

Amanda: Okay. It is June 7th and we are with Captain Will and I am Amanda and we have --

Carla: Carla --

Amanda: I'm sorry. So Captain Will I know we just talked about this, but I want if you could repeat again how long you've been in the Sarasota area and a little bit about your charter business?

Captain Will: I have been fishing Sarasota for 25 years and that's pretty much when I was a little kid it was every weekend. As I got older, it was you know, every day after school and then 18 and up it was pretty much everyday all day when I wasn't working. I've been in and out of the charter industry for the past 15 years and that includes being in Maine you know, I did a bunch of fishing in the Gulf of Maine during the summer times, but I always came back down here to fish a lot with you know, some of the bigger boats bigger offshore boats during that period. And I've always had you know, either a kayak canoe paddleboard or something that I was up in the back country, so it's been -- I have a pretty good handle on what's going on out 15 miles and then way back up into the creeks and stuff like too so --

Carla: What are the species that you typically target?

Captain Will: Well, kind of the -- the average stuff that the -- you know, the tourist want to catch snapper, grouper, those are our main subjects. It comes spring time it's you know, begin kingfish once again fall of kingfish, but our by catchers you know, some of the different grouper species like goliath -- we catch a lot of goliath grouper, a lot of sharps, a lot of cobia.

Amanda: This is all offshore?

Captain Will: Yes.

Amanda: Okay.

Captain Will: Near shore.

Amanda: Oh, yeah.

Captain Will: Inside of nine -- very much.

Carla: So, when you say that you've chartered on and off [00:02:00] is it a seasonal thing or --

Captain Will: Yeah, I guess yes and no. I've -- I charter year around it's just where am I chartering. And I've been here for the -- a year around for the past three years, but that -- my seasonal was kind of [indiscernible] [00:02:24] whether I was in Maine or here, so mostly here.

Carla: Okay. So, I want to talk about red tide starting with the first red tide you remember and go through kind of all the details about it, what it looks like, where it was specially on this chart, what you saw and then go forth into the next red tide and then eventually talk about this last one?

Captain Will: Sure. The first one that I remember would probably be around 1996, you know, going to the beach seeing the feeder fish, pinfish, mullet you know, herbivorous and bottom feeders basically nothing a lot of cat fish --

Carla: You've seen that and watched up --

Captain Will: Yeah, yeah I've seen them on the beach. I don't remember in 96 I don't think there were a major kill on predatory fish and then it happened every summer basically it would happen for a week here, a couple of days there. Probably in 2000 we have boom that - it affected the bay pretty heavily and that was the first time that I saw real feeder fish you know, or not feeder fish, but predatory fish red fish and snook and some of them were -- were pretty big. They weren't in big numbers you know, there were tons of cat fish, tons of mullet, lady fish and you'd see the occasional [00:04:00] sea trout, the occasional snook. I remember there was one 40 inch plus fish snook that I saw in Marina Jacks and I was the kid you know, I was like 14 years old or something like that. Oh wow! That's crazy you know, and then --

Carla: So back because I want to talk okay so 96 you say it --

Captain Will: Yeah.

Carla: growing up in this area it would be like every, would it be every summer like every single summer?

Captain Will: Yeah, if not -- I think we go maybe two years without it or something like that, and when it did happen it was really like, but after 2000 it was pretty much over a times back --

Carla: Yeah.

Captain Will: I would be here it would be like a month where one day we have it, one day we wouldn't and it wasn't in concentrations that were so thick you could see them, if you know, what I mean? Like nowadays when you're -- when you're offshore if there is a boom coming, you could see it and it's -- they are very small concentrations, but they are really heavily concentrated.

Carla: Yeah, what is it look like when you see it?

Captain Will: It looks like creep water.

Carla: Yeah.

Captain Will: It looks like brown dirty water and it's you don't know if we smell it -- sometimes you can smell it. If the wind's blowing just the right ways you can smell it from long way off just a -- two months ago right before the -- the first major heat wave we had a series of storms come through. I think it was like a week that it just rained, you know, it rained everyday and maybe five days after that there were -- I was doing a trip running a long the Nine and we saw bunch of birds and I thought tuna we run out there and it was a grunt, it's just a bunch of dead grunts probably 2000 dead grunts.

Carla: This was two months ago?

Captain Will: Yeah.

Amanda: Right along the Nine mile line? [00:06:00]

Captain Will: Yeah.

Carla: So let's actually map let's map that area.

Captain Will: Okay. And I've got stuff between there now too.

Carla: Yeah, but while you know, while we are talking about it let's map that and then let's try stay because I definitely want to hear about recent stuff and that's one of the you know, main reasons where hear -- hear about that last one, but I want to talk about the past as well?

Captain Will: Let's see here. So that's five, that's you know, that's five that's six, so it would in the ice box is maybe around here.

Carla: What's a ice box?

Captain Will: The ice box it's -- it's a ledge that we fish.

Amanda: A cold water or something or is it a cold water uppulling or something --

Captain Will: No, we call the ice box just because it's a great spot to fish -- so a lot of my trips I mean I am not going to give you all the information, but --

Carla: Well, I want to know --

Captain Will: generally we run in this direction to the four and then over to the five and then well -- well slip up to the five here, so three -- yeah three, four, five and then run along the line to the ice box. So, where I saw it was in this area over something we call K bottom.

Carla: And what it was mullet?

Captain Will: It was grunt.

Carla: Grunt?

Captain Will: Yeah. White grunt.

Amanda: That's not a good sign?

Captain Will: Not -- not usually and there were between a thousand and two thousand there were a lot of fish and it was just in that one area. It was almost like a commercial kill, but as we went over the spot, the water color did change slightly not like I've seen it in the past, but it was [00:08:00] definite. I mean when you're out here, the water is very blue and very

clear this time a year. And for it to go from you know, 40-50 feet of visibility to maybe 15 feet of visibility over that one spot I knew that there was a boom going on in that region.

