

Corina Gribble: My name is Corina Gribble. I am from College of the Atlantic. I am here with Ela Keegan, also from College of the Atlantic. We are at the National Working Waterfront and Waterways Symposium in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Today is May 16, 2018 at 8:02 a.m. Could you go ahead and start by telling us your name and spelling it?

Nicole Faghin: Hi, my name is Nicole Faghin. Nicole is N-I-C-O-L-E, Faghin, F-A-G-H-I-N.

CB: What is your occupation, and where do you live?

NF: I am a coastal management specialist with Washington Sea Grant based in Seattle, Washington.

CB: So, what waterfront communities do you typically work with?

NF: I work throughout the Puget Sound region, which is the area inland waters and based around the greater Seattle area. It's also known as the Salish Sea. So, I also work a little bit with people up in British Columbia, so, across the border.

CB: What kind of work are you doing?

NF: My background that leads to the work I do is I'm an urban planner. I work with other planners, coastal managers and resource managers. I help them address complex shoreline management kinds of issues. That includes trying to understand some of the issues that they need to think about with respect to working waterfronts. I also work with port communities in our region.

CB: What are some of the challenges that those communities have been facing?

NF: So, the issues that they face in our region, there's a range of kinds of things. We tend to have larger industry and fishing vessels and the fishing fleet that goes from Seattle up to Alaska. Then we also have industry and a maritime industry. We have very large cargo that is in the Seattle area. So, with all of these different industries, there's land use conflicts in demand for those uses. So, that's a large city and the conflicts that they face there. Then in the smaller communities, we have smaller fishing kinds of issues or boat repair or some maritime-related issues. Some of the challenges there is also demand for space. Then another overriding issue is the conflict with environmental issues and concerns. So, they're trying to – you have industries doing their jobs. It creates waste, or it has environmental impacts. There are those federal government trying to regulate the environmental implications of what they're doing. Then the industry is pushing back. So, you'll have a lot of the conflict that'll come up because of that. Another big issue and challenge that we have in our area is education and education because of needing workforce. We have a lot of people who've been aging out basically of the waterfront industries. So, there's been a lot of time and effort put into figuring out how do we create programs that are for the maritime industry? So, it's creating classes through academies and the schools. It's getting into the elementary schools and middle schools and high schools and getting kids to do internships so that they can then recognize there's these really great paying jobs that otherwise they're not aware of. So, those are some of the challenges that we face in our region.

CB: Have you seen any successes, things that have worked that might be applicable elsewhere?

NF: There are things that I think are successful. I haven't personally been involved in, but I've seen them. I think they're great models for other places. One thing that we have in our state is somebody appointed by the governor who is a maritime lead. His job is to be a liaison between the big maritime community. It doesn't matter whether you're an individual fishing person or you're a recreational boater, or you're the ferry system, or you're one of the big boat builders. His job is to coordinate all of that and kind of pass through from what the state is doing to what the industry's doing. So, that's great to have somebody in the state government who is really paying attention and cares about the maritime industry. Then one of the things that that office did is created an economic analysis that demonstrated what the value was of our working waterfront and our maritime industry in our state, which hit \$30 billion. Suddenly everybody started paying attention. That was wonderful because once they had that information in hand, they could go to the legislature. They can go to funding sources. They're able to be able to start telling the story about the working waterfront because it had a dollar figure to it. That seemed to be what people paid attention to. So, that's been really valuable. Then there was a grant that was received to create a maritime federation that was to bring everybody together. That group goes and lobbies every year at the legislature. So, obviously, legislatures are very important for the working waterfront industry. Most often it's not a cohesive group of people who are all working together towards that same goal. Oftentimes what we see talk about as our working waterfront community, you've got maybe one group that advocates for their issues and another for their issues. In this case, what they said is, "We need one umbrella we can all go to speak. We may not agree on everything, but every year we're going to have a legislative agenda. We're going to have our key points. We're going to all go and push for those key things." I think that's been really successful. I think it's a great model for other people.

CB: Do you have any experience with communication between different groups regarding the working waterfront, with the lack there? [laughter]

NF: Well, the one example is the Maritime Federation that really created a big tent. At a smaller level, and I helped in the city of Bellingham and Whatcom County that's north of Seattle, they created a waterfront alliance. The waterfront alliance wasn't the port, which we have ports and a lot of the working industries. Waterfront industries maybe lease land from the port. But the port is the heavy hitter and in control. This was creating an alliance that was the fishing and then all of the different industries. There are little shops and boatyards. They all got together and said, "We need our own forum for communicating together." Then the port joins. But the port isn't in charge. So, that's been a really great model. Another couple of communities have looked at creating similar alliances. I think that's a great way to communicate together about your issues and then also be able to again, speak with one voice, to decision-makers when you go for funding, and to be able to say, "Look, this is what our working waterfront really means. It's because we have this whole alliance that does that."

