02/15/2024

BD029

**Interviewer 1:** Um, ok. So, I’m going to ask a couple quick questions about expertise, and then we’re going to do a participatory mapping activity to get your view of the system in Mobile Bay.

**BD029:** Ok.

**Interviewer 1:** So how many total years have you been a fishing guide?

**BD029:** Um, is it 2013, no 2023, is that right? Yeah, so 14 years.

**Interviewer 1:** 14, ok. And do you participate in other marine recreational activities besides fishing?

**BD029:** As in…

**Interviewer 1:** Swimming, kayaking…

**BD029:** Yeah, I swim.

**Interviewer 1:** Swim.

**BD029:** I like to boat ride, what about recreational fishing?

**Interviewer 1:** That counts.

**BD029:** Ok. And I like to go crabbing, I like to go tournament fish, yeah I guess that’s it.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok. And are you involved in fisheries management, local government? No?

**BD029:** I mean I would say yeah. When we had regulation change I’ve gone to meetings and they’ve asked my opinion.

**Interviewer 1:** And environmental groups?

**BD029:** Um, yeah I guess I donate to some environmental groups. I don’t participate.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok.

**BD029:** So like I’ll donate a trip to their, to one of their functions.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok, like a fundraising event?

**BD029:** Yeah.

**Interviewer 1:** Gotcha. Ok. So are you familiar with mental modeling at all?

**BD029:** Uh, maybe?

**Interviewer 1:** Ok. Steven uses it in the lab a lot. It’s a big part of what we do. But basically, I’m going to ask you some questions about how biodiversity affects you and the system that you are fishing in. And we’re going to put it on a piece of paper, and we can connect different concepts.

**BD029:** When you say biodiversity, what do you mean?

**Interviewer 1:** The variety of living things. So very broadly. So it’s kind of how you personally interpret it.

**BD029:** Ok.

**Interviewer 1:** So I’ll write it out, and if there’s things that you want to add as we add things to the model, we can do it in real time.

**BD029:** Alright.

**Interviewer 1:** So. What aspects of coastal and marine biodiversity affect you? It could be positive or negative.

**BD029:** Um, well I - I don’t know if you want to call it a business standpoint or not, but there’s other fisheries that affect my fishery that I fish. So like, you could say gill netting, shrimping, environmental as like sewage runoff from both Mobile County and Baldwin County. It happens very badly in both sides of Mobile Bay. Dredging. Ship traffic in the ship channel. It causes erosion which depletes the habitat that I like to fish, makes it erode away to where it’s not there anymore. Flattens the, flattens out the bay. I guess it flattens out the bottom. From a natural standpoint, rainfall affects me. You know, I guess you could say freshwater runoff, or whatever you want to call it. But it’s natural, that’s natural. And that’s from both local and major rain upstate too because of the way the bay flooding makes sense. Right, so you got your local rain that will flood out a river like Dog River, it’ll be completely salty and it’ll make it completely fresh. And then, but then that cleans up fairly quickly and then you have upstate rain. Like when it rains real hard in Birmingham or Montgomery, it fills up the Alabama river and all that water comes into the bay and flushes out the bay, you know, and the tide washes it up. Weather, I guess that’s one other, right. And then you could say storms too, hurricanes, tropical storms, kind of the same thing. Sometimes in reverse, you know, instead of having a freshwater event you’ll have a saltwater event because it gives you a storm surge and pushes all that saltwater in places it wouldn’t naturally be. I guess you also have runoff from construction projects. I mean those are some of the main things. You could say boat traffic too, that could affect some of my fishing. You know, people that are just pleasure boating. I mean, I can keep making stuff up but…

**Interviewer 1:** Ok, we can go with that. Um, and so you have like, the center concept you’re talking about is your primary fishing business. Are there specific species or habitats that you consider most important to that? It doesn’t have to be a single thing.

