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Gloucester's Working Waterfront - Panel Discussion LECTURE FINDING AID & TRANSCRIPT

- Speakers:** Sean Horgan, Jackie Odell, Al Cottone, Viking Gustafson, Bob Koeller, Ann Molloy and Ed Smith
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Video Description

"Gloucester's Working Waterfront - Panel Discussion" features a panel of fishermen and others who work on the waterfront moderated by Gloucester Daily Times reporter Sean Horgan.

The discussion focuses on the men and women whose lives, families and careers are connected to Gloucester's working waterfront, and their daily routines as well as the

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rewards and challenges of working in waterfront jobs—whether on shore or at sea. The panel also delves into possible future directions for Gloucester's working waterfront considering government regulations. This event was presented in collaboration with Northeast Seafood Coalition.

The panelists include fisherman Al Cottone; Viking Gustafson, manager of Gloucester Marine Railways; Bob Koeller, owner of Seatronics; Ann Molloy, sales and marketing director of Neptune's Harvest; and fisherman Ed Smith.

Subject list

Gloucester, fishing industry, fishermen, working waterfront, Northeast Seafood Coalition, Seatronics, Gloucester Marine Railways, Neptune's Harvest, fish fertilizer, ground fish, lobster, cod, dockside business, regulations, catch share, gill netter, trawl survey, bycatch, NOAA

Transcription

Courtney Richardson 00:00

... Starting, which is something new. And we're also, we just decided... what do we say? Breaking news: that the Portraits of a Working Waterfront exhibition will continue. Yay!

Courtney Richardson 00:18

I'm also looking forward to some upcoming events. On Friday night we will be open six to nine for CAM After Hours—a full evening of art, history, and culture inspired by the Portraits of a Working Waterfront exhibition, and our new exhibition in the lobby—Knots: Drawings and Paintings by Jeffrey Marshall. We will get a sneak preview of the Sounds of the Working Waterfront by Robert Bradshaw, music by Mossy, conversation between artists Jeff Marshall and Ken Riaf, a photo booth, art making and delicious appetizers, treats and wine and beer from Tim Hopkins Catering. It's going to be a fun night. It's all inclusive. Purchase your tickets at the front desk today. On Saturday, Robert Bradshaw and other musicians will perform Sounds of the Working Waterfront in the gallery upstairs. Make your reservations today because space is limited. I also want to invite you to stop into the gallery in the upcoming weeks to record your story about Gloucester's working waterfront. Whether your portrait is on display, your family was involved at some point, or you have a favorite story that you remember, please tell it to our story kiosk upstairs. And if you don't like technology, or if it seems daunting to you, fear not. It's pretty simple and the staff is on hand to help. Now on to the exhibition and today's program. Like most of you, I hope, I've spent a lot of time in our Maritime & Fisheries galleries upstairs. And some of my favorite items are the Augustus Buhler paintings of the fishermen that were done in the early 1900s along with the various objects which illustrate the other industries that existed in Gloucester at that time. Lothrop foghorns, John Rogers' apparatus for drying out fish skin to make glue, the ballast wagon—they are all reminders that the fishing fleet had the support of the community. They had everything that they needed to be successful at their fingertips. They could outfit their vessels, get safety and navigation equipment, sails, tools, ice, etc. all here in Gloucester. If artists like Buhler and others documented their lives on shore and at work, that was over 100 years ago. In 2013, Jim Hooper

came to Gloucester to do the same thing, with the help and support of the Northeast Seafood Coalition. In the Cape Ann Museum, Portraits of a Working Waterfront are now part of the museum's permanent collection, which for generations to come, will add to the richness of the stories that we tell in our Maritime & Fisheries galleries. We wanted to bring together today's panelists to learn more about the people in the portraits. And one thing I think we'll learn today is that everyone pictured is still working together to support the fish industry. Gloucester is truly a remarkable place in that regard. I want to thank Sean from the Gloucester Daily Times, our panelists Ann [Molloy], Viking [Gustafson], Bob [Koeller], Al [Cottone] and Ed [Smith]. And also Bill Hunt, who's been helping us with sound. So if you can't hear, please let us know and we'll try to fix it. And also Jackie Odell, as I said before, the entire project would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of the Northeast Seafood Coalition. Here to introduce our program is Jackie Odell, Executive Director of the NSC.

