

Christina Package-Ward: Could you state your name and where you live, your city?

Charlie Phillips: Charlie Phillips. Well, the mailing route is Townsend, Georgia. Actually, I live on the Sapelo River, and out in McIntosh County in a community we call Belleville, but since we don't have any red lights in McIntosh County, it's not like – [laughter], but that's it, McIntosh County.

CPW: What year were you born and where were you born?

CP: I was born in Jesup, which is about forty-five minutes west of where I live now. So, I grew up knowing how to bale hay, knowing how to pick tobacco, and mostly drove the tractor up to pick tobacco, which really suited me just fine. Then my dad got on the coast probably mid-[19]60s, late [19]60s, and he ended up buying a shrimp boat. He'd been in the feed mill business, and he ended up buying a shrimp boat. I ended up working on it every summer, and it was not necessarily my choice. I think they call it slave labor.

CPW: [laughter]

CP: Back then, if you were a child, you did what you were told, and you just did it. You could grumble under your breath, but you did it. Nowadays, it doesn't seem to work that way. But yes, so I shrimped, fished, worked on the boat. Then eventually, I started running the boat on the weekends when I was in high school. So, I was running a seventy-three-foot shrimp boat on the weekends when I was seventeen. Then I started going to college, so I took a little time off out of the boat. Then I eventually worked around going to college two nights a week and I'd do my college work those two days. The other five days a week, I shrimped. That worked for a while until the end of a spring quarter up in Savannah, up here at Armstrong. My professor told me that our finals were June 1st. I was like, "I can't be here June 1st." June 1st is the opening of the beaches, which is a really productive shrimp day. You might catch three, four, \$5,000 worth of shrimp that day. It's just not a day you miss. I said, "I can be here a day or two before. I can be here a couple of days after." Because it's like a one or two-day run for shrimp, and then it's over for a while. But I can't be here June 1st. He says, "No, no, no, work's not an excuse to miss your final." I said, "You don't understand. I don't work at a gas station. I run a shrimp boat. It's serious money. I have to be gone." We had this conversation back and to for five minutes or so. Finally, I came up with a solution that worked for both of us. I quit.

CPW: [laughter]

CP: I said, "I don't need to take the final." So, I quit. I don't think that was the solution he was looking for, but that's the solution he got. Then my dad, when I told him about it – of course, I was smart enough to tell him in the yard because I knew I was faster than he was, so he couldn't catch me. So, I told him. He said, "You committed yourself to having to work for the rest of your life."

CPW: [laughter]

CP: But that's okay. So, ended up running his shrimp boat for a year. My uncle financed a

brand-new boat that I worked out. A couple of years later, I ended up buying another sixty-eight-foot fiberglass Desco which was roughly a quarter-of-a-million-dollar boat. So, I don't know, that was 1980, which meant I was twenty-five years old, and I owned a quarter-of-a-million-dollar shrimp boat – or me and the bank, mostly the bank.

CPW: [laughter]

CP: I still had the other shrimp boat, too. So, I had two shrimp boats for a while. Back in those days, we would get our boats financed through production credit. They financed farmers, mostly, and they considered shrimpers as farmers. So, they would let you make payments through the six months of the year when you had a season, and then they didn't make you make payments the other six months. Of course, I worked somewhere all year, even if I went to the Keys, which I did a lot. But at one point in time, I was making payments six months out of the year of, I think it was about \$11,000 a month to pay for those two shrimp boats. That was a lot of money back in eighty-one. We just did it. If we needed to go to Texas to go shrimping, we did it. It didn't matter. Then finally, after a couple years, I figured I couldn't run two boats at one time. So, I sold the first one, *Misty Dawn*. I stayed on the *Black Beard* until 1990, so I stayed on it for ten years. I got off and started running the dock. My dad had started unloading some snapper boats along in the late [19]80s. There was a lot of production back then, a lot of beeliners, pinkies, no trip limits. The bulk of it was pink snapper, vermillion snapper, some grouper. University of Georgia's taught us how to catch golden tile in the early [19]80s. So, I knew how to go catch golden tile with my shrimp boat. We spent time doing that. I quit after a while because it's hard to train shrimp boat crews to do snapper boat or longline type work. We were fishing big circle hooks and big cables. Sometimes, on a too regular basis, a hook would go in a hand. Because you couldn't stop the reel, they would just go in and rip out. Nobody got hurt really bad. I don't like my crew getting hurt. We were having to lean over the side of the boat and pick up balls of tile fish that might be tied up together, two or three twenty-pound fish. So, you're trying to lean over sideways – the worst thing you can do for your back – and pick up fifty, sixty pounds of fish. Then my back started giving me problems, and it would pinch. I'd be where I couldn't even walk to the pilothouse sometime. I'd manage to get to the chair, and I'd just kind of sit there for ten or fifteen minutes, let everything fall back in place, then I could get out and go again. I said, "You know what? This really isn't working for me. I need to go do something else." But we did that. We went wreckfishing for a while. I sent the boat royal red shrimping for a while. I didn't go, but I had captains that went. I spent a summer sea scalloping off of Northern Virginia in the late [19]80s, probably middle [19]80s. That was a lot of fun. But it was 4th of July. It was so cold and so foggy. I still had to wear insulated underwear. It was a lot of work because you clocked. When you left the dock, you never shut the engine down. You have maybe four guys on the deck or five, and you're making thirty-minute drags. Maybe a long drag was an hour. You just never stopped. Nobody got more than a couple hours of sleep at a time for three or four days. That's what you do when you don't go to school long enough.