Carla: So I guess and kind of like the late 90s there were those little like every other year there was a small kind of red tide event where you would and you would know that there is a because there is fish go on the beach and that's when --

Captain Will: You could -- you could feel it in your throat --

Carla: Yeah.

Captain Will: but you would yeah you'd start to see pinfish, you'd start to see you know, smaller grunts and then you know, as it progressed you get a itchy ice of asthma, so I can't I am like boom if it's here I know it's here --

Carla: Yeah.

Captain Will: And every time right around you know, the very early summer you'd get a -- a little itch in your throat, watery eyes --

Carla: Did those health impacts or those ever like stop you from going out and fishing on the water anything like that?

Captain Will: The only time I have ever been stopped was this past year --

Carla: Okay.

Captain Will: this past summer.

Carla: So, then let's focus on the one in 2000 that you remember --

Captain Will: Okay.

Carla: and you said that was the first time that you saw the predatory fish --

Captain Will: Yeah.

Carla: So what -- which fish were affected?

Captain Will: Snook in small numbers, red fish in small numbers and probably that the heaviest hit was sea trout although it really wasn't you know, that big -- it was just the first time that I'd ever seen those groups of fish that predatory stature of fish being washed upon the beach and in the base --

Carla: Do you remember --

Captain Will: I remember it was that big.

Carla: So it wasn't a major --

Captain Will: It wasn't a major kill [00:10:00].

Carla: Yeah.

Captain Will: When we hit cat fish like a bad out of hell you know, and it really hit the mullet there were mullet every where, but lady fish you know, the -- the real predatory fish lady fish, red fish, you know, you'd see them you know, one over there and then three miles later you'd see another one up in the main groves or something like that.

Amanda: So and were you seeing that out in the gulf or in the bay?

Captain Will: No, just in the bay.

Amanda: Okay.

Captain Will: Just in the bay.

Carla: Which -- is that somewhere you --

Captain Will: Sure. This is the 2000 --

Carla: Yeah.

Captain Will: 2000 color --

Carla: Yes.

Captain Will: so this Hudson Bay that's not Hudson Bay is it this is Hudson Bay right here, but it wasn't there, I did see it in there, all the way around here.

Carla: Is Hudson Bay right near by Marina Jacks?

Captain Will: Yes, it is.

Carla: Okay.

Captain Will: And then out here along here. And that was really where I was doing the -- the most of my fishing at that time -- you know, I wasn't getting into the middle of the bay in my kayak there is nothing to do out there.

Amanda: Were you chartering there or you're just --

Captain Will: I was just fishing --

Amanda: This was fun, okay.

Captain Will: Yeah.

Carla: Do you remember how long that red tide in 2000 how long it lasted?

Captain Will: Probably, about two three weeks and it was off and on it would come in and out of the tide some days it was heavier than others.

Carla: Would you -- how would you describe that like dense or patchy?

Captain Will: Patchy very patchy.

Carla: And --

Captain Will: Obviously, the -- the curves [00:12:00] you know, up in Hudson Bay the -- the spaces where there are eddies over by landing those there is eddies that happen there, so the water doesn't filter out as much so the concentrations in this places were higher than and say the middle of the bay over hards reef or something like that.

Amanda: Yeah. So with this 2000 red tide, were there species out weren't affected?

Captain Will: I never have seen a founder -- up until last year I never saw a founder, I've never seen a cobia --

Amanda: Until last year or now --

Captain Will: Until last year.

Amanda: Okay. I think I saw a cobia last year?

Captain Will: Oh, yeah and everybody saw a cobia last year, I had never seen a tarpon you know, they're really big fish that are either pelagic or migratory or whatever you -- you want to refer to them as, they were not effected, but the local fish that did necessarily have a way to get out and you know, they live it was that time of year were they're not yet out of those rivers, they are not yet pushed up on to the -- the flats that really filter out during those big tides they were the ones that were getting hit.

Amanda: What about mammals or turtles or birds or anything --

Captain Will: No, no.

Amanda: So, do you think that red tide this 2000 red tide or other ones, do you think that they affect fish distributions or spawning activity or have you -- have you observed anything like that?

Captain Will: Not when they're like in patchy like that, no.

Amanda: Yeah.

Captain Will: I don't -- I think at that point it was just and I mean this -- this could be because I wasn't as involved in the economic [00:14:00] or the ecosystem as I am now, but I don't -- I really don't think that the red tide was moving the fish around the same way that it is now.

Amanda: Okay.

Captain Will: It definitely does now.

Amanda: Yeah. How does it now?

Captain Will: Oh, yeah. Well, for -- we have *[indiscernible]* [00:14:16] fisheries just coming back, and that's not because the fish were all killed. If you go Tampa Bay and fish the southern portion of Tampa Bay like Cockroach Bay you're catching up all day long, and that's because all this fish that were in here went up there -- yeah all the fish in the bay went up here --

Amanda: Yeah.

Captain Will: and round in here, but if you come down here there is no fish really there is there are fish here now, but they all pushed down there was a spot between Venice inlet right about here between Venice inlet and big pass that didn't get the red tide here --

Amanda: Yeah.

Captain Will: and got this past year, it got it, but nowhere near as bad as all this and all that -
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Amanda: Yeah.

Captain Will: So there were some fishing here --

Carla: It's right off of Casey Key or --

Captain Will: Yeah.

Carla: Okay.

Captain Will: Exactly.

Amanda: Yeah I want to I want to map up that's way until we're talking about --

Captain Will: Sure.

Amanda: last year moving forward from 2000 what was the next --

Captain Will: The next memorable one was 2005 and I -- I am fairly positive it's the most memorable because it had finally gained recognition you know, Mot was really researching it and people were becoming aware of it -- it was in papers you know, red tide is here, it started to effect tourism and it -- it became a nation wide thing and then there was that big boom I think it was 2003 or something like that that was from Maine to like North Carolina which we know now is not for the red tide it's a different species of the algae --

Amanda: Maine to North Carolina you said?

