Key Informant Interview 12 USVI

Date:

Stakeholder Group: Government

Years of Experience in Occupation/Field:

Community/Area/Location:

Speaker 1: So could you describe a little bit about your involvement with US Virgin Islands fisheries?

Speaker 2: Certainly. So I am a fisheries biologist.[...] And I work with the commercial fishermen and recreational fishermen a lot. But I would say more so with the commercial fishers than recreational. And so I work with them to collect data based on their landings. I manage the collection of their trip tickets or commercial catch reports as we call them, which is the paperwork, the reports that the fishers fill out to tell us much fish they caught on every single fishing trip that they take. So I do a lot of liaising and coordination with the fishermen. I oversee the data entry of all of that, as well as the port sampling program where we collect the biostatistical data, which is the same thing that Daniel Matos does over in Puerto Rico. I do a lot of outreach with the fishermen. So I plan meetings and workshops when they need to get done. And I would say that I have worked a lot with education for the fishermen to explain more about the regulatory process and management and why certain rules are being implemented. And I try really hard to explain to them why it's usually for their benefit, and for the benefit of future generations as well. So I consider myself as an advocate for the fishermen, even though I do work for the government. But I'm on their side.

Speaker 3: Okay. And would you say, so in your perception, would you say that US Virgin Island coastal communities are highly dependent on fisheries?

Speaker 2: Yes. I would say that. The fish here is pretty small compared to Puerto Rico. But those who are involved in it are very passionate about what they do. And they do it because the islands depend on it. People love to eat fresh fish and seafood. They supply restaurants and hotels, but they also sell directly to the consumer. So that's the locals as well as tourists at the different markets around the islands. So fishing here is very important culturally and historically and of course economically.

Speaker 1: And I know you already mentioned a little bit of this but would you say that USVI fishermen are highly dependent on fisheries for their livelihood?

Speaker 2: Yes. I would say that. After the hurricane of 2017, there were a few who did I guess retire from the fishing industry, and they turned to other industries out of necessity, like construction or helping in the rebuild of the island. But most of them have invested so much time and money into getting their fishing businesses up and running that they're still invested in that industry. Especially for those who use fish and lobster traps, because that's a huge economic investment with a lot of materials that are invested. And so it's pretty difficult for a trap fisherman to just quit and do something else when they've already spent so much money. So that's why right now it's a pretty delicate situation because we received ... The territory received $10.7 million in fishery recovery funds after the hurricanes of 2017 to distribute that money directly to the fishermen as grants to help them get back on their feet. And unfortunately that money has not been distributed yet. We received it in the territory in June or July this past year, but it's still sitting there in the account. The process is just taking a really long time. And because of that, a lot of fishermen have not been able to get back to fishing. And it's been almost three years now after Anna Maria.

Speaker 1: Wow, yeah. And would you say that US Virgin Islands coastal communities are highly dependent on coral reefs?

Speaker 2: Yes. I think that's fair to say. Well, a lot of the fish that they eat are reef fish, although [inaudible 00:13:15] offshore species like tunas and Mahi and Wahoo are also pretty popular. But a lot of the economy in the US Virgin Islands is tourism-based. And a lot of that has to do with water-based activities, such as snorkeling and diving excursions, as well as fishing. And just general boat trips where they take you out on a boat, you have a few snorkel stops. Sometimes they go to the British Virgin Islands. But a lot of them do stay in our local waters. So in some way or another, a lot of the tourism here is centered around coral reefs, and then your shore environment.

Speaker 3: Okay. So Interviewee, I wanted to ask you, what would you say are some of the major problems that are facing fisheries in the US Virgin Islands?

Speaker 2: That is a good question, and I'm sure that depending on who you ask, the answers could be wildly different. But from my perspective, just from what I've seen, a lot of our fishermen are older. And they're getting close to retiring. And it seems to be pretty difficult for them to get the younger generations interested in fishing. There are definitely some who are getting their children involved, but not that much. And so one of my concerns is that it's a dying industry here because it's so labor-intensive. They wake up at 3:00 in the morning usually to go out fishing. And then they're out all day. And then they go to the market to sell their fish as soon as they get back. When the weather is rough, they still go out. It's pretty dangerous, it can be risky. It's expensive to maintain a boat and all that fishing gear. And so one of my concerns is that there won't be a lot of fishermen left to continue supplying the islands with the demand for fresh fish. Another issue that they face is that there's not always a lot of support from the government. Certain industries have more support than others. And I feel like the fishers and the farmers sometimes get grouped together here. But there are oftentimes it seems like there's more programs and support available for the farmers because the Department of Agriculture here is pretty strong. They have a pretty good presence. And so even though a lot of their programs apply to fishermen too, they don't know that. There's not a lot of I guess communication or education that goes on. And so it just seems like the fishermen sometimes get overlooked.

