



Interview with Jay Driscoll by Elizabeth Farish for the Historic New England Oral History Project, July 30, 2010.

FARISH: Okay, well, it is July 30, 2010. This is Elizabeth Farish at the Langdon House and I'm here with Jay Driscoll. Jay, would you mind stating your name and spelling it?

DRISCOLL: Yeah, that's Jay Driscoll, J-A-Y. Driscoll, D-R-I-S-C-O-L-L.

EF: Thank you. So, we're here to talk about the commercial fishing industry and I wondered if you could just tell me how you got started, [and] how long you've been fishing for?

JD: Oh, I started in 1988, got a job with my—I had just graduated from a boat-building school and I couldn't find any work building wooden boats because nobody wants wooden boats anymore, and so I—my uncle—my uncles fished and I begged my first uncle, my Uncle Wayne for a job, and he hired me, but I really didn't like working with him so much so I went with my other uncle. And my—my dad had always—he was a—he was a boat mechanic, so it's always sort of been in the family when it comes to boats and fishing and my grandfather, he was a boat builder.

And like I said, that's what I really wanted to do, but I couldn't find a job doing it so I got work with my uncles. And my Uncle Steven, the oldest Driscoll at the time, was the oldest fisherman. He was in his fifties and I had started working with him for the year, for the whole year and during that season he ended up having a stroke and he was—it was a lot of pressure on me at a young age. I actually learned to run his boat at a fairly young age, so I've been actually captain of the boat now since I was almost twenty years old. I've been running—running a boat for him and that's how I pretty much got in the business and of course as

things go by, you buy your own boat. And so here I am today and I own three boats today, so...

EF: Wow.

JD: Yeah.

EF: Where is your family from? Where did you fish out of?

JD: My—my uncles have always fished out of Rye Harbor. Steve fished out of Hampton for a short time when he was younger. Yeah, so mainly out of Rye.

EF: And your grandfather was a boat builder?

JD: He was a boat builder.

EF: Wow.

JD: And he built the boat that my uncle—my Uncle Wayne still fishes today.

EF: Really?

JD: *Amanda My.*

EF: Is it wooden?

JD: It's a wooden boat, yeah. It's a beautiful boat, but he has since fiberglassed over it. Amanda stands for my grandfather always wanted a daughter. He had three—he had three boys. This was Clyde, Steven—Clyde's my father. Steven is the oldest and Wayne was the youngest and he had always wanted a—he had always wanted a daughter, so if he was going to be able to have a daughter, he was going to name it Amanda and MY stands for my Grandmother Myra. So that's where that name came from, *Amanda My*, so—

EF: But he never had that daughter. The boat is his daughter.

JD: Yeah, the boat was his daughter. [Siren]

EF: Wow. [Laughs]

JD: So that's how that name came about. So.

EF: And what were you fishing for?

JD: There's a lot in the boat names, you know.

EF: Yeah.

JD: Yeah, there is.

EF: Just as an aside, what's the KC? Who's KC? The *KC Lynn*.

JD: KC, this is my—this is Eric's boat. T-shirts aren't in our budget, but mine's the *Karen Lynn*.

EF: Right.

JD: My wife and—my wife and her middle name.

EF: And her middle name, nice. What were you fishing for when you started to fish?

JD: Oh, back then we—I was shrimping, tuna fishing, a little bit of cod fishing at the time. Mostly I was a dragger, very little gill netting at that point. And then when I got my boat, which was in '93 or something like that, I was fishing for shrimp and stuff like that when I first got it. I spent most of my time offshore gill netting probably from 1990 to 2000. We were fishing out of here and we'd spend—

EF: Here out of the Portsmouth Co-op?

JD: Yeah, the Portsmouth Co-op and we were a week at a time offshore and stuff, so.

EF: So what was that—what was fishing like during that time when you were gill netting? You—it wasn't—you weren't day fishing. You were trip fishing.

JD: No, that's—that was a tough time. That's hard on a family when you have a young—I had a young family and I—it's—it was like the only way I could make money and stay in the business still and that was with fishing the Dove Key at the time. That was my Uncle Steve's second boat, his largest boat and it's now called the Pamette now, but it was the Dove Key. It was a big—it's a seabird is what that is.

EF: What's a seabird?

JD: A seabird, a sea essential bird like a seagull but it's a different type of seabird. It's called a Dove Key.

EF: Oh, I see.

JD: So he named it after that bird because it's—I don't really understand the name. My aunt was a big bird fan, so that's how that name came to be, the *Dove Key*, but that's the boat that I ran offshore most of the time and still continued to own my boat here. You know, because it was—his boat was set up for living on, where mine wasn't and so.

EF: What did your boat do when you were offshore on the *Dove Key*?

JD: My boat's mostly mainly been a day boat, you know, and it has been since I've owned and that's what's sort of happened to the fisheries, is you've seen this big shift from offshore back to inshore again. I wouldn't even dream this day of owning a offshore boat, but it's funny how it was like all these new regulations now, it seems like it's--we might make a shift back out there again. We'll see.

EF: How many people worked with you when you were fishing offshore?

JD: I had four people with me.

EF: Who were they? Random?

JD: Oh, God.

EF: Not family?

