Interviewer: So, this is Interviewer with NOAA Fisheries, and I am sitting with Interviewee Interviewee. Interviewee is a fisherman in St. Thomas, who is a commercial fisherman. Interviewee has agreed today to talk to us a little bit about his history, his family's history, fishing in all regards here in St. Thomas, and just a variety of issues. But most importantly, Interviewee, we’re just thankful that you're here. What we'd like for you to do is just tell us your story and tell us your perspectives. The purpose of this is for us to be able to share with managers so that they know when they make decisions that there's certain stressors on life, that there's certain things that make St. Thomas different than other places, and basically, it's just an attempt for you to share and for us to capture a part of history and to understand fishing in St. Thomas. So, I'll just shut up here and let you go ahead and begin. Again, thank you very much for taking the time to talk to me.

Interviewee Interviewee: No problem. Well, my name is Interviewee Interviewee. I fished my whole life. I'm probably the largest commercial fisher in the Virgin Islands. We fish about fourteen or fifteen hundred traps, mostly lobster. My dad was a fisherman, but more for whom – whatever was extra was a little money for food for the house. I kind of got into it. I always loved the ocean.

Interviewer: Did he do it as something other than a job that he had?

DB: No, he had a job, and we did this in the afternoons and the weekends.

Interviewer: Just to provide food for the house.

DB: Yeah, for the house. So, got me interested in that. He used to have like ten traps. We used to go haul them by hand. Sometimes, you don't catch nothing. Sometimes you get so excited with the catch. But it was one of the closest times you can have with your dad when you do stuff like that. So, I got more interested in free diving, and when I came out of school, that's what I was doing. I was freediving and scuba diving for lobster and reef fish. But you'll have good days, and you'll have bad days, and then it doesn't work out, so I got back into the traps with some of my cousins. They was doing traps, and I got to be a mate in the back of the boat. I got very interested in getting that back myself. So, me and my dad, again – my dad sat down. He was already struggling. So, he sat down with me, and I told him what I wanted to do, and he helped get me set up with a smaller – well, back then, it was a big boat, but it was actually a small boat. It was twenty-eight feet. I started to do it with sixty traps, and then it kept going up.

Interviewer: When you were trapping back then, were you trapping for lobster, for fish, or for both?

DB: I started off with just fish and then – everything I was making – once the house bills were covered, I would invest in more trap wire. I went from sixty and then I ended up with a hundred. Then I went to two hundred. Then, I was doing so good in fish, but I didn't have the time to come in and deal with the fish and go sell, and then still get back to the traps. So, I started to say, well, let me try a few lobster. I started with lobster traps, and I started to do really good. So, I more focused on lobster. So, always have the fish traps, but right now, the fish traps in my boat pretty much pays for the fuel and the maintenance of the boat. So, my income is from lobster. I have a thousand lobster traps and only two hundred fish traps. I have two hundred tags. I was one of the people who was focused on the trap reduction. We came together as fishermen. The government didn't ask us this. There was a lot of people who was just entering the fishery that had no idea about traps. They was building traps and setting them out and not even going back for them. Or they'll go one time, and they'll be like, “I'm never going to do this. This is too hard.” But they just leave the trap behind, and then that causes a problem. So, I've been fishing pretty much my whole life.

Interviewer: How long would you say?

