

Female Speaker: Okay. It's April 16, and we are with Captain Sylvester Dixon and Boca Grande kind of Placido.

Sylvester Dixon: Placido.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: Okay, where would you like for you to – for me to give you some history?

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: Okay. I moved here when I was five. Probably started working on the water whenever I was eight or nine. Whenever I was 16, actually 15, I dropped out of school, and haven't turned back – haven't looked back. We've been here for 47 years, I guess. I'm 52 so that'd be 47 years I've been right here on this body of water. Whenever I dropped out of school at 16 I started running a bait shrimp boat, catching bait truck going over the grass flat. I supply this morning with bait truck. Me and my other brothers and my mom would sell them in these tanks. It hasn't always looked like this. We've done a lot of improvement to the area but that's just a little bit of the background. Before I started guide fishing I was fishing gill net before the net ban for probably six or seven years. I ended up before the net ban actually hit had my own boat in 1200 yards matter, so long. Before then I was fishing with my brother, my oldest brother. And then after the net ban, I started guide fishing. And I think I've been doing that I think I've held a license for over 20 years, a captain's license. So, we'll go up here and we'll take a look at these maps.

Female Speaker: All right. Sounds good. [00:02:00]

Sylvester Dixon: My great uncle. My granddaddy actually purchased the place back in the 60s. My dad was born on Boca Grande. My grandparents got married over there, in 25, 1925. My grandmother's family was here actually in Tarpon Springs probably in the early for the late 1800s. They was there before the creeks in Torpan spring. I want to grab my phone just. Yes, none of these looks like [indiscernible] [00:03:13] any of the sea wall here and the sea wall around this place is all [indiscernible] [00:03:22] at night, we've done it all at night whenever I was teenager or younger. By the time I was 16 we had get a lot – we had done most of it.

Female Speaker: Do you do mostly inshore fishing?

Sylvester Dixon: I do tarpon fishing as well on the beach.

Female Speaker: And how far north and south are you fishing? More in Charlotte Harbor Lemon Bay?

Sylvester Dixon: This is my primary area from, let's say, back up to the Placida Harbor condos that to Turtle Bay. [00:04:00] Whenever I'm tarpon fishing, I could range from Minnesota Beach to Captiva Pass.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: I've never wet a hook in Tampa Bay Sarasota. I have fished in Pine Island Sound a fair amount. But most of mine is very, very local. And a lot of time I had a – lot of time.

Female Speaker: Yes, good. Then used to have some interesting stuff to tell us. And this is our first time in this area and, you know, it's been a really beautiful time, beautiful place out here.

Sylvester Dixon: Well, we are pretty fortunate. We've got as much as aquatic stuff, yeah, the big thing that is going on here recently that I've noticed is that – what do you call whenever the US government takes – what do they call that US government takes land like Ding Darling.

Female Speaker: Yes, the Refuge National Refuge...

Sylvester Dixon: They've started putting some national refugees one down there and Turtle Bay and there's some others around that I think that they recently took over. But before that it was state.

Female Speaker: So, what are you – what's your typical, when you go out guiding, you know, what's your average rip?

Sylvester Dixon: Hourly?

Female Speaker: No, like, what do you target?

Sylvester Dixon: Oh, I target primarily [00:06:00] trout, red fishing speck, you know. That's from – I mean that's – red fish used to be my bread and butter. I mean, I used to catch a lot of red fish. There is no red fish now. I bet I don't catch five a week. Very, very sad. We went through the freeze with the snook, knock them back...

Female Speaker: Was that in 2009?

Sylvester Dixon: Something like that. I can't remember verbatim but they closed it for about four years, close to five. I didn't think it was going to help as much as it did but I'll have to give them credit that it helped.

Female Speaker: It did?

Sylvester Dixon: Oh yes, it did a lot. Really floored me. Red trout right now are in really bad shape. The only thing right now my primarily – what I'm fishing right now primarily is snook and it's all catch and release. You know, my customers, to be honest with you, my customer base isn't used to that. They are used to bring in home a mess of fish but there's not enough trout. Trout are, you know, I said red fish, snook and trout. Red fish and snook are close, there's not enough trout. My morning trip we had for trout. I mean, I work to catch those four, keep the trout for me. I didn't expect to catch up many to be honest with you.

Female Speaker: Has that been – you said you, you know, you didn't expect to catch that many trout. Is that just been...?

Sylvester Dixon: That many keepers, yes.

Female Speaker: Yes. Has that been in the last year?

Sylvester Dixon: Since – there were some times there in October, even there was a time there in January that there was some spots, now it was spotty. But I could go there and catch 20, 30 trout, you know what I'm saying? [00:08:00] But those fish, I don't know what happened to them. They are gone. There is still some fish around. They are very spotty. They are not as, you know, be able to go to this spot. If you didn't find them here you'd find them over here. Now you can go to 10 spots and to catch one, you know, to find a few fish. Do you follow me?

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: Just a lot spotty.

Female Speaker: How long has it been spotty like that?

Sylvester Dixon: Since last April, probably.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: April, May.

Female Speaker: Yes. So....

Sylvester Dixon: The red tide started in June and after that I mean that could see the red the trout spawn probably in May. April, May, late April, May, I would say whenever the trout spawn around here. And I think that the trout – I did see trout floating in the red tide for sure.