JD: No. A mixed up bag of people I worked with then. I mean I had all sorts of people. No, no family. I had Erik with me at one point and that's when I—I met Erik. You know, he had married my sister and needed a job, so I hired him. And he's been fishing ever since, too.

EF: So he's married to your sister?

JD: To my sister, yeah. Not the guy in the picture.

EF: Right. [Laughs]

JD: [Laughs] No.

EF: And so you did that for about ten solid years?

JD: Yeah, I'd say so.

EF: You were out there.

JD: I'd say so. It's a tough life out there. It's a tough life away from home like that.

EF: How often would you be home?

JD: Well, it depends on the time of the year. I mean, we—we wouldn't go out there through the winter months like February. We'd almost stop right around Christmas time, I guess, when the shrimp season would start. We'd take that boat shrimping and then we'd start back up again in April and fish 'til like April to December offshore, all the time. That was pretty much the schedule because I didn't like fishing—I don't like going out there in the wintertime. It's not a great place to be, so. I tried it, and I just don't want to do it again. [Laughs]

- EF: [Laughs] Was it successful? Did you run a successful boat during that period of offshore fishing?
- JD: I think I did. I think it was one of the—the—probably one of the finest jobs I've ever done I think was out there because it was a tough time to fish, too. The fish then I don't think are or were as abundant as they are now, you know, over the last—there's been a huge increase in fish over the last fifteen years but back then when I was fishing, it was a little harder to catch, you know, enough numbers to support people, you know.
- EF: And what were those species? Were they ground fish?
- JD: Codfish and pollock.
- EF: So what do you do now?
- JD: Now I'm mainly codfish. Today what do I do? I don't know, I'm so confused. I am. I really am as confused as I've ever been on the water because all I've ever done is, you know, gone off for cod and—and pollock and the ground fish, but—you know, some dogfish and stuff now, but today I'm just going dogfishing and trying to avoid everything else because, you know, my quotas—if you just let me go fishing my quota I can probably catch in a month, you know.
- EF: Could you explain the quota system, just basically? I know it's not—I don't know if that's possible.
- JD: Well, they—they use history based from 1996 to 2006. They use an estimated history of your landings, which is tough for the State of New Hampshire because we've—you know, we have rolling closure that always have been outside our, you know, backdoor right here and then they have from there—you know, we've always, you know, diversified our fisheries. We've gone shrimping and we haven't been—we haven't been that, you know, hard on the ground fish, but yet in a way that hurt the New Hampshire fleet because we don't have a lot of allocation here, you know. We were—I'll put it to you this way. I have seventy-thousand pounds of codfish I can keep, and that's a lot for this state, you know, and there's some boats that have been fishing for a long time and have twenty and thirty thousand pounds.

EF: For a year?

JD: The whole year. Yeah, it's a tough—it's going to be tough on anybody. I don't know how they'll stay in business, and I'm looking at myself. Now as a dogfishery, you know, we were allowed three thousand pounds of dogs a day and that's probably going to last another month and so that might be a two month season, at best. So that's what I'm doing now.

EF: What's the market for dogfish?

JD: Well, it's—what do you want, like a price?

EF: No, like how—like who do you sell it to? You don't—you don't see dogfish on American menus.

JD: No. Well, it goes all overseas. In England that's like fish and chips in England. They love it over there. It never took off here, but—

EF: Maybe it's the name.

JD: Maybe. [Laughs] It might be. I don't know.

EF: [Laughs] So you said rolling closure, so the Gulf of Maine, various parts of it are closed?

JD: Hmm.

EF: Is a part of the Gulf of Maine closed at all times, it just changed?

JD: Well, we have closed areas now.

EF: Closed areas.

JD: Jeffrey's Banks, most of Jeffrey's is closed and Cashes is closed and a lot of those places where I used to fish. I mean, that's where I grew up is outside on Cashes. So if I was to bring an offshore boat out there today, I wouldn't even know where to go anymore because all that place is—is just closed right down. You know, big parts of Jeffrey's and so mostly all the—all the fisherman now I'd say that, you know, the day boat fleets are all fishing twenty miles, you know, inside of twenty miles.

EF: And you used to have a crew of like four people. And now how many do you have?

JD: I have two. Two guys that work for me. Sometimes it's, you know, one and two. We try to—my crew is—they were so good to me last year that I couldn't get rid of either one of them. They were—you know, they were—you know, I've got one—one kid, he's only nineteen years old, but he, you know, never missed the boat. He's up there every single morning at three o'clock ready to go to work. You know, and then I've got this other guy's the same way, so they've just been so good and I don't—as hard as it is, I told them I could do the best I can this year, but this is what we have to work with. We have to be smart about it and use it, and I said that we, you know, let's—let's wait for better prices. Let's let everyone else catch their fish and we'll go for our later, hopefully, get a better price.

EF: So you're sort of waiting it out to get a better price.

JD: I'm trying not to—I'm trying not to catch a lot of codfish and it's hard. It's—I've been, to me if I've been catching three thousand pounds of dogfish, that's the limit. If I can catch that and get by with under two hundred pounds of cod a day, it's a perfect day for me, you know. Which is easier said than done because there are—the increase in cod is just crazy compared to what it was. There were days down in Middle Bank, for instance, in March this year before we—you know, we were going out with gill nets on the boat, six nets and we were setting them over and an hour later we were hauling them back with a thousand pounds of cod and that's how easy it was to catch them. And, you know, we were just—we would let the stuff so it would just sit there at night and just turn around and haul it up and then go back in again. It was—it's the easiest this job has ever been. I mean, the time involved is just, you know—the amounts of nets used today aren't even a quarter of what they used to put out in the water.

