

[00:00:00]

Interviewer: Here we go. My name is Susanna Black (*phonetics*). Today's December 3rd and we have Sean McQuade.

Sean McQuade: Sean McQuade. Yes.

Interviewer: Sean McQuade, do you mind sitting here because I'm going to ask you to help us define on this map some areas for the red tide and I think it's more comfortable there. So, what I would like to do is tell us first of all, what kind of business you have, and since when you've been in the business?

Sean McQuade: Okay. I moved here from Long Island 26 years ago in 93. I've been a charter boat captain and also a commercial fisherman. Pretty much right when I got you know, arrived here in Florida, especially this area, the Fort Myers base is where I started my career there 26 years ago. I did come here from Long Island with a 100 ton captain's license. So, coming down with the mind thought that I would jump on a boat and here we are 26 years later as a captain.

So I have a lot of experience in the water especially actually I have a lot of trips over 100 documented trips to the tour two years with dive trips and fishing trips. I have also been from this area to the middle ground. So, some of those are fishing trips, and some of them had been commercial trips over the years. I'm also a certified diver. I've been certified for 30 years. So, I do have 26 years of diving here. I'm getting fairly close to 3000 dives between the Tortugas and just north of Boca Grande anywhere from 2530 feet out to about 140. So, I do have a wide span of bottom also [00:02:00] so that's that.

Some years I was commercial fishing pretty heavily, more from 93 to 97, I'd say, I did more focus on commercial pretty much after about three to five years I was very interested in actually running charter boats. So, I got tagged in with the Getaway Marina. And pretty much ever since then I've been on a consistency of charters more than anything.

Interviewer: But you still do some commercial or?

Sean McQuade: Absolutely. Yes, I do. I'm still involved in both. I became a firefighter, actually for this district. I've been for 16 years. So...

Interviewer: So, that's your...

Sean McQuade: That's actually my main job now. And to be honest with you the reason I went to firefighting is just this industry alone some of the changes that have come about, I can't say the fishing has gotten worse or better from them to now because actually fishing has been consistent over my 26 years of being here. Species have changed, cycles have changed, you know, and now obviously, I feel that the last five to three years right around and there are water is definitely changed and visually, you can

see things changing. So, that's when I would say, whatever is happening now, is definitely been fueled in the last three years.

Interviewer: Interesting. So, firefighter you said for how many years?

Sean McQuade: Sixteen.

Interviewer: Sixteen. And you've been – that's been your main job for 16 years?

Sean McQuade: Yes, yes. So, I do...

Interviewer: So, what kind of like what proportion of your time or?

Sean McQuade: Yes. For example, 24 I have a 24 or 48 off so one day I'm looking firehouse.

Interviewer: I see.

Sean McQuade: [00:04:00] Here in my district, if I take one day off I have five. So, there is, in recent years for one of the commercial fish, I take a day off, I'd either go for one to three days, usually not more than that in the recent years. So, that's how I'm able to work the firehouse and still do charters. In the last, let's say, five to seven years, I've been more focused on chartering in our area. So, that's been I'd say 80 to 90% of my income on my secondary job, but I still stay as active like as I can with doing commercial so.

Interviewer: What species do you target for your commercial and what do you target for your charter?

Sean McQuade: All right. Pretty, pretty much the very parallel because of you know, I also do charters inside the flats, so like your redfish, trout and smug, but the majority of my offshore stuff we're targeting grouper and snapper.

Interviewer: Okay.

Sean McQuade: So, that's our main breed. We did Amberjack, cobia, you know, as our secondary, you know, in that so.

Interviewer: Okay. So, now in your 26-year experience as a fisherman, what, when, what red tide events stood out for you?

Sean McQuade: You know, well, let's say, because it's hard to go back in time because I've never really written any of this stuff down a lot. A lot of the occurrences have always been near shore and inside our base so I've never...

Interviewer: So, I'm interesting initially like to understand you like it's, like time was like when did you notice red tides in the past what year more less event?

Sean McQuade: Yeah, I'll see, to pinpoint stuff?

Interviewer: No.

Sean McQuade: I mean, for 26 years, it's been on and off with little episodes. I mean, it seems like around that September, October, I mean, even 15, 18 years ago, I think we've had small stuff that has stayed again if you took this chart for example, I've never seen it ever deeper than 30 feet in my history being here. The last bad episode that I can remember and again I'm going back I'm hoping I'm accurate with this about eight or nine years ago..

Interviewer: Okay.

Sean McQuade: I was doing a lot of diving off of Sanibel, you know in this area, the 30, 40 foot area. We had a pretty good cycle off the beach. I'm thinking got in the Back Bay, but it wiped out our bottom, like, I mean it nuke did all the dives, I did, I know again, I want to say it was around September anything from about 30 feet out to about 45, 50 feet was like some of the things we were seeing I mean the Core Growth or any of the softer corals or grass or stuff that exists like gorgonia and stuff like that. Sea fan completely torched like the bottom looked like somebody boiled it.

Interviewer: Where was this? Can you mark?

Sean McQuade: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: Can you mark the 2008, 2009, 2010?

Sean McQuade: Yeah. And pretty much we will follow. Here's Boca, this is the area that I was diving, you know right in here and I remember specifically, the water was nasty. I couldn't touch it, I mean, you'd be coughing hacking, the water definitely look that reddish color that year, let's say in September, October, we would try to dive through it. And what we were seeing is devastation. The bottom was again like I consider it like torch like if you went to a forest and it burned down, [00:08:00] there was no life even the stone crabs, look like somebody threw them in a boiler, like they were this orange red color and you could see that they, you could see they tried to crawl out of this area and they would just drop right where they were.

One thing that we like to shoot out here, of course is gags and hog fish. We have actually a decent hog fishery here. At that time of the year, that's what we're trying to shoot. Now, the interesting thing about that event is I want to say about five to six months later, war had cleaned up. It wasn't a long period. Let's say that water was turned for maybe a week, week and a half. It stayed in one area. It did it's devastation so I'm thinking top to bottom because obviously the bottom was just gone. The regrowth that happened five

months later, six months later was pretty incredible again going to compare it to a forest fire, you burn everything out it looks like oh my god we got a black lifeless area within six months.

Now, we had our all yes your zooplankton, your - seemed like some of your softer corals these stuff started really coming back. Now, the interesting thing here that I will never forget is once that finally stabilized out and again the exact actually got photos, I could probably go back to we were shooting some of the biggest hogfish we ever shot. Fish over 10 pounds and seeing shots of gags a little more stacked up like they used to be now. Going back 26 years ago 25, 24 our gag fishery was tremendously strong here. I used to take trips Getaway Marina [00:10:00] charter, I'd work anywhere in this area from - the battery's dead now.

Interviewer: No, no, I'm just like that.

Sean McQuade: So, you make it sure, yeah. It was amazing that we would come up in here and really beat the gag fishery was amazing right off the beach here. Now, over the years again, really in the last five years, I've noticed the schools that we would get to come in here in September and October have definitely been diminished you know, whether we're seeing a few here where we used to see a ton of them.

And over the years myself, I kept saying there's got to be something wrong with our water. Watching this change, dive wise and fishing wise, you know, I attribute to the water quality. Another thing even going back to about three to five years ago we used to have a tremendous amount of beat here. Redfin [Indiscernible] [00:11:02] threadfin, cigar minnows, you know, that that fishing pinfish super strong off the beach and that's getting again we're like we don't understand where they're going or where they've gone you know.

So whether it's red tide that has killed some of this off or too much river water, I don't know but we've definitely seen a tremendous change in that time period. Someone like...

Interviewer: In the last five years you said?

Sean McQuade: And from five years to three years it is definitely a norm. To give you another example because a lot of the red tide I've ever really seen in myself against any of these bays, you know, it will come into Boca or you know, we get some of it up and around Charlotte, where there's time we had it run through these areas. Well briefly real quick, I mean doing some [00:12:00] flats fishing.

Again, we all kind of talked to each other as a whole, a lot of these flats guides, and we go, hey, we're killing redfish at a certain point and then all sudden they be like, hey, I was in there the other day, coughing and hacking the water look funny and boom. All of a sudden you get dead fish and those redfish are gone, snook gone, you know, whether they moved out or got killed. I couldn't tell you I'm pretty sure at that time, it was such a

small area of red tide that these fish figured it out and diverted to other places where the red tide wasn't so...

Interviewer: And this was what period like, like, like...