Female Speaker: Mm hmm. Is that something you've noticed that any other fish that have spawning when it coincides with the red tide and it causes an issue for them?

Sylvester Dixon: They took snook out because that – the first the red tide hit in the snook, prime spawn and season. And I know that that's why they took snook out. But fortunately, enough, I don't think that it affected them as bad as what they thought. We was fortunate. You know, I didn't see that many snook. A lot of people thought that every snook in the Bay was dead but we was very fortunate with it.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: I think one of [00:10:00] the things that helped us out with snook is again the breathing fish was around the passes. The small, real small juvenile fish that wasn't ready to spawn was still back in the creeks and that because they wasn't ready to make that journey.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: To see whenever we had the freeze that I told you about in the snook, the clan. The snook population drop so far, it didn't differ.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: Because the fish was back there. We went right there on that dock with some people from the state because we are doing counts. My buddy had a picture of Nance McLean (*phonetics*) in the palm of his hand. Nan is a [indiscernible][0:10:47]. So, you follow what I'm trying to say? Those snook in that red tide wasn't in the past.

Female Speaker: Right.

Sylvester Dixon: Like, I went back in one of those creeks back this winter. And I'm going to be very conservative today. I seen over 500 of them that wasn't over seven or eight inches long and won't hold that probably wasn't a whole lot bigger than this slab of concrete.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: And that's conservative.

Female Speaker: Yes, that makes sense. So, the kind of the smaller ones survived because they weren't out of the creeks yet and then that back country area?

Sylvester Dixon: Well, they hadn't went to spawn, they are not ready to – it wasn't mature.

Female Speaker: Yes. So, what was the first red tide that you remember in this area? What was the first kind of big event that you remember?

Sylvester Dixon: I can't come up with a year but I'll tell you this. I told you we caught bait shrimp and we sold them here. That's what I did growing up as a kid.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: Every time that we had a red tide, we couldn't always sell our shrimp and the shrimp [00:12:00] grow because they feed on their predators, shrimp are scavenger.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: So anyhow, one year as a rule, red tide don't kill shrimp.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: Kind of. You follow me, as a general rule. I've seen it get bad enough that one year, it was killing the shrimp.

Female Speaker: Do you remember what year that was?

Sylvester Dixon: It was in the probably early 80s, somewhere in that timeframe and I had seen red tide before then but I wouldn't say that it was that bad. Early to mid 80s will say, somewhere in there. If you go back and look, you'll find it somewhere in there.

Female Speaker: Yes. So, you remember that one because...?

Sylvester Dixon: It killed the shrimp and...

Female Speaker: It did killed the shrimp.

Sylvester Dixon: And the horseshoe crabs. It was a really bad one. You know, whenever you see things like that and I had never seen the killed shrimp and crabs and horseshoe crabs before.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: But they did that year. Dan Hubbard knows a guy, his name is Robert Hill.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: Robert was over there on that island at that time. And Robert said, "Oh my God, I walked out on the dock this morning" and he said "the bottom was red with dead shrimp." You know, because they had started to rod. They turn red whenever they start the rod. And, you know, but whenever the red tide was in like that those shrimp

feed on their predators and get big. Nobody wanted to go fishing so we would eat a lot of them.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: See, there was a bunch of – there's a whole house of that, right? That's the house right down there. That's my mom's house.

Female Speaker: Mm hmm [indiscernible] [00:13:48].

Sylvester Dixon: It's been, it's been an adventure.

Female Speaker: So, after that red tide – and do you remember spatially in the 80s, do you remember where it was? [00:14:00] Like, if we looked on this chart, would we be able to look in the area...?

Sylvester Dixon: I know – I'm not – you see like I said, I know that it was in this area because this is where our focus on now. I spoke to you on the phone about some areas that was hot.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: Back whenever I was gill net fishing. And that's Coral Creek coming out.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: I remember the mullet coming out of Coral Creek and then just on the outside and we didn't had them and put them in the boat and sold them because they was damn right there. We just picked them up. They just died.

Female Speaker: So, where's that on this map? Like, where's Coral Creek? There, is it right there.

Sylvester Dixon: Right there.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: Okay. Now if you want to – have y'all got Google on your computers?

Female Speaker: I don't but I can show...

Sylvester Dixon: Okay, come over here. I want to show you some.

Female Speaker: Okay.

Sylvester Dixon: That's the reason I got my phone.

Female Speaker: Okay.

Sylvester Dixon: Okay. So, I was going to show you where we are at right here right now.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: See where we are at?

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: Right here, this is Coral Creek.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: See, this screen?

Female Speaker: Mm hmm.

Sylvester Dixon: Okay. There's nine golf courses here by this creek.

Female Speaker: Yes, that's beautiful green grass, right?

Male Speaker: And about 2000 homes. [00:16:00]

Female Speaker: So...

Female Speaker: So, nine golf courses all feed into Coral Creek.

Sylvester Dixon: I won't say, let me show you how it works. This is one. This is two. You see it's still on Coral Creek.

Female Speaker: Yeah.

Sylvester Dixon: This is on the other side. And then you go in here to this place called Rotonda. And each one of these are golf courses. So, that's two.

Female Speaker: Wow.

Sylvester Dixon: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

Female Speaker: Wow.

Sylvester Dixon: You see, that's a golf course in that.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: That's a golf course right there. You see all the homes around it?

Female Speaker: Uh huh.