Captain Will: Yeah, yeah [00:16:00] it was a huge boom of some kind of brothers so that the whole nation became aware of what this was and what it does to fish but yeah 2005 was and that was a big hit that was probably the biggest one I'd seen up until last year. There were a lot of predatory fish, trout, redfish not so much snook. More it was more bottom feeders, crustaceans stuff like that.

Carla: Is there a difference with red tide is there a way to tell if it's on the surface of the water versus and the entire water color on the bottom or is there any --

Captain Will: Not unless you dive in it.

Carla: Yeah.

Captain Will: I mean it definitely does affect you know, there are sections that go over the bottom, sections that hang out in the middle of comb and surface sections. I remember last year I had a buddy who -- who I try I had a charter I tried to go on fish and I was like this is just not working and he called me and he said, oh there is a little tummy everywhere. I said where are you and he said I am in 43 feet of water I said I was just out there like in the exact same spot and I didn't see anything. He was showing planers really deep, so there was -- the whole section of the upper home was completely destroyed, but down deep it was clear and they did a diving trip and they said, you couldn't see anything it was like a five foot visibility until you hit 30 feet and then boom you can see everything. So, there is a difference.

Amanda: When -- when was that?

Captain Will: This was last year. This was probably February.

Amanda: Yeah. So let's map --

Captain Will: Yeah.

Amanda: Yeah. How long did the one in 2005 last?

Captain Will: Maybe about a month. It was never you know, it's a kind of the standard thing except it wasn't patchy it was just here [00:18:00] and the wind affected you know, the beaches, but it was up in the bays it was off the beach and it never really went away it just changed with the tide and the wind.

Carla: Do you remember what months it was?

Captain Will: Probably April and May, May and June.

Carla: Mm-mm. And then I want to draw it especially on the map just wherever you experienced seeing red tide or fish keelson --

Captain Will: During 2005?

Carla: Yeah, I think you just you know, kind of circle the area and then I want to talk about areas that also were not affected?

Captain Will: This whole redfish lagoon area and then up in Radio Tower.

Carla: So when you're --

Captain Will: Yeah.

Carla: when you're doing this off of point of rocks is it just there along the shore line --

Captain Will: That was where I was fishing I didn't run south --

Carla: Okay.

Captain Will: a year back then, so that's you know, being on the beach looking for tarpon, you know, swimming within first knot that's where we saw the booms then we didn't I didn't get up here much a whole lot. I do remember seeing some stuff up here off ringling a little bit.

Carla: So for a month it was kind of just in these main area?

Captain Will: Yeah, we're just kind of spread out like I said it would -- it would role in and out with the tide, but it was always here it was always sitting down there. And I am sure I wasn't fishing that country a whole lot you know, up in Roberts Bay I was more fishing the passes snook, tarpon, focused as everybody was when there that age it's all you want to catch. So, yeah it -- it was there, but it's just where it wasn't while it's there --

Carla: Yeah.

Captain Will: if you can follow me.

Carla: Was there anywhere that wasn't impacted that you fish and there is clear water and --

Captain Will: Well, clear water everywhere was clear water --

Carla: Yeah.

Captain Will: It's -- I've never seen the water color change like it did last year. You'd see a little it became slightly hazy which you know, back then the water was always kind of hazy, we've in the past three years, four years we've had cleaner water than we've ever had in -- inside of South Bay I've never seen running up here, I've never seen the bottom of the bay before up until three years ago.

Amanda: We heard from another fisher man earlier that's it's clear this year than he's ever seen?

Captain Will: It's amazing I've never seen it.

Amanda: Yeah.

Captain will: And I think a lot of that because of the grasp that's been killed off.

Amanda: So, before red tide occurs are there any indicators or clues?

Captain Will: Rain.

Amanda: Rain. Rainfall? How do you know like if it's just particularly rainy season then you're expecting a tide to come?

Captain Will: I think that's what we've been conditioned to experience over the past four years.

Amanda: How did this in 2005 how did this affect your fishing?

Captain Will: It didn't really.

Amanda: Yeah.

Captain Will: No -- not detrimentally you know, if you got to a spot where you were seeing and we're not talking about like running across the middle of the bay and having there been [00:22:00] a bunch of dead fish.

Amanda: Yeah.

Captain Will: It's on these shore lines if you got up into the mangroves there would be one or two trout up in the mangroves.

Amanda: Yeah.

Captain Will: Maybe some kingfish floating off here to the flat some place. It wasn't you know, you weren't just running over dead fish everywhere --

Amanda: Yeah.

Captain Will: So if you went to an area and you're like, oh you know, you're -- you're running down the mangrove line and you're pitching live bates up underneath the mangroves and you see it that's not oh, god it's some place up --

Amanda: So --

Captain Will: it didn't slow you down at all.

Amanda: Yeah. So after the 2005 red tide last about a month that it really impact your fishing, were there any like after effects was there like a recovery period or did things just kind of go back to normal?

Captain Will: As far as I could tell it was fine.

Amanda: Yeah.

Captain Will: You know, like I said it didn't really impact the fishing it just made you move around a little bit more. If you are persistent you can find fish if you really wanted to, you

find fish anywhere you went. So no, I -- I would say, since it cleared out which you know, it came in, in waves so it would come in and it would be strong and then it would go back out and then it would back in be strong and go back out. Once it was out it was gone and the fishing was great.

Amanda: And this was kind of -- this was before you had a charter business?

Captain Will: Yeah.

Amanda: Okay.

Captain Will: That's 2009 was when I first started as a mate.

Amanda: Okay. So after 2005, what was next to that?

Captain Will: The next I mean after 2005 it was every year.

Amanda: Yeah.

Captain Will: Like clock work --

Amanda: And --

Captain Will: the rainy season came you know, May June and the red tide came. But it was it would last a week it was last two weeks, it would last a month, at the longest and then it would be gone and we never think about it again.

Carla: And no impacts to your business or chattering then?

Captain Will: Not really. I think the restaurants got a heavier hit on that. Then we did just in the beaches [00:24:00] you know, because people didn't want to go to the beach if there were -- if we're walking down the beach and you'd see you know, a 100 dead catfish then it smells --

Carla: It smells bad.