Jackie Odell 03:48

Thank you, what a great turnout today. Some brave souls who are working to venture out into the weather; it's good to see everyone here today. The Northeast Seafood Coalition about a year and a half ago, or a little bit longer than that, had received a call from the artist, Jim, who was looking to engage in this project and looking to work with those on the waterfront and photograph those in the waterfront. We immediately got involved because Jim came to our office and had a fantastic project that he had worked on in a book that he had brought with him, where he had taken photographs of different businesses and people that had worked in Providence and helped to revitalize that city. So we got involved because we as an organization work in the policy and the regulatory arena, which often tends to forget about the importance of the lives and the people and the importance of the working waterfront. and how much that means to all of us. This was an opportunity for us to, to celebrate the people. And we were also very happy after the project got going. We, partner John Ballard, the chairman of the Northeast Seafood Coalition, had gotten in touch with the museum who was very excited about the project as well. And that's when the exhibition got started and the planning got started. So we're happy to be a part of this. I don't want to take any more time than that. I think it's important for all of you to learn who these people are, and who makes up the working waterfront and thank you.

Sean Horgan 05:53

Good afternoon. I'm Sean Horgan for the Gloucester Daily Times. Can you hear me? Yes. I'm Sean Horgan from the Gloucester Daily Times. And I'm really happy to be part of this today. I think that there are so many great stories to be told in Gloucester. And we have five of them up here today. I think there is a temptation when we look Gloucester and consider the history of the fleet, and the state of the fleet today, to think of it as a chain that sort of stretches all the way back to Samuel de Champlain coming in in 1603 and stretch, and hopefully, a lot before [?]. But really, I think what we want to do is reduce that image or enhance that image to look at the human faces of these industries and of the people that work on the waterfront and working in the fishing industry. So we hope to tell some good stories today. They asked me what kind of questions I was going to ask. I said, you know, really, what we're going to do is just have a conversation. So just pretend we're in a bar someplace—maybe we should have it in a bar someplace. And we'll go from there. I think I'll start with the gentleman who I've talked to most on sailing since I've been here and that's Al Cottone. How long have you been a fisherman?

Al Cottone 07:06

31 years.

Sean Horgan 07:06

And who taught you how to fish?

Al Cottone 07:08

My dad.

Sean Horgan 07:09

And how long does he fish?

Al Cottone 07:12

He started when he was nine in Sicily and fishing was the only job he ever had.

Sean Horgan 07:19

Okay, did he want you to be a fisherman?

Al Cottone 07:22

I think he did. I started fishing summers when I was 12. And I kind of caught the bug early. And he didn't really do anything to discourage me too much, when I was fishing summers.

Sean Horgan 07:36

Would he take you out in good weather and bad?

Al Cottone 07:39

Initially, it was always good weather. And he taught me a lesson once about what battle bad weather was like when I was 12. He complained Monday that he didn't take me because the weather was bad. And he said, okay, you know, now all bets are off. And the very next day was bad weather. You know, I learned my lesson, but I've still been determined.

Sean Horgan 08:03

Have you ever considered doing anything else than fishing?

Al Cottone 08:06

No, that's what scares me to death. It's the only job I've ever had. I mean, I never had a paper route. Never bagged groceries. It's, I mean, it's almost like I was genetically predisposed to be on the water.

Sean Horgan 08:23

And you think about being on the water, what makes you happiest? Is it a big bag of fish coming onto the surface?

Al Cottone 08:30

Oh obviously that makes it that makes it a better day. Now we fish so infrequently. That night, the days that we're going to go out, you really have trouble sleeping the night before, you're just so excited that you're all going fishing tomorrow. But now I haven't been out in a month because of the emergency actions. And I can start going on February 1, whenever [?]. You know, the first good weather day that I go, that night I probably won't sleep.

Sean Horgan 08:58

What do you do with yourself on days that you're not fishing?

Al Cottone 09:01

You're out of water.

Sean Horgan 09:04

Are they endless?

Al Cottone 09:05

Yes, they take forever. And my wife works full time and it's you know, just watching the clock waiting for her to get home. It's basically all I do... especially this time of the year.

Sean Horgan 09:13

And when you're fishing, take us through your day, what time does it start?

Sean Horgan 09:18

What time you get down to the boat? What are the tasks that are needed?