Speaker 1: So if you had to rank both of those problems, which would you say would you rank first? And which would be second?

Speaker 2: It's hard to say. And then if I think about it for a few more minutes then I probably would have 10 more problems to tell you. I do think the environmental changes is a big one. I think a lot of that though is unknown. We're not sure how that's going to affect our region. With the warming of the waters, the range of certain species might change [inaudible 00:17:11]. And there's already a problem here that's been identified for the past couple of decades, which is the reduction in the bait fish populations. They're always talking about, oh, there's no bait. I haven't seen any bait fish in forever. And if they can't catch their own bait, then that makes everything else a lot harder for them. So I think that changing environmental conditions is also very important. And another issue that the fishermen often face is it seems like they get ... They bear the brunt of the burden when considering things that go into the ecosystem-based fisheries management model, and things like that there's of course a ton of issues that are play simultaneously, right? But the easy one to target is overfishing. People always talk about overfishing and nobody ever talks about anything else like land-based runoff and pollution, anchor damage, things like that. And it seems like they just target the fishermen because it's easy because it's easy to tell them, stop fishing or don't fish in this area, or don't fish for these species. And I feel like that's not fair to them because they're making an effort. They have been. They know the problem. They know not to go over there, and [inaudible 00:18:38] catch limits and all of that. And to reduce their number of traps for example so they don't impact the fishery too much. But I still feel like they're being unfairly targeted by most plans and policies. Because it's easier to address that than it is the land-based sources of pollution and stressors. So I think that might be my number one ranking problem. That the fishermen get blamed for all the problems in the ocean, when they're not. They're not the cause of everything. 2) I do think the lack of support from the government is a big one. Here at the Division of Fish and Wildlife, we try to work with them and benefit them as much as possible. So we give them a lot of outreach materials, like fish measuring gauges so they can make sure their fish are legal sized. And hopefully we can get this grant money out to them soon and we do our best to work with them. But we're just one division within the Department of Planning and Natural Resources. And a lot of the other divisions it seems like are more conservation-focused as opposed to supporting contributions of the fishing industry. Which is a little bit complicated because I don't want to speak negatively about other divisions within my department, but it seems like an uphill battle sometimes where they take it for granted. And just don't support the fishermen as much as they should.

Speaker 3: Okay. And what would you say are the most significant changes that have occurred in US Virgin Island fisheries in the last couple of decades?

Speaker 2: Okay. Well again, I would say then going back to what I mentioned before about the dying industry, there used to be so many more fishermen, commercial fishermen. It used to be around 500 I think for the territory. Well I'm sure at one point it was even higher than that, but in the past decade or so we're down to a little bit over 100 fishermen per district. So it's about 110 for Saint Thomas and Saint John. And about 115 for Saint Croix. But it used to be at least double that. And the numbers have dropped from people passing away, or from people retiring. They can transfer their fishing license to a family member or a helper or crew member. But that doesn't always happen. And because of that, when the person dies, the license dies with them unless there's a relative who then wants to take over that license. So that's a huge change that has been happening just naturally. And that's partially due to the moratorium that was put into place on fishing licenses in 2001. Or it's either 2001 or 2004. I can look up exactly what year it was. But basically it said no new fishing licenses other than transferring licenses between family members. And then of course the ... I'm sure you'll hear this a lot from the fishermen themselves, and they can probably explain it better than I can, but the fish populations have, most of them have decreased significantly over the past several decades. They can tell you, oh, I used to go spear fishing and see tons and tons of Nassau grouper and all these other fish, and it's just not like that anymore.

Speaker 3: Okay. Okay. And then what would you say are the most significant environmental changes that have occurred in the US Virgin Islands in the last couple of decades?

Speaker 2: I think the damage of the coral reefs have sustained is probably the biggest one. Areas that used to have healthy, thriving reefs with a lot of live coral cover have not been like that in a really long time. Most of it seems to be just dead coral these days, especially with all of the bleaching and now this whole new coral tissue loss disease that is affecting our region. And so it's gotten even worse in the past couple of years.

