

Natalie Springuel: So, I am Natalie Springuel. I am from Maine Sea Grant. I am here with Corinna Gribble from COA, College of the Atlantic. We are at the National Working Waterfront Symposium in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Today is May 15th, 2018. Why do we not start by having you stating and then spelling your name?

Donald McCann: Donald McCann, M-C-C-A-N-N.

NS: Great. So, tell us where you are from and what you do.

DM: That's a story in and of itself. All right. I'm from Virginia. I'm working with Virginia Institute of Marine Science, but I don't work full time with Virginia Institute of Marine Science. I'm a marine surveyor by trade. But I've been working with Tom Murray for many, many years with regard to helping him with an inventory and trying to put the whole inventory into something that's workable. So, last year, Virginia actually enacted a working plan. It was enacted and passed by the legislature of Virginia. So, I think it's the first real master plan for the working waterfront in the United States as far as I know. Then we go from there, you obviously have a list of things that you wish to accomplish. We actually accomplished one of those things by getting some dredging legislation enacted this year in the legislative session. So, we're going forward. That's kind of my background. But my story is that I've lived in Virginia, I don't know, almost thirty years now. We live at a place called Fleets Island, which is kind of an island simply because it's fifteen feet of a bridge to get on the island, but it's on the mouth of Rappahannock river. So, I consider our location to be pretty close to ground zero where there is a nugget of commercial waterfront activity taking place. So, I awaken in the morning to the sounds of the workboats firing up, particularly Detroit Diesels. They're very noteworthy in their quality of sound, and you can hear them going out to go fish the pound nets. The pound nets of course catch much of the menhaden that's used as the bait fishery for not only the Chesapeake Bay fishery, but also for Maine. I believe some of the lobster guys used menhaden as well because they're an oily fish. So, we have pound nets. Then we have a little bit later, the boats fire up as soon as dawn breaks for the crabbers. Then we also have just up the road from us is the center of commercial activity which would be the Omega Protein factory, which is a menhaden reduction factory. Of course, that's a big deal in our area because it's been in operation, so last facility on the East Coast with regard to the reduction of menhaden. The tradition, as you all know, maybe, maybe not, but Joshua [sic] Reed from Maine actually moved to Virginia to tell those boys, after the Civil War, how to fish them. So, the town of Reedville is named after a fellow from Maine. At any rate, there used to be a number of factories there. There's only one now. There are eight ships. But there's such a tradition there of father and son to father and son which is really unique to the commercial working waterfront. But we're losing that, so that part of it, I would like to help kind of maintain it. So, that's kind of an overview of why it is I'm here. Now, in conjunction with that, the localities in our area, every several years, have to create a community economic development strategy. The last year that they did this in 2013, all of the localities were identified as to how to promote their waterfront for economic development. So, they recognized that. They also bought into the working waterfront strategic plan that was enacted. But I'm not sure that that filters down to the locality, the various counties, just to how important, not only just commercial waterfronts but also the recreational side of it as far as an economic engine is concerned. The rural counties of the Chesapeake Bay, you basically depend upon forestry, you depend upon farming, and to some degree, fishing. Then the rest of it

is recreational stuff. But the waterfront is so important. I think the elected officials, normally very conservative individuals, just don't quite recognize how important it is, so it's easy for them to see the tax base immediate return. When you subdivide a piece of property for houses, they will get a return, but now you've lost the importance of what an industry might be able to do for you. So, I'm not sure that they're dialed in necessarily as to what needs to be done. They have all these plans out there, but I'm not sure they know how to get where they need to be. So, that's kind of a synopsis of my story.

NS: Are you a marine surveyor?

DM: I'm a marine surveyor.

NS: Tell us a little bit about what that is.