EF: And when did that start? When did it—when did codfish really start coming back?

JD: Oh, God, I would say, I mean to the abundance of where they are today, I—I would say that you really started to see big increases from 2005 on, but that doesn't mean that they weren't around before, just not to the point where they are

right now. I mean from—from those years, from like 2000 to 2005 it was—there were so many different regulations then. I mean, it went from four hundred to—it went to thirty pounds, to four hundred, to a hundred pounds and then back up to seven pounds and then to eight hundred pounds.

EF: The pounds that you could catch?

JD: The pounds that you could catch and we're just talking cod. It was—it always seemed like it was very easy to catch the numbers. Always easy, but it was always easy to—you know, you always limited the amount of gear you had set for that species. You just find yourself, your time, your nets, just shrinking and shrinking. I mean back in 19—like early '90s on a trip—we were trip fishing. We were putting six miles of gear out back then.

EF: Wow.

JD: And that was a smaller mesh twine than it is today. And today what we're seeing is, I'm lucky to fish ten nets a day just for codfish. So we're—we've gone from six miles down to about, you know, a quarter of a mile and the mesh size is bigger today than it was back then, so.

EF: Wow.

JD: Yeah.

EF: What do you think that means?

JD: I mean, I just think there's a huge increase. I think if we were to fish—if I was to put—if I was to put six miles of five and a half inch gear out today, I don't think I'd ever get through it. I would sink five boats before I could get it all in the boat, I mean. You know, it's crazy.

EF: So do you think that the regulations, like days at sea and like the amount of fish that you can catch, do you think they have been effective?

JD: Yes, very much. The days at sea was an extremely effective tool.

EF: Do you think that that is a good way to regulate the fishery?

JD: Yeah, it had its—it had its, you know, pluses and minuses. It was—it depends on the individual fisherman, I would—I would guess. It's hard—you know, and this is the problem with the system set up today is the most erroneous or hardest

fisherman on the resource are the ones that prosper the most, and those are the ones that are going to be, you know, running the show here later on because they might have millions of pounds of history. Where—where like a small day boat fleet, say if you have a limit of eight hundred pounds, you know, and at that, you can make a living at that. We have and that's what we've done. I mean, you know, eight hundred pounds a day and you're—you know, if you can get eight hundred dollars a day and you do that six or seven times a week, it's still a week's pay for everybody on the crew, too. So that's how it—so we've always kind of worked within the system that they've had in place and it's—you know, if—if it was eight hundred pounds then we'd just, you know, be able to target eight hundred pounds. Say we could fish ten nets and if you'd get too many, you know, you'd have to cut back. So that this, you know—and that's one of the negatives, too, is there has been discards but not to the point whereas, you know, in like a day boat fisherman was always able to pretty much those go and they all survived, you know. You'd occasionally have some that would come up dead, but that's just a lot of the places that you'd fish, but it wasn't—you know, it wasn't—it wasn't almost like you read about where you see twenty thousand pounds go over the side and everything floating up. It's not like that. Not even close like that.

You know, it's like anything. Like a dragger would go out and realize he shouldn't—if he's fishing now in say Middle Bank where there's a lot of cod, he knows that he shouldn't set out and tow around for over an hour. He should haul back in twenty minutes. You know, that's just what—what days at sea did. You learned this—learned to work with the system. Now, this new one place is there's no discards at all. There's a lot of mechanisms that you're relying on other fisherman, too, to help you get through this big system where we're all—we're all kind of teamed up into what they call sectors, and unfortunately, I'm one of the leaders of the Sectors 11, 12 in New Hampshire. That's what keeps me so busy is trying to have all these rules that for years this is how we've been running the system, where we've thrown over fish and they've survived. They obviously survived a lot of this or they wouldn't be in the abundance that they are today,

but—so now we have boats that go out there still and, you know, we have—a friend of mine in Rye just set out recently and, you know, five miles off the beach in New Hampshire and towed for twenty minutes and had eighteen thousand pounds of codfish, which couldn't get discarded. So he had to bring it all into the boat and, you know, that's—that's good and it's bad and nothing got thrown over, nothing got wasted. It put a little bit of a push on the market that day and stuff like that where—but what would happen if—if he only had—say that all he could bring to the table was ten thousand pounds of fish, that's all his history allowed him to catch and he went out and made a tow like that and it's nobody's fault. I mean, the fish are like that, they come and go from the areas and if he was to go and, you know, haul back and something like that would happen and he had enough fish to cover it, that would have to come from someone else in the sector. So that would be—and that's the problem with a system like this because you have to rely on someone else to help you get through it. You know, it's always been so independent. We've always been an independent breed of people and to group together, you know, it's—it's—it can be tough and challenging sometimes.

Like right now we have an assumed discard rate of five percent. So the government is assuming that we're catching fish and throwing them overboard, still.

EF: Why?

JD: I don't know.

EF: They just built that in?