Al Cottone 09:23

Depends on the time of the year anywhere from 1 am to 3 am is when my day would start. When you get down to the boat and start the engine, we have to do a pre trip notification which is letting the government know when we're fishing, where we're fishing, what kind of fishing we're doing. And then with that our lines go, and the ride out could be anywhere from one to two hours for myself, I'm a day fisherman. And I usually set by that, depending on what I'm fishing for, one to two tows. And if everything is, I call an "uneventful day," everything was good which is a uneventful day, you know, you get a base pay and are usually home by 2:00 or 3:00.

Sean Horgan 10:04

What's it like to come, to be steaming back into the harbor with a hull full of fish at the end of a really successful fishing day? What is that feeling like to you?

Al Cottone 10:15

It's, I mean, it's the best feeling in the world it's, you know, mission accomplished, basically. That's, that's what I was there for, you know, especially if it's a nice calm day. You know, obviously, the enjoyment level goes up, you know, I'm hanging on and, you know, it's, it's really undescrivable unless you're doing it. I don't know how many of you have actually been on a fishing trip, but it's undescrivable.

Sean Horgan 10:38

What's the name of your boat?

Al Cottone 10:40

Sabrina Maria, named after my daughter.

Sean Horgan 10:42

You got your daughter, and tell us about your boat.

Al Cottone 10:45

It's a 45 foot wooden dragger. And it's really past its life expectancy. I'm squeezing these last couple of years out of it, because I can't really invest in a new vessel right now, with what's going on. I'm not giving up, you know, that's basically why I'm hanging on. If things turn to the better, you know, I hopefully will purchase another boat.

Sean Horgan 11:09

Ed, what's the name of your boat?

Ed Smith 11:12

The Claudia Marie, and I also own the Special K, which is currently [?].

Sean Horgan 11:17

And the Claudia Marie is named for?

Ed Smith 11:19

My daughter.

Sean Horgan 11:21

Your daughter as well. And [?]

Ed Smith 11:23

It's 1996.

Sean Horgan 11:25

And where she built?

Ed Smith 11:27

She was built in Nova Scotia, Southwest Nova Scotia. So I and I, it's I purchased it from another previous owner. And that boat was dedicated just solely to lobstering. When I purchased it in 2006, I was actually using—utilizing it because of the regulations at the time, we needed, we were limited as far as how many days we could fish. So as a gill netter, we had to be out of the fishery for 120 days in a given year. And in order to keep myself going and my crew, I needed multiple vessels. So that was the reasoning for purchasing that vessel. So we re-rigged it as a gill netter. And she dole netted for several years as the regulations once again changed, and now she's dedicated solely to lobster.

Sean Horgan 12:17

What is a gill netter?

Ed Smith 12:18

A gill netter as a boat that sets a net, it's if you can kind of visualize a net that has a float line and a web line, lead line holding the net to the bottom and the float line carries that net depending on the size of the web and the mesh. That will carry it up in the water column anywhere from six feet, and bagged down gear which would be dedicated for trying to catch lobster and flounders and monkfish, to a vertical net, an upright net which would stand about 12 to 18 feet off the bottom. Now it's on the bottom, but the net will be suspended as high as 18 feet. And that type of gear would be used to catch every week whether it was [?] fish, pollock, cod, dogfish, those species. And so anyhow, within the gill netter itself, usually you have what's called the Spencer Carter Hauler or a Crosley Lifter. And it's a

mechanism by which the line and then the net subsequently gets hauled and it gets the net gets pulled back by crew members, and they extract the fish. And, and it's usually we always refer to it as you know, a good fishery. I liked it at the time because you can really target specific types of fish based on the size of meshing utilized. We'd use twelve inch mesh for targeting solely monkfish for example. And then if you're looking for a minimum mesh size, which is six and a half inches for smaller type fish like haddock and then we utilize different mesh sizes in between for different species.

Sean Horgan 14:02

On any given day that you're going to fish, how do you decide what you're going to fish for and where you're going to fish?