DB: I'm forty-five. I've been fishing, maybe [since I was] fifteen or sixteen. So, I would say twenty-five, twenty-six years. The struggles in the Virgin Islands is very little assistance from anyone. We get tax breaks from the federal government, from agriculture, and that's great, but sometimes that's – it gives the fishermen the option they don't have to file taxes, which is ridiculous. The government entities here do not intertwine and explain to these fishers how important taxes is, the catch reports that they did. There's no kind of information that at least the older guys – I'm pretty much one of the younger guys, and I’m forty-six. I have my son, and my son has been training from when he was twelve. He already has his own license. He has his taxes in place. He does his catch reports. He sits with me, and I go through, and I try to explain him the business, why he's paying the taxes, why he's doing this. When we do the catch report, it boosts what our fishery is worth. If something like when the hurricanes came, a lot of the fishermen don't understand that when you do your catch report, that's what the federal government will base the worth of your fishery on. I was actually very surprised that they gave us ten because I'm sure if they do it right now, you're going to probably end up with two, which is probably our lobster fishery, which is smaller than our fish fishery money-wise. So, I'm afraid – this disaster recovery was amazing. That really was a boost to help the guys who was really out there, but how they wrote the grant – I'm not talking bad about the people who wrote the grant. I'm just saying anybody who had a fishing license qualified. Let's say we have a hundred and ten commercial fishers in St. Thomas. We probably have thirty-five active. So, when we took the loss – like I said, I'm probably the biggest in the Virgin Islands. So when I took the loss, I lost like six hundred traps. I lost four months of income. They have me at a cutoff. So, the cutoff was seventy-five [inaudible]. But these people who didn't fish in twenty years was getting the same amount of money that I was getting just because they could fabricate – “Well, I had this here.” There was nothing to match what they was claiming. I would figure that since they have the catch reports, this is what you would go by. Then I know people who haven’t turned in catch reports in fifteen years, still registered a commercial license, which is illegal, and qualified for the same 75,000 as me, who took that loss.

Interviewer: Now, was that a loan, or was that an assistance?

DB: That was a grant from the federal government through NOAA.

Interviewer: That was just supposed to help you recoup some of the loss that you experienced?

DB: Yes. For me to get back where I was before – well, here's the thing. Everybody think that it was really Irma that we lost. We didn't really lose anything from Irma. We lost everything from Maria to the path on the south of us, and they just wiped everything out on that side. On the north side of the island, there's a couple guys who fish, but it's not a very productive area. It's more sand and mud stuff. So, you got to go way out to find – so, there's only like three guys of fish over there.

Interviewer: You mean for traps?

DB: Traps. Yeah, there’s some other guys.

Interviewer: There's net guys over there, right?

DB: Yeah. There are some net guys, and then the charter guys go trolling and stuff. But trap-wise, ninety-five percent of the guys are fishing on the south side and down in the west, which anytime anything comes either side, the west is a dangerous place. But I was glad for the help, and I was glad that our commissioner stepped back in after and rewrote the grant and helped me get what I was supposed to get. Because at 75,000, I couldn't even rebuild two of the days that I lost. I brought receipts for every single thing. I had all my paperwork. I'm very business-organized, so I'm at $202,000 in losses, and you're capping me at seventy-five. [telephone rings] So, it was a little disappointing at first, but the commissioner stepped in, and I ended up getting another seventy-five because he wanted to at least pay out some of the bigger guys. It's not me alone. It's like six of us that got some extra money after. That really helped the fishermen. The issue with that is, like I was saying, if these guys couldn't prove that it took the loss and you gave them money, these guys were pretty much out of the fishery. Now you gave them that money. So, now they're reentering the fishery and putting more pressure, but it becomes the same problem. They go out one time – “Oh my God, the sea is rough. I can't go back.” But you just set out thirty traps. So, it sits there. The money was a blessing and a curse at the same time. The enforcement hit –

Interviewer: Could there be a way to resolve that issue, do you think? Is there a solution?

DB: Well, the trap reduction was to resolve that. That way, it was a set number of traps that could be –

Interviewer: Well, I wasn't talking about the trap and the added fishing pressure. To make sure that the money gets in the right hands of the right people.

DB: This is federal money, so I would figure that at least the local government would step in and put a cushion there that they would be protected. But they didn't do that. They was just trying to get the money out, which was good for the community because most of the money went right back into the community. We’re buying this. We're going [inaudible]. But to have the extra pressure from guys who wasn't fishing again – see, down here, when you have that license, you get the tax benefits, but you also get to register your boats for free. That’s what a lot of these older guys hold onto the license for is the couple benefits, but they're not actually fishing. So, when the SSC does – let's do an overall study, and this has 140 guys fishing, and they're only catching this little bit amount, they hurt us instead of help us. So, that's why I was talking with Kevin at the last – I'm like, “Do you guys actually go in and pull these people out who said they did not fish?” Because that's an allowable thing on your catch report, which I think should be legal. You cannot fish this week and next week, but you can't be a commercial fisher and not fish for a year. I understand everybody goes through stuff. You have a problem with the boat, that's fine. But how are you making a living if you're not fishing?