Sean McQuade: I want to say in the last three to five years is really where it's affected. And we can see it you know, and typically, again, I'm going back to the fall because a lot of fish move in and out of here in the fall time. We would get these big school migratory ball reds come in and out of here especially September was a really big month for that. And we'd also see mix sizes. So, let's say you have fish over 30 inches coming in here. And pretty sure they're gathering to breed you know, get into big schools and do their thing and then they come off shore and they do their other thing go with these big bowl reds. We also had a fish from 30 inches down to 24 inches that would come in and we have a lot of these grass flats again over the last 10, 15 years. Unfortunately, we're watching a lot of these flats disappear. You know, again, the water quality, weather, red tide really affects that part of it. I don't know.

Interviewer: Can I ask you about 2000 that 2010 period, besides that area that you dived, did you notice red tide anywhere else where you finished or? [Overlapping Conversation]

Sean McQuade: [00:14:00] I just remember just being an area right off the beach. And it was it was a hardcore hit because, you know, again diving through it and we did many dives to keep checking on it, but like somebody turn the switch now what's this dissipated again, I don't know whether wind dissipated, whether it's a water temperature thing, this stuff disappeared. You didn't hear about it. The water got super healthy, and then boom, the fishery came back it bounced back in that area very quickly.

Interviewer: Interesting.

Sean McQuade: You know, again, and I have...

Interviewer: This...

Sean McQuade: Same thing here, if it got back in the Back Bay, it would never be there more than two weeks. It would be a brief thing. It would definitely be red tide, you know, and more the devastation we've seen barring this year. The devastation would be more pinfish or threadfins, you know, just more the of the bait type stuff, yeah we'd see in occasional go-live maybe a smaller one or maybe some snook would die getting caught in it. But you didn't see the devastation like we have now. So, it was brief, it was boom bang and gone.

Interviewer: And here you said it was everything was that though?

Sean McQuade: Yes. This was a complete for that area whether and again whether these fish you know, a lot of the fish sense that and ended up getting away from the time being.

Interviewer: But there was nothing there.

Sean McQuade: But the stone crabs and other stuff. It wasn't like dove and went holy cow there's 30 dead gags here, I'm pretty sure they figured out a way to get out of there. And some dead fish like spottail grunts and stuff, they got caught up in it. But I'm pretty sure, even with this episode being a pretty decent area got away from it, you know [indiscernible] [00:15:57] [00:16:00] cobia we do have a lot of cobia king mackerel here.

And again over the recent years king mackerel fishery has stayed pretty decent here. But we've seen a reduction in our cobia. Even again, going back five years ago, I'd run charters actually on some of these bigger breaks what we call brace, you know, with relief or we get we have a lot of artificial reefs that they've dumped out here. You know, five, six years ago, I could take clients out again, this time of the year, there are some challenge we could have anywhere from 10 to 50 cobia show up, just not seeing that anymore. We're not getting that big influx of them, like we used to.

Interviewer: So, when you notice this event here in 2014, 2015, how did it affect your business, your fishing activities like did you have to switch and in any way?

Sean McQuade: Yes, it was, again a couple of years ago, we had a pretty decent episode. I think it stayed longer. It pushed, pushed and trapped fish and kill. We had it. We had some fish kills, pretty good fish kills here a couple of years ago. And it did because I think what happened is it's the first big hit we've had. And a lot of our people in the area didn't see the devastation like oh yeah, there's red tide and coffin for a couple of weeks. It kind of got swept under the carpet.

You know, we're again, I'm going to pick compare everything to this year. This time they were able to put a major finger at like you could see okay, we've never had a beach, beaches literally hundreds of miles of beaches literally with dead fish that we've never had that kind of a death devastation.

Interviewer: In 2016, would you be able to show us on the map, more or less what was the extent on this red tide? 2016 like the first [00:18:00] Big Hit that you mentioned and you switched the bug?

Sean McQuade: I'm thinking, you know, I know we got hit hard in here, I remember Boca getting hit pretty bad. I want to say it reached you know more to these areas. Again, like this year for some reason this this got spared, I don't know how or why, you know whether it's just the way we have our rivers pushing, I don't know again up the river, for example, you know I don't know what those guys really experienced. I just know the river has been dead for more than probably three or four years. Again going back from that five year period, it's been such tremendous change whether it's red tide or not. That's what concerns me too.

Interviewer: Right.

Sean McQuade: This is where we're getting to like, we can say X-amount of this was red tide, but then I think there's a lot other factors up the river that's, you know, doing this same thing if we go to Peace river and all that, there's other factors of that water quality going. But yeah, I think it was more focused in here because we didn't have really any major kills that I can tell you about running my businesses. I do a lot of half day trips. And again, my half day trips were focused from here to here and no further than, let's say 50 foot. This one isolated incident and now this year, it's wiped out a lot of this, I mean this, this there was nothing here.

Interviewer: So, let's mark that down too.

Sean McQuade: Today is the first day that I've actually got out up in front here, and we are now definitely marking baitfish. We're getting spottails. We're getting Margate grunts. What else we had some lizard fish today. We're definitely some [Indiscernible] [00:20:00] the beach here. I mean, I'm presuming, I'm praying to God that we will have some of these gags and mangrove snapper show up. Not the big thing that the guys are complaining about whether it's water temperature, we wiped out we were getting some mangrove snappers through here now that's kind of non-existent in the zone, right as of now.

Interviewer: As of now like...

Sean McQuade:: Last X amount of months.

Interviewer: Oh, I see.

Sean McQuade: You know, so some of these pockets that these fish got away in which again this is a huge pocket here. Fishing, actually stayed fairly consistent not like it's ever been, again we go back five years ago and this was just an unbelievable fishery you know, it was sustainable for all the guys that we have and all the recreational anglers and stuff.

Interviewer: So, when we're going to the 2018 you say like 17, 18 red tides but that they still remains fairly untouched. So, can you mark for me what's red tide 2000 like this red tide?

Sean McQuade: Yeah, there's a power line that comes through here. All right? So, from North to here and I know the guys have been fishing up and I don't know anything about there but everything pretty much it seems like from here has been kind of spared.

Interviewer: Okay.

Sean McQuade: This all this especially, you know, inside these any of these inlets, there's been some devastation this year.

Interviewer: Inside the...

Sean McQuade: So, yeah we got Boca, Captiva, redfish and there's [indiscernible] [00:21:45] right here. Although I will say this somehow cleaned up in last month a lot of my buddies are finding a lot of big redfish coming through the inlet right now and some snook in here. We had a snook killed here about three months ago, literally thousands on floating dead.

Interviewer: Where sorry?

Sean McQuade: Right in here.

Interviewer: So, inlet coincidence.

Sean McQuade: Blind Pass.

Interviewer: So Blind Pass, Snook yeah all right.

Interviewer: When was the...

Sean McQuade: Let's say Snook Kill was probably three four months ago, let's say June, July is what I want to say, you know. And again I can probably turn you on to more inshore guides that would probably be accurately to say what's what and this is all what I'm hearing from the guys so. But yeah Boca for some reason now they're saying that there's some more dead fish showing up here now as we speak.

Interviewer: Here?

Sean McQuade: Yeah, up and around this Boca area, they are saying they're seeing you know this area again is being constructed...

Interviewer: Can you highlight?

Sean McQuade: Yeah.

Interviewer: Kind of it's kind of new or renewed.

Sean McQuade: Renewed is what I would say.

Interviewer: [Indiscernible] [00:23:05] basically.

Sean McQuade: Yes. Another thing I wish I could, you know what if you can give me a piece of paper?

Interviewer: Sure.

Sean McQuade: Kind of like to show you what I think is maybe going on, I mean, I know the scope this has been stretched out past half an hour on the beaches and actually how it shot up to the north in the last month or so is just incredible you know?

Interviewer: I mean, that's the one we have...

Sean McQuade: Yeah, if you got something I can draw on, like from Sanibel down to Naples in the Marco area because I'm going to give you kind of what's going on, like, I got one of my friends that takes charters out of the Naples and he does run stuff out in Arco. Pretty much I'll try to kind of draw this [indiscernible] [00:24:00]. Yeah here you go. What it seems to me is, as we get to the Boca Grande....

Interviewer: It will be a little bit this area.

Sean McQuade: And this is consistent through the summer. And this is, again the most broad area that I've ever seen. But it seems like this area kind of we got hit in this area and then I don't know whether it's [Indiscernible] [00:24:32] and there is Marco there. So, I want to say that this so far is what I can gather from him.