Sylvester Dixon: There's – okay. So, you see where this goes in here?

Female Speaker: Mm hmm.

Sylvester Dixon: You see where – now it has to overflow into this. And then there's a dam right here that overflows into that. But whenever you get a lot of rain, it still going to go in to Coral Creek. Now there's one other creek up here, Bull Creek. And that's right here. And then there's – it can feed into this creek right here.

Female Speaker: The same one feeds in – oh, it does.

Sylvester Dixon: It could feed into that. So, I don't know how they have it set up to where which streams are higher, you know. They are probably somewhat the same level. But if you look that Rotondo, the rim ditch is all the way around the place. See it?

Female Speaker: Yes, yes.

Sylvester Dixon: So, it either goes over here or it could, if you look, you see it continue to go where's it leading to?

Female Speaker: Right.

Sylvester Dixon: Coral Creek. Where is it leading to around on this end? Because it's a big circle. It's leading back into Coral Creek on this end.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: Every time that we get, every time red tide starts, it starts[00:18:00] out of the mouth of Coral Creek. It comes through this bridge and kind of goes right across the Bay over there. And then some of it goes on up the Bay.

Female Speaker: Okay. So, I want to try to draw that. So, here's Coral Creek. And then there's nine golf courses. I remember seeing that Rotondo on map. Yes. Yes, I know [overlapping conversation] [00:18:31] And then what is it do from here? You said it comes out...

Sylvester Dixon: I can – I'll show you. It comes out...

Female Speaker: Because you can draw. I love if you just draw right on here.

Sylvester Dixon: It comes out. Let's see, Coral Creek comes out through here, it comes, you – right here is a little threshold. Y'all could put a monitor in place on that threshold right there without no problem. But it comes out in – I haven't got my glasses on. Go down but it comes out through there, comes out. And it comes out this Gasparilla Marine, I believe and it comes out around through here and it kind of weave around and comes out right in there by this. Well, you see, here's the bridges, it ain't going to Boca Grande.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: So that's pretty much how it goes up through there.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: It goes out and comes right out through these bridges and right over here in between these bridges is where the whenever it starts coming this way is whenever it gets worse and worse.

Female Speaker: Yes. So, you've always seen it start right here in this?

Sylvester Dixon: I'm not saying 100% of the time. I'm saying 70% of the time anyhow.

Female Speaker: Okay.

Sylvester Dixon: Okay. So, you see this little bridge that, that – [00:20:00] if you go back on this road right here. If you go back on this main road, go right, go up just a little ways. Not even a quarter mile, you'll see a building but there's a little threshold right there, that that water has to go by that you could put a monitor and turn thing or not. Now, of course, that's a public pier keeping people from messing with it. You know, it could be a problem. But there's another car bridge right there.

Female Speaker: Yeah.

Sylvester Dixon: But I think it'd be neat to put in something to monitor that water coming out of there. Just to see what's really coming out it for a long time. I don't know the name of it. The water plant, but they was dumping salt brine in there, you know how they do, what do they call whenever they take and make? What's the system that they use to make drinking water out of salt water, reverse osmosis. Okay. And you know whenever they do reverse osmosis they have water that comes out, and it's the brine water. Well, they were, for a while they was dumping the brine water in that Coral Creek up in that East Palm, they don't do it no more. But for a while they was dumping the brine water in that Coral Creek.

Female Speaker: So, what is, if you can think back, what are some of – what's the first large event after that one in the early 80s? Do you remember any specific times in the 90s where, you know, red tide...?

Sylvester Dixon: After that?

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: I don't remember any of them lasting over a year like they have now but I remember one back in the 70s probably. [00:22:00] You see, we moved here in about '71.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: So, I remember in the 70s.

Female Speaker: What about after? And how often in the 70s do you remember there being red tide?

Sylvester Dixon: [Indiscernible] [00:22:28].

Female Speaker: That's fine.

Sylvester Dixon: You know.

Female Speaker: What about closer to now? What about 90s or 2000?

Sylvester Dixon: It seems – now tell you the last big one.

Female Speaker: Yeah.

Sylvester Dixon: Okay. Charlie. What did we have happen? For named storms go across the state. We had big rain events. What happened last year? We had the most rain all history in the month of May.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: Meeting notice.

Female Speaker: So, what's the one around Charlie? Was that before or it was right after...?

Sylvester Dixon: After Charlie. Yeah. I'm trying to remember, that probably started in April or earlier.

Female Speaker: What year was that?

Sylvester Dixon: 14, wasn't it?

Female Speaker: So, that started in April around that?

Sylvester Dixon: Somewhere, I'm guessing because I remember because I was going across the harbor to fish. It was bad in April. It probably started before April, what's January or – no, hang on. February, March. So, I said April. So, it started before April, probably in March, the middle of March or something like that. Because I remember the guys going across the harbor, don't take that stuff there for bait market. [00:24:00] I don't know exactly.

Female Speaker: That's fine. So, let's talk about that 20-, you know, the 2014 or thereabout threats...

Sylvester Dixon: Okay.

Female Speaker: How long did that last?

Sylvester Dixon: My guess, not for [indiscernible] [00:24:20] my guess would be...

Female Speaker: Yes, no. And we're just interested in your experience too. So, whatever...

Sylvester Dixon: I would say three to four months. Three, you know, before get to where we could fish around here again.