**BD029:** Well, so species… I mean I can list off my species that -

**Interviewer 1:** I know, you focus on a lot. So we don’t have to - you don’t have to pick a single one.

**BD029:** Yeah. I’m trying to think what I like, offshore stuff that would affect…

**Interviewer 1:** I know, this gets very complicated very quick.

**BD029:** Like my species, my main targets are, you know. The usual stuff. You know, speckled trout, flounder, red fish, yellowtail, cobia, white trout, spanish mackerel. Habitat is - habitat’s kind of a, I don’t know, that’s broad. You know, I could tell you bottom types that I like to fish. I look for oyster shells, but there’s also a lot of - oyster shells, rocks, bridges, piers.

**Interviewer 1:** Like structured bottom.

**BD029:** Yeah, piers or docks. And then lots of marsh stuff, you know what I mean, where there’s a lot of marsh type flow.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok. So, we’ve kind of talked about a lot of these things that are affecting your primary business. Before we go and add more concepts… so this is kind of just a basic diagram, but we can assign weights to how these things are affecting your business. So you could say, most of these things you said were negative. So, in your day to day business, does the gill net fishery have a -

**BD029:** Wait, do I need to add positives?

**Interviewer 1:** If you don’t think about positives, you don’t have to add them.

**BD029:** No, there’s plenty of positive things that we can add in.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok. Then we can talk about positive ones too.

**BD029:** Oh man, one giant one that jumps off the page to me are the breakwaters that are getting put up. Like the ones we fish at Fowl River, and the ones that are at Bayou La Batre, and then of course the state puts the deep water rocks in the bay. Like the limestone reefs in the bay.

**Interviewer 1:** Mhm.

**BD029:** Another positive too, I guess, is that the state doesn’t - one of the negatives I put on there was gill netters. They don’t allow them to net above certain, above the bridges, you know what I mean. Like none of them can go net above Dog River or Fowl River Bridge, or Bayou La Batre, or any of those, you know. So I would say the state is a huge marine resource, it’s a huge positive impact on my business. And then of course those limitations that they set as well, like to the anglers and the guides. And everybody else too. Alright, so back to the last question. Sorry I added all that.

**Interviewer 1:** No, that’s ok. So basically, we’re going to go around and say - so you just said MRD is a huge positive to your business.

**BD029:** Yeah.

**Interviewer 1:** Is that, basically we can do it from one to three. So is it a strong, medium, or low positive effect? We’re going to do that for all of these.

**BD029:** So one is highest, three is lowest?

**Interviewer 1:** Three is highest.

**BD029:** Ok, so, MRD is a three.

**Interviewer 1:** Three, ok. And then for another positive, the breakwaters.

**BD029:** Three.

**Interviewer 1:** And then, I’m gonna go around the negative ones.

**BD029:** Ok.

**Interviewer 1:** Um, so the gill-net fishery.

**BD029:** Zero. Or does it have to be a one?

**Interviewer 1:** So it’s negative.

**BD029:** Yeah.

**Interviewer 1:** But is it a weak negative impact, does it affect you significantly?

**BD029:** I think it does, yes.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok. So, three. Negative three. Ok. Man. And then, the impact of the shrimp fishery on you.

**BD029:** About a two.

**Interviewer 1:** How about sewage runoff.

**BD029:** Uh, that’s high. So three.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok.

**BD029:** If we’re talking about negative.

**Interviewer 1:** Yep. Um, and then you had the ship traffic in the channel.

**BD029:** Three.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok. Industrial runoff.

**BD029:** One.

**Interviewer 1:** Hurricanes, tropical storms.

**BD029:** One.

**Interviewer 1:** Freshwater runoff?

**BD029:** One.

**Interviewer 1:** Dredging.

**BD029:** Three.

**Interviewer 1:** And pleasure boating, boat traffic.

**BD029:** One.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok. So, these are all for the most part natural impacts, so like ecological. Are there social benefits or impacts that either affect you or that any of these concepts impact?