Interviewer: What's your perspective, or what are your thoughts on people that hold onto it so that they can do it in retirement? So, when they retire, they can – and so, maybe they don't fish much now, but they really want to hold onto it because they want to be involved in it in retirement.

DB: I get it. But when they do that, it eliminates the younger guys from coming into the fishery, which is what we're going to need to replace us. Because, like I said, I'm making forty-six, and there's only like three guys that's younger than me. Some of these new guys got some license, but it's only for line. When we're talking about traps, there's like one guy younger than me.

Interviewer: Is there a transference of those licenses that you can give it to your son?

DB: Yeah, it has to be an immediate family member. Of course, the commission will have to approve it. Now we're trying to get – I sit on the FAC. I've been having some issues, not with the FAC, but my dad came to live with me; he was sick. He just passed.

Interviewer: I’m sorry to hear that.

DB: So, I didn't get to make it to a few meetings, but we was working on what the Virgin Islands would define a helper as because we just give out helper permits, but there's no definition in the code of what that is. So, when we was doing the trap reduction, you could only transfer this license to immediate family member. So, I slid in that you should be able to transfer your license to a helper. I could have an immediate family member have no interest in fishing. And I have this guy in the back of my boat for fifteen years, so I think – he's a knowledgeable one, or she's a knowledgeable one, and that is who it should go to. It kind of went in – and then, it was like, “Well, what is actually –?” We pulled it up, and there's nothing under the code of what a helper is defined as in the Virgin Islands.

Interviewer: You mentioned something interesting there. You said, “Or she.” Do women play a role in the fisheries here in St. Thomas?

DB: There's a few. I'll be very honest –

Interviewer: As fishermen?

DB: – I'm blessed. Me and my kids' mom is not together, but she has worked with me for twenty years on the boat.

Interviewer: You're kidding. (laughter)

DB: I stay home now, and she goes out with my son.

Interviewer: Serious?

DB: Yeah. She is definitely one of the top – I would put her up against most of these guys that's out there. Whether she's calm or rough, she doesn't care. She shows up, she goes, and she does what she has to do. There's a few other ladies involved, not like that, but they will do fish cleaning. They will do delivery. My daughter delivers all the lobsters to some of these places. So, my whole fishing business is a family. All of us are involved in it. Even now that I have a new girlfriend, I brought her in, too. I need her to understand that this is who we are. We are not changing that for anyone because that's what I identify as.

Interviewer: Were you happy to see your son take interest in the fishery?

DB: Definitely. He is going to have an opportunity I didn't have. I had to build this from scratch. He is starting to understand what I'm saying. You because you got on the boat – and I'm not telling – this boy, he's a hustler. He works seven days. I'm saying, but you have an opportunity to just walk on and go. I had to build this first and then go. So, he is very appreciative, and he is very – he loves that.

Interviewer: You've mentioned that you've got multiple generations of people that have been involved one way or another, whether it's from subsistence fishing, providing food for the home, or doing it for money, or your wife being a fisherman as well, and an educator to your son as how to do it, the right way to do it. Is family here in St. Thomas an important part of fishing?

DB: Definitely. When I said that, it was just like my immediate family, but everyone outside my immediate family, that's family, are still some way involved in fishing. Both uncles and their cousins, who started the North Side Club where the tournament's going to happen – they started that. Then my cousins took it over.

Interviewer: Is (Catherine?) related to you?

DB: Catherine's related to me.

Interviewer: I worked with her twenty years ago, back when she worked with a senator.

