this old guy too and Tony. (laughing)

Anthony Acain: I've been, probably bottom fishing for about 18 years, but I was mostly self taught.

ML: I had my first boat when I was 16 years old. I had one 13 ft Ali'i Kai. Based off Waianae, hitting the buoys with that small little boat. Live baiting for marlins.

BS: I don't own a boat, but been fishing on everybody else's boat. That's the best boat by the way. And been pretty much little bit of everything.

AA: Think I got my first boat in the late 80s and I used to do more diving and trolling when I first started, then I slowly got started bottom fishing, but I think I started off with an 18-footer and worked my way up from there.

Narrator: Mel, Brad and Tony say that the Co-Op keeps them connected to the previous generation of fishermen.

ML: Yeah, camaraderie.

BS: Chit chat with the old timers

AA: Talk stories.

ML: You know, learning from the kupuna, the old time fishermens, it's about the best.

AA: Yeah, a lot of good stories out there. They've been fishing for years and they got a lot of good interesting stories.

BS: Make friends with the old guys and ask them a lot of questions.

ML: Yeah.

BS: And maybe after 15 years they tell you one thing that you ask. Like for instance how you cut bait - very carefully.

ML: You know the old timers. Some old timers, you ask them about fishing spots they tell you "over there". You know what that means, "over there"? You ask them, "where"? And he point again, "over there". He points with his hand open and when he finally tells you what he mean it means "pick a spot". It's any spot you like go to it's over there. That's how the old timers teach you. Co-op has changed from what it started to be when it first started and what the Co-op is

today. So being the Co-op now is coming to more of a club environment. Hopefully, we can get more younger guys in and I pretty sure if we can get the guys in the club would stay along. Before the Co-op was formed for them to help themselves. They fish because they used to get hard time, but today hard to get contracts so we just sell to whoever we got to sell to.

Narrator: For these fishermen, protecting a resource is a personal responsibility that they take seriously.

ML: Yeah, try not to hit the same spot over and over and I try to tell people do the same.

AA: Yeah, move around, fish different areas.

ML: If I had one good day I might not go back there for the rest of the year, you know. But we see people that do go back to the same spot every weekend. So, try to educate them when we can.

Narrator: While current regulations ensure the future of the fishery, they feel confident about its sustainability because of natural protections.

ML: This year the winter season it wasn't good. Fish was there, the depth recorder shows the fish they don't bite so it's just all depending on the season. Temperatures and everything it all plays a big role. I don't think it's ever going to die out. Nature itself take cares the biggest, what you can say, the BRFA right there. How much we can go, how much we can catch.

BS: Where you can go.

ML: Where you can go, so. Nature predicts everything. And Maui we always get strong wind.

Narrator: The BRFA Tony mentions refers to the State of Hawaii's Bottomfish Restricted Fishing Areas that were established in hopes of protecting seven species of bottomfish.

ML: BRFA is a joke. It's a joke. Is no scientific facts on that BRFAs. Never had. As far as the ACLs and stuff. Well I guess they got to monitor them somehow. So, to me it's agreeable. I mean, to me if we're dealing with this catch per, you know, what we can catch per year shouldn't have no BRFAs, in my eyes. Shouldn't have. Especially because the state ain't doing nothing about it. They not studying them.

BS: We'll be here for another hour if we talk about that, I think. About dinner time yeah, already? Yeah, BRFA is kind of. I guess for us not too bad because the BRFA's kind of like where it's always windy for us. Get the one over there Moloka'i and then the other one. Oh, and Kaho'olawe basically, but-

ML: Biggest BRFA is Kaho'olawe

BS: But for us, no really affect us too much 'cause we hardly fish that side. But, would be nice to go there if we could, but, I don't know, that's kind of a touchy subject I guess you could say.