Captain Will: Yeah, it smells and if you have respiratory issues you know, you have trouble breathing and so you'd -- you'd wind up going and you'd go to the card zone s[*indiscernible*] [00:24:18] you know, go to a museum or something like that, so --

Carla: Yeah.

Captain Will: But for us you know, we could just outrun it. We run offshore, we run to the middle of the bay where it doesn't bother you, you can't smell.

Carla: So it was kind of that same type of deal where it would last a couple of weeks and --

Captain Will: I think progressively it stuck around longer and longer and longer. I know 2009 I wasn't here that summer, but I remember hearing people saying that the red tide was

particularly bad in 2009 the smell was bad, the beaches were bad, but like I said I wasn't here to see it, so I can't really speak on that.

Carla: Yeah. And then was there a year after that in between like 2009 and 2019 that set out to you as --

Captain Will: 2017.

Carla: Yeah.

Captain Will: Yeah.

Amanda: Or you mean last year 2018?

Captain Will: 2017, 18 and into this year.

Amanda: Okay.

Carla: But the 2017 event that's different from the 2018 event?

Captain Will: The 2017 event started in Port Charlotte in October and it did not dissipate until February of 2018.

Amanda: So it started in Port Charlotte, but --

Captain Will: I'd have to double check that February [00:26:00] it didn't dissipate until February this year completely --

Amanda: Yeah.

Captain Will: It was not completely gone until February of this year.

Amanda: So, the 2017 -- are you saying the 2017 event fed into the 2018 event that they're -- that's kind of the same thing?

Captain Will: It's exactly the same thing.

Amanda: There wasn't any break?

Captain Will: There was no break.

Amanda: Yeah.

Captain Will: We got it here bad in August no in July.

Amanda: July 2018?

Captain Will: Yeah, but it was offshore that whole time --

Carla: So --

Captain Will: it didn't come into the bay until -- on until July 2018 --

Amanda: So were you seeing it up out there when you're out in the gulf?

Captain Will: Yeah if you're around south down the Venice you could see it.

Amanda: How --

Carla: So yeah.

Captain Will: About seven miles.

Amanda: Okay.

Captain Will: You see water color changes seven miles, yeah.

Carla: So 2017 you saw a red tide mostly offshore --

Captain Will: Yeah.

Carla: and then in 2018 around August that's when it came in?

Captain Will: Yeah and it came in like a freight train. I mean it was overnight. There was -- I had a trip I was out here running around doing my thing and then the next day I had a trip, I came out and I didn't I made it to here I turned the corner in near pass and that was black water and millions of dead fish.

Amanda: That was the next day you said?

Captain Will: The next day.

Amanda: Wow! It's crazy.

Captain Will: Yeah. I was literally three days prior to that boarding on Radio Tower flats and hanging out and then did a charter and we were out here and we were fine everything was cool we didn't go way out here, so it may have come up, but I didn't see a water color change off in the distance like you know, if I was fishing down here up shrimp or anything like that you could see it out here you can see the water color change and I thought it was just you know, [00:28:00] actually run off kind of weird current bringing odd colored water -- we had no idea what it was at that time and then of course you know, CFCW started putting up all their stuff on the internet and we realized what was going on and you know, maybe two weeks after, or three weeks after that news that this groups CFCW we got the hit and I called the crap.

Carla: So in 2017 when it was off shore, what area it doesn't make sense to map that?

Captain Will: Not really I don't have an exact candle on it, it would be down here --

Carla: Okay. So closer to like Venice?

Captain Will: Yeah, yeah.

Carla: So --

Captain Will: I think I said you could just see it. I could see a color change in the water --

Carla: Yeah.

Captain Will: That we couldn't smell it, we didn't we didn't have dead fish floating around and I never ran over it, so I couldn't give you a hand along exactly what it was.

Amanda: Did it impact your fishing?

Captain Will: Not at that time, no, no. Our fishing was phenomenal up until the day it came in.

Amanda: Which was August or --

Captain Will: June -- July.

Carla: July okay. So in July when it came in, and stuck around let's draw that that area where you yeah and I know it's --

[cross talk]

Captain Will: Let's see the farthest, so I do when I am just out hanging out by myself I'll run 15 20 miles, and I never attempted to do that when it was out there, but I know guys who had FET [*phonetics 00:29:38*] permits that would try and outrun it and the farthest they had to go that I am aware of was 39 miles.

Amanda: Had to go beyond where the red tide was and it was --

Captain Will: It was 39 miles just to get into fishable water not even clear water and 39 miles that's blue water here --

Amanda: Yeah.

Captain Will: Like that is blue water [*00:30:00*] I don't even know where to start drawing honestly day one --

Amanda: You said day one, you're seeing a new pass or big pass?

Captain Will: New pass, yeah. Day one was this region and out and then all the way down. I mean we came out here and if you ran up towards Anna Maria Island you could get out of it.

Carla: So how far out?

Captain Will: How far out did it go on day one?

Amanda: Yeah.

Captain Will: I don't know I turned around I turned around five miles.

Carla: Okay.

Captain Will: And it was I mean it was dead fish as far as you could see and that was when I was getting the reports that you could run out to you know, maybe 10 15 miles and be outside of it and then it was 20 and then it was 30.

Amanda: So where would five miles be on this --

Captain Will: Five miles would be right around why am I looking at here? This is the -- this is the five mile.

Carla: And we could make that big circle.

Amanda: Yeah, yeah. So --

Captain Will: But I would say I would say it was all the way up here. So you just want me to to.

Amanda: Yeah, I want you to draw out the whole area that you saw then if you know that it went passed there, then we can draw a thing yeah I mean that's --

Captain Will: Yeah.

Amanda: What about --

Captain Will: And -- and even beyond.

Amanda: what about in the bay?