DM: I'm a glorified house inspector for boats. So, I inspect commercial boats, and I inspect recreational boats. So, if there's an accident that takes place, the insurance company asks me to go and examine the nature, cause, and extent of the damage for people that are purchasing boats. They want me to go in there and ensure that it's a safe working platform. The commercial side, insurance companies want me to make sure that the boats that are being operated by the commercial guys are safe working platforms. So, traditionally, commercial guys are somewhat complacent with regard to safety because they get out there, and they do their thing every day. They just kind of overlook things such as dangling light bulbs in an engine compartment or an accumulation of oil in the engine compartment or wiring something that may not be safe in the future. So, I'm looking at hydraulic stuff. Basically, as I say, I only inspect the structure and the various systems of the boat. Then I end up assigning a value to this boat as well. So, it's many components involved. So, you have to know that structure and then how the systems work. Then I have to go through research and assign what I feel is a fair market value of these things.

NS: So, you spend a lot of time with boat owners, commercial, recreational.

DM: I do.

NS: All kinds of boat owners.

DM: Yes.

NS: This community of boat owners, what do they value in Virginia supporting waterfront in the Chesapeake?

DM: Well, the Chesapeake Bay – like every place that we come from – is dear to their heart. I mean, it is a premier estuary and enjoying being out on the water. For those people that want to, you can find an isolated cove somewhere in the evening just to drop the hook and spend the evening and wake up in the morning as I do with my wife. There are purposes besides you – as you're drinking your coffee, or watching skimmers going along the placid water, or just the fish, whatever. So, on different levels, the fishermen, they're making their livelihood, the recreational boaters – just the fact that the bay is such a wonderful resource to enjoy in general, whether

you're going to visit the quaint villages that are along the waterfront, or if you go to a city. That's the diversity of the bay. So, it has so much to offer, fishing, culture, just being able to get away.

NS: What are the challenges for boaters? Recreational or commercial?

DM: Well, the lack of infrastructure in some places, there are multiple ones, from being taxed for the ownership of your vessel – that's a big controversy in our part of the world. Each county has the ability to tax based upon the value of the boat. So, these boats slosh from county to county, depending upon who has the least tax. That has a huge kind of multiplier effect on what happens to that local economy.

NS: So, the tax rate on the boat.

DM: On the boat.

NS: Just to make sure I understand.

DM: Yes, that's correct. Each county has something different. So, for example, in Deltaville, which is in Middlesex County in the south side of the Rappahannock River, they have a relatively high tax rate. A consequence of that, if you go to Deltaville today, you will find a lot of empty boat slips because people have gone to other counties to put their boats in places. So, there needs to be a leveling of that resource. They were, at one point in time, getting \$1.2 million a year in income itself. It's now all the way down to \$700,000, and yet they haven't figured that out yet, the local officials. So, there's a need to better educate them as to what the implications are. Because the tax is one thing, but the multipliers involved with fuel and the people that repair and so on and so forth. One of the other things that I see is a major problem coming up is the lack of workforce on these vessels, be they commercial or recreational. I think that is a controversy on a national level, but very much so on our neck of the woods as well.

NS: How does it impact your local industry?

DM: Oh, hugely. If you went to our neck of the woods and looked in the newspaper, you'd probably see in the local newspapers at least six or eight want ads for people to work in the boating industry. The question is there's nobody in the pipeline. It's an aging workforce. It's not going to improve unless we are somehow, in the industry, able to incentivize young people to get into the whole business.

NS: All kinds of different jobs relevant to...

DM: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. Be it carpentry joiner work. Be it mechanics, electronics, electricity, painters, fiberglass guys, all of that. All that's involved in the industry. There's a need, and I think, nationally, people recognize that. In fact, a group of executive directors of the various trades have met this week in Rhode Island to talk about a strategic plan as to what to do with regard to getting more people into the marine trades working.

NS: You mentioned a few minutes ago that Virginia has developed a plan for its working

waterfronts –

DM: Yes.

NS: – which sort of answers this question already. But what are some of the successes related to working waterfronts in Virginia that you guys are proud of, either places that are special or more about the plan?

DM: Well, to the credit of one of the executive directors – Middletown is the planning district commission – Lewie Lawrence, he's done a dynamic job trying to bring this to the forefront and allowing, getting more people to access the water, which is one of the greatest deficiencies that I see in Virginia is we don't have enough public access to the water. So, we are working on that. There have been some areas in which we have been able to kind of reconstitute some commercial areas, particularly in the Middle Peninsula area that may have been in decline so that the product can be landed safely for the workboats. I'd like to say there's more. The one great thing that has happened is the passing of legislation that allow us to dredge the areas with less kind of encumbrance, government encumbrance, regulations and so forth. That's important because if you can't get in and out, except on tidal window, then you're at a disadvantage there.