DB: Yeah. She’s related to me. They're in charge now. But then I have another cousin who does a real local tournament, and it's beautiful. Whatever we catch, we cook on the beach. It's just like seven or eight boats, but it's a bigger prize than a big tournament. So, it's fun. It's a five-hundred-dollar entrance fee. And then we cook all the fish, cook some johnny cakes, and it's a fun day at the beach.

Interviewer: I did a study on spear fishermen because I was a spear fisherman, too, until I had my neck injury from a truck accident. I was in Hawaii for six months studying spearfishing, the importance of spearfishing, its connection to family, its history, and its cultural connection. They let me come and participate in the Ali'i Holo Kai, which was the name of a fishing organization group that ran their fishing club, tournaments, and things like that. We went out, and then when everything came back in to weigh, there were certain coolers that were set aside to be sent to the United States for parties and stuff that people would move over there. Then the rest of the coolers – they broke out this big wok, the size of this car. There must have been a billion Heinekens and a billion fish.

DB: That's how it always is.

Interviewer: They sat there, and the party afterward went longer than the actual fishing tournament.

DB: Yeah, of course.

Interviewer: But they taught me so much about the fish that they catch and the reasons why they do things and the seasons and things.

DB: Like I said, my cousin with a smaller tournament when they come in, everybody's wife and kids are already there cooking. They're doing the johnnycakes. The beers are iced down. They're just waiting for the guys to come in. So, it's pretty amazing to be there and experience that.

Interviewer: Do you still spearfish today, or are you pretty much on top of the water?

DB: I haven’t done it in a while, but what happens – we camp a lot. So, whenever we go camping, I go, me and my son always go –

Interviewer: You swim from shore and go out?

DB: No, we go on other islands like Hans Lollik, and we camp there. So, we just take the boat, and we go wherever we want to go. But again, it's a family thing. We'll go. I have a smaller son who's eight, and he is just starting to get interested. So, we're having him diving and stuff. So, he's getting into that. For this summer, he wants to go in the big lobster boat now.

Interviewer: Wow. That's the one thing I always say is that you can change a kid's life the first time that line pulls or the first time you shoot a fish. They're going to want to be hooked on that forever. One of the things about being a free diver is that you see in the water, instead of a lot of times on the top looking down, which you still see a lot – you still can see changes and things like that. But being a free diver, have you noticed changes in the environment from, say, when you were a kid? Are you seeing certain kinds of changes?

DB: Definitely, you'll see changes. We're talking about twenty-five years. Definitely, the coral is not as healthy as it used to be. I don't think that's from overfishing. I think that's more from pollution and runoff. Because again, we're free diving, so we're not going in the middle of the ocean. We are pretty much around the island.

DB: Do you have a runoff problem here?

Interviewer: Definitely. If it rains, you just can go – you could drive around the island and you'll never see that blue water that everybody talks about. You just see brown water. So, I live at Hull Bay, and I have a gut that passes right behind my house. My house trembles when the gut runs, and it goes right into the beach. The guy who owns Hull Bay kind of made a retention pond, but there's so much water to come, and it can only retain so much, and then it'll run over into the beach.

Interviewer: So, are you seeing anything like –

DB: Currents have definitely changed. Definitely. I see currents on top of water now that in places I've never seen current before in my life. We have two buoys on, and if we go into that day, you don't even have to walk with the dragger. A dragger is a thing we throw over – hook the ropes, and these buoys are fifty feet under the water. I'm like, what is this? So, the current's definitely changing. This year has been one of the – we call it a spring tide. This has been going on for maybe three months, and it's been horrible. So, it makes it really hard to get the traps up. It makes it the catch –

Interviewer: Why is that because it's pulling your buoys deeper?

DB: Yeah, it's pulling opposite of what you normally pull. So, if you normally haul east to west, the current’s smoking going up the hill, and by the time it changes, you're already going in. So, you miss what you're normally hauling, and then tomorrow, you go back out. It's still going back up now. But whenever that current goes up the hill, it makes the catch go down. It's not because the fish are not there; they just don't really – they stay in their caves.

Interviewer: Who taught you about things like currents and tides?