CB: Do you have any personal connections to the waterfront?

NF: I have lots of personal connections to the waterfront. I grew up in a neighborhood near the waterfront and spent a lot of my childhood on the beach in Puget Sound. So, I've always been oriented towards the water. I've never been able to live in the middle of America because I'm not near the water. Lakes don't do it for me. If I don't see an ocean, I'm uncomfortable. [laughter] So, living in Washington, you're surrounded by water. So, I grew up sailing and boating, mainly little boat sailing. Since I've been older, I kayak throughout Puget Sound and throughout a lot of our islands, kind of similar to the main. We always say that they're comparable to the Coast of Maine, the Coast of Washington. So, my personal connection to the water really is mainly recreational and just loving to be on the water, loving to kayak whenever I can.

CB: What is the relationship in Puget Sound between recreational and commercial use of the waterfront?

NF: It depends. There's always a tension there because of demand for space and mortgage and use. Sometimes it works out. Sometimes there's conflicts that need to be resolved. It all really kind of depends. There's been some great examples. For example, Fisherman's Terminal in Seattle, which really was the heart of the fishing industry, we're talking 60-to-70-foot boats heading up to Alaska every year. That's their home port. The recreational boaters came along. They could pay a lot more for the mortgage. There was a point where the owners of the marina, in this case, the port of Seattle said, "Well, maybe we should support the recreational boaters because we can get more income from them." Because of the pushback of the fishing community and their supporters, that didn't happen. They really maintained the balance and maintained access for the fishing community. That's happened in marina after marina. The ports in Washington state, and we have really vibrant ports community. I think there's fifty-eight ports or more in the state. Some of them, all they are is basically a marina. But because they are kind of a quasi-public entity, they have really been the supporters for the maritime community and the working waterfront community. That's where you see that real balancing act between, we've got to support the working waterfront, we've got to support the fishermen. We have to support our rec boat community. But it's always a challenge. When the fishing industry is declining, it's always easier to go, well, we have slips. We should rent them out and lease them out. So, there's rec boaters who want it. So, then it's kind of like, well, you don't want to lose it, but you run into those tensions. A great example though of how there's the multi-use of commercial and rec in Washington is Lake Union, which is a lake right in the middle of Seattle. So, you have all of the tour boats. Then you have the rec boats. You have the paddle boaters. You have the kayakers. By the way, you have the sea planes, all on this one lake, all happily coexisting.

CB: Have you done work with the National Working Waterfront Network before?

NF: Yes. I've been involved with the National Working Waterfront Network since about 2010 before it existed. So, I've really been involved from the very beginning of the network. I wasn't at some of the founding meetings. I started working for Sea Grant after the network had been formed. Then my very first job for Sea Grant was to host the Working Waterfront Symposium in Tacoma, Washington in 2010, so, just before that. Since then, I've been very actively involved. I'm currently the chair of the Working Waterfront Network. So, I'm very involved now. [laughter]

CB: Is there anything else you would like to add?

NF: I really appreciate what the Working Waterfront Network has done in terms of providing a forum for this real interesting cross-section of people. Prior to this, I've always been very interested in coastal issues. As when I practiced as a consultant, as a planner, my whole focus was on maritime issues. So, I worked for ports, and I worked for private people. We did a lot of planning maritime. How do you plan how to have a marina? How do you do a master plan for a marina, for example. Then if you're building a marina, how do you get all the permits for a marina? So, all of that kind of work. I used to go to the Urban Waterfronts Conference, not every year, but I went a couple of times. I always loved that because it was always talking about maritime issues and the waterfront and more about the design of the waterfront and how you can improve it. What I've really appreciated since I've come to these meetings is it's more about not just the design of the waterfront, but it's about the use and the people and the interface of how that all takes place. So, you can design a waterfront, but you have to think about who's going to use it and who is not using it as well. That's as much as the story. I think that the network has really provided a great cross-section of people. I mean, you see at these conferences all the way from fishermen to somebody who works for the federal government and everything in between. Finding that commonality and common interest is, I think, what's the exciting part about it is. It's a conversation that just doesn't take place anywhere else.

CB: You mentioned earlier the importance of a community being able to speak with one voice in order to drive change. Would you say that this symposium is also doing that, is allowing a community to speak with one voice?

NF: I think it's allowing people to come together to recognize that they can do that. The forum itself isn't advocating or making change. But because of the forum, people go away from here, and they realize who their allies are and how they can reconfigure their alliances that maybe they hadn't thought about before. Because they come here, and they hear a presentation about what they may have thought of strange bedfellows that are like working really well together in another state, they wouldn't have known it unless they'd come here. Then they go, "Oh, I can work with this group of people. We could then be change agents." So that's where I think the network is great, is learning about what's going on in other places.

CB: Thank you so much for your time. It was really nice chatting with you.

NF: Thank you.

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