**BD029:** Well, social media.

**Interviewer 1:** Yeah.

**BD029:** Social media in my opinion is - there’s two ways to look at it. Personally if I make a post, with my business, it’s a positive 3. If there is like, let’s just say there’s bull reds out on Dixie Bar, right. And they’re wall to wall, and there’s five billion out there, and people are - people that I don’t know or I can’t control are in my social media network and they start posting about it, it puts pressure on the fishery. Because everybody is posting pictures about bull reds right? Everybody doesn’t think how I think about bull reds. It’s not an edible fish in my opinion, but it is a fish that people eat. So they’re being taken as a result of that. So, negative three.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok.

**BD029:** If that makes sense, you know.

**Interviewer 1:** So it’s going both ways there?

**BD029:** Yes. It’s definitely a double edged sword. I really wish social media would just burn up and die. Because I feel like there is more negative there than there’s positive. My phone does not ring more from something that I put on there, ok. Because I’m well established in my business. I can probably, for the rest of my life, get away with not having a facebook page, not having a website, not having anything. People would have to figure out how to find me. But, that’s just me, you know.

**Interviewer 1:** So you’re not going to become an influencer.

**BD029:** No, I don’t think so. The influencers are something to talk about too. Like, the guys who have fucking youtube channels. You know, like, those guys are more or less like training and showing people where to go fish in our area, versus having to go figure it out on their own. You know what I mean, like what has taken me a lifetime to figure out, a lot of people are watching these influencers and figuring stuff out relatively - in one hundredth of the time that it took me. I’m still a way better fisherman than some of those people, you know what I mean, but like they’re still sitting that goat in the monopoly game, you know what I mean, but… I think the influencers are a problem. So you put them as three, as a negative.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok. Other social aspects?

**BD029:** You mean…

**Interviewer 1:** Could be your satisfaction, other things, we don’t have to add anything else either.

**BD029:** Well from a social standpoint, this is my life, you know what I mean. I’ve really enjoyed - I get a lot of satisfaction out of talking, conversing, and comparing notes with other fishermen. I love doing seminars where I get in front of a crowd, or one on one with people and teach people about fishing.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok. Um, what economic benefits or impacts are either affecting you, or other things are affecting you?

**BD029:** Well, obviously the state of the economy of the country definitely affects me. I’ve seen it at the very low end, and I’ve seen it at the very high end, I feel like we’re kind of somewhere right in the middle right now, I would assume. I would say for me, it has not affected my living drastically one way or another. But I’ve seen it affect my business - I should say my line of business. If that makes sense.

**Interviewer 1:** So this is an indirect thing?

**BD029:** Uh, sure. Well so you know we’re like trending down in the economy right now, and I have the same amount of trips. My business is perfectly fine like it’s always been. But I’m seeing other fishermen in the industry suffer because we are trending down right now. And there are not as many tourists coming, or they’re coming and they’re not spending extra money on going fishing.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok.

**BD029:** My clientele is different. I’ve built my business differently than relying on the tourism. Because I’m not really a tourism guy. I take very few tourists, I don’t know if you can add that into your equation, at what you’re looking at there. But I’m kind of a local favorite around here, like I’ve taken a lot of… well the Sea Lab obviously. Y’all are my main business, the biggest chunk. But, you know, like I have 3 or 4 industrial companies that use me several times a year, you know. There’s a hospital right down the street here, they book me for three or four weeks throughout the year. And then, I have guys that have boats and fish and just want to learn. Learn what spots they should go to, what they’re doing right, what they’re doing wrong. Um, or they just like catching fish, so they… so yeah. My model’s a little different then -

**Interviewer 1:** That’s ok. You’re the first one that we’ve done for this part of the project. So you’re now the model. Um, and everybody’s is obviously going to be different. Which is why we do this kind of physical diagram, so that we can compare both by just looking and then also seeing well, ok, [BD029] thought that this was a really significant impact. But then we talk to another fisherman, and then he didn’t. So, just trying to figure out why that is. Cool. Any other economic impacts. Positive or negative?

