Key Informant Interview 9

Date: 8/4/2016

Occupation/Affiliation: Recreational fisherman

Years of Experience in Occupation/Field:

Community/Area/Location: Patillas villa pesquera

Speaker 1. Describe your involvement with Puerto Rican fisheries.

Speaker 2. Informant is a recreational fisherman (pescador desportivo) – they cannot obtain a commercial license because they does not depend entirely on fishing. They mentioned other occupations including working for Pfeizer and also mentioned being unemployed for a period of time. They said he cannot sell their catch “in the street” but that they can sell it from their house.

Speaker 1. In general, how would you rate Puerto Rico coastal communities’ dependency on fisheries for their livelihood?

1. Somewhat Dependent – Very little

Speaker 1. Describe (e.g. In what ways? Why do you think that is?).

Speaker 2. They said that in PR there is a lot of variety of fish but not quantity. They also said that the stocks have been declining in the last 15 years or so. They said they attributes this decline to the use (“abuse” was the word) of too many plastic nets by commercial fishers. Informant said there was a 5 year ban on the use of nets but that was lifted and since then the use of nets has been hurting the fish stocks. They also said that most fishers in PR do not sell or make money out of the fish they catch but rather they fish to eat.

Speaker 1. In general, how would you rate Puerto Rico coastal communities’ dependency on coral reefs for their livelihood?

Speaker 2. Somewhat Dependent

Speaker 1. Describe (e.g. In what ways? Why do you think that is?).

Speaker 2. Informant did not answer this question directly but they did say that in their opinion the reefs are healthy.

Speaker 1. What would you say is(are) the major problem(s) facing fishing communities in Puerto Rico? (If more than one please rank them in order of importance).

Speaker 2. They said that “bad weather” is one of the major concerns because the boats used for fishing in PR are very small and therefore bad weather poses a serious risk. They said that the weather has been changing and that the weather affects the fish. They also talked about illegal fishing (for money) and the lack of enforcement. They said there are rules but no enforcement. They said that the resources are not well managed and that the government does not invest any money on the fishery or on research to benefit the fishermen because they have no interest.

Speaker 1. Have you observed any changes to the fishery, environment, or other natural resources in Puerto Rico that you think can be attributed to climate change? Describe.

Speaker 2. Informant mentioned the changes in weather patterns and said that they’ve been observing these changes for the past 5 years. They also said that there might have been changes to water temperature and to currents that are affecting the fish. They also pointed at the algae growing on the shore rocks (referred to them as “limo”) and said that they are growing everywhere and that this is a recent change and that it also makes it more dangerous because it is slimy. They also mentioned that for a whole year they experienced unusual amount of sargassum in the water that was getting entangled in the boat engines and creating an impediment for the fishermen. They talked about pollution from the nearby coastal houses [when asked if the pollution was from the tourism sector or hotels they said that it was from the population living on the coast that produces a lot of waste]. They talked about some changes to the fish “behavior” – said that for 2 years they did not see dorados – a fish that normally is abundant from February to May; they also said that they are fishing a lot of lobsters now which is unusual because this is not lobster season. However they said that the fishers are happy about that because they can make money. Informant said they do not know why these changes are occurring.

Speaker 1. In your opinion, are Puerto Rican fishers concerned about climate change? Why or why not?

Speaker 2. Yes. They are observing the changes mentioned above but they do not know why.

Speaker 1. In your opinion, are Puerto Rico fishery manager/decision-makers/researchers concerned about climate change? Why or why not?

Speaker 2. Informant did not answer this question directly but mentioned that the DNER has little money, not enough personnel and that they hire people with no involvement with or knowledge of the fishery. They said that they stay in their offices with the ac on and that they do not do anything to help, they have no interest in helping the fishermen.

Speaker 1. Do you think people in this community can work together to solve community problems? Why or why not?

Speaker 2. Informant said it is difficult because of the local culture and politics. They said people are divided over political parties (“*eres o rojo, o azul, o verde*”). People sometimes will not work together because of the politics.

Speaker 1. Do you think fishers could work together to solve problems in the fishery? Why or why not?

Speaker 2. Informant said the fishers have always worked together. The fishers agree on certain issues (they mentioned competition with jet skis that disturb the fishery). They then mentioned the lack of enforcement and lack of support from the government.

Speaker 1. Can you think of any examples of this kind of community action occurring now in Puerto Rican fisheries? Describe.

Speaker 2. No.

Speaker 1. Do you think the government and fishers could work together to solve problems in the fishery? Why or why not?

Speaker 2. Yes. Informant said that for that to happen the government needs to listen to the fishermen. They talked about the need for recreational licenses and for enforcement of the rules.

Speaker 1. Can you think of any examples of this kind of participatory action occurring now in Puerto Rican fisheries? Describe.

Speaker 2. Informant did not answer this question.

Speaker 1. Do you feel that fishery management in Puerto Rico is fair in the decisions they make? Why or why not? Be specific.

Speaker 2. No. Informant said the government has no interest in including the fishers and that government and fishermen do not unify.

Speaker 1. Do you think most fishers understand how managers make decisions? Why or why not?

Speaker 2. Yes. Informant also mentioned that some rules were difficult to understand.

Speaker 1. In general how would you describe the relationship between fishers and fishery managers/decision-makers?

Speaker 2. Very politicized. Informant complained about the lack of continuation due to the change of political parties in charge (“change of color”). They said that government and communities are divided.

Speaker 1. If they exist, how are conflicts between fishers and between fishers and managers/decision-makers resolved?

Speaker 2. Informant said that people representing different areas communicate issues to the government and they said it is a slow process to get things accomplished and that often they do not reach any conclusions. Informant mentioned that the fishers protest [they did seem to have a negative view of the protests however].