And for us, once we broke out of these inlets, so from 50 to the 60 foot mark, nothing everything was dead, didn't mark hardly anything. On the surface we had a little bit of like we could see bait and birds working once we got about eight to 10 miles off, but everything on that bottom in their torch I mean I'm saying this is all up to now. Once we got past here fishing the charter from here to I'd say I'm just oh no I can't see it that well but I'm just going to say that 110 foot fishing has been incredible right on that line.

I mean I'm seeing, you know, like lanes, lane snapper. I'm seeing more lane snapper than I've ever seen in these last three months, I mean, we're doing double hook rigs, we're getting lanes up to 22 inches. We're getting anywhere from 20, 15, 18 inch lanes to you know, going down to the smaller one we're getting about 50 head of snapper every trip without even trying. They are pretty much on every [00:26:00] piece of bottom out past that barrier.

Now, again this zone in here is just the water looks terrible we're not reading much on the fish fighter up until recently. We you know as of today I'm finally reading fish in this band here, which is a good sign because last month nothing.

Interviewer: So, November, December?

Sean McQuade: Yeah. November...

Interviewer: Nothing.

Sean McQuade: Zero. I mean not reading not yeah, you're right. Really it's June, July, August, September but um, let's go back...

Interviewer: But you said like now in December you just started seeing just starting seeing fish?

Sean McQuade: Yes, started seeing bait fish and we caught fish today in the 30 foot range, which it's been not existed prior so but there's this wall and it's kind of interesting because you know, knowing that loop current and all that comes up and around. I'm sure Casey has made you guys aware of - he was up to the north here on a commercial trip. Did he tell you about that master.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Sean McQuade: Okay, that's up in here. For me, it's been a combination of stuff. I've seen red water, which is obviously a red tide. I've seen this black water. I've never seen this kind of water.

Interviewer: Where did you see black water?

Sean McQuade: Right in here. This is it. And then you may I don't know maybe you guys could tell me a little further on that, maybe as the red tide came in, knocked out the life took out the oxygen, maybe that's what the water does or is this something else?

The funny thing is just driving through that nobody's coughing. My live wells have stayed pretty decent when I do bring live bait. And usually if we get in some nasty water red tide, they drop right out. You know when you hit a bad patch of water that's up off the surface. So that's another interesting thing that intrigued me is that I've also seen this dusty brown, I'm hearing some theories that it's the dust brought over from the deserts that got in the atmosphere, I don't know, to me.

Interviewer: Where did you see the dusty brown?

Sean McQuade: Again more in the eight mile, eight miles to about 10 miles. There's a band of it that you come out.

First time I saw it, I thought somebody made dump some oil oh my god it was just a wide streak of it. Again, it's like that a light brown dust, you're wonderful. Thank you. So, that's another thing that we're seeing that I don't see very often. So, and again hearing different things about it. I'm going to bring it back. I did some diving it was last month.

Of course we got outside of that that dead zone. We went from 100 feet to almost 75 feet. And again, life is phenomenal. Lots of fish, we shot some nice fish. But again, coming in, I never took any dives in that dead zone. It's kind of freak, too. So, that part of it I can't tell you about, you know, for this year. What else was I'm going to tell you that?

Interviewer: So let's think so from what I understand from what he's saying before 19, I mean 2014, 2015 the word red tide events you've experienced and went through that didn't really have an impact or like shortly, like a few weeks, right?

Sean McQuade: Yes, it was very short lived.

Interviewer: And you could move around them? But then in 2014, 2015, you started to see something more dramatic?

Sean McQuade: Yes.

Interviewer: So, you show me these areas here that was affected. What did you do [00:30:00] to continue in your business? How did that affect you?

Sean McQuade: I'll be honest with you, as of two years ago, my flight fishing business I pretty much closed it down. I saw the writing on the wall that something's going on...

Interviewer: Two years ago?

Sean McQuade: Yes. I decided that I'm done with convincing people because what I would do is a tandem. Let's say, if I get it's nasty weather like it's been lately. Okay guys, I can't offer you a six man charter to 100 foot but what I can do, or even off the beach, is there's nothing there. What I can do is I'll throw it on my flights book I'll get two or three, we'd go redfishing, snook fishing, Pompano whatever, you know, in the winner space, you know, it worked out great.

I pretty much gave that up because I've watched again over the last five years stocks of fish definitely diminished. You know, whether these fish are taking warning and saying hey, little by little they know what's going on. I know a lot of my friends up in Tampa said they had some of the greatest fishing they've had in the last few years up that way.

Now, I know the red tides run through there in sparks too. But it seemed like this last season in the spring they were tearing it up there, somebody said all the redfish you could want, I'm like, that's normally how it is here. And as you get to talk to some of these guys this year, just I mean, this is it we hit between the episodes and the water quality, we've hit rock bottom, but I'm hoping we have.

Interviewer: So, how did you replace that stream of income, right?

Sean McQuade: I'm just pushing the my bigger boat a little bit more you know, we focused on that and yeah, what's going to kill me this...

Interviewer: Same species [indiscernible] [00:31:47]

Sean McQuade: Yes. Yeah, yeah. Again, anywhere from bronze to snapper to grouper, and then we'll put the cobia and amberjack, you know, in that bundle.

Interviewer: Did you notice the difference in [00:32:00] the types of fish kills between the kind of like before 2014?

Sean McQuade: Absolutely.

Interviewer: Okay, so what?

Sean McQuade: Absolutely. Again, being in the areas that I was looking at, again, we're talking more bait fish more small fish got affect, these last two years now look when you have goliath [indiscernible] [00:32:23] I had a video of trying to think what Brian said this is in June or July. It was in Captiva Inlet and the guys were actually catching some awesome mangrove snappers, and getting nice 30 inch gags out of there.

And then as this stuff progressed, there was a day he got up, set up with the charter. They're going they're catching some fish and the incoming tide started hundreds and hundreds of gags were washing in twitching and dying and then that was it. After that, after that episode...

Interviewer: That was [Indiscernible] [00:33:03]

Sean McQuade: That's going to be Captiva.

Interviewer: Captiva.

Sean McQuade: So, basically I'll put an X right there. This was in June because there's a lot of rock in here that these guys fish and that incoming tide literally, I mean on the video you can see if you watch it and you kind of get an estimate of area and what was coming through there. Literally there was hundreds of gags and there were some big I mean up to anywhere from 14 inches to 35 inches dead. And some of them were still on the video you could see them just having like a seizure, you know an episode you can see that they were choking up, you know, we do have video with that.

So, and that's my other buddy, he's got that he sent it to me [00:34:00], I was going to send [Indiscernible] [00:34:01] came out so terrible on my phone. So, we'll have to if you really need that I can get you that evidence but pretty much after that, like say a couple of days now they did okay with catching some gags and they limited out on my mangrove snapper there about four or five days after that video, this whole thing, that fishery god they couldn't get a bite days after that video. So, again...

Interviewer: That was what that was what, more or less the time where it was filmed, you know.

Sean McQuade: I want to say June, let's say June 20th.

Interviewer: And a week later, it was completely dead.

Sean McQuade: Completely dead. So, whatever moved in there killed these fish and that that was it. They could not get out of it, you know, which is kind of scary, you know, fish can't haul butt out of there to get away from that is a pretty devastating. And again, I have never, never seen gags like that dead, I mean, even in this episode, you know, I'm sure a few of them might have taken a hit didn't get out or maybe they got caught up in a little bit and it finally ended up getting into but nothing like this nothing.

Interviewer: So, what do you do? What have you been doing since this?

Sean McQuade: I've been - all my charters now.

Interviewer: So, how do you usually fish and how it changed?

Sean McQuade: Okay. So, with the offshore fishery that I've been fishing, I have three trips that I offer half day, which I stay within probably eight miles of the beach, you know, and up until now it's been a tremendously healthy fishery. So, I'll run you know, five hours, will fish about three and a half hours, anywhere from 25 foot to about 40 foot. Then I'll do a three quarter day which is anywhere [00:36:00] from that 25, 30 foot out to about 60 foot. And in my full days run, basically I'll stay outside of that. So, I'll go from 60 foot to about 120 feet. And then if they want an extra-long trip, it'll be outside the 120 would be from 120 to 150.

So, my breed and butter basically comes from 30 feet to about 120 feet. That's the majority of my charter. So, I don't know whether I'll get it like last year, for example, at this time of the year, I was booked 14 days out of the days I had off. And I got to run I think a dozen of those trips even with the weather out of that, and I do document my charter. So, out of that we ran I think six or seven trips right off the beach for half days and had a phenomenal, phenomenal trips trying to pull some of this up, and probably later on I'll even give you more examples of what's the differences fishing right off of beach and fishing offshore. I mean for now knock on wood, you know, again, this is an example of...