DB: I learned that myself. Like I said, my dad – he's really an inside Magens Bay. He had property right down on the beach inside that cove. So, we just used to go in a small boat and pull them by hand. He always had this thing, “Oh, there's no fish that tastes better than this.” But when I moved out, you had to really learn about out there. So, my son, he's the best. He'll go diving, and he'd bring like six lobsters, and I'd tell him which caves he caught them in. And he's like, “How do you know that?” I'm like, “You can look at the color. This color is that one [inaudible].” He's like, “I cannot do that.”

Interviewer: That's amazing. So, this thing is all about your experience.

DB: Definitely.

Interviewer: And listening to others.

DB: So, I learned that for myself, but I've been teaching him, and he's learned much faster.

Interviewer: He’s soaking it up.

DB: And now he is teaching me stuff because he's out much more than me. He's like, “No, I do this way now.” And I'm like, “Okay.” And it works.

Interviewer: And it works. Wow.

DB: So, when I go out with him if he needs me, I would do the captain; he'll do the back. So, I'll move this from here, and I'll put it there, and I'll go to the – he’s like, “No, no, just go in the back.” So, I let him captain, and I work as the mate.

Interviewer: Nice.

DB: I don't want to feel he's got demoted because I'm on the boat. He's doing really good, and I want to keep him in that high spirit.

Interviewer: That's great. That’s great. I don't want to keep you for too long, but I would like to ask because this is something I know just from my experience in St. Croix is that the lobster guys tend to have special relationships with the restaurants and the hotels because they're serving to a higher – and I'm not trying to downplay the [inaudible] –

DB: No, no. I know what you're saying.

Interviewer: – but to a higher dollar customer. Right? Now, when you had things like the hurricanes and COVID occur, did you feel the pain worse than others? Because you really had control over the high-end market.

DB: So, what has happened is the hurricanes eliminated most of your customers for that kind of thing. So, I dropped my price down so the locals could actually get involved. Once the hurricane was done, the restaurants started to reopen, and then you got back, and you got to make this money. You kind of forgot about the local people who saved you. So, when COVID came around, everything was closed. And I'm like, “I'm going to do it different this year.” So, what we was doing is we was having lobster sales for locals on Wednesdays and Saturdays. So, we dropped the price down lower than it was costing to catch the lobsters. So, everyone could have something.

Interviewer: Wow. So you were feeding people?

DB: Yeah. We was doing so good in St. Thomas that St. John – I was posting up on Facebook that, “Listen, we know how it is. It's going to be rough. Come get something for a good price, and you don't have to worry about eating Skittles.” Because that's what the government was giving us – Vienna sausage and Skittles. I don’t know what the hell is that. But we're like, “No, come, we have fresh fish, and we got fresh lobsters live. Come and get some. So, we dropped the price from twelve to seven dollars a pound so people could get fresh food and still have some money in case of an emergency. So, once I started to post it up, people from St. John was like, “Can you please come over by us? Nobody looks for us and stuff.” So, we went over there four or five times. And St. John is just different than St. Thomas. I'm from St. Thomas. I'm never going to take anything from them. But St. John people are so much more nicer and they don't get in arguments. When we went up one day with about eight hundred pounds of lobster, we set the sale. We went up the first time with 250 pounds. We was there for fifteen minutes. We didn't have a lobster left. There was people that was there that didn't get – and I felt horrible. So, the next time, I let them know. I said, “We was not expecting that, but I'm coming prepared the next time.” So, when we got there, it must have had a hundred people in a straight line.

Interviewer: No kidding.

DB: Nobody's arguing. The first guy comes up, he's like, “I need like fifty …". I used to sell at St. John before. We used to go straight in from hauling traps and selling, but customs kind of closed out that little area now. So, we can't do that anymore. The first guy comes, and I'm like, ‘What's up?” And he’s like, “Long time I see you. I need to get like fifty or sixty pounds.” I'm watching the line. I'm like, “I can't give you that…” because he had a little restaurant and stuff. But he's the older guy. The people behind him was like, “No, no, you give him whatever he wants because he's going to cook all of that and bring to the old people.” And I'm like, “Man, you take whatever you want.”