JD: They built it in because there was a mistake that one of the fishermen made at the beginning of the year. There were some rules that, you know, there were certain—the regulations involved in this new program are the worst I've ever seen. I mean, they—to me, I have to question everything they're coming up with. They call it an assumed discard rate. Well, assume is a—a word that I don't really care for too much because if you're assuming that I'm lying and you're assuming that what I'm catching is going to be the same as someone else's, but my last six observed trips I've thrown over the equivalent of two small flounders that weight less than

a pound and it's all documented, but yet they're still assuming that every time I go out to fish that I'm catching and throwing over a lot of codfish and that's just not how it is. But that's how they're doing it in the sector.

It's a—it's a—what was supposed to happen is that fisherman was supposed to bring those fish in, regardless of what they were. He was supposed to bring them to the dock and he—what happened is you have slime eel damage and things like that didn't get in with the fish and ruin and the fish. But still you have to bring those fish in under sector rules. You have to even though they just—they come to the dock, they have to be thrown back overboard, but they have to be documented, and this is the problem. It's a lot of these, and the observer rates. We're constantly—you know, we have observers forty to fifty percent of the time now, to look at—

EF: Who pays them?

JD: The government. The government. They're contracted through—you know, the government gives the contracts, you know, AIS and another group called EMRAG and another group called East West.

EF: And they're like biologists? They're—

JD: Yeah, biologists or maybe some ex-fisherman involved. They're very new to it. They're—you know, that whole program in my opinion has gotten way out of control and if I—if I do anything in this world, it's like I want to fix that because it's—you know, they—the observers themselves have gotten so far away from what their job really is. Their job is to pretty much sample fish and learn from the fish, but they come on my boat now, they'll check e-perms and life rafts and flares and things of that nature, just to feel, you know, that I'm safe. But you got to remember, these are just pretty much kids right out of—because it's kind of a stepping stone job. There's a lot of turnaround in that job because I can imagine it must be kind of miserable for them. You know, a lot of them get seasick and a lot of them, you know, they—some of them can't handle it or—you know, but some of them I'm sure can do okay.

And so it's funny. I have a—you know, I had a guy today with me today, for instance, who it was his second day on the boat and he went through all my—my survivals just to make sure I'm safe. Now, I think that's kind of funny, how I've been on the water for twenty-one years now and I have some guy who comes off the—you know, two days on the water telling me I'm safe, I'm safe or not. The whole time, we have to go get our boats surveyed every year by the Coast Guard to make sure they're safe. So it's just this whole—

EF: Are these guys Coast Guard trained?

JD: No, they have a one week survival training course and they have a one week—they have a one week survival training course and they have a one week fish identification course and that's all the training involved to be an observer. And these guys are thrown on our boats to, you know, help document what's going on, which is fine. Document, but they—you know, I'm always questioning the data before. I have to look at their data before they step off my boat because, especially now because all, everyone relies on each other. If someone sets a high discard rate, but when you don't know the difference between a haddock and codfish and things like that, it's you got to question things before they, you know, before they write things down on paper, so.

EF: Do they have the legal right to go through your boat? I mean, their job is to make sure that you're following whatever rules set by—

JD: Yes, they do have that legal right.

EF: How—who gave them that—?

JD: It's the Magnuson-Stevens Act of—that there should be—it was the Magnuson-Stevens Act of Framework 42 or Framework 44. One of the Frameworks that said that, that they were authorized to take—

EF: That people with two week training have the right to go through your boat?

JD: Yeah, it's something that I really want to fix, but that's true and I had wrote a story of last year about a couple of our fisherman when they're like prying through e-perms and stuff. Well, this is a—you know, your boyfriend will tell you. This is an electronic device that really shouldn't be tampered with. I mean

that's—we rely on those things. You know, the time that we go out to see, I mean it's three o'clock in the morning, it's dark and they want to pull up and all they're doing is looking at the registration just to make sure that it's okay and it's registered and, you know, the battery's not expired. Well, that's what the Coast Guard does every year, anyway, so it's kind of to me it's a point—if there's anybody I want—because the Coast Guard are trained to do that. I think it's a slap in the Coast Guard's face, too, that they're allowing this to happen, but, you know, rules are rules and I guess we have to follow them. But it doesn't mean we can't bitch about them a little bit in the process, you know. [Laughs] So.

EF: So who oversees these people, the observers? Who—?

JD: No one.

EF: Who do they answer to? When they get off the boat, who do they bring they data from your trip to?

JD: Oh, that would go to a research division in the National Fishery Service. It would go to a division of them, the statistical thing and how it's supposed to work now is it's supposed to be updated every four or five days, but this is such a new program that everyone's just scrambling. Even their own government are as confused as we are. You know, this was such a rush to a program that no one ever really thought let's just chill here a little bit. Let's make this a—this whole thing right now should be nothing more than a pilot study, you know. Learn from it, but don't—don't regulate so hard about it, you know, about those rules because it's tough, you know. It really is tough.

You know, in New Hampshire itself we—I mean, this state lost a lot of history. We had some problems over there at the Co-op sometimes and now, for instance, with my three permits that I own, I'm missing, you know, roughly a hundred and fifty thousand pounds of fish that—that didn't get reported, but yet—you know, and those were back, you from 1998, '99. Well, how long ago is that? Fifteen years ago now? You know, I wish at one point the government maybe should have given me a letter, told me it's probably pretty important that you keep all your—and that's my—I paid taxes on that and, you know, like taxes, I only

kept them for seven years and threw the rest out beyond that. I wish I'd—you know, I'm under no legal obligation and National Fishery used to say to us that "You are to retain your paperwork." You know, what they did to the history part of these fishermen is just—you know, it's criminal in my opinion. They—they took data and they—like I can't even—like I have my VTR slip reports from a long time ago.