CPW: [laughter]

CP: Then we spent an awful lot of time in the Gulf. I lived in Mobile for a while for about three years while my wife at the time was finishing her nursing degree. Then we came back over here. My packing house is about an hour south of here. I like these marshes and mud. Of all the

places I've been, in spite of the sand gnats, this is the best.

CPW: [laughter]

CP: It's just a really good environment. Then shrimping started getting bad. My boat caught fire and burnt. So, rather than buy another shrimp boat, I invested in a snapper boat. Then the boat that I bought – the guy that wanted to run it and got interested in it said, "I don't like that boat. I want another boat." I said, "Well, then tell me what kind of boat you want, and I will get that boat." So, he told me what he wanted. So, we went and got that particular hull. So, then I ended up with two snapper boats. One of those sank about two to three years ago. Captain wasn't paying attention and ran it up on a breaker on a northeaster with a low-water flood. He tried to tell me the buoys moved. No, the buoys didn't move. It doesn't work that way. So, when I got the insurance from that, I turned around and just bought another snapper boat. I'm not very smart.

CPW: [laughter]

CP: So, right now, I've got two snapper boats working. Then I had one up on the rail back last year. It was a forty-two-foot Duffy sitting up on the chocks there. That's what my other boat that sank, Duffy. That's when I went, "That's a pretty boat." Then I just kind of kept going. The guy at the railway said, "You need to buy that thing. That would make you a good boat." I said, "I don't need that boat." But he needs to sell that boat. Nobody's offered anything for that boat. The engines were worn out, but it's a good boat. Anyway, in December, I bought the boat. It's going to cost me more money to put engines in it than what I paid for the boat, but when you have a boat addiction, then it's just what you do. [laughter] I'm still not sure what I want to do with it. As soon as we got just doing snapper boats, I think I brought the first one home in and went in New Jersey. I got that first Duffy in, I think it was 2002 because I still have the weather forecast stapled to the wall, thirty, forty-knot winds, chances of snow showers. It was nasty in January to bring that puppy home. I mean, it was a really good sea boat, but she's cranky. We'd be sleeping, me or my friend, and would help me bring it back. She would snap roll and just toss you out of the bunk, throw you on the floor, and step on you, but we got her home. I mean, it's just what you do. You don't think about it, "This is what I need to do. Let's figure out how we're going to go do it." Then I shrimped, but we thought beeliners were going to be great, short-lived fish, lots of them, and it wasn't. Three or four years before, they were talking about lowering the tack and stuff. I'm thinking, "Okay." Then the university came and showed us how to grow clams. So, we started learning how to grow clams probably in ninety-seven. The first thing we learned was how to kill clams, and we got really good at killing clams. Then we started just doing the other stuff. Now, we're producing way over half of all the agricultural clams in Georgia. Now, I have to qualify that, because there's only a handful of people that even grow clams. None of them owe as much money as I do, so I have to work harder than them.

CPW: [laughter]

CP: Even today, I'm horse-trading around, finding homes for orphaned clams. So, my clams money ends up supporting my fish habit. I really need to sell a lot of clams so I can buy those two engines that I need. That's what we do. We shuffle. You have to change around. If you