Interviewer: Wow.

DB: They stood in line, and one by one. When we came to the last lady, I'm looking inside the last drum, and I'm looking at her, and I'm like, “Oh, Jesus.” I'm looking, and she's coming. She's been there, let's say, two hours in the sun. She's like, “I guess there's nothing for me.” I was like, “Well, what exactly are you looking for? Maybe I could take your number and stuff.” She's like, “I only wanted two small ones.” I took the drum, and I [inaudible]. There was two small ones left.

Interviewer: Serious?

DB: So, we got everyone taken care of. They were so happy. But again, the government comes back in after that, and nice things like that get downplayed. Now the government's going to step in, and they're going to – lately, they've been really harassing us bad. When they moved us from Fort Mylner, I did a big post. I'm like, “You see, this is what happened.”

Interviewer: Explain what that means – move you from Fort Mylner.

DB: So, we built Fort Mylner. We used to sell on the side of the road. But it became the biggest fish market St. Thomas has ever seen. It took a long – we've been selling them there for twenty years. I didn't start it. I came in, and I helped build, and it got bigger and bigger. Then, one day, the government decides, well, we don't want you selling on the road no more then. So, everybody had to move. So, they put up big signs – no vending, no parking, no nothing. So, they moved us now. Like I said, I'm the biggest guy. I'm looking at – there's going to be a blow for me because I sent a guy five, six days over there to sell. I wrote a big post. I'm like, “See, this is what happens when people forget who saved them in the hurricane.” COVID and the government steps in and tell you, “Okay, we had enough for you now. Just move.” But in my mind, it was never about that. My mind was like, “The government is pushing us out.” So, it left from there, and they went – Lionel Roberts is the next market. So, now Lionel Roberts is telling the fisherman that they're cutting the water supply off because people are stealing the water. All of that is supposed to be under DPNR [Department of Planning and Natural Resources]. It kind of falls under Lionel Roberts Stadium under Parks and Recreation. And they're saying, “We have nothing to do with your fish house, so we can't supply the water.” These guys keep stealing it. So, Lionel Roberts pretty much sells on a Saturday. It's the only day. All week the water's on; these people are pulling up drums and tanks in the back of the truck, and Lionel Roberts is paying a hundred thousand dollars in water bills. So, they're like, “We can't do that.” Now, you step down one more step, and at the FAC meeting, the lady for Agriculture is telling us that she wants to eliminate fish cleaning at Market Square. So, I'm like, “What is really going on? Are you really trying to eliminate fishing from the island? How do you expect six cleaners in the back of this establishment to clean a million and a half of fish?”

Interviewer: I was here at four this morning. So, I saw the amount of people working.

DB: That's just for this guy. But Market Square is full of people. These guys actually went on-site private property at Fort Mylner, went down inside a little hole, and they sell out from there. They're not supposed to, but the owner of the land said it is fine, just keep the place clean. So, they've been doing their own little thing. Then, there’s Smith Bay. That's privately owned. That's where I started to sell – at Smith Bay. But if you don't clean up and stuff, everybody always –

Interviewer: [inaudible]

DB: This is a government establishment. If you're going to clean fish and stuff, and then the government does not come to pick up the trash for a week and a half, what do you expect? You can't blame the fishermen for that.

Interviewer: No.

DB: This is a government's job to clean this place. It's the same that I was telling Leah. I say, “No government entity is matching. How does licensing and consumer issue 150 fishing licenses to sell fish, and IRB only receives ten tax forms from them?” If you're issuing a license, they're supposed to say, “Hey, you have a bunch of businesses out there that's not filing taxes.” Whether they're paying or not, they're supposed to file. Now, the fishermen are not understanding the importance of that. I'm like, you complain, and you're paying ten percent of what you're supposed to pay. You only have to pay your social security, which is a benefit to you when you get old. So, you're getting old now. Who's going to take care of you? Who do you think is going to step in and take care of you? And they're like, “Oh, I need the extra cash.” I'm like, “Okay, God bless you.” There's no way to – the older guys is going to be very hard to – I'm trying to get the Fishermen’s Association to do some educational programs for the younger guys coming to try and make them understand catch reports, taxes –

Interviewer: Well, you were at MRIP [Marine Recreational Information Program].