**BD029:** Um, I know when we had covid and there were covid checks. So, I think they call that a stimulus.

**Interviewer 1:** Yeah.

**BD029:** Like, I saw people spending their stimulus money with me. The - I’m trying to think about your bait shops. Because I’m trying to figure out what my expenses are, other than just fuel. Yeah, I guess you can say fuel. Fuel is definitely an economic impact that affects me and my bottom line. Two years ago, when fuel was shot through the roof, I went up in price.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok.

**BD029:** Um, there’s a - I’m trying to think about bait. Bait was the same way, with live shrimp. They went up in price too, and fuel went up, you know what I mean. I guess inflation’s the real culprit to a lot of these things. Yeah, ok. Yeah, inflation’s a big one. Because I buy a new boat every other year, or every 18 months, every year and half. And from 2016 to 2023, I’m paying double what I paid for my boat in 2016. So I don’t know if that’s…

**Interviewer 1:** Anything else, or do you want to move on?

**BD029:** Nothing I can think about.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok. What management decisions are affecting this stuff? We talked a little bit about MRB regulations, but anything else broadly? Any other specific policies?

**BD029:** Like, by government?

**Interviewer 1:** Yeah, it could be the federal government, it could be state or local government. That affect you or affect any of these other things that you added.

**BD029:** Uh, I guess licensing could be an issue. Right, like I really like targeting cobia with my clients and I’m not able to do that because I don’t have a really expensive ass license. I need to purchase a coastal pelagics, migratory pilagics federal permit. I would’ve bought it already but at the time I was ready to buy one they were requiring what they call BMS which is a vessel monitoring system, and I wasn’t willing to put that on my boat. So I didn’t buy the license. But they no longer require it so I’m probably going to buy one.

**Interviewer 1:** Was that a cost thing? Or you just didn’t want to…

**BD029:** Yeah, no they’re stupid expensive. It’s like an $8,000 to $10,000 license, so that would take several years to make it worth my while. Um, yeah. I don’t know if it’s like a cobia or mackerel less than 3 miles out of the state coastline. I mean, I can’t see any negative with the, other than that, with the regulations. And I wasn’t even saying that what I was talking about there was really a negative, it just is what it is.

**Interviewer 1:** It impacts you negatively but it can be a good thing.

**BD029:** Yeah. I don’t see why it exists, but it’s… I kind of agree with the reef permits and how they’re counting the fish and all that. One thing that really does irritate me is, I guess, just for instance, recently marine resources caught a commercial gill netter with all those flounder, you know. Like the 300 something flounder. And I was talking to Bannon about it, and he said the guy only got 3 citations, one of them was for like over the limit of fish, under the size limit of fish, improperly marked nets. And for the three, we’d get a fine for each offense not more than $500 for citation tickets. And he only accrued 1 point against his license. That really irritated me, like the guy went and caught 300 flounders and - well, he got 3 tickets but like, they’re 3 chicken-shit tickets in my opinion. And the guys continue to fish, you know what I mean. I feel like if I killed 300 flounders, like they would put me under the jail, you know what I mean. Not just charge me $1500, you know what I mean. And how many times have they done that before then. I just feel like the legislation issues should get looked at. And what you need to go through to get the law changed, it’s like, it’s like half a million dollars for a lobbyist to go and try to change legislation. So maybe you could just say, maybe not harsh enough punishment for breaking the law? I don’t know. I don’t know how to word that. I would just say legislation issues.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok.

**BD029:** And it’s funny how they treat certain ones. You know, if it was a protected fish, like a red fish or a red snapper that somebody got caught with, they would be fined per fish. And just because it’s a - it’s not a game fish, doesn’t have game fish status in the state, you don’t get fined as bad. You know, it’s a fishery that’s in recovery.