Interviewer: [Indiscernible] [00:37:14]

Sean McQuade: That's an 80, 85 foot, this is on the outside of that zone, that's a typical day. This again very strong fishery. I know who proficient fishing have you know, I know that's why you came to us, that's where [Overlapping Conversation] [00:37:27] I think we are in a cycle with red grouper.

But it also could be water quality now we'll put some of this together. There are some of the things that I could correlate with the red tide is maybe it'll kill some of hatch things or some of these in the estuaries now the last few years that have killed off. But I will say it's still pretty strong out there. These fish have been very finicky. I will say that, we have dropped down to lighter line this year than we had in prior finish. They're just [00:38:00] and they're very spread out. I'm not getting eight to ten, fifteen big fish, I

dropped, I'm getting one here, two there, none, one, but they were there, you know, and you can see I can show you a picture after picture in the last two years right here.

But anyway, yeah, this fishery really I mean has gotten shocked this year bad. You know, and again with this years ago, even with the smaller in and outs, this recuperate, very, very quickly, it bounds back.

Interviewer: More or less?

Sean McQuade: I'd say, a five-month period is where I want to say.

Interviewer: Like you said in that area, okay.

Sean McQuade: You know, again, and I think the problem we're faced with, again, the boys down by Naples area is they're running through 24 order now to about 100 it's still not good, that nasty water hasn't dissipated you know, maybe it's getting a little better.

But nobody that's fishing in that zone they said they're having a real hard time getting fish, even to show on fish liners. So, and we're here again if you if you kind of draw that line you can see where and how that water is flushing, you know, all that for some reason we have a big belly in here that is outstretched to that 100 foot. And I think up until a week or two ago that guys were saying they're seeing the red water down here with orange, you know that red tides flared up more again coming off Naples, they're seeing it in this general area, you know, as we speak that's why...

Interviewer: But this is kind of like the general area?

Sean McQuade: Yeah, and I don't know if it's made it down in the Bay of Florida only you guys I don't know, whoever's tracking it.

Interviewer: Okay.

Sean McQuade: Once we get past [00:40:00] here, I don't know anybody fishing in the bag that's in the Bay of Florida. But this yeah, this has been it's amazing how that shot offshore though, and affected their deeper water where we have it a little tighter it's the 50 foot, you know it seems like once we break out in this way, if we don't go too far, hard South West, we're not seeing that. It's not affecting our offshore fishery is bad it is down here off net.

Interviewer: Okay. What about any impacts on your health in any of these events?

Sean McQuade: You know, I've had no I want to go back again to June, July.

Interviewer: Okay.

Sean McQuade: Myself personally have had days of scratchy throat and wicked headaches. And we would get through this pretty quickly. Thank God, you know, so it wasn't like, let's say my boat does on average 30 miles an hour. So I can get out and pass that 15, 16 mile where we really were coming through it, you know fairly quickly within a half hour I can be out.

Yeah, but still that exposure, you know, I haven't had too many customers call back and say wow, you know, after we went on your trip we have you know some respiratory distress. But there's a bunch of us that it's funny because I haven't been through a lot of this lately because it's been kind of quiet. So I can't tell you like, lately what's going on with that whole deal. You know, but I would feel...

Interviewer: How like what would be your kind of like business volume this time of the year normally at?

Sean McQuade: Again, going back to this month. I would say it does in 14 trips. I have to work in the firehouse 10 days is when it comes to where the thing is. So, again, if you feel that, you know, I got kids and then the other part of my life, so it gets pretty crazy. You know in [00:42:00] – so, we've got December, January, February March, I'm pretty much booked every day. So, it's going to be interesting to see what comes about and transpires the next month with the fishery, with the water and whether these people are going to book. So, I am definitely way behind and this has affected us.

Interviewer: So, normally you will be booked already for January and February?

Sean McQuade: Normally, I would be. Now, as of now on my books like this month, I had four definite trips. I mean, we're way behind the negative publicity on this, unfortunately and the reality of this is, it's deterred I think quite a bit of my – I have a lot of people that have fly, you either stay on the beach or they have a condo. Hey, we're down here with family. Let's jump on a trip and boom it's done and even before Christmas. So, I can't really give you what's going to happen until really after Christmas where these people were just waiting or it's gotten to people and they're thinking, hey, this area is dead. We don't want anything to do with it. So, I don't know yet, you know.

Interviewer: In the previous events like 2010, 2014 – were there any like...

Sean McQuade: Economical...

Interviewer: Do you have any health...

Sean McQuade: Health?

Interviewer: Yes.

Sean McQuade: You know again, I think what happens here let's say, we're all fishing together. You might tell me, hey, Sean, don't go to Boca there's – it's bad, a coffin.

Okay. Now, I know to divert. So, over in recent years or the past years, we were able to divert more to stay out of it as people would get into it they kind of report to each other like don't go here. We get around it.

Interviewer: Okay.

Sean McQuade: Now, as you can see getting around it is, this year was almost impossible. Besides here, this has been the jammed this is – I think this is going to save our fishery that the fish [00:44:00] that stayed out of this and survived, you know, its...

Interviewer: Any particular species that didn't make any sense, like didn't – weren't – was not like that...

Sean McQuade: Here it did excellent but in here, okay. I can tell you many of my guide friends. I'll give you an example. Let's...

Interviewer: For example, what kind of species you catch up here?

Sean McQuade: Here? Oh, everything.

Interviewer: Everything.

Sean McQuade: Mangrove snappers, still gag grouper there's pompano I'm sure there's goliath, there's been cobia, redfish, snook and trout, it's kind of stayed in a consistency through here.

Interviewer: And is it like, this is like the normal condition with all these species...

Sean McQuade: It's still a lot slower...

Interviewer: It's still a lower – lot slower.

Sean McQuade: You know the school there are – there's been a few schools of redfish. I don't know how they pulled this off, that would be offshore. We still had redfish running to get my bearings and burn store, pirate is this is all a gym here. But you know, let's say these schools would run from here and here and up to here and they would come every year. You know, this is there, in September, October, like clockwork, you can take your calendar out and say, okay, there was a school 300 redfish, you know, on this point. And they would show up or there's a school of 1000 that would run this beaches here. They would show 1

So, whether they again diverted from this area or they unfortunately may have got caught up in some of this bad water. That part I can't tell you, we can't tell you the long term effect. I mean, obviously what we're seeing now is that the snook again, big kills, big kills all these inlets. [00:46:00]. I want to go back to August and somewhere on the inside the Boca Grande but he calls me, because you know again – sometime I would

charter and sometimes I will stop and I want everybody just to have fun and we do some win fishing this time of the year.

He spotted a nice big school of 30 to 40 inch snook and probably 200 to 300 sitting in school, had him sitting here by Cayo Costa, want to go take his customers [overlapping conversation].

Interviewer: Oh, my God, I'm sorry...

Sean McQuade: Oh, that's it, and don't worry about that [laughter] it's all getting back watch it. I'm good. I got kids. There's all kinds of stuff, that's froze up in my water bottle. But anyway, so a big school came back with the customers and he's got a tower boat. Yes, he went to go settle up on the snook, went and look and see the snook and went seen way too much silver. They were all lying dead, two days after he told me about it, dead. Belly up, God.

Interviewer: When was this?

Sean McQuade: This was up in Cayo Costa here, somewhere up in this area. Yes, that was all this.

Interviewer: And that was like...

Sean McQuade: Up in the backside of that island, snook – yes, and I mean a good school, a big fish, big breeders that, I mean I wiped out. You know, and it's one of those things whatever water rolled their way in and drop them right where they sat. So, that's what I thought it was pretty interesting that to have something, it happened so quickly and he said they were healthy [indiscernible] [00:47:41] and they were busted up on it, figure he'll leave alone let him sit there because that's, you know a lot of us who will try to hold our fish.

So, you know some other things that, you know over the last few years of watching a little bit of this water [00:48:00] but this year, it concerns me that, we've got a lot of stuff going on with the river, this mosaic within tracking and dumping the phosphorus in the water and it's like...

Interviewer: Where was...

Sean McQuade: I think mosaic dumps and then...

Interviewer: Oh, that was gone but...

Sean McQuade: Yes, they're in the mining company in Central Florida. And again, I'm just giving you some of the information that I've been passed on and to what I talked to people, it seems like they're allotted X amount of phosphorus in their dumping, when they're, you know, they got all this byproduct that they dump. And it seems like and

that's something maybe you guys could look up that there's a percentage of phosphorus that they are allowed to dump in other chemicals or...