think you're going to do one thing in fisheries and you're always going to do that, you're never going to change. It is just not the right answer. It just doesn't seem to be the right answer. I know a few people that shrimp and fish, I mean, it's good for a while, and it's really bad right now. Prices are through the roof for shrimp, so those guys are making really good money. But three years ago, you couldn't give a boat away, hardly. Fuel was high. Prices were down. I got a sneaking suspicion, as soon as some production comes back, prices are going to crash again. Shrimp have almost priced themselves out of the market. I saw it happen in the [19]80s. It got really high, and then just everybody quit using them. A lot of restaurants and a lot of people just quit buying them because they think they're too expensive, and they just are not buying them. The market crashes, and it's a cycle. Of course, fish prices are pretty high. So, maybe they won't crash too bad. But we'll see. I don't have a dog in that fight too much anymore. But I work with a lot of NGOs and stuff, the (Cahaba?) Riverkeepers, the Nature Conservancy last weekend. Well, actually, Saturday, I was up here with the Georgia Conservancy helping them do their fundraiser Oyster Roast. They went through thirty-five bags of oysters, 3500 clams, and they fed, I think it was over four-hundred people. Then they had a low-country boil that went with that. It went really well. I work with people like that, because they're the people that help teach the rest of the public how important it is to take care of our environment and what happens when you're putting pesticides and herbicides and all this stuff on property, and then it runs into our waterways. Eventually, it ends up down here. I think, maybe a year or so ago, it was at a habitat committee meeting, and somebody was making a presentation. They're finding these chemicals six-hundred feet deep offshore. They say, "Well, they're still not at levels to worry about, but we're finding traces of them." I'm thinking, "And what's the half-life of them?" You don't want to know the half-life. So, we've got something that's accumulating with a really long half-life. When will we reach those levels when it starts affecting things? So, it's just important to start teaching people and getting them to change the way of doing things to live with a lighter footprint, so to speak. Which is one of the things I love about clams, because all they do is eat algae out of the water. They clean the water. So, I'll work with them. I'll be up in Atlanta in another month at the Nature Conservancy fundraiser, their (Gucci?) event. I won't take that many oysters and clams up there, but I'll go up there. It's the steady process of trying to teach people what you do to take care of your environment, why it's so important. I'm passionate about a lot of things. But anyway, so we do that. Then we just fishmonger and horse-trade. I got a buddy, Jack. I showed him pictures of my boat. He said, "I want that boat." I could make some decent money just telling him to come get it. I really don't want to sell my boat. I may not use it for anything but get on it on the weekend and have some friends and just go ride around and just be trifling. I really can't afford to do that, but we'll figure it out. But yes, what else do you want to know?

CPW: So, you mentioned your dad fished. Was he a farmer before?

CP: He went to the University of Georgia. I think he flunked out of dental school and ended up getting a degree in animal husbandry. My granddad had a stockyard in Jesup, so my dad ended up half-owner of a feed mill next door with another guy. The other guy got murdered, and nobody knew who did it for a long, long time. They couldn't find out if his son had done it – or stepson or something – over an argument about money or something. The bank wouldn't loan him the money so he can do it. So, he had to sell out. That's when he went to the coast. We had a little weekend cottage in the coast. He would rent our shrimp boat, and they caught \$500 worth

of shrimp in half a day. We're home at lunch. I thought, "Wow. If we stayed out all day, you could have \$1,000 worth of shrimp." So, he went and had a shrimp boat built. While they were building a shrimp boat, somebody clued him in that the reason they came home at lunch was because they knew they weren't going to catch anything the rest of the day. So, they just worked the good part of the day, and they came home. But he had already pulled the trigger on it. He was one of the few people that didn't really know the industry, that came down and learned it, and was successful at it. He hired a guy to run the boat. He got on the back deck as a crewman until he could learn how to run the boat. But we saw a lot of people that would come that were literally farmers. "I want to have a shrimp boat. I want to go do that." They'd come down and do it. It weren't that they weren't hard workers, but they couldn't make it click, and they'd end up going back where they came from. Fishing is not something anybody can do. I think if you're mentally well, you probably can't do it. [laughter] I think it helps if you're a little bit not well. [laughter] But maybe that just helps me justify why I do what I do. So, yes, we've seen a lot of stuff. All of it changes, and you have to change. You just have to. I'm not so sure how long the clam farm is going to work. When we started, you could get really good money. Then they had 9/11 and we were just starting to produce a few clams. But after 9/11, the market crashed. You couldn't sell a clam in New York. Nobody wanted to go out, afraid of terrorists and stuff. By the time they started buying clams and just seafood, there was a backlog of clams, especially out in Cedar Keys. The price dropped by about a third. It never came back because production was going up, and it just never came back. You've got a lot of production out of Cedar Keys. You've got production out of Virginia. You've got farms all the way up to Rhode Island. So, there's a lot of production around. It's not like shrimp where you get a boat in with a bunch of shrimp, you can sell it. It's not a problem. You just call around and find out who's paying what. When you get a bunch of vermillion snappers in, you can sell it. It's not a problem. You may not get what you want or somebody may buy them on consignment, but very seldom do you not have a home for them. Clams is a different deal. You have to line up markets because everybody's got them. You just can't say, "I've got two-thousand pounds of clams or X amount of littlenecks," or whatever, and somebody's going to automatically make you an offer for them. It doesn't work that way. So, you really have to network and beat the bushes. Mostly, what works for me is networking. I'd see who needs something and try to say, "I've got something that I think you can make money with." Because I understand that if I don't make money, the crew doesn't make money, and the customer, in the end, isn't happy with the product and what he paid for it, that chain's going to break. That whole chain has to be together. Somebody may have to work cheap every now and then for some one reason or another. But for the most part, everybody's got to make some money in that chain, or it doesn't work. A lot of people, it's, "Well, I want to see what I can make. Once you pay me, I don't care." I don't understand that train of thought, but I know there's a lot of people that think that way, where I'm going to make all my money now not going to worry about it later. Whether it's clams or fish or shrimp, I love to get healthy stuff to people that appreciate it. Because to me, there's so little healthy stuff for people to eat. Everything's got chemicals in it, shrimp, scallops, tripolyphosphate to make them hold water and sulfides, just on and on and on. So, I eat very, very little what I call industrial meat, beef, chicken, pork, almost never. I eat a lot of fish. I've got friends I'll take oysters to and clams and we just cook and until it lasts and have a glass wine. Life is good. The University of Georgia was doing mercury testing at their marine extension in Brunswick a few years ago, and they said, "Well, you know you eat a lot of fish. So, we want to test you for mercury." Okay. They checked me, and I didn't hear from them for about a month or maybe two months. So, I finally