Female Speaker: Yes. Do you know, like, if we looked, was it that same thing? Did it start in this area?

Sylvester Dixon: I know that we had some events at that time in that area.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: And it – we just can't get rid of it coming out here. It just – you take this last event. Every time we turn around, it was starting over there and then spreading out in the Bay, you know.

Female Speaker: Yes. So, if you think about 2014 and where you were fishing and where you actually saw red tide, could we draw that? Is that an area that we could put down on here?

Sylvester Dixon: Yes. 2014, I know it covered from all of this out here to see it really don't go up the creeks.

Female Speaker: Yes. So, let's draw that. Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: I'll try to draw a circle around it.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: Now this is what I recollect. It started all of this up back up in here, but I knew and it come and included, you know, most of this in here because I was going over here to fish. I was fishing on this side. And I didn't fish anything this side [00:26:00] over here, nor none of this. I was fishing over here on this side. And mainly back up in this area here because they call this two pound back up towards [indiscernible] [00:26:13].

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: But I could fish down this wall some. See that red tide, even this past year, really don't get too far back up in this harbor. You know, whenever it gets bad, it will get up to maybe in here, but it really don't go that far back...

Female Speaker: Would you say like right around here.

Sylvester Dixon: Yes.

Female Speaker: Okay.

Sylvester Dixon: Yes. And it don't really get up in the creeks were, you know, back up in them creeks neither. Yes, that'd be safe to say that, you know, that's pretty good line.

Female Speaker: Yes. Well, we've been seeing this, you know, we've talked to a lot of people in this area so we've been getting that kind of the same observation that people have been saying once you get up here, you know.

Sylvester Dixon: I think it's too much fresh water. And it's just like the water that comes out of these creeks, you know. We know, you know, that's where a lot of the nutrients is probably coming from, but it doesn't – it can't get – it doesn't go up there.

Female Speaker: Yeah. So, in 2014, you couldn't fish in this area at all?

Sylvester Dixon: No, for probably, at least over two months or more. I'd come across over here to catch my bait and then come around and go over here to fish.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: And up this side. But I could catch bait over here in this [indiscernible] [00:27:36].

Female Speaker: So, how did you know what it looked like? What was your first inclination?

Sylvester Dixon: Okay. Let me tell y'all something.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: If y'all ever see real bad red tide and it's real bad, you can raise your hand through the water and lifted it out in the middle look like snap kind of, you'll see it won't drip. [00:28:00] It'll – and you could do that out there.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: I've seen it like that two or three times whenever it's real bad. You just, you can see it in the water. But if you really want to see something take and raise your hands in and handle it and it just kind of swings off of it.

Female Speaker: Are there health impacts to like, do you notice? Does it give you like a cough or anything like that?

Sylvester Dixon: Oh, yes. Yes, there's – some people were a lot more affected than others.

Female Speaker: Mm hmm. For you did it ever, you know, stop you from going out or anything like that?

Sylvester Dixon: Because of the customers not me necessarily.

Female Speaker: Yeah.

Sylvester Dixon: It's uncomfortable to be out there. And I've been around the [boors] most definitely uncomfortable for me.

Female Speaker: Yes. What about – are there any clues or indicators before red tide or you know that that one might be coming or it might be bad?

Sylvester Dixon: Absolutely.

Female Speaker: Yes, what so?

Sylvester Dixon: Rainwater.

Female Speaker: So, do you know like if there's a really heavy rain, are you expecting a red tide after that?

Sylvester Dixon: Yes.

Female Speaker: And how long after it rains do you usually see it?

Sylvester Dixon: Depends on the amount of rain, but if you get a lot it could take a month, two months, couple of months something like that, two or three months.

Female Speaker: Are you able to prepare for that at all? Like do you know a red tide is coming so you, you know, you want to get a bunch of trips the month before, like, is there anything you can do?

Sylvester Dixon: Yes.

Female Speaker: Yes. So, what do you do when there's red tide? What did you do in 2014?

Sylvester Dixon: Well, I was fortunate enough to where I could pick up my people and go over here and catch bait and then take them fishing.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: On this side...

Female Speaker: Just north of Pine Island?

Sylvester Dixon: A lot of times we can [00:30:00] get far enough back in these creeks. But the tough thing of it is, is catching the bait and then having to go through some of this out here to get back in to where the fish are.

Female Speaker: Yes. So...

Sylvester Dixon: The tough thing is keeping your bait alive in the red tide.

Female Speaker: Yes. Do you ever – are you able to switch to bait that isn't live or you have to use live bait for what you are catching?

Sylvester Dixon: Sometimes, you can go to the shrimp, because like I said, it doesn't bother shrimp the same way that it does the bait fish. And I had a buddy, you know, he can't keep his bait alive, he's got shrimp and go fishing with [indiscernible] [00:30:41]

Female Speaker: Mm hmm. So, what species do you usually, you know, you said it doesn't impact shrimp and crabs usually, sometimes it does when it's really bad. Are there any other species that it doesn't impact, that it doesn't affect?

Sylvester Dixon: I know that there's kind of like a little bit of a pecking order. Seems like what they call, we call them grout. They call them pigfish. They seem like that they

go first then the bait fish, then, you know, used to be catfish. I don't think it affects catfish like it used to...

Female Speaker: Pigfish or grout?

Sylvester Dixon: Yes, pigfish or grout.

Female Speaker: Okay.