Interviewer: Right.

Sean McQuade: You know that they funnel through here in the state and eventually I'm sure that works its way here. I don't know if you are aware of an incident. I don't know if anybody has talked about it up in Tampa they had that major spill. And Casey may be able to further you about it.

Interviewer: Casey showed me the email.

Sean McQuade: And it's funny how all sudden he went to the northwest and boom, he sees this mustard looking stuff. So, is it correlated to that? I don't know. But that's funny how that stuff whipped up and he was up there and all sudden he see this fucking water up that way. So, you know, what concerns me is knowing again and I'm not saying you guys isn't a general, I'm just saying the government and water samples I mean, I don't know what game FWC is playing with you. Because I know for years they have kind of – oh yes, the red tide of honor rain and so on this beach or this or that.

So, what information they would give you and how hard of evidence that is like [00:50:00] okay, we did sampling and this is what happened or is this just what they're hearing? I don't know. But, yes that sampling – my curiosity is, do we really know even what Mississippi and all that you know, you got all that stuff being dumped, we got dead zones there that's been there though it's something that, I think we've learned to say – hey, this is what it is these nutrients and this is the dead zone that outside of it everything else is flourishing.

Interviewer: Yes.

Sean McQuade: And also, but here that's not the norm. 26 years ago, I just give you that I hate to be jumping around on your 26 years ago when I first moved here, a couple of my friends said, man you want to go have the best time you're like efficient off the beach. I said, go to Sanibel, go up to bypass park there and back then you know, the beach was empty. I was literally getting up on blind pass bridge and looking out you would see this black masses moving down the beach, it's how clean the water was. In the school of thousands of snook, so wide that you could literally wait for them to come down to the beach and go, okay, you'd have your bait, we, cast nets and bait. We would walk out to where they were and you would fish them and catch snook all day long. That's how clean the water was back then.

And then, I noticed that getting worse and worse as I would say, let's say early 2000's. The water wasn't as clean and we didn't see as biggest schools coming down. I mean, this is going back, way back when you know it – you can see it even opportunity let's say again, three years ago I can still go up on the beach and really have an excellent dates and catch some snook and redfish, whiting. [00:52:00]. And now, I don't know what it's, it's

gotten from the water quality back then to now there's a big difference, a big, big difference even think out again five years ago, whether it's attributed to now. And again, I know weather patterns have changed.

But I think the river is changed and that even though, I can remember going up the river 20 years ago, and it would be clean and you can actually catch a bait way up the river. The snook fishing was phenomenal. Black drunk fish are phenomenal, big trout – you don't see that at all anymore. The color of the water now is just not anything like the wintertime. You know, you would call them the water would, you know clean right up for especially in October, November, December and you know, now your rain some side, your typical tannic water that comes through here, which is even, it might be orange looking water but it was clear, clean fish could live in.

More and more, you're seeing that diminish up in the river too. So, if that's getting beat up and who knows what's in that order from all this dumping? You know that's wrapping around in our area is definitely being affected by that.

Interviewer: So, if you kind of like, on the same note, like, you know what are the things that clue you into words – yes, we might see a red tide, you know in the near future, is there anything that kind of gives you a clue about what you can expect or [overlapping conversation]?

Sean McQuade: You know, again and they don't go back to – and the hard thing is getting data back when we were catching a lot of fish and the river was healthy. I mean, we're seeing all this algae and junk coming that we've never, I mean, maybe once in a blue moon, you might have a little episode of something coming down a river but now it's consistently. So, like [00:54:00] salinity I mean, I know that's a big thing, you know the rivers is still considered brackish water. I don't even know what our solidity is from here on up.

But if you change it, you know, let's say over the course of my 26 years of being here, let's say that the salinity is, okay consider brackish water wherever parts for million, I don't know biggest below 28 or 27, or I don't know what the readings would be. I know 31 years healthy in our area, it's good [indiscernible] [00:54:29] the river off course, it's going to diminish. It would be interesting to see what the comparative resolve because if over, let's say from 1993 to 2000, our salinity has stayed at a base of – I want to say, let's say 26 up there. So, it's still brackish water and everything's.

And now, let's say if that's down to 14 or 10, or now we're more into a freshwater thing, well, how's that going to affect the fish? Well, absolutely because the fish that like that 26 number or maybe a 14, which is getting – well, which can tolerate freshwater.

Interviewer: Right.

Sean McQuade: Now, it's all fresh water. So, now the fish that we had going up the river, they're not doing that, they might be pushed out for being deterred to going in that because of selenium has changed. Now, we add on, what other junk fertilizers and phosphate and nitrate you know, how is that all affecting just that system alone?

Interviewer: Right.

Sean McQuade: So, some of our answers may be what's going on with that river and how that changed? And again, and so how's that stuff now coming down the river, maybe it's like, said everybody's thinking pesticides and mountain caring and all that is driving you know, that gets washed in here. And that comes down in the river and maybe that's a fuel that's feeding it. [00:56:00]. Again, that part I don't know, I'm not a biologist to break down that red tide or...

Interviewer: There's nothing that you personally can kind of like while traveling alone or fishing can say, oh, I see that happening and we might have a red tide in the next, I don't know if you [overlapping conversation] [00:56:20].

Sean McQuade: Right. I mean then, no, I mean there's no literal warning of what, where and how it fires off?

Interviewer: Yes.

Sean McQuade: You know and again, watching that river over the years of fishing it, I mean as fisherman pay attention to all that stuff and then that to watch that system just plummet. You know, it's like again, getting a base of what's going on from those, from Okeechobee all the way to here may have some of our answers on that part of it. What concerns me is just dispersing, that oil spill and dumping all that stuff that they did. You know, we'll never know I mean again, you guys being on the biologist part of it – I don't know where do we start, how would you figure that out, but I feel that that is fueling it.

I think red tides, red tide it's been here for how you know, history. It struck different parts of the gulf at different times. Now, we're seeing different water and I just don't think it's the red tide, it's doing this. I think this...

Interviewer: So, when you say different water, was the color of the water – what [overlapping conversation].

Sean McQuade: Again, this black water...

Interviewer: So, in the previous years, red tide, you know, eastern time because of fish, dead fish, mostly that the bait fish, the water look different?

Sean McQuade: Yes, the water was – oh, yes absolutely.

Interviewer: Why was red?

Sean McQuade: Yes.

Interviewer: Was that – okay? And so in the last few years, you've seen other colors...

Sean McQuade: [00:58:00] Yes.

Interviewer: Besides red.

Sean McQuade: Brown. We're getting this black water. I know at our last meeting we discussed with those guys up in Tampa this middle grants, why we had such a dead area there, whether it was confirmed red tide or could it that been something that dispersing that caused some bad water to get hypoxic or maybe it's something else growing in here that we don't know another algae or I don't know that, that's the other part that is such an open book, but we're seeing different we're not just seeing just red tide.

Interviewer: Yes.

Sean McQuade: It's really where I'm kind of heartbroken. You know, it's like, wow, and how do you get a handle on that or how do we know that stuff that's getting dumped from the Mississippi finally is making itself around and causing a dead area but when they said that dead area, the middle ground? I mean, that's shocks you because that's deeper water up. One thing with the gulf that I've learned, especially, you know, we've done trips way, way off shore. I've actually fished up in the Mississippi, it fascinates me how this new currency, which is derived down from Mexico comes almost straight up across and banks off the Mississippi and comes around our side.

So, the volume of clean water I would say clean water is tremendous. This gulf can wash itself out in a matter of I don't know, let's say a month I'm just going to put a time on it. You know, knowing that we have that good water but now that to see the water getting and, I can't say poison, but that's the word I'm going to use. You know, pass the Mississippi, we're getting this pan and all the way down to where we're at. It's like why is that doing that, you know? And again, I'm not convinced it's just the red tide, you know.

And now, we're seeing there's different strains and stuff. Maybe some of it harmful, maybe some its not. Another piece of evidence, I'll give you that this spring we shoot a lot of black grouper here. [01:00:00] In springtime, they'll come and migrate from the tour to this and work their way up into our area. This year is the first year I've ever seen in the summer. And I know you guys know the mechanics so, okay springtime, typical spring, cold water, it gets hot. You know, eventually somewhere it's either we get a thermal cloth but it pinches that cold water and we don't get that convection.