**Interviewer 1:** Other policies for management.

**BD029:** Yeah, there’s a lot of relationships and stuff, but I feel like overall I’m pretty satisfied with the state.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok. So, we have this model. Are there any other environmental factors that should be considered? Or even just - it could be affecting you or your business. Or, that are affecting other factors. Because I’ve connected -

**BD029:** I hate to say it, because I think - I feel like the world and how the, I don’t want to call it global warming, right, because I don’t believe global warming is a real thing, but I just think the world is constantly changing. Like it used to be really fucking cold everywhere, and now it’s really fucking hot, you know, all of that affects sea level rise, or decrease or whatnot. I feel like I’m kind of seeing some effects of that, but I can’t really say that the tide gets higher than it should be. And like I said, I haven’t been paying attention to it long enough to know. It was really really freaking hot last summer, you know what I mean. The year before last - I mean I have experienced summer like the year we just had. Where it was like 98 degrees every day for like four months. Like, I’ve seen that before. But just two years ago, it was really really freaking nice all the way through June. Before it got really really freaking hot. So, I don’t know, I feel like the world’s warming up, maybe.

**Interviewer 2:** You don’t believe in global warming but you believe in global warming?

**BD029:** I mean, I just - I don’t want to call it global warming. I think that’s just some bullshit scientist embedded tale they told somebody. Well, no, they told some tale to somebody at the government and they fall behind it. I don’t know, I feel like that’s all a bunch of hooey. But like, the world naturally changes, goes through changes. Are we making it worse? Probably. But, uh, climate change. Let’s just say climate change. I feel like climate change has affected us.

**Interviewer 2:** And climate change is the more acceptable term nowadays. Because, yeah. Sorry, I’ll interact the talk after.

**Interviewer 1:** So what is that affecting here?

**BD029:** Uh, it affects the way the fish behave.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok.

**BD029:** Where they choose to inhabit.

**Interviewer 1:** Do you think that’s mostly a negative change, or it really depends? Like if temperatures are increasing…

**BD029:** Um… the one thing I can think that we’ve been seeing around here is we’re all seeing a more tropical habitat? Like we’re seeing some bone fish, hermits, things that live in tropical waters. There’s even a flounder that Dylan and I think is sneaking up here called tropical flounder. It’s not supposed to be here, but it’s kind of possibly showing up.

**Interviewer 1:** Have you caught them?

**BD029:** We believe so, yeah. We’ve seen probably 6 or 7. They’re very similar looking to the gulf, the only thing is we can’t say for sure, but.

**Interviewer 1:** Gotcha.

**BD029:** They’re native to the bay, just north of Mexico. We think there’s potential that they’re creeping up. But basically they’re the southern flounder but from Mexico.

**Interviewer 1:** And, how does the change in fish behavior, or the tropicalization, how does that affect you? Is that kind of a net neutral right now? You don’t really know?

**BD029:** Yeah, I would say we’ve experienced enough that no.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok.

**BD029:** I mean, we’re not seeing like stagnant water and fish kills or, like, I don’t know there have been, because of the hot ass summer we’ve had, but there have been an exuberant higher number of jubilees. But, it seems like - and then again you have social media, I mean having jubilees where we didn’t before, so…

**Interviewer 1:** Right. Anything else you can think of?

**BD029:** Environmental?

**Interviewer 1:** Yeah.

**BD029:** Mm, not really.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok. How does this look to you? Are there things that are missing? Things that don’t seem right?

**BD029:** All these arrows pointing to my business, do you have others going other places? I guess you have arrows going other places, wow.

**Interviewer 1:** So the way that you were describing this was mostly going towards you and your business.

**BD029:** Right.

**Interviewer 1:** But, so we have some that are going the other way.

**BD029:** Right, I saw that.

**Interviewer 1:** But we can add more.

**BD029:** Um, you know like some of these things are negative to the fishery, not just me. So I don’t know how to…

**Interviewer 1:** We can add that.

**BD029:** Um, you know, like we have the influencers here. I feel like that’s a negative to certain fisheries, because there’s people sitting at home, twiddling their thumbs, watching an influencer talking about a species that they’ve never thought about catching before and then they start going and catching and killing them where other rods have been left alone.