Captain Will: Day one it hadn't got up here. We actually we turned around at five miles and I think it started to kind of dissipate around here and we fished a lot at the long guard that day and caught we had a great day actually we caught huge blue fish, a bunch of gator trout and then quite literally the next day was all the way up. It wasn't -- it wasn't all the way up it was up to here.

Amanda: Okay. So [00:32:00] --

Amanda: So --

Amanda: let's draw that too, so the whole bay all this and then up here it was clear?

Captain Will: Up here it was clear for a while. It wasn't until September that and it never went up into the bay it came up to about in the deer beach and it was only up there for maybe a month --

Amanda: And it never got into Tampa Bay?

Captain Will: Never -- not way up into Tampa Bay --

Amanda: Yeah.

Captain Will: it kind of went up to the Sky Way and that was it. I mean it was Cockroach Bay it had some of it. I mean you might want to pull out the Tampa Bay map, but I can't really speak to exactly where it was, this is all here say from other charter captains.

Amanda: Yeah. No, I mean we're interviewing people on tape on material tape --

Captain Will: Yeah. So you should be also --

Amanda: so look at that, where were the areas that you could fish in here during the --

Captain Will: Oh, everywhere.

Amanda: Yeah.

Captain Will: Yeah oh, yeah.

Amanda: So, let's circle those two and that I know you talked about a spot down here as well.

Captain Will: This was always great. This action of area was good and obviously big point -
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Amanda: And because try to draw like whole circles because I am going to take this --

Captain Will: Oh, okay.

Amanda: I'm going to digitize this and it's easier to digitize and it's easier to digitize areas polygons and lines.

Captain Will: Gotcha. Those would be the spots that I would be fishing.

Amanda: Right.

Amanda: So during that time, did you take your clients up there or --

Captain Will: Not really because I oh I am sorry.

Amanda: I am just going to continue --

Captain Will: Sure.

Amanda: somewhere around there.

Captain Will: I – like I said primarily off shore new shore so no I didn't -- I didn't [00:34:00] go up there –

Carla: That's where you were fishing personally --

Captain Will: Yeah.

Carla: And this was clear all of last year?

Captain Will: No, no that was -- that was clear up until September.

Carla: And then in September it was --

Captain Will: In September it aided up all the way up to Madeira Beach.

Amanda: So, I am super curious about that day one charter that you took and you went out five miles, like what were your clients thinking I mean --

Captain Will: Modified.

Amanda: Yeah, like did they know that there was red tide or --

Captain Will: No -- nobody did.

Amanda: Yeah.

Captain Will: Nobody did and we tried to -- and we tried to keep going, we tried to keep fishing it just thinking, oh we'll be able to -- to get out here, if we go this far would be able to get out there you know, people were trying around south and it was never ending, so we started running north, but running north was nonconductive to our season. The fisher coming from the south so we won't head south --

Carla: So, these are like out of town clients I am guessing which --

Captain Will: And it -- it got to some guys I don't agree with this some guys would say, oh it's gone and then they'll take their people out -- or they take them up into the bay you know, and try and find some spot that just wasn't covered in dead fish, where's -- I basically just shut down I stopped my trips.

Carla: How long were you shut down for?

Captain Will: End of July through to October. In October you know, it's a slow season, so I wasn't running a whole lot of trips, but there were trips to be had and at that point the really offshore stuff had [00:36:00] kind of cleared out. It was sticking on -- on any given day it was between five and nine miles offshore, so it was a gamble. You -- you can try and run out to the nine and maybe get passed it or you're just stuck in it.

Amanda: Yeah.

Captain Will: And for *[indiscernible]* *[00:36:15]* they don't have FET permits that follow that rule you know, that's pretty detrimental if you can't get passed it.

Carla: How long does it take to get out to the nine?

Captain Will: In my boat?

Carla: Yeah.

Captain Will: About 25 minutes.

Amanda: I know you talked about an area downhill that wasn't affected?

Captain Will: It was affected, but not as heavily as some other spots.

Amanda: So, when you were fishing here, was it just recreational or were you taking charters down here?

Captain Will: It was just recreational. I didn't like going in there because the inshore guys were all in there. It was the only spot that you could fish inshore and so these guys had a CBs, you know, the guys would run all the flats boat.

Amanda: Yeah.

Captain Will: They were all in that area. I mean they were fishing on top of each other and to bring my monster boat in there would just nobody would ever talk to me again.

Carla: So, it was out here then I came in here day one then by day two it's the whole day and then when did it come up further north?

Captain Will: Gradually, and by September it was up there. I mean and infiltrated up there. It wasn't just in one spot, it was -- it took up the entire mouth of Tampa Bay. From Bean Point all the way up to Madeira Beach.

Carla: So, all this up here.

Captain Will: Yeah.

Amanda: But the river was still clear?

Captain Will: Manatee River?

Amanda: Yeah.

Captain Will: *[00:38:00]* For the most, but I am not exactly sure how far it made up Manatee River, because it is obviously it's a non tidal outward flowing body of water.

Amanda: Right.

Captain Will: So it's hard for an algae to creep up there. I know that it did get up into it, but I am not sure how far.

Amanda: So where did it end like when we're talking about these areas was it near?

Captain Will: Was the red tide here?

Amanda: Yeah.

Captain Will: Yes.

Amanda: Okay. But still the --

Captain Will: It didn't help because there was a sewage fill in there too.

Amanda: And then it was up in here too?

Captain Will: Yeah. I mean I would say I can't like I said I can't speak to how far up the Manatee River it went --

Amanda: Yeah, but what about the spot you saw?

Captain Will: Oh, yeah, yeah. This whole everything, so I just draw a big circle around it?

Amanda: Yeah.

Captain Will: Yeah.

Carla: So those little green spots were only like the first day or --

Captain Will: No that was --

Carla: Until September.

Captain Will: They gradually dissipated.

Carla: Okay.

Captain Will: The -- the fishable spots got smaller and smaller and smaller.

Amanda: So before you know completely shut I guess you kind of shut down as soon as you realized the extend of it right because you shut down in July?

Captain Will: Yeah.