NS: Can you characterize the situation with dredging from the coast to Maine, where it is all rocky? So, talk about dredging and how and why it is important, how it works.

DM: Well, it's important on several different levels. The first and foremost one is having to do with commercial access. If you can't get out and you can't get in, where you're going to get your product? Where does your product go? On the recreational side, it's interesting because that has an impact. If somebody buys, those that are moneyed enough to buy waterfront property, and it's advertised at, say, six feet. All of a sudden, the entrance to the creek is three feet. That diminishes the value of that property. So, that has an impact then upon the dollars that the community receives back again. So, if you keep that open, that particular entrance to a particular creek open, then of course that's good for real estate, which means it's good for business. Because otherwise, the value of the property diminishes. So, you see that throughout our parts of Virginia, part of the Chesapeake. Because siltation – the core of engineers has stopped doing that with the exception – dredging that is – with the exception of those federally mandated channels that they must dredge. So, the Coast Guard has gone through some places and just taken out markers. When it reaches a certain point and they say it's not safe, they take out markers. So, come what may, and that's problematic.

NS: Yeah. Wow. Going forward, how do you think the National Working Waterfront Network could support what you guys are tackling in Virginia?

DM: Well, awareness more than anything else. To me, it's to somehow enlighten the elected officials of the counties as to how important the working waterfronts are to that particular locality. The other side of that is maintaining the heritage because everybody likes – in our neck of the woods, we have people that move in. The first thing they do is they buy a painting of a waterman, and they throw it on the wall. So, the issue is that people want to identify with the area in which you live, and the heritage that it has to do with it. So, ensuring that the elected

officials understand that, economically and culturally, it's important that we maintain this stuff because once it's gone, it's gone.

NS: The story you just told about somebody moving in and putting the picture in, do you think they're sort of thinking that was a past use of the Chesapeake Bay? This is not happening anymore?

DM: No, not in our part of the world. Now, if you get up further into Maryland where it's more densely populated, maybe so. But in our part of the world, at least on the western side of the Chesapeake Bay, and I would say I can speak for the eastern shore as well; no, that's still a dynamic resource.

NS: Okay. Is there anything else that you want to say? I mean, do you have any questions about locations or anything?

Corinna Gribble: What have you noticed over the years, in regard to Chesapeake Bay, in its use, how it has changed? Do you feel it has changed or drastically, over your personal lifetime from what you've heard?

DM: Well, two answers to that question. The first thing is, because the oysters were in decline, but they're no longer. So, the oyster industry has increased dramatically, astronomically. What has happened then, which is very cool, is that where there were not young people getting into the industry, you have these young entrepreneurs who are recognizing they can turn a profit. So, we're having oyster culture everywhere. So, one of the things that happens is they put these floats out to grow the oysters. Now we have conflict because we have those well-heeled individuals on the shoreline that don't want their viewshed interrupted. So, they have done some things to try to keep these young entrepreneurs from growing their oysters in the water, and there will be that conflict, I think, increase all over the place. But overall, that's very positive. On the other side of that, while there is a great deal of work being done with regard to water quality, there is this anoxic zone that manifests itself off of the mouth of the Potomac River and South, every year, and depending upon the amount of rain and the nutrients that have gone in. So, because the Chesapeake Bay watershed is served by Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia, as we know, when you have various kind of entities, you don't necessarily get to enforce everything. The Susquehanna River, being the mother of the bay through which – it passes numerous dairy and whatever cattle operations, a lot of nutrients get washed in. So, one of the things that has happened is this anoxic layer increases a little bit every year, and that's problematic. So, we have a good thing with oyster culture taking place. The water quality is kind of okay. But there's room for improvement. Although, on the positive side, there's a lot of submerged aquatic vegetation. Every year there seems to be more, which is good for everybody.

NS: Great. Thank you.

DM: Yeah. Are we good?

NS: We are good.

DM: All right.

NS: Yeah.

[end of transcript]