Speaker 3: Okay. Okay. And then have you observed any changes in the US Virgin Island fisheries and/or the environment that you think can be contributed to changes in the local climate?

Speaker 2: Well, about the bait fish, there are theories that that might be due to environmental, changing environmental conditions rather than overfishing of the bait fish species. And I am inclined to believe that, but we don't have any data on that. But I've heard other regions have proposed the same theory. But we don't have any data or any study to back that up. But I wouldn't be surprised ... Excuse me. If that were due to the changing environmental conditions.

It's more of a theory than anything. But I think it could be [related to climate change]. And then on a different scale, just from my personal experience there is a lot of runoff that happens and land-based sources of pollution, which I guess would affect more acute areas, like in specific bays. But there's a lack of enforcement of best management practices in terms of construction and land developing. So sometimes people will put out their [inaudible 00:25:54] fences, but they're not installed properly so they don't work properly. And then all of that sediment and the debris ends up running off into the bays. And of course that winds up on the coral reef.

Yeah, my gut instinct would be possibly temperature [affecting bait species]. But maybe it's a combination of all the usual suspects. But I would think maybe temperature. Maybe also the water quality from the runoff because they usually, the bait fish are caught in the inshore regions like in the lagoons. And the calm areas. And so those would be the first areas that would be affected by runoff and land-based sources of pollution.

Speaker 1: Okay. And I also remember that you mentioned something when we were talking about changes before. And you mentioned temperature as being one of the possible changes. Have you seen any changes in environment or fisheries or anything that you think could be related to this change in temperature that you mentioned? Any other changes?

Speaker 2: Well, it's hard to say because there are so many years of data, and I'm not really the one who analyzes that data. All of the landings that we collect, we enter all that data into the [inaudible 00:27:57] databases, and it goes to the Southeast Fishery Science Center. So I can run analyses like basic summaries of the top landed species and how many pounds of each species are family of fish. I just haven't really compared that over the past decades because it hasn't been part of my job. But I would think that, that would be easy enough to do. And then compare that to the known climate data to see if there's any kind of correlation. And then there's ... I'm sure the fishermen would have some good insight into that because for the ones who have been doing it for decades, they could probably tell you exactly, oh, we're seeing a lot more lobsters. Or there were no lobsters during these years, which were really hot or something to that effect.

Speaker 3: So Interviewee, in your opinion, are the US Virgin Island fishers concerned about climate change?

Speaker 2: Yes, I think they are. I think they are because they know that it could affect their livelihood, as well as the fish populations. A lot of them do care about the environment and they care about the fish. They're not trying to just take as much as they can to make money off of it. But I just think that there are a lot of other more immediate problems that they're also concerned about. For example, recovering their businesses after the hurricanes, now they have the [inaudible 00:29:41] coral tissue loss disease, which is causing widespread destruction to a lot of the coral species here, which of course will end up affecting the fisheries even if it's 10 years down the line. And then things like this Coronavirus, which affect not necessarily the fish, but it affects their lives and their ability to go out fishing. And so more acute problems that arise like these might end up capturing more of their attention than climate change because they're facing them right now.

Speaker 3: And just again, just a quick follow up question to that. In your interactions with the fishermen, are there any specific issues that could be related to climate change that they mentioned that you can remember? Any examples?

Speaker 2: I'd have to think about that. Possibly the different changes in the landings of certain species that they've seen throughout the decades.

Speaker 3: And in your opinion, are US Virgin Island fishery managers and researchers and decision makers concerned about climate change?

Speaker 2: Definitely. I've participated in a few working groups with local environmental managers and federal as well. Where we have identified short term and longterm problems and prioritized them and tried to come up with solutions. And climate change was definitely one of the top issues. However, the group could not ... They were having trouble coming up with specific actions that could be taken to combat climate change at the local level. And so that ended up bumping climate change down the list because they were trying to identify problems that they had half a chance of actually fighting.

Speaker 1: So Interviewee, I have a couple of questions about relationships in fishing communities, and also between fishermen and managers. Starting with the fishermen themselves, how would you describe the relationship between fishers in the USVI? So between fishers and fishers in the USVI.

Speaker 2: I think they have pretty strong relationships with each other because it's such a small territory. The population of Saint Thomas is only about 50000. And on Saint Croix it's pretty similar, maybe 40 to 45000. So it's a pretty tight knit community where everybody knows everybody else. Especially the fishers. They don't always get along with each other personally, but they do help each other out. For example, after the hurricanes when a lot of them lost their boats, here on Saint Thomas, a couple of them who still had their boats would help haul the fish traps for those who lost their vessels. Even though they weren't business partners, they still banded together to help everybody out and make sure everybody's traps got hauled so that they could sell the fish and start making some money back.