called them. I said, "Did you forget to run my test?" "No, but I wanted to talk to you before you got your letter that I just sent out." I said, "Why did you want to talk to me?" "Well, I think the average limit is supposed to be like 2.5 parts per whatever, and you're like 9.7. We've never had anybody as high as you. By the way, are you losing your hair? How's your memory? Are you shaking?" Well, I am losing a little bit of hair, but I don't think that's because...

CPW: [laughter]

CP: So, I don't know. Maybe I was eating too much tuna when I went to council meetings or something. I don't know where it came from. I didn't really change my diet. I took it six months later or something. It was down to five. I think I took it six months after that. It was, I'm thinking, in the three and a half range. I probably need to go take it again just for fun.

CPW: Yes, see where it is.

CP: People say, "You eat raw oysters and raw clams?" I say, "Of course, I do. It's a whole lot safer than eating a Big Mac." So, I was like, "I know where my stuff comes from, how it was handled." But yes, life is interesting. So, what else do you want to know?

CPW: So, you talked about how long you have been involved in fishing. How did you first get involved in fisheries management?

CP: I was on the wreckfish advisory panel back in the early [19]80s, mid-[19]80s. Then eventually, because they had told us how to go and tilefish. I was probably one of the first of maybe a dozen boats that went out there trying to catch wreckfish. We were actually trying to anchor at those times. We took our shrimp boat winches and put five-thousand feet of aircraft cable on them, 7/16 aircraft cable. We tried to anchor up in twelve-, fifteen-hundred feet on a spot. It was a pretty neat trick. It was not easy. We caught some wreckfish, but eventually, those guys went to motor fishing. I never did try to do that, because I knew I had to take my clutch and spend a bunch of money and put a trawling gear on and things like that. I said, "You know what? I can just stay shrimp fishing, and I don't have to buy gear for wreckfish. I don't have to try to train crew how to do wreckfish and do this." I would do several things. I found out after a while, you can't rig up for wreckfish. You can't rig up for golden tile. You can't rig up for shrimp, because you end up tying up a lot of money and a lot of different gears that you only use for a limited amount of time every year. Then you're just trying to get your crew trained to be good at these other things. Sometimes, I'm a slow learner. It took me a while to figure out, just do a couple of things and try not to do everything. I was a competitive shrimper, and the *Black Beard* was a really good boat. It had a 3412 Cat. So, it had a lot of power for its size boat. It was pretty fast for a shrimp boat if you call nine knots over eight and a half fast. But as shrimpers, we did. But I liked shrimping. I shrimp-fished before they had TEDs. I shrimp-fished when goliath grouper were jewfish, and you could still go spearfish for them, which I did in the Keys. Of course, I spearfished with them with a .44 Magnum powerhead. [laughter] My rationale was, "You had to die sometime." We handled yellowtails and did a scuba diving off the boat, because I could dive, and spent a lot of time around Dry Tortugas working and things like that. It was hard work. It was a lot of fun in a lot of ways. Shrimping, when it's good, it can be really, really good. When it's bad, it can be really, really bad. I remember shrimping in Texas on

Texas opens. We had about forty-something boxes of tails, another hundred boxes of head-on shrimp, which would have made another sixty boxes of tails. So, we had over – had they all been tailed – a hundred boxes of shrimp in eight days. I think I had three guys on the deck. After maybe three days fishing, they had picked up so many shrimp that we would have to take that waterproof cloth tape that you use for putting medical bandages on and stuff. We'd have to tape in between all the joints of all their fingers because they were raw. Then just have to do this for a little while before you could go back on the deck, start picking up shrimp again. At night, we worked all night, slept during the day. It was just what you had to do. You'd soak your hands in alum water to try to keep the infection out of them. I had a really good crew. It was different.