Sylvester Dixon: That I mean, they can't handle much of it at all.

Female Speaker: Mm hmm. And does it matter, is there a size class? Does it affect bigger fish? I mean, you mentioned what was really interesting with the snook, the smaller so are still up in the creek so they kind of survive it. Are there any other observations about species or size and the way it impacts certain species that you have?

Sylvester Dixon: Like I said, [00:32:00] I don't think it's impacting catfish the way that I seen whenever I was a kid. It doesn't impact tarpon as much as far as killing them. They were able to move away from it. I do know this, it does impact sharks, most of the time they can move away from it. One time whenever we had some red tide, there was a bunch of sharks that moved into this Marina and I had never seen that before or after but there were several of them.

Female Speaker: Yes. And they were pushed in here by the red tide?

Sylvester Dixon: Yes, and they got pushed up into an area that I know some other guys that seen them last year and it ended up getting a lot of them.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: But they all push back into area to get away from it. And they could only go so far and they get stuck.

Female Speaker: Yes. But not in this like back country? Oh, it was right here.

Sylvester Dixon: It was down here in Pine Island Sound. I didn't see it. Tommy Lock I don't know if y'all got the name Tommy Lock.

Female Speaker: Yes, I think we're going to talk to him tomorrow morning.

Sylvester Dixon: Tommy Lock?

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: Okay, then ask him about the sharks. He'll probably volunteer and tell you.

Female Speaker: Yes. Yes, no, we heard about this area from a couple other people too.

Sylvester Dixon: Yeah. Tommy Lock seen that kill.

Female Speaker: So, after the 2014 red tide, how long did it take this area to recover? How long before you could fish here in this area again?

Sylvester Dixon: Three, four months.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: Yes.

Female Speaker: And then after three, four months, it was back to...?

Sylvester Dixon: It wasn't 100% but we gradually moved into it. I'd say for it to be back to normal that year might have been six months or so, in my recollection.

Female Speaker: Yes. But for you as a charter captain you were able to keep pressing because you had other areas to go to?

Sylvester Dixon: Yes.

Female Speaker: Yes. And then, yeah, [00:34:00] so let's talk about then the 2018 event this past year and the red tide and then if you could draw the area that you experienced, that you saw it impact. And this is just, you know, this is your experience...

Sylvester Dixon: This is my primary area.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: Right in here in that...

Female Speaker: And this, when you say right in here you mean.

Sylvester Dixon: It this area right in here is my, where I primarily fish.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: But it did whenever you talk to Tommy Lock, he will be able – he fishes farther down this way. He'll be able to tell you how much farther with now in this way because he spends more time down here. He does spend time over here but he spends more time down in this area than I do.

Female Speaker: Yeah.

Sylvester Dixon: I do know toward this past year I was able to run over here and catch, you know, some bait and bring them back but it was tough, you know...

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: You have to really keep your eye on the bait.

Female Speaker: So, you were still able to fish just north of Pine Island in the same area for bait fish?

Sylvester Dixon: Yes.

Female Speaker: And then were you able to still take clients over into over here?

Sylvester Dixon: I would try through the fall on that because I take – you have to remember, I take – I haven't told you I take from the middle of June till the first of September off, I take the summers off.

Female Speaker: Oh, okay.

Sylvester Dixon: So, that, the real hot time, I was already off the water.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: I'm very fortunate. I'm pretty busy. I work really hard. Like today I did a double tomorrow I got the rest of the week. I got two trips a day.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: So, [00:36:00] I do, I don't make pretty good money and there's – my son was home through the summer so I take the summer off with him and the fishing slows down and it worked out, you know, it works out with, you know, red tide will show up if it's going to show up whenever that water gets warm.

Female Speaker: Yes. So, the summers are you just hanging out with your son and fishing kind of recreationally or not fishing?

Sylvester Dixon: I stay off the water...

Female Speaker: You stayed off the water?

Sylvester Dixon: I got enough of it.

Female Speaker: You know, you're the first charter captain that I've talked to who said he doesn't fish in his spare time too.

Sylvester Dixon: I've done so much. I mean I've done it a lot.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: I mean, I get enough of it.

Female Speaker: Do you say though? Do you stay in Placida?

Sylvester Dixon: During the summer...?

Female Speaker: During the summer.

Sylvester Dixon: No, I go up and spend some nap time up in North Florida now.

Female Speaker: Okay.

Sylvester Dixon: Not on the water, [indiscernible] [00:36:58].

Female Speaker: Yes. So, in that way you know you don't even really see a red tide unless you are, unless it goes into the...

Sylvester Dixon: The fall?

Female Speaker: The fall, yes.

Sylvester Dixon: And the spring?

Female Speaker: And the spring.

Sylvester Dixon: Yes. But you do get red tide in the fall. And then we keep praying for Carl French or whatever to call the water down hope that it kind of dissipates the red tide.

Female Speaker: Yes. So, for the 2014 red tide, did that impact you the same way that the 2018 red tide impacted you?

Sylvester Dixon: That red tide was in the spring and the...

Female Speaker: The 2014 was in the spring?

Sylvester Dixon: Yes.

Female Speaker: Yeah.

Sylvester Dixon: Yes, I think see we had those four names storms come through and they probably ended up, and these last storms probably had to go across in [00:38:00] late October.

Female Speaker: Right. Yes, at the [indiscernible] [00:38:03].