EF: What is—what are those?

JD: Those are like when we—we write down what we caught. It's an estimation. I have all that paperwork from—from when I first started fishing, but they won't use that paperwork. They want actual dealer landing slips with a price and everything on it, but like I said, under no legal obligation are we required to maintain any paperwork like that from way back. You know, that whole part of it is just—

EF: Where is it? I mean, they didn't keep—would they have had any record of that?

JD: No, see, the—because the Portsmouth Co-op went out of business, so all those records are gone. All from way back.

EF: So does that mean New Hampshire, or Portsmouth, New Hampshire fisherman are—are—?

JD: I bet if the fishermen really audit themselves, I bet we lost seven hundred pounds of fish because of that because of bad reporting based on dealers and stuff like that. That's a lot of fish. You know, if your whole state is run on a history-based thing, to lose that much is just, you know, it stinks, you know.

EF: So that puts New Hampshire fisherman at a greater disadvantage—

JD: Sure it does.

EF: Than like Maine or Massachusetts fisherman.

JD: Yeah. I think it—I think the whole system is broken. I'm sure there's a lot of Massachusetts people and Maine people, for that matter, that have lost—you know, their history has been lost along the way. It goes into a system. I'll explain to you how it works. They—you write something down on a piece of paper. It's called a VTR slip, it's a dealer slip and it all gets documented and it's been like

this since '98 is when they started keeping good records. So that's why the qualifying years are from '98 to 2004. Based on the fish you caught, they're going to give you a percentage of that stuff and you know, what I was able to fix—I fixed a hundred thousand, anyway, but they—I don't have the paperwork to back up any of the years prior to—you know, first from '98 to like 2000, I don't have any of those papers, which is a shame because a lot of fisherman would keep it. But yeah, we can't fix them now, you know. Yeah, that's the worst part of this whole thing is just, you know—

EF: Is there—what was the answer when people or you went to whatever, NFS, I suppose, with this fact that like this big junk is gone?

JD: Sorry, nothing we can do about it.

EF: So your permit, your sector, your allocation is now missing all of that fish?

JD: I'm sure there isn't a fisherman in the ocean that doesn't have a mistake in their paperwork, you know.

EF: Do you see this—so this is brand new.

JD: Right.

EF: It's—you've been doing it for a few months. Do you see this being revised when things like this are brought to people's attention and, you know, all the—all the—unfortunately, they're working kinks, but like do you—if there are obvious things that need to be changed, do you see them changing?

JD: I think the only way there's going to be change in this fishery right now is pretty much from the top down. I think these new regulations were pressed on the Obama administration from [administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Jane] Lubchenco and I think that she is—she is environmentally pushed to the point where I just feel that this won't change. A system like that, I think it will get worse with somebody like her running National Fisheries. She's a—she's a, you know, a Pugh baby, you know, oil baby and stuff like that where when you have, you know, a scientist with an agenda is the worst type of scientist there is. You know, a scientist with an open mind and sees how things are and looks at the science. I mean, we went from a—we just a six—a six-

fold increase in pollock and how could they get that science so wrong is beyond me, but they did it.

Now, boats just went out of business for thinking that they—you know, I was allowed—two weeks ago I was only allowed twenty thousand pounds of Pollock for the whole year. Well, now I'm allowed a hundred and twenty thousand. It's almost like, they go, "Whoops, sorry. We just made a mistake. There's a few more Pollock than we said there were." The whole time we're saying, "We told you this," and there was such a choke stock for everybody and that means—I don't think I talked about choke stocks at all, but a chock stock is when you come—when you reach one fish in your history, you're done, whether it be—whether it be flounder, codfish, Pollock, no matter what. If you can't find more or buy more, get it from someone else, you can't fish anymore. So in theory, you could go out tomorrow and say I only had, you know, a hundred pounds of yellowtail, which is pretty close to what I have, I could go out, catch it all in one day, not be able to find anymore and I'm done for the year. Done. No one else can—I wouldn't be able to work again.

So that's how the program is set up. That's called a choke stock. Everybody was looking at pollock as a huge choke stock and it was going to be at that because a pollock is a funny fish. They come and go, they're crazy. You can have twenty thousand pounds in one day and you can sit in the same exact spot and you can have one the next day. It's just crazy how the fish marks and they're hard to figure out. They're hard to get away from sometimes and they're hard to—you know, and they're—so that's—that has always been—that's the choke stock in there.

When it comes to flounders and especially the gill net fleet where you can get in some trouble with them, if they're not careful.

EF: So if their—just to keep things simple because math really isn't my thing. If there are a hundred pounds of something you can get, are there like four or five or ten boats that can catch that hundred pounds?