CPW: Why is it that shrimping can be so bad?

CP: Well, if you're not catching anything, trying to make payments, you need to replace your nets or cables. The gear is expensive. Sometimes, just economically, it's just hard to make ends meet. I remember being down in the Keys, in Tortugas, and dragging along one night. I was trying to expand and push the edges of the bottom. I was dragging along, and I saw a big ledge jump up on my meter. I thought, "Oh, jeez. If I hit this ledge with my nets and I tear all my gear up, I don't know where I'll get the money to replace it. I'm done." I said, "Lord, if you want me to keep shrimping, let me get my stuff up. If you don't, then ..."

CPW: Yes, [laughter] take it away.

CP: I knocked everything out of gear. We just started pulling everything up. We didn't break a mesh.

CPW: Okay, luckily. [laughter]

CP: Like I said, that trip in Texas, eight days, it was a \$20,000 trip. That was back in the early [19]80s when \$20,000 was a lot of money. We'd clock out of Bayou Lafourche, Alabama. We'd leave the dock. My boat held 6800 gallons of fuel, and we would clock until we couldn't see any fuel in the sight glasses on the tanks anymore. We'd open up all the tanks, take up, go home. We made three trips in a row like that, \$20,000 trips. Bang, bang, bang. Fuel was cheap. I still don't know where all that money went. [laughter] It's my feminine side. I could spend some money. No offense. [laughter]

CPW: No offense taken. [laughter]

CP: But people now can't do that. I mean, you can't get a quarter-of-a-million-dollar shrimp boat and decide, "Well, I want to go shrimping," or "I want to go catch rock shrimp," or "I want to go catch rock shrimp," or "I want to go catch royal reds," or "I want to go wreckfishing." The permits and the fuel, you can't do what we used to do. I don't know of anybody that's covered as many fisheries as I have. You just can't do it. I mean, you can't get a scallop permit. It's probably a quarter of a million dollars or something. I mean, they're ridiculously high. I think you could get a little five-hundred-pound scallop permit for a while, a day trip, all those things. I probably should have stayed with sea scalloping, and I would have been a lot richer. Well, I eat well. But you can't do these things and being able to shift between fisheries is really critical if

you want to stay on the water. I worry about fishermen who compartmentalize everything. "You're a king mackerel fisherman. So, that's how you make your living. So, we're going to make it where it's just you and nobody else can get in." But what happens is when nobody else can get in, and somebody else takes their fishery, and they do the same thing, and you can't swap fisheries, and it eventually is going to bite you in the butt. People are worried about catch shares. They say, "They're not fair." Well, life isn't fair. But if you want to have the public to have access to their resource on a timely manner and do away with derby fishing, it's probably one of the few methods that I know that's going to do that. A lot of people are like, "Well, we'll just put a lot of really low trip limits. Then we'll catch three-hundred pounds of that and five-hundred pounds of that and four-hundred pounds of something else." Well, that's fine if you're going out in the parking lot and you're picking up little black rocks and some blue rocks and some red rocks because they're all right there. But fish aren't necessarily like that, unless they're a whole lot better than my crews. They're not necessary. It doesn't work for a lot of people. I'm afraid that some of these people that are maybe wanting all these little trip limits so they can stay open for a long time aren't really abiding by the trip limits. It's just, "Oh, I can have fish and nobody's going to come and check how many fish I've got because we don't have enforcement." So, how do you judge making rules that's enforceable, that's fair for everybody, that works for the public? The public owns the resources. It's not the fishermen, not the NGOs, not the recreational. It's the public. To me, if you take care of the public having access to their resource, the rest of it kind of shakes out if you use a little bit of common sense. I get really nervous when one stakeholder group – it's all about them. They don't think about the other side of the equation. You have to think about the other side of the equation or else you're going to mess up, as a lack of a better term – in my humble opinion. Now, what else do you want to add?

CPW: Well, this is probably pretty much what you are talking about. But what are some of the significant changes in the ways that fisheries are managed today compared to when you first began?