Sylvester Dixon: Okay. So, and I said it took two or three months.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: So, you take November, December, January, February where are we at.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: You know, then it started flaring up. We might have had a little bit of red tide early or late that fall, we probably had some red tide showing up in that late fall around October. It probably started in – we just never got rid of – it kind of carried through the winter and then it really got bad in the, in the spring.

Female Speaker: Yeah.

Sylvester Dixon: Because the winters really don't kill it out, it just slows it down is what happens.

Female Speaker: Yes. So, how was the – I guess I'm asking how was the 2018 red tide? Was that different for you than the one in 2014-ish?

Sylvester Dixon: Well, it started, I would say we started seeing signs of it in May. It was, just got really bad towards the middle of June, the first of June to the middle of June, carried all the way through the summer, tried to clear up there a little bit around September in that, come back, went all the way through October with a clear spot here and there, carried through the winter. See, would that be right? And, yeah, yeah, carried through the winter and then it started clearing up, I guess the red tides been [00:40:00] gone since I mean where we was comfortable about it till after January...

Female Speaker: Of this year?

Sylvester Dixon: ...of this year. So, it went through – what did they go through then? The end of May, all the way through January. So that ain't quite a whole year is it?

Female Speaker: No.

Sylvester Dixon: We had – but see we had the record amount of rain in May. So, they are saying that it carried – we had some remnants from some from another red tide I think what it was, and it never would die and then we got all that rain in May and it is already there.

Female Speaker: Yeah. Was it larger? You know, you said 2014 was kind of in this area. Would you say that the one in 2018 for your experience?

Sylvester Dixon: It went out into the gulf because I was trying the tarpon fish in June.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: And it kept the tarpon from out here, but I know it affected the whole coast.

Female Speaker: Yeah. What did you see like where did you see it?

Sylvester Dixon: I personally seen it all the way from this, I'd say a bigger scope. Because see, I was tarpon fishing so I was on up this way more, just say something like that.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: Because I was covering more area for tarpon, you know, going up and down the beaches [00:42:00] and coming up inside. Forgive me for my line being too far back this way.

Female Speaker: That's okay.

Sylvester Dixon: But you can get an ideal because I was covering more ground for tarpon. Whenever I'm bait fish in the spring and the fall, it's in here.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: So yeah, I was more and maybe even up further this way.

Female Speaker: So straight up. And this is what months or was this is the spring?

Sylvester Dixon: That was in June.

Female Speaker: Okay.

Sylvester Dixon: And then by the middle of June, I was off the water July. The fourth was the first year that I had never went out to watch the fireworks on the beach [indiscernible] [00:42:46] and it was because of the red tide. We hop in the boat and go up to Minnesota beach and watch the fireworks. I know it's here Fourth of July. You don't want to see – hear something interesting?

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: You see that moon over there?

Female Speaker: Mm hmm.

Sylvester Dixon: If you looked at that moon, could you tell me what that was doing?

Female Speaker: No.

Sylvester Dixon: You can't?

Female Speaker: No. Can you, [indiscernible][0:43:16]?

Female Speaker 2: No.

Sylvester Dixon: Rule of thumb. This is something for y'all to educate yourself with.

Female Speaker: Okay.

Sylvester Dixon: Rule of thumb whenever that sun is right there at the horizon it's low tide. Tide's coming up, tide's high, tide's fallen, tide's low. Never knew that, did you?

Female Speaker: Well, it's good. That's good to know.

Sylvester Dixon: You've always heard that the moon affects the tides, haven't you?

Female Speaker: Yes, right, yes.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Female Speaker 2: Definitely.

Female Speaker: [00:44:00] So, how long...?

Sylvester Dixon: And you do know in this particular areas in that that the new and full moons affect the tides more on the full or new moon than the quarter moons?

Female Speaker: Mm hmm.

Female Speaker: Right. Yes, like...

Sylvester Dixon: Okay.

Female Speaker: That's like the king tides, right? Like there's an issue with some times there's these extremely large.

Sylvester Dixon: Yes, they call them, down at the past they call them full tides. Yes, they call it in the summer and late spring, early summer they call [indiscernible] [00:44:34] the tarpon fishermen called them that.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: Because the tarpon go up on farther in the harbor on the big tides.

Female Speaker: So, with the...

Sylvester Dixon: Where that name come from.

Female Speaker: The 2018 red tide, you said it kind of cleared up in 2019 in January. And then how long did it take that area to recover?

Sylvester Dixon: Still hasn't recovered.

Female Speaker: Still hasn't?

Sylvester Dixon: No.

Female Speaker: Is it coming back a little bit or...?

Sylvester Dixon: The snook, the snook have.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: But the red, there was some schools of redfish around this past fall but I don't know what happened to them. There was only like one or two of that.

Female Speaker: Mm hmm. And then other than the golf courses and fertilizer and stuff like that, is there any reason why you think this past red tide lasted longer than other red tides or any other like theories or...?

Sylvester Dixon: Yes.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: Where did they mine phosphate?

Female Speaker: Oh, we heard about this. I don't know where the...

Sylvester Dixon: In the center of the state.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: Up towards off of the branches of the Peace River. Okay, if y'all wanted to do some research, you could go up. There's places in that Peace River where they dig fossils.

Female Speaker: Yes. Heard of that.

Sylvester Dixon: Where did they get phosphate from?

