Key Informant Interview 11

Date: 8/4/2016

Occupation/Affiliation: NGO

Years of Experience in Occupation/Field:3 years with non-profit

Community/Area/Location: Currently non-profit is working on project in Culebra

Speaker 1. Describe your involvement with Puerto Rican fisheries.

1. [Work in] project in Culebra to provide tools/education to fishermen to better understand sustainable fishing.

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

Speaker 2. Not Dependent

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

Speaker 2. There are less than 1,000 commercial fishermen. Different licenses – part time, full time – informant believes there are few commercial fishermen who have full time license. 20 years ago the government did give commercial fishers money and tools to increase the scale of the fisheries, however it did not work.

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

Speaker 2. Very Dependent

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

Speaker 2. Fishermen are fishing on the reefs so are very dependent on the reef for fish. Also, tourism is dependent, especially divers.

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).

1. 1) Lack of sustainable fishing; 2) Lack of enforcement; 3)Land based pollution; 4) Coral bleaching; 5)Lack of education

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. 1) Loss of habitat due to rising sea level ; 2) Sea level affects the infrastructure; 3) Climate is hotter/more dust from the African desert.

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

Speaker 2. Not a priority. The priority for fishermen is catching more fish and not getting regulated.

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

Speaker 2. It is a concern. The DNER advisor to the Secretary has raised this issue. It is on par with other concerns, but there are many environmental concerns. Informant believes the government is in the process of implementing some things but is not sure what those things are.

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

Speaker 2. They should and they can.

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

Speaker 2. I hope so.

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

Speaker 2. Informant could not think of a specific example, but did say that there was a meeting in July to start the process. It created discourse but was not aware of the outcomes of this meeting.

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.

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

Speaker 2. Informant believes that they can work together but was not aware of a specific example in which they have. They believe that commercial fishermen are not respectful of the laws and need to be educated on these issues in order to help them understand why such laws are important.

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

Speaker 2. No! Informant believes that the government favors commercial fishers. For example, a few months ago the government was going to pass a fishing law that allowed the commercial fishermen to have more control over managing the natural resources. Commercial fishermen would have had control over the natural resources. Informant believes the government does not have the right advisors involved in the decision making process. They stated commercial fishing is only a 16? million dollar industry vs. 72 million for recreational fishing?

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

Speaker 2. No – Informant believes there is a lack of communication between the government and those who depend on the resources. However, they did stress again that the government favors commercial fishermen over all others. Informant stated that the government does not take into account other users. For example, recreational fishermen want licenses but want the funding raised from licenses to go back into the fisheries.

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

Speaker 2. Informant stated it is in the middle- there is no tension between fishermen and managers.

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

Speaker 2. Informant believes that if one group puts pressure on the government, the government will listen and try to resolve the problem in order to avoid additional problems. For example, the fishermen wanted to clean conch in the water and not have to bring entire animal with shell back. They created a video to show how dangerous it is to bring back shelled organisms (disrupts the weight of the boat). Government said they will allow fishermen to clean in the water but they will complete a study in one year’s time to see the impact of this. Concern that fishermen may be bringing back juvenile conch. So the commercial fishermen got their way and we still have not seen the results of any study on this issue.

Speaker 1. Anything else?

* The recreational fishermen are a strong community – believes they should be licensed.
* Fishermen do not understand the difference between federal and state boundaries and therefore do not understand what the rules are for the different locations.
* There needs to be regulations for sharks. Shark finning is happening. They are not being caught and released.
* In Culebra there are only 3 fishermen with commercial licenses, the rest are poachers and are illegally fishing. Lack of enforcement allows this.
* There are long liners that are fishing outside of the 9 miles, especially in the southeast. They are catching swordfish.