JD: Uh-hmm. What we can do is say—this is how the system's supposed to work. You know, all in all, I think if the government would sort of just ease up on some of the things and give us something, some more fish here and there and realize that this is a—the [unclear] programs are already in effect. I mean, they go all over—they're all over the world right now, but they're not based on the multi-species fishery like we have. I mean, New England is fortunate. We have a multi-species fishery where this might work for scallops. It might work for crabs. It might work for a single-based fishery, but when you put all these multi-species things into a pot and you're expected to only catch so much of a certain species, well, fish have tails, they move around. You're going to have to, you know—you know, things happen, but you know, say for instance someone in my sector has five hundred pounds of yellowtail and I only have a hundred pounds. Well, I could give him a hundred pounds of cod and he can give me a hundred pounds of yellowtail. That's how it supposed to work. You're supposed to be able to tool up and, you know, be able to say, "Well, I need some of that. Here's some of this." And the whole network, all of New England is supposed be based on this, where I can go from somewhere because we're group number eleven, twelve of the Northeast Seafood Sector [unclear]. You know, there's roughly thirteen sectors involved all together within in New England. So in theory we can grab from down there, too, if we need it, but it's—it's—it's scary to think where this fishery might go in the future because it's—it's now a commodity, how it's sold. It's almost sold like the stock market where the biggest and largest vessels—you know, it's the guy with the most money is going to win in the end, and that's what it seems like.

You know, I see a future where you might have a hundred and twenty foot boat who could afford to pay—buy fish from, you know, at two dollars a pound. Go out and make one tow, land four hundred thousand or whatever it is that he just bought. Come and sell them and they'll be a whole bunch of people lining the dock ready to cut them. That's where I think the fishery's going because everything is sold on a—you know, they—what happened is they put value to the

permits. I mean permit values just skyrocketed like crazy. You know, fortunately—

EF: So you can get a bigger permit, more landings for the following year?

JD: Yeah, that's a good and bad thing, but you know, there'll be no one left in this fishery. I mean, I don't know who's—there's no young owners anymore. I think I'm the youngest one and I'm turning forty, you know. So it's just—I mean, I know Curt Lang down there, he's probably the youngest fisherman and he's in his thirties. He got a little help along the way. He's like a pet of mine. I just don't want to see him go away, you know. You know, it's nice to see him get some quota from other people and I think—but I mean if you don't have—if you don't have a good base before you start, I don't know how you're going to get started. You can't—permit's going to be a million dollars pretty soon here.

EF: So how could anyone—how could someone enter the fishery now, if they're like, “I'm going to be a commercial”—?

JD: Unless they had some, you know, financial support or some kind of windfall, they're not getting into it because it just doesn't make business sense.

EF: Then how would they ever make their money—if they—if they all of a sudden like, “Okay, I have a million dollars. I'm going to buy a [unclear]”?

JD: They couldn't because what drives this—this is funny. What drives this entire thing is it's the permit banks that are what's driving this problem. I mean, we have like the Cape Cod Hook Association sitting on thirteen million dollars. Well, they can afford to—well, I don't know what they're sitting on, but it's a lot and it's in the millions. And, you know, in Gloucester itself they have a nice permit bank going all ready. Well, they had the money to go out and spend these—you know, they'll spend, you know, five hundred thousand dollars for a permit that only has like sixty thousand pounds of Cod on it or something. You know, and it's like the small-time, small communities like New Hampshire, we can't afford anything like that, you know. Because, you know, at the end of all this is when they say our permit banks is going to get up and going, we won't have—we're lucky to have two million in it, and Maine, too, so. You know, [unclear].

- EF: Do you think that that means that people could come in and buy the New Hampshire permits and that the New Hampshire fisherman wouldn't exist?
- JD: That's where they're going.
- EF: So people from Maine or people from Massachusetts.
- JD: You see that happening already.
- EF: Could have the resources to buy them.
- JD: Maine's took a huge hit. You look around Portland. I mean, I just got a letter begging boats to come back up there, you know. I think New Hampshire, we can't afford to keep—and that's the most important thing to me is just to keep what we have. Maintain what we have here because, you know, with the permit banks and the things like that going, they'll gobble up this state as quick as—there won't be a boat left, you know.
- EF: Do you think that Rye and Portsmouth will change if there are no more boats, fishing boats?
- JD: Yeah. Make cute little condos, wouldn't they? You know, absolutely.
- EF: It's the trend.
- JD: They'll change.
- EF: You said—do you have kids?
- JD: Yeah.
- EF: Do you see them fishing?
- JD: No. No, I'd kill them. I'd kill them. No, but I see them—I would love to, you know, be able to, you know—I would love to be able to just, you know, give it all to them, but I'll just give them a permit instead and they can sell it or something, do what they want to do, but I just—I don't want them getting into the business. It's—it's a constant change and it's a constant battle. It's tiring, you know. It can be really, really tiring at times. But it's too bad, too, because I really love my work and they see that I love my work, you know, and they come out with me and they love it. But it's—they—
- EF: Why do you love it?

JD: Why do I love it? Oh, I don't know. I don't know. It's just—it's the--it's just the peaceful feeling to it all, I guess. It has a—good question. You know, it's something that I just—I guess it's the hunt sometimes, I guess that's fun. It's the looking around. It's the, you know, my friends are there. Just I love the hours. I love the independence. I love—I love being my own boss, yet I don't really feel like my own boss here lately, but you know, I still—I like working on them. I love every part about my job. I do. I don't like it so much in the winter when the weather gets rough, but that's—even then, I still like it.

EF: So even though you love it so much, you wouldn't want your kids to do it?

