

Natalie Springle: This is Natalie Springle from the University of Maine's Sea Grant, and we are at the National Working Waterfront Symposium in Grand Rapids. Today is May 15th, 2018, and I am co interviewing with Karina Gribble from COA. Why don't we start with you saying your name and spelling it?

Matt Campo: So, my name is Matt, M-A-T-T, Campo, C-A-M-P-O.

NS: Great. Thanks. Can you do me a favor and move the ice over here, because the ice rattle.

MC: Yes. No problem.

NS: So, what is your occupation and where do you live?

MC: So, I'm a senior research specialist at Rutgers University, and I live in Red Bank, New Jersey.

NS: What is a research specialist?

MC: So, I'm a research staff at the Bloustein School for Planning and Public Policy. So, we are a research center that is funded by different federal, state and local grants as well as different foundations and other not for profit institutions.

NS: Great, great. So, tell us a little bit about the work in waterfronts in your area.

MC: Sure. So, there are lots of different working waterfronts in our area I would say. You know, when I think of a working waterfront, I used to get picked up by my grandparents after school every day. My grandparents lived in Elizabeth, New Jersey. When my grandmother was fed up with me, my grandfather would take me down to a park that was located along the Arthur Kill. The cool thing about this park was that it was right across the Arthur Kill from the Staten Island Container Terminal. So, we would go down there and we would sit for an hour and watch the boats come in, watch the vessels come in, watch them load and unload containers. We would look at the rail yards and we would look at the cement plants, and we would look at all the big trucks and big boats and big trains and things that every five year old boy loves to think about, right? But instead of, you know, playing with them on the floor in the living room, we were out and seeing them up close. Right. So, New Jersey has a very industrial relationship with its waterfront in some areas in Newark and Elizabeth and places that have undergone, you know, a fair amount of change in terms of the communities around them. This particular park was right next to the Singer Plant, singer sewing machines, which had left decades prior to that, right? So, you know, you have a park and then a very large disinvested manufacturing plant next to it. So, urban areas of New Jersey have been dealing with that type of working waterfront for a while, right? We also work with commercial fishing villages in places like Belford and Barnegat Light and Cape May, right, that have a different type of waterfront that they're dealing with, right? Different types of issues, and thinking about how to work within the context of a community that is becoming more tourism related and thinking about development pressures. If you wanted to call it gentrification, gentrification pressures in those local areas, and then everything in between, right? We have ferry terminals and we have all of these other things that are water dependent,

but not necessarily working waterfront per se. Old industrial manufacturing facilities that are using water for whatever reason, new manufacturing facilities that are using water, wastewater treatment plants, all of these other types of uses that are in some way, shape or form dependent on the water. So, what we try and do is think about how to get those folks to talk to one another within a sort of land use, urban planning type of context, right? So, when people traditionally think of working waterfronts, they think of commercial fishing, right, and things like that, right? They think of fisheries and they think of places like Maine and Massachusetts and South Carolina and some of these other places that have, you know, fairly large and still existing traditional historic roots, right? We have some of those, too. I think one of the things that people are beginning to recognize is, how do we make all of the different users of the waterfront and all of the different people that are dependent on the waterfront, work together and collaborate more, so they can all think about how to work together there.

NS: [coughs] Excuse me. What do you think the people sort of the average person values about the waterfront in your area?

MC: So, I'll speak as a resident of Red Bank, right? So, Red Bank is interesting in that on the town seal of Red Bank, New Jersey is an ice sailing boat. So, it was one of the first places, and still every year, if the Navesink River is frozen over, they have ice sailing regattas, right? So, people identify with those sort of unique things that are local to them in their areas as a way of, you know, heritage and community identity. I think people also identify with the sort of, you know, tourism aspect and recreational aspect, right? A lot of focus on water quality, a lot of focus on getting people back to the rivers, back in the water and using it as a playground, right? I think that people in some ways identify with those larger industrial areas, the same people that live in Red Bank and along the coastal rivers and lakes may also work up in Newark, or they work at the port, or they work at something related to those in warehousing, right? So, they think about when they go out to the beach and they see container vessels and cruise ships and those types of things, they realize what an important asset those waterfronts are. So, they have lots of different ways of thinking about waterfronts during different points in their day, whether they're relaxing on the weekend or going to work on Monday.

NS: Tell me again the name of the town that you said that you...

MC: Red Bank, New Jersey.

NS: Red Bank. Do you find that awesome?

MC: Yes.

NS: What is the history of Red bank's waterfront?