Speaker 1: Okay. And are there other examples that you can think of, of fishers getting together to address an issue? It could be a management issue or anything else?

Speaker 2: Sure, yeah. They're always doing that. We have the local Fisheries Advisory Committees, the FAC's. There's one for Saint Thomas and Saint John, and one for Saint Croix. And that is made up of recreational and commercial fishermen as well as others in the community. There's a scientist from the local university who's on there, people from the diving industry and government representatives as well. But that is the committee where they identify issues and needed changes to the existing regulations. Or they can propose new regulations that they think are necessary. And they would propose those to the commissioner of the Department of Planning and Natural Resources. So a couple examples of what they've done there at those committee meetings, which happen once a month is they proposed length, a minimum size restrictions on Mahi-mahi and Wahoo because we do not currently have any size restrictions or bag limits on those species. But they were concerned that some of the charter fishing operations here were taking too many of those fish because there is no regulations on that. So they said, we need some regulations. We need to protect these stocks for us as well as our grandchildren. And they looked at what the regulations are in other south Atlantic states. And they proposed some size restrictions to the commissioner on those species. They have not been implemented yet. I think now that it's been put kind of on the back burner because of everything else that's going on. But they also proposed recreational fishing bag limits on some species that currently only exist in federal waters. But that there was a gap for in local waters. And then the meetings are open to the public. So sometimes there'll be dozens and dozens of people in the meetings. And we have other meetings where the entire commercial fishing community comes out, like 90 to 100 people. So they try to be involved, even if there's an issue that doesn't directly affect them because they know it will affect their peers. And there might be another issue down the line that would affect them.

Speaker 1: Right, okay. And do you ... So before I was asking you about relationships between the fishers and amongst themselves. Do they get together socially or are there any sort of events or festivals or things where the fishermen get together socially that you know of?

Speaker 2: Yeah, definitely. There's a lot ... Some of the fishermen, a good portion of them live in Frenchtown, which is on the south side of the island. And then there's also a lot of them that live on the north side. And within those communities they tend to hang out together socially quite a bit. Not as much [across communities]. But they still do. Certainly all the island-wide events like carnival and parades and other concerts and festivals. Everybody goes to those.

Speaker 1: Okay. And how would you describe the relationship between fishers and fishery managers in the USVI?

Speaker 2: It depends on the day. It has changed a lot. When I started working here, the relationship was not good. There was just a disconnect between the fishers and the managers because there wasn't a whole lot of outreach and education going on. I started in 2013. Well, I started as an intern actually in 2012, but after I graduated it was 2013. So we worked really hard to improve that relationship. We started doing the port sampling again where we went out and met with the fishers and interviewed them and measured their catch. We started having our annual or biannual meetings with the commercial and the recreational fishers. And we started doing a lot more of those types of outreach events. I've also seen more and more fishers get interested and get involved in the management process. So a couple additional fishers will come to each council meeting. They're coming to the district advisory panel meetings for each island. And the fisheries advisory committees, those FAC's. So I think that the relationship has come a long way where there's a little bit more trust than there used to be. But it really, it's a tricky situation because the directors of the Division of Fish and Wildlife and the commissioner of DPNR are political appointees. So every four years when there's a new election, we get a new governor maybe. And then that person puts in their own people that they want to be the commissioners who then does the same thing for the directors. So if you get someone who doesn't support the fishermen as much, then that's going to ruin the relationship. The director that we had before, Ruth Gomez was very involved with the fishing communities and did a lot for them. Which is how we were able to build up that relationship so much.

So sometimes the fishermen feel like everything is so dependent on the person, the government contact. So it doesn't matter if the person gets along with them or not. But if they don't know them, then they're not going to like them. It's hard, they have to earn the fisherman's trust.

Speaker 1: Right. And so my initial question was, how would you describe the relationship between fishers and fishery managers? And I just wanted to ask you, is there a difference between relationships if we're talking a local versus federal government?