Female Speaker: From the fossils? [00:46:00]

Sylvester Dixon: Not particularly from...

Female Speaker: Within the same layers.

Sylvester Dixon: What caused the fossils?

Female Speaker: The dirt?

Sylvester Dixon: What cause – now hang on. What made the fossil? So in other words, the whales, the sharks...

Female Speaker: Oh, yes.

Sylvester Dixon: And the rest of that. So, whenever they are mining phosphate, they are digging in those big deposits of artifacts or whatever you want to say.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: And that's where they are getting that from. But all of those spots, whenever they are mining, trust me, they are going through a lot of fossils and all the rest of it that nobody ever sees or any, but that's where they are getting the phosphate from. But there's natural deposits of that throughout the area. And that's the reason why red tide is probably been here since God-knows-when. There's one particular deposit I know of, Van mentioned it to you. It's out there off of Minnesota Beach up there by that Pier and they go out there and dive and get shark's teeth like this and fossils and the rest of it. And a lot of times the red tide just start down that way, and right about that area. And I talked to Van about that. And I said, hey Van. I said what about that place up there off of – because I brought up this thing to him about the Peace River and all that. I said, Well what about that place up there off Minnesota where they dive up them big shark's teeth in that? Oh yeah, Bo Valley. Nobody ever thinks about it but that's a natural deposit of phosphate. And red tide of currents does start there. Go back and ask Van.

Female Speaker: And you [00:48:00] said that's what area?

Sylvester Dixon: Off of Minnesota Beaches, out there somewhere around where that pier is off of sharks' teeth. I'm not sure. I haven't ever went up there and dug the sharks'

teeth. I've probably seen sharks' teeth, it's come from there. But you take old sharks' teeth where the sharks decayed, decayed, that's the proper term. That's where they get phosphate from. And you stop and think about it, you know. Then they go and taking the dead fish out of the water after a red tide.

Female Speaker: Right.

Female Speaker: Mm hmm.

Sylvester Dixon: Why had they been so big on that? Because there's so much – what did they – nitrogen in it. Or what about all these great big sharks and all this stuff that died years and years ago? That nitrogen deposits are still there.

Female Speaker: Right.

Sylvester Dixon: So, everybody wants to blame all of this on Okeechobee the golf courses and all the rest of that. Sure. I think it contributes to it, but it's not the whole picture.

Female Speaker: Yeah. Very cool. So, do you have any suggestions for management changes that could help fishermen survive red tides?

Sylvester Dixon: Fishermen?

Female Speaker: Yes. You know, charter captains who are looking [overlapping conversation] [00:49:23] during the summer.

Sylvester Dixon: Is that what you are working with mainly is trying to help the charter captains?

Female Speaker: You know, where...

Sylvester Dixon: Or y'all trying to figure out what causes.

Female Speaker: We're really just trying to learn as much about red tide as we can.

Sylvester Dixon: Uh huh.

Female Speaker: So, you know, that's why we are...

Sylvester Dixon: The captain base, I'm going to tell you right now there's not very many of them that, it's tough on all of them. And the ones that tried to do it part time that there's red tide around. But those are part time guys, those aren't full time [00:50:00] guys. There's not a lot of really – there's a whole lot more part timers than there are full timers, I feel.

Female Speaker: Mm hmm.

Sylvester Dixon: You know, I mean, true full timers. I had no other end – well, my wife works at Publix, but of course she helps but there my – all I do is guide fish. That's my only income right now.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: My only income before that was commercial fishing and catching bait shrimp.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: So, but I've been very fortunate, I've been here for all these years. I've gotten a lot of clientele through them random people who's got to know me because I've been around so long and just really fortunate with that, you know. It's got to be, I think these newer guides, a lot of them has got their stuff through the internet and that I don't understand. I haven't gotten to internet page. I'm not on the internet and the rest of it.

Female Speaker: Yes, I know it's good. It sounds like you have a great client base just from growing up here and knowing the area real well.

Sylvester Dixon: Most of my – those guys both trips that I head out today I fished a lot, you know. The guys that are headed out this afternoon, they'll fish at least once every other week or once a week, somewhere in that neighborhood.

Female Speaker: Are a lot of your client's local? Local people?

Sylvester Dixon: They come down and spend the winter over on Boca Grande or come from the center of the state like where this lady was from this morning.

Female Speaker: Mm hmm. So, mostly are from other elsewhere in Florida?

Sylvester Dixon: Yes.

Female Speaker: Or do you have other people coming from the Midwest or anything like that?

Sylvester Dixon: The ones that spend the winter down here.

Female Speaker: Yes. Yes. But they have like a house down here and they spent the winter down here...

Sylvester Dixon: I know they rent. [00:52:00] They might rent for a couple of months or something.

Female Speaker: Mm hmm. So, what do you think about monitoring of red tide? And do you think there's...?

Sylvester Dixon: I think we need to do it.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: Especially where we think, you know, some, they keep saying that they are monitoring Okeechobee and that stuff coming out of Okeechobee and all that. But I haven't seen really any really hardcore that own exactly.

Female Speaker: I don't think we have either.

Female Speaker: Mm hmm.

Sylvester Dixon: ... exactly what's going on there for sure. Do you follow me?