MC: So, I've lived in Red Bank for three, four years right now. I grew up in Monmouth County, New Jersey, to the south of that in Wall Township. So, my waterfronts earlier were Manasquan, New Jersey, and Point Pleasant, New Jersey in Belmar, New Jersey. Those waterfront relationships were beachgoing and recreational and going out on party boats, you know, fluking with my family and things like that, right?

NS: What is fluking?

MC: Fluke fishing. So, a recreational charter boat, right? So, you would go out for fluke or for bluefish or something like that, right. So, you know, living in Red Bank now there's a different relationship with the waterfront in that it's more of a coastal river, right? So, it's more like a river than it is a beach, although the beach is five miles, maybe less to the east, right? So, the relationship there is more of, there are waterfront parks. The landscape of the river is a little bit chopped up, right? There are two parks. Then there's a boat club in between. Then there's some parking lots and some commercial development and then another park. So, everything is kind of choppy, right? So, you know, it would be good to have different ways of pulling together those waterfronts and thinking about the use in that context. But in some cases, in New Jersey, because of the legacy of industry, right, there's not always some connectivity, right? So, one of the things that we struggle with, both in town as well as throughout coastal New Jersey, is access, right? You can see the water, but you can't touch it, right? Because you're up or you're down. So, you know, that sometimes presents a challenge for folks that want to be out on the water and don't have their own private dock, right?

NS: In New Jersey, public access, are you a low tide state?

MC: We are a high tide state. So, mean higher high water is our coastal boundary, right? So, you know, public trust doctrine essentially says so in New Jersey we also pay to go to the beach, right? So, if you are a recreational saltwater angler and you want to fish, you are allowed to go to the beach, walk onto the beach, walk all the way down to the water and stay down at the water for free, right? If you were to walk back, you know past the high tide line and sit down on the beach and lay a towel out and put your stick your umbrella in the sand, you would then have to pay for a beach badge, right? So, this is something that is not necessarily unique to New Jersey, but a challenge in New Jersey is figuring out and explaining whose property is where. There's a long history in New Jersey of land use rights and rights and public access, and what needs to be provided in order to have public access to waterfronts, right? Parking, restrooms, all of these types of things that have to get integrated into your comprehensive plan. So, your land use plan at the municipal level. In New Jersey, there's 566 municipalities that all have their own local land use law and authorities.

NS: Your program at Rutgers, how do you fit in?

MC: So, what we do is my work has primarily been in thinking about local land use planning and coasts as it relates to climate change and resilience and sustainability. So, when we're talking to communities, we are generally talking with them about their relationship with water, about flooding, about how all of those different aspects could be considered in not just their own local land use plan, but in all the different types of planning things that urban planners do, right? Long range transportation plans, regional plans, you know, so your harbor plans would be like a local area plan is what we would call, right? So, thinking about ways to integrate those perspectives into all of these documents that then set you up to make some of these decisions about where we're going to have public access both now, but as well as into the future, what that looks like.

NS: What have been some successes that you have seen in terms of waterfront issues?

MC: So, I think there are many and I think what's been driving a lot of the success has been conversations between waterfront stakeholders that previously kept to themselves, right? So, one of the interesting things that I'm observing, and I don't know if others would observe it or even say the same thing, but having had hurricanes. Irene and Sandy drove a lot of conversation about waterfronts, about coastal communities, and thinking about how smart those investments were and where people were going to invest in the future. Both in terms of private homeowners and infrastructure. That conversation has led to coalitions of folks saying, "We understand that water and flooding are a risk, but we are also dependent on the use of those waters for a variety of different things." So, our conversation is different from the homeowner conversation, and it is different from the FEMA conversation, and it is different from a lot of other conversations that we're having here about managing risk and thinking about the risks of investing in coastal communities, right? So, a lot of that has driven conversations and partnerships between the navy and marinas and ferry terminal operators and fishing co-ops and all folks that, you know, would not have necessarily – may not have even gone to or participated in local land use planning decisions, but are now starting to have conversations about how is it that we talk about a comp in a coherent way about the value of our waterfront as waterfront and water dependent users together, rather than representing our own individual interests, perhaps in different conversations in different contexts.

NS: Interesting. Mostly when you ask people who are connected to working waterfront issues, what they see are emerging issues, what are the emerging concerns? Many times, they will talk about climate change, sea level rise, increased storms. I am going to ask you that question, but you guys have already lived it with Sandy and Irene. So, what are the things that you're sort of, we have to pay attention to this? This is coming down the pike.