Amanda: And then what did you do, you know, how did -- how are you able to adapt you know, how -- is there like another fishing --

Captain Will: I have fall backs because of my history of going back and forth to Maine. I was able to go up to Maine for a month and fish and run fairy boats and sail and stuff like

that. And that made just enough money to basically make me keep my boat. Other guys weren't as lucky other guys didn't have that fall back, so I -- I very much looked out with the ability to go do something else. I stayed in the marine industry obviously, but you know, some guys had to sail the boats entirely.

Carla: Did you have -- did you have people [00:40:00] who had charters boat that you had to cancel like the other boats?

Captain Will: Yeah. Yeah I would say I lost do you want to know the number?

Amanda: Sure.

Captain Will: I lost probably \$20000.

Amanda: In that July to October timeframe?

Carla: Further guys that actually ended up you know, selling their boats was there anyone who was able to make it work in some way or like what did -- what did other people --

Captain Will: Like I said there were guys that kept fishing. They -- they would keep taking their clients out and taking their money and I not about that you know.

Amanda: You saw the same thing with the kayak and the paddle boating --

Captain Will: Yeah.

Amanda: You know some people would say, you know it's fairly it's fairly --

Captain Will: Yeah. No, it's fine don't --

Amanda: it's fairly there you don't even notice and we would just feel like you cannot come unhealthy --

Captain Will: No. Yeah, it's not safe and that level people were being yeah it's -- it's very depressing especially when you're seeing you know, 400 pounds of live grouper on the beach when you are seeing sea turtles, manatees and dolphin and it's -- it's more to find. My whole business is marketed family friendly fishing and so I got a lot of kids. You know, I get a lot of young kids and you know, 12-year-old -- a 12-year-old girl what's all she wants to see a dolphin and not an upside down dolphin you know, so why would I do that to those people.

Amanda: So you did see marine mammal impacts?

Captain Will: Yeah, yeah much though.

Carla: So in the past have you ever actually left and like gone out to Maine because there was ride tides?

Captain Will: No.

Carla: So, how did you know you know, was -- you just never seen it fill up the bay like that?

Captain Will: I've never seen the water turn that color. I mean spots that were six inches deep you couldn't see the bottom [00:42:00] that's unheard of just coming through here that first day and seeing the numbers that we were seeing. I mean it -- it was so packed in there I don't know if you guys know what pogies are the bunker menhaden, so you'll probably if you know what they are, you are probably familiar with their escape and evade method which is to bunch up as tight as they can. And this happens striped bass behind the blue fish, sharks whatever is speeding on them. They bunch up as tight as they can, so tight that they suck the oxygen out of water and they die. And when that happens pogies kills they are so thick we are talking millions and millions and millions of fish, so thick you know, they're six feet deep and fill up whatever cove they are in.

Amanda: Right.

Captain Will: That's what was like going through like that day -- we were -- we were blending fish with the [indiscernible] [00:43:00] we went through.

Carla: So were you in Maine like calling back here and trying to figure out when it was clear and when you could come back?

Captain Will: Yeah, yeah. And I wound up just making enough money to come back. You know, I was only there for a month maybe a month and a week just enough to pay the bills and then I came back and started getting ready for the next season because we were so uncertain as to what was going to happen. So we wanted to make sure that we're ready if -- if it cleared out we'd be here.

Carla: Did you know you're going to have another season or people calling and saying we want to book in January --

Captain Will: I was getting a lot of phone calls and every single one of them was we are thinking about coming down, is it worth it, what's the point, are there still fish there? [00:44:00] A lot of people thought that our fishery was completely destroyed which in some ways it was. If you look at the sea trout numbers there are no sea trout here, I've caught one in a year, so --

[crosstalk]

Captain Will: Yes. It was -- it was just shy of a gator trout is 28 and I caught them in a place that you shouldn't have been.

Amanda: Yeah. So when you, you know, you got back here in October and there was still red tide --

Captain Will: Yup.

Amanda: until February, were you running charters from October to February?

Captain Will: That was the -- the timeframe -- towards the end of that was the timeframe that you could get out passed it.

Amanda: Okay. That's when you were in five to --

Captain Will: Yeah.

Amanda: Yeah.

Captain Will: So you know, we'd -- we'd go out and look at it the day before because it's the charters you're not fishing everyday.

Amanda: Yeah.

Captain Will: That time of year, you're fishing maybe one or two times a week.

Amanda: Okay.

Captain Will: If that and you'd be able to go out and pre fish. You'd be able to go out and check it out and say it's not worth it --

Amanda: Yeah.

Captain Will: you know at that time it wasn't we can't go because it's too rough it was we can't go because we're not going to be able to get at that time.

Amanda: Yeah. So in that you know, in that area where you have to go out farther to catch fish, what -- how does that affect your business or are your clients still you know, been gone a little bit farther and look for fish or does it or is it more expensive?

Captain Will: I -- I don't change my prices. It's not fair to my clients to do that and it's not fair to my industry to either raise or lower prices you know, we collectively this is the way I think about it collectively we all run more or less the same prices and when you start under cutting everybody else that's like the housing market that's how you destroy your industry when you started charging *[indiscernible]* *[00:45:54]* you only hurt yourself you know --

Amanda: Yeah.

Captain Will: So I stuck to my prices I stuck to my *[00:46:00]* platform. I didn't change anything. The one thing I did change was I moved completely to catch and release inshore and offshore. And that my clients did not enjoy that, but I said you know, what like I had a -- a group of people that I spend an hour on the phone with them trying to make them understand what we had just experienced here and how heavily we were impacted by it and that was going to be catch and release only and they showed up on the day of their charter with the attitude well we're fishing we're paying we're keeping the fish they should up with a 162 code eddie *[phonetics 00:46:36]* and said we're here to control fish population word for word that's what they said. And I said that's not happening sorry our fish population has already been controlled.

Carla: So, is your idea going to catch and release just temporary or you can --

Captain Will: It was temporary -- no it was temporary 100% I -- I catch and keep now.

Carla: Okay.