CP: We didn't. We didn't have much management when I first began. There was no trip limits. Everything was open. It was open all year. We didn't have ACLs. The way science is done has changed. Yes. I think we're trying to play catch-up in a lot of ways with our science and what we want to do. Sometimes, I don't think science is as fast as we are. We can't get the data that we need to make a decision that we need, or we can't get it timely enough. We don't have enough scientists to do the stock assessments in a timely manner. I mean, all of this ultimately reflects in the public having that timely access to the resource. The better management decisions we can make, the more we can make their resource available, and without overfishing and doing things like that. So, a lot of what's happened that's going on now, I'd say probably most of it needs to be done. It's not as clean as it could be. We're working our vision, and I think that's going to go a long way to bringing stakeholders together so that they can understand each other's point of view and we can kind of get a common goal. I'm optimistic that it's going to help a lot. Roy sitting down with this, what I call as fireside chats. I think that helps a lot. It takes a while. When you've got a region as big as we have – because Tortugas is all the way up to Virginia – you've got a lot of regional issues. So, if you try to fix something in one region, there's give and takes. There's plus and minuses with just about everything. But I think the system works. It's a little slow and cumbersome sometime, but it's probably good that it's slow. You have multiple opportunities to fine-tune stuff. Sometimes, you need to move fast, and you can't. So, again,

you just know where you are and you make the best of it. I may have an issue that I'd like to see run one way or another way. You win some, you lose some. But when you get through, you can go have a glass of wine with anybody at the table, and it's fine even if they're on the opposing side. That's really good with our staff and our council. I think we have the best staff you could get. So, we're – I think I'll use the word blessed in that aspect, in a lot of ways. But it's definitely a far cry from where it was. When you put the ACLs in, it caused some major heartaches. Say, with wreckfish. It caused the council to do stuff that we really didn't want to do, and I knew it was going to cause the council to do stuff we really didn't want to do. I'm probably one of the few that voted against it. But that it had to be done at some point in time, because when we set up the wreckfish ITQ, we had no idea this kind of stuff was coming down. I had wreckfish ITQd for a while. So, again, it's just one of those things where you have to change and adapt. Sometimes, it's pretty, sometimes, it's not so pretty. The ultimate goal is to take care of the public's access to their resource, and I think it shakes out. That's the boss. That's who we work for. So, what else would you care to know?

CPW: What would you say has been the biggest improvement in the way that fisheries are managed today compared to when you started?

CP: I was an advisory panel member when I started for probably ten years or more. We were consistently ignored – I mean, consistently. They talk about MPA or something. Well, fine. But put a sunset clause on it, show us that it works. Then they'd go, "No, not doing it." We were ignored a lot. Now, it's almost the other way. We don't do anything unless the advisory panel gives us its blessing. I think the pendulum might have swung a little bit too far, because sometimes, you just have to lead and know what the right thing to do is. Sometimes, the best decision is the one where nobody's happy on either side. You kind of split the difference. But I'm seeing a lot more interaction between fishermen and managers than ever before. There's a better understanding back and to than ever before. So, that's really good. We've got a lot of hard stuff out of the way, I'd like to think, like the ACLs. We're still going to go into some allocation and there's going to be screaming and gnashing of teeth. Hopefully, that we can get different stakeholders that aren't catching their share of the quota be willing to say, "For the good of the public, let's transfer it over to the other sector for maybe two years, and let's catch it. But if we need it back, then after two years, it resets where it was, or some kind of formula." I'd hope that we can work out something so that we could keep fishing, bringing our resources in at an optimum, sustainable yield, and we don't have to bring in so much stuff from Mexico or the Caribbean or wherever it comes in. It's just better for the people. It's better for the country all the way around. We import most of our seafood, especially shrimp, and then work on ways to get it where everybody has access to it. I don't want to sell the rights of red snapper to whoever's going to be the highest bidder. I don't think that's the right way to treat our resource. I believe everybody should be able to afford it. Commercial guys really don't catch stuff for themselves. They catch stuff for the non-fishing public. They're almost like truck drivers. What they bring in doesn't just go into a cooler and never come out. They're a truck driver in a delivery chain. I totally agree recreational people should be able to go catch fish and have their quotas and try to fish in their tax if they're bumping up against them and figure out how they want to run their own train. I totally support that. But I'm also generally supportive of historical allocations and the public having access to their allocation. They shouldn't have to try to match. A recreational person may pay \$10 a pound to go catch a fish. I don't think the normal person in public should

have to try to match that price. They own part of that resource. Now, if the country makes a decision that we're going to sell our resource for the highest bidder, fine. But let's have that debate, and then we'll go from there. I just believe in being fair and equitable as I can. Anything else? [laughter]

CPW: What do you think remains lacking and needs improvement with regard to fisheries management?