MC: So, one of the things we've been focused on is, when we've talked with coastal communities, one of the things that we're learning, you know, we always make mistakes, right? So, early on in the process of thinking about climate change and coastal storms, we were solely focused on water, right? We were solely focused on floods and thinking about how do we make maps and how do we communicate, who gets wet and who doesn't, and those types of issues and more and more, I think as a way of having conversations with communities, we're connecting that conversation to listening more, listening better, and figuring out what the actual driving issues are in the community and connecting that. So, for example, coastal communities have – when you compare them to other communities right there, the opportunities for employment are highly variable, right? They're seasonal and they're tenuous jobs. That has social implications for folks. So, when we talk to not for profit agencies, one of the things that we often hear is it's helpful for people to have jobs. But when people can only have jobs between the months of May and August, that doesn't help, and that doesn't put people in a good situation. That is a discussion that is consistent among all coastal communities and that existed before Sandy and exists after Sandy. There are lots of other issues like that around affordability and schools and all these other things, right? So, we're trying to think about these places not only as – and we try to think about them as not only places on maps where there are somewhat meaningful lines that we can try and determine what those risks would be in the future. But I think what we've started

to really focus on is thinking about those risks of sea level rise and climate change as things that will affect them in the future in terms of flooding, but also could exacerbate all of these other different pressures and inequities that already exist in the communities, right? That's been a real critical focus for us, is thinking about public health, social welfare and all of these other sort of connected attributes that are unique in coastal areas that don't necessarily exist in other places.

NS: Going forward, are there any particular tools or things that you think would help you that the network might be able to provide?

MC: So, I think one of the real interesting things in terms of the network is providing information and case studies, right? You know, if you go to enough meetings, whether you're dealing with ports, right? Let's say if you've been to one port, you've been to one port. That is somewhat true, but it's not in many cases, right? Many port communities are surrounded by vulnerable populations and are in areas that have different needs, right? So, to think about it from a community and urban planning perspective, understanding how, you know, ports with a big P, with big vessels coming into them deal with those issues and how small commercial fishing villages deal with those issues and they deal with them not just from the perspective of, you know, the term resilience has been a little bit hijacked by the sort of climate change, flooding conversation. But you can be economically resilient. You can be socially resilient. What are the things that help those communities? In this case, you know, I think we've had a lot of conversations about preserving history and making sure places stay. I would offer that conversation needs to advance to not only a conversation of preservation, but a conversation of preservation and advancement, right? What does the new commercial fishing village look like? What does the new working waterfront look like? Right? Where are those places that are changing and thinking about ways not only to preserve, you know, industries that are related to heritage, but industries that are related to the cultural identity and the way that community sees themselves in the future? Right? I think is one of the things that I would like to see come out of the working waterfronts network, right? Because that's the question that we get from an urban planning perspective when we're doing five, ten, fifteen, thirty-five year plans about for transportation or whatever is, you know, part of that is preservation, and part of that is thinking about the future. So, what are the new demands for the way the industries are changing going to be so that they can incorporate those, so they can adapt and not just become a preserved heritage asset, but continue to be resilient from an economic perspective into the future?

NS: Great. Thank you. We're pretty much out of time, amazingly, but do you have any final thoughts? Anything you wanted to add that you did not say?

MC: No, I think one of the things that I shared with folks before and that we've heard a couple times already is that waterfronts are deeply personal to people. They identify with them from very young ages, and they learn more about them as they move along, right? So, I think when we talk to folks about the types of waterfront issues, I think that realizing that is important and evident right when we go and we talk to communities, this is not a rational decision. It is not a rational plan. People identify with their waterfront in their town, and it's their place, and often their family has been there for a very long time, right? Using that as a precedent and a principle, I think is really important in thinking about waterfront as compared to other places, right? That sense of identity is important to consider and be considerate of when you're talking to folks.

NS: Great. Thank you. Great.

MC: Thank you.

NS: We are parting shot. Yes.

MC: Thanks, guys.

Karina Gribble: Quick question. You mentioned a regular river that would freeze over.

MC: So, it's the Navesink River. So, there are two rivers in northern Monmouth County, the Shrewsbury and the Navesink. I'm not sure. I know that the ice sailing is definitely on the Navesink. I'm not sure. They're both very large sailing communities generally, but the ice boats I know are. I think, we may be the only place in the United States that has an ice boat on their flag. I don't know.

NS: That is so cool. Yes. I want to go see your flag.

MC: [laughs] Yes. You don't you don't notice it at first. It just looks like a sailboat. Then you're like, wait, what is it on? Then you realize it's not a hull, right? You see the sail and you think, "Oh, a sailboat. That makes sense." Then you look at it and go, "No, no, that's not it."

NS: Great. Thank you so much.

MC: Thank you guys.

NS: Yes.

[end of transcript]