JD: No, I don't.

EF: Why?

JD: I just think it's—the future's bleak if it keeps up like this. I mean, if things were to change for it, I think it would be great, but not right now, and I don't see—unfortunately, you know, it's going to take some work to change this up. That's why I got involved in all the stuff lately, you know. I was more than happy just getting off my boat and going about my life like it was, but you know, it's just I'm one of the younger guys all—you know, the average age of a fisherman is fifty-five years old, you know.

EF: It's a brutal job for a fifty-five-year-old guy.

JD: Yeah, it's brutal and it's—you know, when they're all retired, I mean who's going to be left, you know? Scary thought.

EF: What do you do with all—with three of your boats? Do your uncles still run?

JD: Two of them sit on land.

EF: Two of them sit on land? Is that because—

JD: Because of regulations. They're—they're permit based. I had to get—you can pool all your days at sea and allocation on the one boat now. [Unclear] you can do it, so they're just sitting there wasting away.

EF: So out of necessity you have to take the permits from those boats and do it all yourself, rather than hiring a captain to—?

JD: Yeah.

EF: Hiring another captain for another one.

JD: Now, five years ago I had an Erik. Not that Erik, the other. I had him running both for me and as he went on, he bought his own boat and went from there, but, yeah.
[Sighs]

EF: Do you think that if you and people like you continue to be active voices to the regulators, to NFS, do you think that you'll be heard and that you'll be listened to?

JD: Just not now, but yeah, I think so. I do, just not this time. I think that we'll be—our time is coming. They'll hear us. I mean you can't—you can't fake this stuff anymore. I mean, I am more than happy to—anyone in the world can come on my boat, see what's going on and this whole over fishing thing, I mean, we're not over fishing, believe me. You know, over fishing might have been occurring, you know, fifteen years ago, even ten years ago, but we are not over fishing now and—and the proof is in the pudding. You can just see the amount of effort it takes to catch the fish that we're allowed, you know. It will all come out. It will all come to light eventually somehow. You know, one of these days we're going to have a real science get in there and just sort of—a science that isn't, you know, effected by, you know, grants from oil companies and things like that, a real science.

EF: Biased.

JD: Not biased science. And there are scientists out there right now that are fighting for us and hopefully they'll be more joining them because those are the scientists that are going to be like, you know, the right science. Because I think every fisherman on the water is one of the best scientists there is. You know, they—they know. They know patterns of fish. They know—you know, they know how—you know, they know when, where and when things show up and I wish they would listen to us a little bit more about what we know.

EF: Will you keep talking? Will you stay with it? Is this your career?

JD: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah, I'm going to—my ashes are going out on a hunt that I fished. It is true, it's in my will. Crazy, huh? It is. It's in my will.

- EF: Are you hopeful that you'll get at least one of your two landed boats back in the water?
- JD: Yeah, I would like to get another one in the water, of course. Yeah. I'm going to have to—I just got—I just bought a friend of mine out who is getting out of the business, you know. So.
- EF: You bought his permit?
- JD: Yeah. I bought his permit and unfortunately I was—he couldn't take it anymore. He just couldn't take it, so.
- EF: Is it—?
- JD: He's a well-known—you know, well-known fisherman around here. You know, well liked. Well loved, really. He's a great guy. You know, I'm sure—it's Peter Morse. Do you know Peter Morse? I bought him out. Just recently bought him out.
- EF: Wow.
- JD: You know, that's—that's a sad case right there. I don't know if you want to record this or not, but I mean it's a—you know, he had some trouble in his life, basically, but he—you know, back when the history and stuff was going on, he had some trouble in his life. You know, over the last five or six years he got remarried and, you know, he had a little, you know, alcohol problem, but AA. He doesn't touch the stuff, and you know, when he was looking at his allocation, there just wasn't enough there for one boat to—one person to make a living on, you know. But it would be all right as an additional permit to the ones I have, and that's why I ended up buying it, you know.
- EF: So it helps you, but it totally takes him out of the game.
- JD: Yeah. And he went out of business. Yeah.
- EF: What will he do?
- JD: I don't know. [Unclear] touch with him a lot about it, and I don't know, but it sucks. It breaks my heart really that it had to happen, you know, because he's a great friend of mine. So. That's probably going to—see, that's how it's going to happen. All of us, or the ones that, you know, who just—it's—I don't understand

the government's philosophy on this. I mean, my biggest—I guess my biggest issue with the entire thing is, you know, ask your boyfriend this and everything that you—you know, it's an ethical question. It's like somebody that has conserved how they fished and not thrown over a lot of things and not been, you know, gung-ho all the time and try to catch that very last fish. The ones that truly conserve, work within the limits and things like that, or the one person who went out and would catch his eight hundred pounds, and then go out and catch—try to catch forty-thousand pounds of pollock in the process, knock off, you know, another fifteen thousand pounds of cod, just you know, kill them off, no big deal, just to catch a little bit more pollock. But who deserves the right to more fish today? Somebody who really went about it in a conservative way or somebody who just went out and balls to the wall? I mean, who deserves more? And now that they based it on this person over here—

EF: Because they have this huge landing. Huge landings.