CP: We need more research, better mapping, and more tools to make better decisions on what, when, how, things like that. It's really difficult to make a management decision when you're guessing. MARMAP gives us a lot of really good information. They say, "We've seen fish here. We've seen fish here." I said, "Well, wait a minute. My fishermen said they've seen Warsaw grouper out in this area. There's no points out here." "Oh, well, we don't go out there. The tide's too bad. It's too deep." "Okay. But then don't assume or act like just the points that you've got are the ones that we've got to work with." So, a lot of the places on the map are blank. I don't know that we're ever going to have enough money to do all the research. Probably not. So, you have to try to mix some common sense in, which is a chore in itself sometimes. Common sense is not so common anymore, I think. We've got to do a better job of figuring out how to get the research and get the data and do the research grants. I'm on some of those research review teams and stuff. I did MARFIN for a long, long time. I just got through doing research grants the other day. I was looking at all the list of people that were doing it with me, and they were all biologists and state managers. I told Roy, I said, "You don't know any person on there that's not a biologist, not a state —" He said, "You're a manager." I'm like, "Yes, I'm a fishmonger." [laughter] It's kind of like some of the stuff that I go home and read, philosophy and Russian literature and Carl Jung and things like that. It's over my head, but I read it anyway. I'm trying to figure it out still, which is not a good sign to be. As old as I am, I'm still trying to figure it out. That's not a good sign. But that's okay. What else?

CPW: If you could change anything about the current way that we manage our fisheries, what would it be?

CP: I almost want to say more flexibility. But again, if you give people more flexibility, you stand the chance of being pushed into being too flexible on stuff. So, it's a double-edged sword. You can be more flexible and it could help you in some ways. You can be more flexible, and it can bite you.

CPW: With being more flexible, do you mean being able to be engaged in different fisheries like you were talking about?

CP: Fishermen need to be able to be more flexible and engage in more fisheries. I don't think that's a bad thing for fishermen. I think that's a good thing. I think it's a good thing for fishermen. I think it's a good thing for the public. I'm thinking as far as regulations set, rebuilding guidelines and you can't go over your ACL or you're going to get all the kind of bad things happen and have some buffers. But once you start setting buffers in people — okay, you've got a ten percent buffer. All right. Well, our new line is nine percent over the line. It's kind of like the speed limit going down the interstate. It's seventy miles an hour. You drive seventy

miles an hour, you're going to get run over. I mean, you better drive seventy-eight. But guess what? If you hit eighty, they're going to write you a ticket or whatever. So, being flexible can help, but it can also get you in trouble. So, you have to be careful with things like that. Other than that, all I know is you just keep digging. So, what else?

CPW: How about this? Are there any memorable moments or periods that you remember most during your tenure as a fishery manager?

CP: I think one of the first meetings – I was in Jekyll, and they were talking about doing some regulations for royal red or something, deep-water shrimp. They were going to set some regulations. They hadn't bothered to talk to the royal red advisory panel. I was so mad, I just had to get up from the table and go outside and walk around. I'm outside on the porch taking five minutes and thinking – and I'm doing this. "What? Am I crazy?" I really had to catch my breath and think, "What did I get myself into?" Then I learned to take some things more with a grain of salt. I learned how to maneuver and network and talk to people ahead of time and get people's opinions and get a fuller picture of the story and things like that. But yes, I definitely remember that. It is a learning curve to sit at that table. Some people pick it up pretty quick, especially people that's been on the advisory panel. Some people are just natural at it. I think Ben, Dave, and I are probably the three longest ones up there. Dave has got one more meeting, and then it's going to be – and Ben's been around, this is his second terms – time going around. I so respect Michelle and Ben and David, and really, everybody's input at the table, even when we agree to disagree. It's a different world here than where I normally live. I normally live in mud and water. I live with a dog named Trouble. What can I say? [laughter] Me and the dog.

CPW: How long have you been on the council itself?

CP: I think this is four years. I'd say I've got one more year that I can fuss, and then I have to be nice for a year.

CPW: [laughter]

CP: I hope they don't reappoint me. Then I can be whatever I want after that. It doesn't matter. [laughter] I can really cry out if I feel like it. That is the rule, isn't it? [laughter]

CPW: What have you enjoyed the most about being involved in fisheries management?

CP: The staff and the people. I really enjoy the people. I really enjoy the mental puzzle of how to put things together where it works, and just watching how dedicated the staff is and the peoples really caring, even if they want to skin the cat a different way. The staff and the people, that's one of the things I like the best. If you're going to ask what I'd like the least, which I think is next, is getting chewed on for doing something or not doing something by a person or a group of people, and yet, they don't have any kind of constructive answer – just to sit there and be vented on. That's probably the hardest part. If you want to growl at me, fine. Growl at me. But give me a constructive answer, and don't just jump up and down, telling me you don't like something.

CPW: Is that being chewed on then by other council members or by the public?