Speaker 2: Yes, absolutely. Well, obviously they don't know the federal personnel as well because they're not out here in the community. They're not attending the same events and just running into each other at the restaurant or the bar up the street. But I think a common perception of the fishers is that the federal government is there just to impose regulations on them. I've heard the comment a lot, oh, they just come down here from DC or wherever they are and tell us what we can't fish anymore or where we can't fish anymore. But again, certain people like who they see all the time, like they would see Bill Arnold all the time at these meetings. And so they get to know him and realize that he's there to work with them as well, then that helps. But then when he gets retired, new people are going to come in who they might not now. They just automatically don't trust them.

Speaker 1: Okay. And I know that you mentioned this within the context of the FAC a little bit, but can you think of any other examples of fishers and fishery managers getting together to address an issue?

Speaker 2: Let's see, one example is the fish trap reduction plan, or the fish ... I think it's technically called the fish trap management program. And this was started before I started working here. But from what I understood, this ... I'm trying to think of the best way to phrase it. What the fishermen said was the federal government is trying to shut down the trap fishing industry like Florida and all these other states because we still do have a trap industry here. It's pretty small, but they were afraid that the federal government would be going in the direction of shutting it down completely. So the fishermen got together with the managers at the time. I know Ruth Gomez was heavily involved in that process. And they drew up a plan to manage the fish trap industry, which would reduce the number of fish traps in the water by 20% for each individual fisher and overall for each district. And this was ... Everybody was involved because nobody wanted to see the fishery completely shut down because all of these fishermen had invested so much money and the fish traps is what supplies a lot of the reef fish species to the restaurants and to the consumers. So that took a lot of work. And I'm not sure who started it, but I think it might've been the fishermen. They wanted to be proactive and do something so that they wouldn't be told what to do and then feel like they had no say in the matter. And so that worked. That was signed into law by the governor in 2017 I believe.

Speaker 3: So Interviewee, I wanted to ask just a few more questions related to fisheries management. So the next question had a couple of parts to it. And I may ask you to make a distinction between both the local and federal government. So my question is, do you feel that fishery management in the US Virgin Islands is fair in the decisions they make?

Speaker 2: I think it would depend on the issue. It's hard to speak for all managers and for even just my division and the entire department. But for the issues that I'm involved in, I can definitely say that yes, I do try to be fair. The fishermen might not always see it that way because a lot of times these rules are implemented without their involvement. And they feel like their fishing activities are being restricted just for the sake of it. But also none of the decisions are made completely at my level. None of them. Everything is ... All the regulations are implemented by the commissioner of the department. And it's really up to that individual how much they want to consult myself and the other biologists. And sometimes the decisions are made without consulting us at all. And that makes things very tricky. An example of that would be we don't currently have a recreational fishing license program. And we realized that that was a problem. So again, Ruth worked with the Caribbean Council to get some funding to develop this pilot program where essentially for a year we were going to work with the recreational community to issue voluntary fishing licenses. So they could come to us and say, I own a charter boat or I fish recreationally, and I'd like to get a free license. And then all we would ask of them was that they report their landings to us similar to what's required of the commercial fishers. So we held public meetings around the islands. We, the council developed a website for us to issue these licenses and to give out information about the program. And then new election, new governor, new commissioner, new director who got together and said, we're going to cancel that program and it's just going to go straight to being mandatory. And we're going to charge for these licenses. And it's going to range from, I don't know, I think $20 for a basic one week license for a tourist, up to $800 for a charter boat that takes over six passengers. And that was a big problem because there was a ton of backlash from the community. And they did not feel that was fair. I didn't think that was fair, but ultimately it didn't end up happening. I think they did go back to the drawing board for that program. And I'm hoping it's still going to not be so harsh because if we lose the trust and the partnership with the community, then they're not going to be on board with that program or any others.

Speaker 3: So that is still ... There still hasn't been a decision yet that's been made about the recreational licenses?

Speaker 2: Well, I'm sure that Nicole has made a decision. So that would be something to ask her if you haven't already spoken to her. I just don't know because again, the communication doesn't always come down to the level of the biologists. So that's really, that's a challenge for us on a lot of issues. But we certainly do try to be fair for them. It's just whether the upper management agrees with everything, or has their own priorities. And actually, that would be ... I'm just going to make a suggestion out of personal interest. I'm interested to hear the responses from the fishermen on their perception of local government, ranging from the biologists up to the management because I feel like they would have very different answers for those different levels.

Speaker 3: And how about the federal government? Do you feel that fishery management in the US Virgin Islands is fair in the decisions that they make?