But you watch our temperatures go from like 67, 68 January, February, March, March is our turning point, weather changes, patterns change, wind changes. And that's where I think causes a lot of our migrations. You know, where these fish know, okay, it's time to

come here but they're coming here because the forage is moving a certain way or temperatures getting a certain way. Now, this year diving, surface temperatures 84 degrees, 85 degrees for example, this is the first year ever I can tell you our bottom temperature in 80 to a 100 foot was 72, 74.

Interviewer: Wow.

Sean McQuade: And then hearing, I know whether it was you guys or somebody else may had mention that seemed like when Casey was out testing that it seemed like a lot of this guy trapped down in that thermal client. So I mean, another interesting fact that I, you know, going down now, you would see a like a layer. It wasn't like a red tide layer. All as we were feeling is that temperature go from, oh, man, it's comfortable to like, I couldn't breathe out of my regulator for about a minute...

Interviewer: Wow.

Sean McQuade: Because it hits you so cold that temperature change in the summer, it's never that diverse that pronounced. You know, let's say from surface to about 30 to 40 feet off the bottom, that's when [indiscernible] [01:01:57]. So interesting that, [01:02:00] I don't know if that has any new effect, some of the things that are going on, but I've never seen that before. You know again, going back a couple of years ago, of course, we've had our hurricanes, we've had a ton of rain, you know, not in our normal thing go back 10 or 12 years and take our averages. I think we've had more episodes here. You know, and with that being said, the coastline and really the middle part of our state, you had that extra rain and the extra stuff.

Now, either we're washing more junk out, you know, and this is from the North Florida down. So, could that possibly affect what's going on? You know, I know some people are going behind the global warming. And it doesn't matter what everybody's opinions on that. We're definitely seeing a change pattern in our last three to four years. So, is that part of the problem or is somebody strains of algae changing within or what – I don't know, I mean some of this now it sounds pretty nasty that, that you know I know people are coming up with these respiratory stuff...

Interviewer: Yes.

Sean McQuade: And lately in the last couple years, so.

Interviewer: In the last couple years?

Sean McQuade: Yes. So, yes as our fishing patterns change you know, I know a guys are worried about the red grouper. I know a guys came with us concerns is, is killing our gag grouper and our yearlings and stuff that we need to come out. It could to an extent. But I think what's happening here is these fish got a little smarter than we think they are. And they're like, you know, it's like us coming in this room. We're breathing fresh air but let's say, we came in here and somebody had some hydrochloric acid and your

breathing, you know, oh, that's terrible or you know, something that smells like rotten eggs. After a while let's come in here and you know what, I don't think we should meet here. You know this is and we're going to stop going.

Interviewer: Yes.

Sean McQuade: [01:04:00] So, again another thing that I've thought about heavily over the last few years, why we have certain changes? Obviously, this has really been getting his butt kicked. And again, besides the documented episode up, you know that big area they had up in Tampa, you know, but again, what is driving that? I mean, is that going to be really red tide? I don't ever remember red tide out really past too far off the beach. This is the furthest, I've ever seen it personally. Maybe it sat on a surface for a day or two and went one who knows where but not nowhere was killing stuff. So, that's another concerns like, well, what's going on here?

Interviewer: Right. It's shifted, definitely shifted. So, no question that I'm thinking if current conditions of red tide continue for let's say, another six months – how would that affect your business?

Sean McQuade: Well, again, even going back to last year, you know, it affected people. People started not going to come, somehow they swept that session of it. Oh, don't worry, it's going to go away and it kind of went away it receded when people came back. This years, I mean, if it keeps going, how are you going to convince anybody even want to come here? How are you going to – there's people that I know that don't even want to stay here.

You know, I got two young kids I'm going to do if this continues, I've got nothing to show these kids as they grow up and stuff that I grew up with here. And the health issue starts becoming a problem. Who's going to want to stay here and poison water? So, again, if it goes and six months, my main people that come here that will, winter here, I got people that will stay four to six months. They're going to start thinking why am I spending thousands of dollars [01:06:00] on my condo to come here for four months? When – again, they want to enjoy the beach, they probably want to go fishing, they want to see the dolphins and they want to see the manatees.

If you don't give them that option, there's no reason for them to be here. I think we're going to lose a lot economically here. We're all hanging on by a thread as it is in the last five years. You know, if you think about it, things have just progressively gotten worse, you know. So now we're to a point, we talked about that rock bottom is just going to be a rock bottom, I mean it, again, in my mind, thinking, the way of thinking, you know, over the years of process, this a giant episode now that we had the right concoction of situations that came here and this is the worst we're going to have it and maybe it'll burn itself out or grow itself out or get pushed and it's done or is all this going to continue to keep fueling many different things? And this is going to be a normal.

Interviewer: Okay.

Sean McQuade: We certainly don't want that. I know we're all crossing our fingers and praying to God that this isn't going to continue, you know.

Interviewer: Any signs of that, that is not going to continue, you said there is some fish that's started to come back?

Sean McQuade: And someone is starting to light up, which is good. You know, again, that stuff I pay attention to as a fisherman, you know, that is a positive sign. Again, when you take something that got torched and there's nothing there and I know you guys have done tests and said, hey, there's 0% oxygen here now. And I know, they said as of a couple of weeks ago, that index is between zero and eight has been about a four or five. That's good.

However, what about five months from now, this hits again? You know, is the fuel burnout or [01:08:00] whatever strains of stuff we got? Again, I don't, I'm not sold on complete red tide. So, you know, controlling one you, I mean, you'll never control it, we just can study it and say, okay, this is what's going on. And maybe you can add some of the items that flare it up and give it fuel. But I think we're, we got our hands full of trying to figure out all the dynamics of this work. I think it's just more than what meets the eye. So, you know, and I know for to myself and Casey talking about this all the time and say, hey, we are willing to do whatever you can for testing or taking samples at least on our base of doing a trips and giving you parts of what we're saying...

Interviewer: Yes.

Sean McQuade: Maybe I come into a crappy part or one like hey, here's that brown stuff snook and some stuff up here you go, guys. This was at a 26, 14 and 82, 27 and you can go, take it to the lab and go home. Okay. This might be a harmless strain of algae's for all we know or maybe it's something you're going all day, this is showing up something else. I don't know. So, that's...

Interviewer: Do you have any knowledge of how spawning thing change, history changes or any changes in fish behavior besides, you know?

Sean McQuade: That a two part thing for me.

Interviewer: Okay.

Sean McQuade: Because again, nor to survive it and think about some of the things I've learn in school, going from zooplankton to migrations to why stuff changes, sexes and how stuff moves in and out, water temperature that whole thing is always the way I pride myself on fishing out here. I'm going to say, yes to that on one part, that the weather change and water temperature changing. And forge being different has changed some of these patterns.

Interviewer: [01:10:00]. Okay.

Sean McQuade: Example, gags, one of my favorite fishing catch. They're used, you know these cold months we would get a mad Russia gag from the Bay all the way to right out here, whether a lot of them or more male because they're smaller fish, which I do believe there are some females because they will have eggs. You know, but fish up to about 35 inches down to that big that starting in the bay and they go nuts this coming year.

Interviewer: No too like seven, eight inches.

Sean McQuade: Yes.

Interviewer: Yes.

Sean McQuade: And to see in the last again three to four years, we're not seeing their numbers, so is it because of water temperature and forage maybe they're focused up in the northern gulf a little bit more or out in the deeper water, or are they even sensing this bad water this, this is not favorable to them? And it's not what they like and they have changed their migration for now or that, we just wipe out a migratory, you know, school of fish now that have been back and forth through here, or now I know doing this long time I know there's residential fish that stay here. Those fish that are in the summer, their residential gags again, they're not 40 inch fish. But they're that 15 to about 35 inches. I think they choose to stay here because they have good forage and they're not going to make that migration out offshore.

Interviewer: Okay.

Sean McQuade: Summertime, usually deep water and north, wintertime right in the bays and off the beach. And then as we get to March we know that's a big spawning month for a lot of our grouper, whether some stayed here but most I think those females will get offshore, you know, [indiscernible] [01:11:53]. I mean, it's a yes question to patterns have changed, [01:12:00] I feel that it's been more towards a weather pattern in the last X amount of years and the same thing with the red grouper. You've seen their pattern is, there's no way you're going to convince me that we caught all the red grouper out here.

Interviewer: Okay.

Sean McQuade: You know, I know we have a lot less fishermen, whether in water. And again, there's no way you can put one finger on. Red grouper, in my opinion over 26 years they've stayed very healthy. They've had stayed with their patterns of migration. We have a big stock of fish that stays off of Naples and Marco. We call it the compass rose. And then we have a residential that year but – yes, you can watch them go in and out right on the money and then I can, again get my charters and look at my book and say okay, August, September, these red grouper start working their way out a little deeper and grouping up.