**Interviewer 1:** Yeah.

**BD029:** Does that make sense?

**Interviewer 1:** Yeah, I can add that.

**BD029:** Yeah, I don’t know where you can put that on here.

**Interviewer 1:** There’s no space on here.

**BD029:** You get what I’m saying though, you know what I mean? You could say the same thing about certain social media. You’ve got that going both ways. It’s a negative one way, positive in the other.

**Interviewer 1:** Well because you spoke - you talked about the jubilees too. And that’s not necessarily affecting you. But that and the social media reporting of this is impacting the fishery population.

**BD029:** Mhm.

**Interviewer 1:** So would you say they have a strong negative impact? Medium, or low maybe?

**BD029:** I would say they have a medium impact.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok. And then, social media. I guess they’re kind of similar.

**BD029:** They are, I would also say negative.

**Interviewer 1:** And then, the jubilees.

**BD029:** I mean, jubilee’s an actual thing. But as a result of social media, people know about them and are going and participating at a much higher level then if there was no internet, or telephones, or things like that. Like people used to just live on the bay, and they would have to go down there and look every night to know that there was one going on.

**Interviewer 1:** Right.

**BD029:** And it’s like, one person goes down there and suddenly you see the alarm’s off. And it’s like wow, a tornado’s going off. You know, like.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok. So that’s almost like fishing effort, as a result of social media…

**BD029:** Correct. Is much higher.

**Interviewer 1:** Yeah. Gotcha. It’s starting to get messy. Ok.

**BD029:** You’ll probably rewrite that again, I’m sure.

**Interviewer 1:** Yep, yep. Um, ok. So we fixed that. Anything else you think needs to be added?

**BD029:** No, nothing off the top of my head.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok. Cool. Um, then just three more questions.

**BD029:** Only three more questions.

**Interviewer 1:** Three more questions. What year were you born.

**BD029:** 1983.

**Interviewer 1:** 1983. Um, I kind of know the answer to this question but I’m going to ask it to you anyway. So, we did this today, just you and I. We’re doing an in person workshop next month that will bring a bunch of stakeholders. So fishermen, ecotourists, oyster, and aquaculture people all together to make a model similar to this. Um, it’s on the 15th and 16th at 5 rivers. Obviously you have fishing days booked. But, if you were to get rained out on either of those days, would you be interested in coming? We’re paying a $250 honorarium and we can give you a hotel room if it’s helpful to you.

**BD029:** What time is that?

**Interviewer 1:** All day. Well, the 15th would be all day, and 16th would just be in the morning.

**BD029:** Well, I’m scheduled with y’all and it’s like the 15th on Sunday?

**Interviewer 1:** November. That would be funny, huh.

**BD029:** Um, I’m booked on the 16th in the morning. I’m open on the 15th but I suspect that that will close.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok.

**BD029:** You said how much?

**Interviewer 1:** $250 and a hotel room. If you want to book a fishing day, then do that. But if you were to get rained out, would you consider this as a backup.

**BD029:** Of course I would.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok. Cool, thank you. And then finally, do you know any other fishermen who might be interested in doing this?

**BD029:** You need to call Captain Bobby, I’d be really interested in seeing his…

**Interviewer 1:** His model? Ok.

**BD029:** No, I would, actually I’d want to come sit in for that one. I’d be quiet, but then I would love to hear what he had to say.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok.

**BD029:** I’m telling y’all, that man thinks about every god damn thing there is to think about and he, he’s definitely someone you’ll talk to. He’s been guiding longer than I’ve been alive, you know. I turned 40 last month, he’s been guiding longer than that.