JD: Based on history of landings. You know, I don't think that's right. It's wrong how they set this up. They really need to fix that because like, you know—like I know Steve there that Mike works for there, and you know, he doesn't seem like he's—I don't know. Don't know him that well, but he doesn't seem like he's that type of fisherman who would go out and, you know, kill a bunch of stuff for nothing. You know?

EF: Yeah. He's worried about his son's job, so—

JD: Yeah.

EF: Even if that might be his instinct, which it's not, he wouldn't do it for very practical reasons.

JD: Right.

EF: Like there's future generations to—to be out there. Let alone just being respectful of the environment because that's where you work and where we all live.

JD: Exactly. You don't have to—you don't have to fish in that way and the system was set up to make a perfectly fine living with the limits that we had in place. We had to fight for that, though, because it was hard. We had four hundred pound

years and things like that but eventually the market caught up with it, you know, and we were able to—you know, it was a—even though we were only getting eight hundred, well, as soon as we get two dollars a pound for that eight hundred, and that went, you know, really good. You just work with the system. This new system's just set up—it's just not set up right. Not a lot of thought went into the consolidation issues that are going to happen. You know, the big boat theories and things like that that are going to come out of this whole situation. I can't—it's just basically common sense, that's what happens. You take away—take away everyone's—somebody's going to be left standing, that's all there is to it. One guy is going to be left standing at the end of it. That totally ruins—it's like New Hampshire—it's like a Monopoly game where Massachusetts and Maine and all these other—all these other big players have all their hotels and motels and it's New Hampshire's turn to roll and we don't have any money. That's exactly what it feels like. That's exactly what it feels like we're up against, you know. That's the easiest way to explain it to people because that's about what's going to happen, is if you don't have the tools in place to keep going and when I mean tools, I mean fish—if you don't have the allocation, allocation is money. If you don't have the money, don't have the fish, we're not going to be around much longer here.

EF: Can New Hampshire permits be sold out of New Hampshire?

JD: Yeah. Yeah, they can be sold anywhere because they're federal. They're not state-owned, they're federal-owned but that doesn't mean we can't buy Massachusetts permits and bring them here. It's just—you know.

EF: Yesterday on the news it was announced that I think Jeanne Shaheen, Senator Shaheen was able to secure some money for buying permits. Do I have that right?

JD: Uh-hmm, yeah.

EF: Is that helpful? Is it too late? Is it not enough? It was a million dollars, I hear.

JD: No, it's nowhere near enough and I tell you why, because of what's driving it is when someone's sitting on more money. When someone has—if you only have a million, but someone over here is sitting on ten million, the same amount of boats

involved, they are willing to pay money. They are willing to pay a lot more for permits and we're going to be left with the ones that don't have much value. So it's just, you know, that's—that's how that's going to go.

EF: Who does she give that money to?

JD: It's supposed to go—

EF: Fisherman? You?

JD: No. No, it's a problem, too, and I don't understand it. It's not going to go to the fisherman; it's going to go to the state. Right now they're talking about the PDS, Port and Development Authority is going to get the money and they'll distribute it from there. Those are the same people that we pay our mooring fees to and stuff like that, so.

EF: And finances the—?

JD: Yeah, they don't want the—they don't want it to go to the sectors. I don't understand why because I think that we would control it more than anybody else. It's not like we're going to throw all the money away, but it's going for the fishermen, but it's not for the fishermen. I don't understand. But I've been trying to bring light to it and I don't want to see the PDA get it because PDA is just—don't let them have it and take a, you know, fee off it and everything else I'm sure. I rather see it go to the Fish and Game. At least the Fish and Game, they're under no—we have no obligation to the Fish and Game when it comes to—you know, I can see the PDA someday going, “Oh, you didn't pay your mooring fees. You're not going to get any permit money or permit bank fish,” or stuff like that. So I can almost see that happening because there's a disconnect with the fishermen and them lately. So.

EF: Are there permits for sale currently?

JD: No.

EF: There's none—

JD: The market's pretty froze right now on permits because everyone's waiting. Yeah. Everybody's waiting. There's very little, little permits at all right now that have come available. Nothing with value.

EF: Do you have four permits?

JD: I have—I have four permits. I have three multi-species permits and I have one Black Sea Bass permit that I can use off of like Maryland, if I wanted to.

EF: I wanted to ask you, is New England—is it—is the coast here unique in terms of the layers of species? More unique than other fishing ports?

JD: Oh, yeah. Yeah, this place is crazy. It's a multi-species fishery. I mean, you can—you don't see it so much gill netting, but when you're—say you're dragging, you get like a variety of, you know—you get everything! It's cool, I mean. I'm not saying that it's—I don't mean that in an erroneous way at all. I mean it as like there's just a smorgasbord of fish there that they're all edible and they're all good and they—you know, it's cool. It's great. You know, we have four or five different types of flounders that are all good. Pollock, the cod, the haddock, you know. Tuna fish. We've got all sorts of stuff here.

EF: Do you see Fishtival—the Fish Festival—as being a benefit to the industry? Do you think that that helps to educate, not only our own close community, but you know, people who don't live on the coast who don't live and work next to fishermen? Do you think that it helps sort of get realities out there?

JD: I think any knowledge the public can have from a fisherman or—I think that all helps, no matter what it is, even the smallest amount. I mean, sometimes when you get these—when you get—you can pick up any paper in the world right now and read some paper on over fishing somewhere that's going on.

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