And like right now, we're seeing some really nice sized fish that we didn't see in a summer coming together and feeling a little harder. It's hard to say, because we had some really nice 26, 28 inch red grouper in this year. In In the last couple years, I have not seen that as a lot of little fish. So, that there's some things definitely changing. But, if we take these two years out, it's been very normal. This year, you know, again, I'm not finding big schools of grouper. I mean, you might have an area, that was just giving an example like in the summer 12 to 14 inch fish. I'm just going to give you, I mean a little example. Let's say in the 60 foot of water and in a summer, June, July and August we'll catch a 100 to 200 red grouper anywhere from 12 inches to about 28 inches. [01:14:00] We love to come here and fished.

Again, as soon as that we start getting our water temperature where I marked out today 70 degrees, that's enough to start pulling the main and bigger grouper that are types of speed they'll start moving on, doesn't mean January, February when we catch a couple of mudskipper but the main bulk this year in the summer, they're hiking it. These fish are moving out and in the ones that are in the 80 foot, 100 foot, 120 feet, they're gathering up and in by January, those suckers are at 180 feet, 140 feet, 150 feet.

So, the main school that here in the summer are definitely hiking. So, it's going to be hard to tell you because now I don't have any of this that you can judge whether they died, died out of here. And now, we are seeing the migration happening in the 80 to 100 foot, things are happening like they should, just we're not killing like say again, going back a couple years ago. We get this time of the year. We were getting fish even from 70, 80 foot out to 120. I take a charter out. We can make two or three stops and have 40 head of legal 20 plus inch red grouper this time of the year. We're not seeing that bulk of the fish, I mean we're having good days, we're getting anywhere from a dozen nice sized fish to maybe 20, if we're lucky, you know. I will say over the last few years again, soon as I get my legal red grouper, I'm pulling off the red grouper bottom. I'm trying to go to like smaller breaks where we get mangrove snappers or lane you know, more open bottoms. So.

Interviewer: Speaking of that what was the impact of like, you know and in the last three years, trying to adapt to this events and changing water condition, [01:16:00] how did regulations impact you or helped you or not help you?

Sean McQuade: Just like anything, I mean, I don't want to bash our system. I mean, ever since really the federal end of it has taken over. I mean, I feel that there's, you know, like us sitting here talking is great. And this is how I should always feel that we should have a balance of fishermen, scientists, commercial recreational divers, everybody coming together. I mean, you got a lot of guys and ladies that are making these regulations, author hip. There's no hardcore circumstantial evidence, like triggerfish. What are they doing? It's open, it's closed, this size, that size. They don't have a clue. They don't think we have actually more.

This last couple years, we've actually seen bigger, some bigger triggerfish showing up here whether it's a slack and regulation or changing water, I don't know. You know, it's like lane snapper is a great example. They've always been eight inches, which again they don't get very big. But there's more lane snapper showing up here than I've ever seen, red snapper, more red snapper and I – 26 years of watching it, we never used to catch red snapper not even remotely close to what we're getting now. So, some things are changing in the positive and some things are not.

You know, again whether it's correlated to this or fish cycle and we all know that fish do have cycles. Same thing with Amberjax, they shut down oh, you can only, you're going to have a season on them, why? As charter guides and even, let's say I take you out and we're going to go Amberjax fish and is that's what you enjoy to do? I put you on four or five of those things, do you think you want to catch 60 of them? No, you're going to want to probably catch one nice one to take home, fight a few more you're done.

You know so, for them to put these clams and raise the sizes, none of us know why. It's not like we're going out and catching 67 [01:18:00] Amberjax and trip and then going home. You know, so why they even mess with it? I don't know. And I'm diving out here on some of these deeper wrecks, some of these wrecks that had maybe a good hand 30 to 40, 50 of them there's 200, 300 and 400 of them. You dive down and you're almost getting dizzy because they're certainly you know, so that's change for the better, is triggerfish again, I mean we usually see an average triggerfish out here, is anywhere from 10 to maybe 14 inches, so they made it 15, is that good and bad? Well, I mean to know the area, and what an average me and fishes but if you go to the oil rigs, you're catching triggers 7, 8, 9 pounds and they make a living of it up there but not down here. So, some of these regulations and what's going on don't make any sense.

Interviewer: What do you think, I mean how for the future, coping with red tide let say, that this red tide events happen every two years at the hypothetical scenario, what kind of like management like fishery management type of thing would helped?

Sean McQuade: Well, I think, again, the hard part about this is, we don't even have our finger on really, truly what's going on. I'm not saying you guys aren't doing your job. I'm just saying that it seems to me now that we're all congregating together, how much hard evidence in the last 10 years that you can say I got samples, and here's the chemical makeup of this, and this and this and this. And then you start putting some of these pieces together and going, you know what? All the stuff that is coming out, or the river is driving this stuff to get out of control and go and spread faster.

I mean, I don't think this is going to, you know, the more and more we see this, I wouldn't say it's a natural event. You know, it's occurred [01:20:00] and it's drop fish from here all the way to Boston, fish kills have happened, you know, in history, but this is something more than again, it's hard to answer that question because I know as far as us guys that, again, that are in the fishery, that loved what we do. I mean, I know there's a bunch of us that are willing to do whatever we can do to figure this out, whether it is the

red tide or what's going on. I mean, that's all I can tell you is that somehow we all have to band together and find out really what's going on.

You know, that's because and it's going to affect this no matter what we do. But here's why I talked about this rock bottom. If we're not at rock bottom, how's it going to affect us? It's going to drive everybody out of here, it's going to shut businesses down, its going to close fish houses, it's going to determine the people that actually that a lot of these people rely on, you know, these next four or five months, you take that away. We have a crash economy.

Interviewer: What have you observed in the community so far related to red tide, what can you say about or how and then people are – whether fisherman or not like, what's happening?

Sean McQuade: Yes, it's very negative.

Interviewer: Okay.

Sean McQuade: It is very negative. I mean, again, me and just me having two kids, I won't let them swim anywhere around this. You know, and I don't know why I still do it, but you're not going to take that out of me. But again, if it meant that I can't have my kids go swimming, diving or fishing, why would I even want to be here?

Interviewer: Is that like, is that common among families they don't, they stop doing this activity, is that something you observed like in your families?

Sean McQuade: Sure. I mean, I don't know if you guys saw the interview. Again, we had East Germans come. They come here for two, three weeks a month. Again, if you look at them, oh, getting shells off the beach [01:22:00] and sitting on a beach and getting brown. That's their whole thing of coming here, just to see that. They're never going to come here again. We said in the interview when we're done, why are we going to spend thousands of dollars to get our family here to not even be able to sit on the beach right now?

You know, they go back to Germany and then you know, this is – I think this is becoming worldwide views. So, yes, that I'm going to tell you about the patient when we ran somebody the other day, first thing you said I can't breathe because of the red tide, whether it's true or not. There's an example though is its starting, people are starting to blame some of their health problems on it now. I can't say whether the – it's not red tide, it's affecting them. And you know, seeing this bird episode, all these birds dropping out. And again, this is going on for months whether it's something they're eating...

Interviewer: What – I missed it, so was the bird episode – I like birds, tell me about birds [laughter].

Sean McQuade: No, no I mean just a Naples here right as those dolphins washed up, tons of tons are just popping dead...

Interviewer: What kind of birds like...

Sean McQuade: Turn...

Interviewer: Oh...

Sean McQuade: Seagulls.

Interviewer: Okay. Seagulls and...

Sean McQuade: Yes. Here, I got a video another video for you guys have a pelican sitting up on the beach, my buddy was sitting there and he has all these blueprints matter of fact that was a – I was writing this error, wait and let me see what's in here? Right here, he was down the beach right here, on video he's got hundreds, we can't really see the blue crabs but the blue crabs are up on the beach and stone crabs trying to get out of the water. And there was thousands of dead blue crabs there. And there's a couple of pelicans sitting there, one pelicans just going on and fell over and dead [01:24:00].

Interviewer: But they ate the, ate some of the...

Sean McQuade: Ate it, yes.

Interviewer: Oh, yes we should mark that up.

Sean McQuade: That's why, yes, that we got it and again video for that pelican dropping out and how many other birds who knows, I mean, but it's happening. And this was months ago, if you look it up after these, I think they pulled 46 dolphin is if I'm not correct so far and maybe more down in that Naples area that's where all those terms are. Birds are just showing up dead on the beach. So, and this is very recent, very, very recent. Scare me...