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: But we need to start monitoring, you know, where these rivers in that, like the Myakka River, the Peace River comes out. And some of these creek like Coral Creek and places that we can see, stuff, you know, we need to monitor, start monitoring that. I have one other theory though.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: I can take you out here in this Bay and show you places that I've seen 14 foot of water around these passes, and it's a sandbar. Right now it's out of the water. And there was 14 foot of water there. I can take you out here on Gasparilla Beach and show you a house my buddy had. And his parents was scared to death, somebody was going to build in front of him. And I remember being on that. And that house and you can see the people on the beach where the dunes that water is close to their house today.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: So, that beach has eroded and all of that. And that – is that beach erodes, it that comes into these passes and it's filling up the passes. [00:54:00] And we don't have the water flows that we used to have.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: What did they do whenever they renew the beach? They don't go in the passes and get the sand to carry back out the beach. They go offshore, they put more on the beach to fill up their base. And the other thing I want people to monitor and look at, where did all the green algae and all that that they talk about a lot of that real bad stuff that I seen on TV, I didn't see it personally and all that the real bad stuff. It come in, it

that was in the canals, dead end canals where you ain't got the water circulation. So, if we go out here and we let these passes continue to fill up and close off in that we ain't going to have no water flow. What are we going to have?

Female Speaker: Lot of time.

Sylvester Dixon: We are going to have a lot of bad water.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: So, this red tide thing, I think it's about as complex as you want to make it.

Female Speaker: Yes, I know. That's what we've been learning because there's a lot of different indicators and stuff that goes into [overlapping conversation]...

Sylvester Dixon: It can be as complex as you want to make it. And one thing that I'm thinking about right now is this would be a good study for y'all. What happens? We know that nitrogen and phosphorus and some other things causes red tide. The red tide comes in, it thrives on it. And after it's ate up most of that nutrients out of the water, it falls, correct? Goes to the bottom. What happens? This [00:54:00] the nutrients disappear out of the water and the nitrogen and all the rest of it or does it go to the bottom?

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: What's happening? Do you see what I'm saying?

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: Now if the red tide isn't really getting rid of it and it stays in the water, that means that this nutrients and the water is compounding all the time.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: Does that make sense?

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: So, I think that that is the reason why we have this grass that I offered to show you back in. It's coming from – it's feeding off of that nutrients that went to the bottom and that this boy right here knows Tommy Lock pretty well. I'll ask. Hey, did you, did you see those sharks down in the sand last year, yourself?

Male Speaker: In August?

Sylvester Dixon: Yes.

Male Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: Do you know exactly where they was?

Male Speaker: They go off down by the [indiscernible] [00:57:08]

Sylvester Dixon: Yes. Where Tommy and I'm seeing them?

Male Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: See there, he knows Tommy. He worked with Tommy Lock. But – and you are you got Tommy Lock's name?

Female Speaker: Yes.

Sylvester Dixon: Okay.

Male Speaker: And there were hundreds of them.

Female Speaker: Wow.

Male Speaker: All side.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Male Speaker: Hammerhead.

Female Speaker: Crazy.

Male Speaker: It all died.

Sylvester Dixon: Hammerhead did you say?

Male Speaker: Hammerhead, yes. I think that's all.

Sylvester Dixon: That, it wasn't [indiscernible] [00:57:39]. And that was when?

Male Speaker: In August.

Sylvester Dixon: August. Alright. These girls are from the University of Miami.

Female Speaker: Okay. I supposed to localize and all over that. [00:58:00]

Female Speaker 2: Yes, right?

Female Speaker: Now, for all the shark research they do.

Female Speaker 2: Yes.

Female Speaker: It's surprising how many...

Female Speaker 2: Hundreds.

Female Speaker: Collect as many samples as they can.

Female Speaker 2: Hundreds, hundreds.

Female Speaker: That's it. And one of the other interviews, they said it's blacktip, bulls, hammerheads, like...

Female Speaker 2: Yes.

Female Speaker: Every shark nose, black nose.

Sylvester Dixon: [Indiscernible] [00:58:27]

Female Speaker: Yes.

Female Speaker 2: Yes.

Male Speaker: [Indiscernible] [00:58:30]

Sylvester Dixon: Were they – they are drawing some stuff. Hey, Mark, tell me this. Your personal opinion, do you think Coral Creek is a hot spot or not?

Female Speaker: For red tide.

Sylvester Dixon: For red tide. We see whenever that red tide flares up.

Mark: Well, we know why.

Sylvester Dixon: Yes, but where does it start? Right on the outside.

Mark: Oh, well, the red tide does, that – yes, I know what you're saying when you say the outside, yes.

Sylvester Dixon: Right on the outside of the creek.

Mark: Yes, on the outside of the creek.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Mark: We know why.

Female Speaker: Yes. You said that golf course was...

Sylvester Dixon: It was, man, I counted in about 3000 homes, you know, or over 3000 homes.

Mark: What do you got?

Sylvester Dixon: This is Coral Creek back up here...

Mark: Yes, but right here too. See, I live in here.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Mark: When I build my home there, there was only about 700, 800 homes there. Now, I think there's over 3000.

Female Speaker: Wow.

Mark: Okay. Now that has a lock on it. But then over here, they pulled the lock out of Barstow Isles and...

Sylvester Dixon: That's...

Mark: You know, I was having this conversation with my customers the other day. The biggest threat and you said it before too, Sylvester, it is water quality.

Female Speaker: Yes.

Mark: It's water quality. [01:00:04]