Captain Will: I am firm believer that the FWC should have when they did the moratorium on snook and redfish, trout should have been included in there from day one they should not have waited however many months that they did that to do that because people were going out finding the trout and it was all you could keep, it was all you could catch because there were no founder here that time of year you know, there were no black trout that time of year. So people were going out and just wrecking the trout and now we got none.

Carla: When you were fishing from after October and you were back here was you know, did you ever just stay home because you -- because of the health impacts because of your asthma and because of --

Captain Will: No.

Carla: Okay. So that was never a reason for like canceling your trip?

Captain Will: I never cancelled the trip because it as too tough for me. I -- to my fault don't care. I would do it if [00:48:00] I had kids on board if -- if my clients had respiratory issues. You know at that point money was the factor very much so and -- and you're going to do whatever you have to do as long as it's safe more or less you know, I am not going to run a hurricane because I need the \$400, but if it's red tide and they don't care I'll take them out, I'll find them fish.

Amanda: So you talked a little bit about recovery and you know, what's come back and what has it, could you just talk a little bit more about that?

Captain Will: Sure. The snook -- so all right we'll start with snook is that's the big one that's the one that everybody you know, that's the one of the biggest sport fish in Florida. They got out of dodge, so that the snook kills that we saw in Sarasota they were no big fish. There were some big fish, but they weren't anywhere compared to the -- like this whole area Roberts Bay all these little canals and stuff and here they were packed thousands of juvenile snook I mean to the brim like -- I described pogie kills to you guys. That's what it was like with juvenile snook and catfish and ladyfish. The bigger fish we saw them they were around they were on the beaches you know, Lido Beach was packed as far as you could see with big predatory fish.

But the majority of our really big snook all went up into Tamp Bay Cockroach Bay that whole area basically from the southern portion of the bay all went to Tampa and they've started filtering back down. We're seeing them off of point rocks you know, where they should be on the near shore reefs this time of year. And we're starting to catch bigger and bigger fish so that it means they are coming back. Red fish on the other hand, we refer to them as unicorns now [00:50:00]. I've caught two redfish in the past year and they were together.

You know, they were a -- a pair and that's it, so redfish are gone obviously this time of year they're supposed to be off shore, but we haven't seen them and then the trout they're aren't any. Pinfish on the other hand you know, off the predatory fish around to the feeder fish they

were gone completely you couldn't buy them you know, you could set traps all along the grass lets [*phonetics 00:50:36*] Sarasota Bay and not catch a single one. But now they are everywhere they are back and they -- they came back really, really hard and that's great to see. And that goes too with the grunts, the creek chubs and all those feeder bay fish. They took a big heavy hit, but they are coming back very strong very fast.

Amanda: What about Mullet?

Captain Will: Mullet is interesting. Obviously, they are seasonal a lot of people that they are not because we do have them year around, but we get a mullet run not the same way that they do on the east coast, but we do have a mullet migration and after the mullet migration our mullet numbers were up a lot. There is not where they were last year.

Amanda: When is that mullet run like --

Captain Will: The mullet run was in April, so and they're -- they're breeding a whole way up so they are leaving behind smaller fish.

Carla: Were there any other environmental changes or other algae's or --

Captain Will: You're talking Blue-Green?

Carla: Yeah, sure --

Captain Will: We didn't -- I never saw it, I know that it was just reported somewhere in the Manatee River.

Carla: Okay. And then [*00:52:00*] anything else that you've like noticed in this area over the time?

Captain Will: The grass.

Carla: Yeah, what's going on the grass?

Captain Will: According to MOT and the FWC, the water color got so dark and so thick that sunlight couldn't penetrate it. And that [*indiscernible*] [*00:52:19*] it couldn't do its photosynthesis anymore in areas that were all grass. I mean this is from the Ring Wing Bridge all the way up here was just the giant grass flap and now it's like that.

Carla: Yeah, super patchy.

Captain Will: There is no grass anywhere. Spots that were really, really, really, really shallow like off of Radio Tower in this area any -- any spot that was over a foot deep, I would say 80% of the grass died.

Amanda: What is Radio Tower, you've mentioned that a couple of times?

Captain Will: Radio Tower, so there is a giant radio tower here at the Sailing Squadron so this is a huge grass flap --

Carla: Okay.

Captain Will: And we call it radio tower flaps.

Amanda: So all that grass is gone?

Captain Will: Gone, gone except for the spots that were a under a foot deep. And that's I mean as you guys are probably aware that's everything.

Amanda: Yeah.

Captain Will: The grass is the starting point of everything.

Carla: Yeah.

Captain Will: It oxygenates the bay, it gives habitat especially for predatory fish --

Carla: It feeds manatees --

Captain Will: It feeds manatees, it -- it masks the crabs everything it comes from the grass without it you've got nothing. Like when they build Bird Key you know, the -- the army core of engineers said that the construction of Bird Key would decimate Sarasota Bay and they did it anyway, so I am glad they did it anyways. And for 50 years the bay was destroyed. There were no dolphin, there were no fish nothing because they ate up [00:54:00] like the second largest grass flap in the entire little Sarasota Bay you know, it's huge like it's a living organism that whole flat is one organism.

Amanda: Right. What do you think causes red tide?

Captain Will: That's a -- a loaded question. I think that red tide is 100% confirmed as a natural blooming thing. It is however, definitely accelerated and -- and fed by human beings the additional phosphates anything that that creates nutrient rich water. So you know, it fertilizes plant [indiscernible] [00:54:47] anything that you are throwing over in some way it can contribute to nutrient rich water. And then when you get the combination of nutrient rich water, sodium rich water and a massive temperature change boom that's the perfect breeding ground for red tide. So it where exactly does it come from obviously everybody is saying like I am wearing a hat this is CFCW I am on that chain.

Amanda: What is CFCW?

Captain Will: Captains for Clean Water.

Amanda: Okay.