Interviewer: I mean...

Sean McQuade: But I mean...

Interviewer: I mean, before I made an updation here.

Sean McQuade: Yes.

Interviewer: And this is like the migratory area.

Sean McQuade: Yes, this summer, summer, yes. Well, this would be where the red grouper mixed but like now, is when we see the gag come in this way. And they'll come

in here. So, the gags and basically any, and we're seeing anywhere from 14 inches to basically 35 inch. And they like to come in here around September through November they start showing up. And in our peak months are December, January, and then we get to March. So, they're there, they show up here in peak and by March, March – say through April. A lot of these fish will start now making their migration back out as...

Interviewer: And right now, as of now there's nothing here?

Sean McQuade: Right now, this is a dead – yes, this is a dead zone. Now, whatever red grouper got you know what, when I'm – that's [01:26:00] why we call this the fence right now between us guys.

Interviewer: The fence, interesting.

Interviewer: Because this inside of that is where the devastation right. And that can change day to day but over the let's say last three months, again we're driving out this water is pretty much black. And then you get over here and boom, we get some green, green in here where you can see it changing and then it's beautiful blue once we break the 70 to 80 foot the color is a...

Interviewer: So, the fence is black water?

Sean McQuade: Yes. Black and then you can put with brown because again in the mixed up...

Interviewer: Black.

Sean McQuade: As we're going through it, you're getting its real weird brown dusty stuff.

Interviewer: And then you said this one is blue?

Sean McQuade: Once you pass, yes. Once you get into about 80 foot...

Interviewer: And between here?

Sean McQuade: Yes. Green to blue.

Interviewer: Green to blue, and then it's nice green.

Sean McQuade: Yes. Nice blue actually.

Interviewer: Nice blue.

Sean McQuade: My last dive, I did a couple of weeks ago. So, I want to – I go back to picture that. Now, once we got outside of that okay, this was two of us. We made dives

between, I mean beautiful lobster, lots of big man's, that was the pile of fish between two of us, that's what we shot. Nice black grouper, some red groupers. And then we did a little bit of fishing too. But anyway, I mean, that's this, that's a huge lane snappers but outside of the fence, no problem. I think, either we make four or five gags and we were done...

Interviewer: Wow.

Sean McQuade: Plenty of lobster. We actually saw some bulldozers...

Interviewer: But do you think there's a chance that it's the fish that escaped this area or are [01:28:00] they feeding on something here that's related to red tide, what do you think?

Sean McQuade: That's, that's a funny, complicated question again, because I think it's a combination of both, you know, these fish were going to be in here anyway, and spread out to that zone. So yes, do I feel that maybe some of those fish came back out because that zone is excellent fishing. You know, a lot of those lanes snappers would be all through here. So, again, I'm hoping and praying they did back out of that. But you know, a lot of them died too. So, its combination.

Interviewer: So, but [overlapping conversation] this is not...

Sean McQuade: It's still great fishing, but on average, I mean...

Interviewer: But not like now...

Sean McQuade: Yes, now.

Interviewer: Like now, it's like [overlapping conversation] yes.

Sean McQuade: Yes, you can pass that and fishing is excellent.

Interviewer: The fences been there how long?

Sean McQuade: Three, four months, since a lot of this, I mean, I'll just go through. There you go. There's our lane snapper, that's just, that's basically in that band that you just saw. I'm not going deeper than 80 foot right now to catch these fish.

Interviewer: Sorry, the band is like the blue green...

Sean McQuade: Good, yes – its yes, it's where right where you see the black changes. And then on our fish finder as we're running, I mean again, let say I got that angle as we're running you know, and I'm watching the fish finder. And I mean, you'll see the bottom moving and doing this and you might see some bait stuff but this time of the year

it is bottom March like crazy, the bangs and the grunts like you'll come over and you'll see big stacks of stuff on that hard bottom and those ledges. It'll be like a flat line going all the way out and then we get past this fence. Boom, you got fish showing up, boom, fish going up.

And the more you get out this way the more it's you know, but once you get into that blue water, again and the example I mean you just trip after trip after trip. Let's see, there's just a flat day that was about 15 miles. [01:30:00] I don't know if I can even give you an example, truly that a good example of the fish machines. Yes, this was right outside the fence or before we couldn't get out of the king mackerel about a month ago. You know, they got up and around that and they stayed right there as fast as you could throw a bait as fast as they would it. I mean, look at this, I mean look at this snappers for that depth of water. I mean, these are 20 plus inch bangs, not that they wouldn't be there but for some reason, they're there now...

Interviewer: It sounds like, they congregate now there more than...

Sean McQuade: Well, I think they hit that that wall on go.

Interviewer: Oh, interesting. Okay.

Sean McQuade: Say anything, it's migrating and again, it's like walking in this room. We walk through the front door and like something smells, but the worst it gets, the quicker we're going to turn and get out of here.

Interviewer: Yes.

Sean McQuade: But we might just go to where it smells good again. I think that's what they're doing. I really do. I think they're smart enough to recognize the environment right now is not stable now, taking that so called theory, I think now as this is breaking up, I feel that our water starting to turn, we're getting that convection toss up, because when I went diving on that dive, I didn't hit that thermocline like I did, months before the water was more even.

We had an 80 foot, we go through some brown stuff, you couldn't see your hand in front of you, got down in some green and bottom was blue. And as you saw from that photo loaded, so I mean, for us to shoot that many fish, you can times that by about 100 to 200 times. That's how many fish around that. That's how many fish are there. I mean, it is busting my life. So, there's really I mean, we're only selecting a few fish. A drop, boom, boom, boom, and we're on up anyway. So, to tell you that that's good. Seeing that oxygen levels are going now what I felt this happened, maybe [01:32:00] I'm just theorizes that, that junk that was getting held down there and then make it everything hypoxic if that flips, we might see a lot of crap on top, which is not good but you know, it looks bad.

But if underneath is getting the oxygen and everything's growing back, now I think these fish will start making their migration in. And that's what we're seeing Margaret grunts and spottail, pinfish...

Interviewer: Oh, interesting.

Sean McQuade: Where, I'm telling you if that's what the fish was trying to look like for months, now I'm getting this again. So, today we focused on looking at where I would normally catch a lot of big gags this time in the year, didn't get any gags. But we caught fish.

Interviewer: It's not like that's.

Sean McQuade: That's it. To me, that's exciting, because that's telling me that the episode we had now is hopefully diminishing. It sparks up again, I don't know. But I'm telling you, it's getting better.

Interviewer: Okay.

Sean McQuade: You know.

Interviewer: Great.

Sean McQuade: And that's what part of what I was telling but that blue current and how these, these currents are very weird. This is what I call the triangle. Right in here, when we go dive in, in the summer you know we might get green water and you get particular, its normal. There's times you won't be able to see in front of two feet, in front of your face and the way this current, it's weird how they pour out of these inlets. But you get into this triangle off the tip of Sanibel, you go from and can't see nothing and you hit this little pocket that stays crystal clear.

You dive in and let's say it's 50 foot of water you might have almost 50 foot of this where I might have 10 foot of this here, 10 foot of this there, 20 there, crystal clear there. So, what I'm getting at is, you know dependent on how these currents will hopefully carry this off. And then our friends mixing it up, hopefully we can fizzes this out. But that's our first step to seeing that., today, to me is the first step of [01:34:00] getting going in the right direction now.

Interviewer: Okay.

Sean McQuade: You know, so that's it. That's all I can tell you. And no, I can tell you more so – they were no more I mean...

Interviewer: Yes, now I think I...

Sean McQuade: You know, again I...

Interviewer: I run through all my questions.

Sean McQuade: I wish I could...

Interviewer: Yes, at least tell us if you have anything else...

Sean McQuade: You know...

Interviewer: Anything would be...

Sean McQuade: I could give you the exact biology of it and the chemistry of making up what's going on, but this is what I see.

Interviewer: I think what, we're still gathering the facts of this and why I'm trying to understand what actually is happening on the ground or in the water in this case?

Sean McQuade: Yes.

Interviewer: Yes.

Sean McQuade: Over the years, again, little episodes that were, I can't say just not in control, but it would happen. You'd have an episode or event. A couple of weeks goes by, oh, like it didn't even happen. I think that's been the problem over the last as this is building up. Last year, it was showing that this is going to happen. They swept it under, let's not do anything you know, that the power, the politics of it. You know, in last year or even the last three years, I've known that something is going down. And it's not good.

Interviewer: Yes. Well, thank you so much for agreeing to do this interview..

[01:35:27].