Key Informant Interview 6

Date: 7/22/2016

Occupation/Affiliation: Government

Years of Experience in Occupation/Field: 14

Community/Area/Location: Cabo Rojo, PR West Coast

Speaker 1. Describe your involvement with Puerto Rican fisheries.

Speaker 2. In the beginning I was collecting information directly from fish houses (pescaderías) around the Island. Then from 2005 I worked as part of the research component. We mostly assess life history (age, growth, reproductive parameters) of fish species, which are either commercial or recreational important. Most of the samples collected belong to fishery dependent activities.

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

Speaker 2. Somewhat Dependent

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

Speaker 2. I’ve been around the Island and it depends on the county. Let's say on the north coast fisheries are very limited due to wave action, weather, so you won’t see that dynamic very often. But west coast, Cabo Rojo, Rincon etc, on the south Peñuelas, Ponce, you’ll see that they fish a lot, sell the fish on a fish house, you’ll see the restaurant manager waiting for the catch etc. You will see on specific sites that is an inherited by generation, there is father-son relationship, often a family business.

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. It is mostly what I say on 2.1 answers. It depends on the geographical location, that’s why I say somewhat dependent, cause is not the whole coast of the Island. There are counties like Rincon, Cabo Rojo, Aguadilla, Fajardo just to mention the most important ones that tourism is very high, which translate in more Scuba or skin diving. So around the coast you’ll see a lot of diving, kayaks etc related commerce that depends on tourists. Also most of the fisheries, I can’t say a high percent of landings are reef associated catches, like lobster and queen conch which are number one and two on landings.

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. 1. Spend too much time fishing to at least get profitable catch 2. Price of combustible 3. High price of fishing gears 4. Contamination and coral reefs decline 5. Less ramps and boat access

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. It is difficult for me to describe it, because my work is mostly lab work. I know that climate change is affecting coral reefs and I’ve seen a lot of colleagues works that confirm that, but personally is not correct to confirm that.

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

Speaker 2. I think they know is happening, maybe they are seeing lot of changes at sea but they ignore it (my opinion).

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

Speaker 2. Yes, I know they are doing a lot of research. But I’m not related to them.

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

Speaker 2. Community for me is the key, because they are the ones that could confirm exactly what’s going on their location. Around the Island there are community groups working together with researchers with excellent results.

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

Speaker 2. Of course, they are vital in decision making, it will be great because they are always in water.

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

Speaker 2. Right now I can’t remember

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, as I said before, they are always using the resource

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

Speaker 2. As far as I know there are a group of fishers participating on the review of the new fishing law. Also there is fisher representation in Caribbean Fisheries Management Council.

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. Is hard for me to answer, cause is part of my job. I think we have waited a long time to make difficult decisions but something has to be made. Related to fisheries still some important decisions have to be made like the impacts of nets (e.g. beach seine, trammel nets etc) and fish traps. Important reef associated species depletion, thus the negative impact to the ecosystem.

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

Speaker 2. Most of the time they don’t understand why, I have been involved in several talks and workshops to explain how decisions are made, so I believe only a small percentage that understand. I think is difficult to understand cause fishing is their job, is what they do on a daily basis to sustain their families.

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

Speaker 2. Is a harsh relation, just a few understand our job. Some of them cooperate in our projects, for example is we are collecting fish for X or Y research they allow us to do so, but they always say something negative of the agency. They know that is has to be made, but they do [not] want to.

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

Speaker 2. Let them have more participation on the decisions, more talks and workshops, well more education. Let them know that in order to keep having fishing resources they need an order, they need rules.