DB: My son was.

Interviewer: Your son was?

DB: Yes.

Interviewer: I met your son. I got to say that the younger guys that were there not only understood the message but saw how hard it was – the process. I think that it's really good that you sent him over to do that.

DB: Julian wanted me to go, and I'm like, “No, I need to …”. He's like, “Well, can you get your son?” So, I sent my son, his girlfriend, his cousin, his girlfriend, his other cousin – all the young guys that went, I put them together as a group to send them.

Interviewer: That was a great thing you did. Because I've been working with Julian since 2004, and we're all getting old. [laughter]

DB: That's why I was telling. He's like, “Well, we need to try to get him in.” I'm like, “Well, he works and stuff.” And then, with my experience with the meetings and stuff, I don't mind going to the meetings. Me and Julian have been doing this for twenty years, too. So, we’re on the (DAP?) together. I'm on the FAC. I'm the president of Fisherman Association. I go to the council meetings. So, it's crazy. Then, when here comes the benefit, somebody who doesn't even fish is getting the benefit. I'm like, “So what am I doing?” I'm wasting my time, and everybody else is getting the benefits. “Oh, you need to …”. I say, “I don't mind the guys who are fishing to get benefits. I don't care that they might be smaller than me. They might be bigger than me. They might be – I don't give a shit. I just want them to – I want whoever's getting the benefit to actively be fishing. I don't want you to keep a license to register your boat, and you're going to get ten thousand dollars for that. Well, I'll just stay home too. So, I was very disappointed that they didn't pull the catch reports. How hard is it to pull 108 September or August 2017 reports? You can't claim you lost seven hundred traps when your catch report’s saying you only have a hundred out. So you got paid for seven hundred, but you only have a hundred in your catch report. So, that's a problem. When that steps up to the federal government, are they ever going to help us again now? And that will kill – if something like that was a come now, we can't get that help. The fish will be over.

Interviewer: Well, speaking of that, it makes you sound anxious about the hurricane season.

DB: Yeah, this is a rough –

Interviewer: Hurricanes are a part of your life. You know it's coming. It's not a matter of if; it's a matter of when. What does that do for you in terms of your preparation for these things? Do you do certain things to protect yourself?

DB: Well, being on the FAC, I've tried a few times – I'm going to say that making laws or regulations is just too hard. My request to the FAC was to reserve at least ten spots for the big commercial guys. I have a thousand traps out there. I'm going to be the last boat to tie up. I got to move these traps. But if I come in, and there's fifteen sailboats that people just [inaudible] sit, there's no space for me. So, it's more important to protect the sailboat a guy uses once a year or the people who are actually feeding the people on the island who's bringing the food when the hurricane comes? If our boats are good, the next day, we are ready to go to provide food. But this guy doesn't even know that he – some of the boats are still there from 2017 and never moved.

Interviewer: I heard that. I heard that.

DB: So, I've been trying to get them to say, “Well, come in and put some tags on these boats that sunk in and get them out of here.” And they're like, “No, it's a process.” I'm like, “Five years, six years, seven years a process? But if I put my boat there, you give me a fine.” That's the crazy part. Oh, they say, “You're supposed to know better.” I say, “Well, thank you very much.”

Interviewer: Well, I appreciate you taking the time to talk with me today and share the story. I think (Yummy?) is about to blow this phone up here.

DB: [laughter] Maybe Ruth's here. That's why.

Interviewer: I think maybe so. I don't want to –

DB: Oh, Ruth's got to go. Said she’s going to come.

Interviewer: What?

DB: She says Ruth's got to leave in a few minutes.

----------------------------------END OF INTERVIEW-----------------------------------