CP: No, it's generally not other council members. Public hearings sometimes end up being just vent. I've sat through them for two hours just getting chewed on. You try to pick things out that you think that you can use as a tool, and well, maybe we could take that idea and do something to it. But it's really hard. It's tough on people to just get chewed on when you don't have choices on some of this stuff that you're getting chewed on about. We don't have a choice on whether we're going to set an ACL on something. We don't have a choice if they caught it and it closes. I understand. I make a house payment like everybody else. I like to keep making it. So, I understand the frustration. But it's still hard. Give me a constructive answer if you're going to fuss at me. But we can deal with it. Move forward.

CPW: So, what do you think is the biggest concern for the future of fisheries management?

CP: Probably the next major thing is going to be dealing with allocations because there's some groups that just want more fish and just being fair. I think we're fair now, but I hope it doesn't get to a point of who has the most political clout trying to get the most fish. I'll use the term troubling as a lack of a better word, troubling to even reach what I'm feeling.

CPW: You are talking about clashes between the recreational sector and the commercial sector?

CP: Yes. I'd like to see the stakeholders work together and agree on where they need to be. With so many other things, you've got outlier groups. I'd like to see more centralist and common sense and working together on common things. Like I said, I'm hoping and envisioning that it's going to help us in the southeast. Like I said, a lot of our fishermen, a lot of people tell me that the meetings in Georgia are more laid back than some of the other meetings. Maybe we are. But I am a little bit concerned what may be the future there. We'll see.

CPW: Is there anything that you are particularly proud about regarding your accomplishments in fisheries management?

CP: Yes. I'm proud that they let me play at the table. My opinion seems to be respected, for the most part. I'm not so sure. Yes, it just is. So, just being able to be part of the group and try to help put things together. It's a good feeling to be part of the council and the staff and the advisory panels and put it together where it works for people. That's a good feeling.

CPW: Do you have any advice for a young person who might want to get involved in fisheries management? [laughter]

CP: [laughter] I don't. Well, I guess some people may plan it that way, because I certainly didn't. I was reading a quote from Plato a while back. I told you I wasn't well. [laughter] They were talking to Socrates, and they asked him why people would be in a leadership role. I think Socrates' answer was they either did it for money or for power or to keep somebody that was dumber than them from telling them what to do, which was the best of the three. [laughter] So, I think sometimes people end up doing this because they just can't stand for somebody else to be telling them what to do when they have a better feel on where things might need to go. Maybe

that's not the best answer. [laughter] I don't think anybody here does it for money or power. I think they just generally care. I think the way the selection process works – and most of the time, not all of the time. Because I've heard of some selection stuff that's going on at other councils that I thought, "They did what? They let who go? Come on." But as far as the way it's run in Georgia with the DNR and stuff, the support system, I think they try really hard to pick good candidates that can bring something to the table. It shows in the decisions and the conversations and the debates. We have a wide range of stuff. Zach, he's just as passionate as anybody. You'd want to hear about his recreational issues. You heard it today with the triggerfish. He wants it common all the way down the East Coast. We have South Florida issues. So, do we want to make it common for Florida? Common off the East Coast? How do we want it? He was passionate about it. I don't blame him. I understand that. I just had to be on the South Florida team. I spent a lot of time in Tortugas shrimping and catching yellowtails and stuff. So, I'm sympathetic to that, and the Gulf. I'm sympathetic to how Florida's got two coasts, two different sets of regulations, and two different councils to deal with. If at all possible, I'm going to let Florida run the rabbit the way they need to and support them as best as I can, unless I just say, "No, no, can't go there." But if I can go there, then I'll support them every way I can. So, it's slightly different philosophies, but we mean well with all of it.

CPW: Well, have you worked with any interesting people in your career? Plenty? [laughter]

CP: In what respect?

CPW: I do not know, notable people or interesting characters.

CP: Well, they're all interesting characters, in a way. I came upon the realization many, many years ago that everybody's got something they can teach you. Even if he's a hobo on the street, he's got something that you would probably like to know. Now, you may not have time or the patience to listen to three days' worth of chatter to finally figure that out, but everybody's got something that's worth sharing. So, you have to kind of balance your time and your energy with who you can collect thoughts and ideas from. So, to me, almost everybody's interesting. You really don't have the time and energy. You know you don't. So, you have to pick and choose who you're going to let into your world as far as who you're going to share with and be part of your trading information with. Does that kind of make sense?

CPW: It does, yes.

CP: I can say I'm a philosopher at heart. [laughter]

CPW: Is there anything else you would like to mention or think we should talk about?

CP: No, I think you've done a very good job. So, I'll go back to fish mongering, horse trading, and trying to make things work. I appreciate it.

CPW: Yes, thank you. Thanks so much for doing this.

[end of transcript]