Carla: So is that why, the releases from like Okeechobee is that why you think that's reason one was as --

Captain Will: I -- I have and along with many other captains have seen a direct correlation within a five to seven day period after the release of the Western Gate, so when they opened that gate up about a week later we have micro booms of red tide.

Carl: Yeah.

Amanda: Is there a way -- is there a way to track that are you --

Captain Will: That's out of sound of water everyday.

Carla: Or but I mean are you tracking like when they open the gates --

Captain Will: Yeah, oh yeah.

Carla: Is there a website you can find that?

Captain Will: All my information is coming from the FWC and captains for clean water on that.

Carla: Okay.

Captain Will: Every time [00:56:00] they open the gate, captains for clean water puts out a - a thing and says, get ready they're opening the gate and it's -- I mean it's clock work it's five to seven days. If -- if it rains for three days straight and like Okeechobee gets full and they open one or the other boom there it is.

Amanda: Do you have any suggestions for better monitoring or forecasting or something that would help guys who are on the water?

Captain Will: That's tough I mean we -- ever since 2005 when MOT was allocated a lot of money to start studying we really don't know that much about it and the more we study it the more realize we don't know much about it. We know why it blooms but we really don't know how if that makes sense. The only I mean forecasting big blooms the only way I can think to -- to kind of predict them wouldn't -- wouldn't even be to predict them it would be to have spotter points looking for the change in water color beyond that no, I think I don't know.

Amanda: So, I think you said something earlier about the way the winds are blowing, so like if the winds are blowing offshore then it stays offshore --

Captain Will: Yeah.

Amanda: and if --

Captain Will: Yeah and easterly wind will -- will blow it and keep it out. It all blooms offshore it starts offshore it doesn't start inshore. So if the wind blows west it goes in if it blows east it goes out.

Carla: Do you have any suggestions for management changes that could help people that would adapt to a tide or other events?

Captain Will: Well, during the major bloom we saw people swimming on Sand Bars that's not good [00:58:00] if there is a major bloom stay out of the water. Don't -- don't try and

come and -- contact with it. As far as management goes to prevent it, I think we're on the right track finding the way to divert the water, clean it and then send it back to where it's supposed to be in the other glades that's the right move. I mean nobody can lose from there, absolutely nobody can lose from there.

Carla: If we have another bad red tide this year, you know, what does that look like for your business --

Captain Will: Debt.

Carla: Yeah, would you just -- would you go to Maine?

Captain Will: I -- I don't know. I would probably try and find something. I love Florida and -- and it's my home. I -- I can't ever imagine myself leaving Florida and leaving the maritime industry, but yeah if -- if we get another bad boom I will, will lose this business for sure along with I mean the last boom we started with a 185 short of captains and Sarasota we went down to 120.

Amanda: And do you have -- do you have a crew was it just you?

Captain Will: It's just me.

Carla: For those other for the guys that had to leave did a lot of them get out of the fishing industry entirely or --

Captain Will: Some of them became mechanics you know, marine mechanics, some of them started working at marinas became dock masters you know, I know that there are some very successful live fishing guides that just you know, became ENTs, you know they had nothing to do with it. And there's some of them most talented tarpon guys I've ever known. So it's -- it's a mixed [01:00:00] bag. Some guys found a way to stay in the industry and other guys didn't. Some guys moved straight -- they straight up moved to Costa Rica because they don't get it over there you know, I know guys who moved to Georgia and South Carolina to do king fishing, it's a mixed bag.

Carla: Yeah.

Amanda: Did you for your business did you reach out and use any like the SPAs disaster loans --

Captain Will: No.

Amanda: or did you try to get any of that stuff?

Captain Will: No, no I did not because getting money from the government today and then having to pay it back an interest rate tomorrow it doesn't make any sense.

Amanda: When you don't know what's going to happen?

Captain Will: I don't know if I am going to get the money back.

Amanda: Yeah.

Captain Will: Yeah.

Carla: Okay. So I think we covered a lot of information --

Captain Will: Okay. I hope it was helpful.

Carla: It was very helpful. Yeah. Is there anything else that you want to add about red tide or the environment or anything else?

Captain Will: Yeah, don't fertilize your wants that's the normal one thing. I mean my lawn is doing fine we don't fertilizers.

Carla: Yeah.

Captain Will: Yeah, I think that the federal government, the state government is moving in a right direction. Obviously, there is a lot more that needs to be done, but we're moving in the right direction slowly and if you know, one more season may kill a couple more guys, but it's not fixed. If -- if we don't get the water diverted in the right direction by the end -- by summer of next year, you're -- you're losing a huge percentage of this industry and this a 15 billion dollar a year industry state wide in Florida. It is a huge piece of the economy. The other side is that this bloom was so bad restaurants closed [01:02:00] restaurants that are nowhere near the walk because they just --

Amanda: At Mozaic downtown closed down.

Captain Will: My favorite restaurant in Sarasota Mozaic --

Carla: Oh, yeah.

Captain Will: phenomenal.

Carla: I've never been there when I heard they closed it --

Captain Will: It's oh absolutely incredible and they shut down. The American Oyster Bar shut down, The Salty Dog which is where my girlfriend works they -- they didn't shut down they somehow managed to stay open, but they lost 80% of their workers, so it's huge.

Carla: Yeah.

Captain Will: You know, it doesn't just affect shore captains it -- it will affect the entire state. I was trying to explain this to a friend of mine who is an insurance claim adjuster for cars and stuff and he said, wow I don't know that it's going to be that big. And I said, look you know, who are the people that you're writing these claims for? They are tourists they come down and get in car accidents they don't come here, you're not writing claims, you're not getting paid. So it's not just the water it's everybody.

Carla: Yeah. Yeah, the whole state needs to see tourists that's --

Captain Will: Yeah and a 15 billion dollars a year in my industry alone that's a big number.

Carla: Yeah, it's huge.

Captain Will: It's a big number.

Amanda: Yeah, serious problem. Thank you so much for your time today --

Captain Will: You're very welcome.

Amanda: I have a form that we'd like you to sign. So it's just your name up here and then --

Carla: And then at the bottom --