Speaker 2: Okay. I think sometimes it can be. But perhaps not so much in others. And again, it just depends on how much they involve the participation of local people, whether local managers or those in the fishing community for input. I think the worst case scenario would be when regulations are implemented or things are changed without consulting anyone in the Virgin Islands because it's hard to know what's going on when you're anywhere else. Whether it's the southeast regional office or the science center or up in DC with Congress and the [inaudible 00:51:29] headquarters. And I think the biggest concern is that people just want to be involved in the decisions that are being made about their home and their industry and their livelihood.

Speaker 3: Right. Okay. So do you think most fishers in the US Virgin Islands understand how fishery managers make decisions?

Speaker 2: I think some fishers do in some cases. The fishers who come to all the council meetings and who serve on the district advisory panels certainly have a greater understanding than others. And then there are some who they'll come to the mandatory meetings, but they're not going out of their way to come to other meetings because they don't understand some of what's going on. And I do think that some ... That a lack of understanding prevents them from getting further involved in the management process. And I think that, that's where they really rely on us as the local government to explain a lot of that to them. So we work really hard to try to get them to understand when things are happening, why they're happening. But it's not perfect.

Speaker 3: Right. And will they ask you questions about the decisions that were made? Or do you just tend to take the initiative to explain it to them even before it gets to that point of having to ask the questions?

Speaker 2: It's a combination of both. If it's something major like with the fish trap management plan, then we would definitely be proactive and try to call them all together in a meeting where we can tell them what's going on. Sometimes with smaller things or issues as they arise that possibly from the federal government and not from us, they do ask questions. And if it's something where there's a lot of questions going around, then we might still call a meeting to address everybody all at once. Or we would just answer the questions as they come.

Speaker 3: Okay. Okay. And then if they exist, how are conflicts between fishers and other fishers resolved?

Speaker 2: Let's see. Sometimes they're not. One issue that has always been happening is sometimes people's traps will go missing. And somebody either steals them or cuts them loose. And they're not sure in some cases who did it. In other cases they do know who did it, and in most cases it's not another commercial fisherman. It's an unlicensed, illegal fisherman who's stealing their traps to use for themselves or to sabotage them so that they can get a leg up in the industry. And in those cases, it's very difficult to resolve those conflicts because the only thing that can be done is getting enforcement involved. And the Division of Environmental Enforcement, which is also under DPNR has very little presence in the community. They do have a boat, it's always broken. They never patrol the waters. It's hard to get them to respond to reports or violations on the water. And as a result, the fishermen just don't take them seriously. And they'll call us to report something like, oh, this other guy stole my traps. Or this guy's fishing in the closed area. And then we as biologists can't do anything about that. All we can do is tell them, you have to report this to enforcement. And it's up to them whether they take that step or not. And in the cases where they know who stole or sabotaged their traps, they could try to get the police involved or they could try to deal with it themselves, but a lot of times I feel like they would just not do anything. They would let it go because they don't want to get into a fight with someone because it's not worth it. But that would be I guess something more on a case-by-case basis.

Speaker 3: Okay. And if they exist, how are conflicts between fishers and fishery managers resolved?

Speaker 2: Usually just by communication I would say. If they have a problem, they usually bring it up to us. If it's something where they don't understand a policy that's being implemented, we just try to talk to them and educate them on what's happening and why. But sometimes there are conflicts that can't be resolved. And that's if somebody has a personal issue with somebody else. So there are definitely certain fishermen who won't deal with certain government representatives. And we actually have that problem with the current director because they don't know her. They don't know where she came from. Her background is wildlife, so how can you have a wildlife biologist now making decisions on fisheries issues? It's just a bit of a challenge right now. A lot of the fishers will only want to deal with me because they know me, so they'll come straight to my office, or they'll call my cell phone. And I like having that kind of relationship with them, but I wish it were the case for all of them and all of us.

Speaker 1: So Interviewee, these are all our questions. Is there anything that we didn't talk about or anything that you would like to add?

Speaker 2: Yes. And it's more of a question. So most of my responses have been from the perspective of Saint Thomas and Saint John fishers. Because I work with them directly. There are some differences and issues between the districts with the Saint Croix fishers. It's totally different fisheries, different gear types, different populations. And they don't always see eye to eye. Sometimes there's conflicts between the two fisheries advisory committees. And I think that having these new island-based fishery management plans are definitely a step in the right direction because now each division can promote management as it pertains directly to them. But I think that's something that would be really good to ask a fisherman that you talk to what their perceptions about Saint Croix because it is completely different.