Ed Smith 14:09

It's first and foremost, that's where they allow you to fish. So we look at charts, you know, and try to formulate a plan, you know, months ahead of time. Okay, this area is going to be closed in April so we won't have access to that. When I mentioned monkfishing earlier, we've actually—when we've had these spring closures we've fished out of New Bedford, up on Juniper Island, and just targeted skate and monkfish. They tend to go hand in hand. So that's, you know something we think about. You have to buy webs for example overseas, and it's a process. You can't just gear up overnight and say okay, I'm going to New Bedford. You have to get dockage, you have to secure your dockage, a fuel provider, things like that setup, you know, you need to take out at a certain place. So there's a little bit of logistical work involved in trying to set forth where you where you go and when you go. And then as far as deciding what species to target, it's, you have to really kind of sit back and say, how am I going to generate the most for the least, because we're on a quota now. So we have very limited quotas. And you have to say, okay, well, there is x amount of quota out there that I don't personally have. But I can gain access to that by buying it at a reasonable right rate. If you're spending too much for the quota, initially, it's just not viable. So for example, going forward, even if I could get enough cod fish to satisfy what I needed, that price for that cod, it's too too high. So I've been paying close to what I yield there in the dark. So you just can't even ask that.

Sean Horgan 15:56

If you take away the regulation, and you take away the strict restrictions of where you envision what you can fish for, what physically is the hardest part of your job?

Ed Smith 16:12

The weather.

Sean Horgan 16:14

And you fish on days like that?

Ed Smith 16:16

Yes. Oh, absolutely. Back when we were, we had a daily limit of codfish, for example. If you're a gillnetter, you'll pretty much go every day, because the quality of the fish degrades very quickly. So, and we don't want to catch too much. And at the same time, so we always use, we got to stay up on the gear. And that means turning the gear over daily. So if it blew 40, 30 to 40, it's not unheard of that we could go. We didn't have to go that far, so that was another issue that helped us. And the other thing, unlike lobstering where you have to haul a tremendous number of given strings, we basically when we were—when we had an eight hundred pound pod on, for example, we had to get on to one buoy, the

pod were pretty prolific. And normally we could toss two or three nets, four nets and get the pod that we needed and we'd be on our way in just several hours. So it's not as... steaming is the worst part in poor weather. We can ride into the troughs and haul and what have you, but if you had to spend 16 hours out there and haul 20 strings of gear, it just wouldn't... it wouldn't work. But we haul some pretty poor weather conditions.

Sean Horgan 17:27

How did you come to be a fisherman?

Ed Smith 17:30

I was just enamored with... I grew up in Manchester and it had a small working waterfront if you will. There were probably 20 to 25 lobster boats. And I just wandered down to the water; I was drawn to the water so to speak, and I hang around, you know you get a drop line and see the guys unloading. And the camaraderie—that's a big part of this industry is you know, yeah, there's gonna be conflicts and everything else, but guys tend to come together and it's a fraternity. And I saw that and I enjoyed it even at a young age. And my father spoke to someone to see if I could go out lobstering and, he's actually quite a character unto himself, or was. His name was Bruce Leseine and he owned Captain Dusty's, which was a lobster shack in Manchester. It's now a ice cream parlor. But he took me out—my father bought some lobsters from him and asked if I could tag along with him. He was terrific to me, and I from that point forward I just fell in love with the industry. And just a trip to Gloucester was like, you know, your eyes bugged out. You know, you had so much diversity as far as fisheries and the enormity of it all... I mean you saw boats unloading 100,000 pounds and, you know, just the activity was really something that was... there was energy.

Sean Horgan 18:54

Do you miss that?

Ed Smith 18:55

Oh god, I miss it.

Sean Horgan 18:57

Are you still able in some way to tap into that joy when you fish? Is it still the same when you're on the water?

Ed Smith 19:04

It's not. That's sad to say that, but I always look forward. Okay, how are things gonna get better? How can we make, you know, what avenue can I kind of take. And so I'm currently lobstering, and that's the way I'm paying the bills. But it's not my true love. I'd much rather be ground fishing.

Ed Smith 19:25

It's... lobstering to me is a little bit like factory work. You have to haul X amount. The price is pretty steady. You don't get the the highs and the lows in lobstering like you do ground fishing. And I can pick up the nets for example, if I was gonna go to a different area and I can go from having a terrible day to a fantastic day with you know, six hours of shifting gear. Whereas lobstering it's a big process, and it's almost like you're waiting on them.

Ed Smith 19:59

But, so, the joy and the love, I mean it's still there and there's nothing else I really want to do. And you know, I'll wrack my brain and still say, okay, what am I going to do for a career?

Sean Horgan 20:14

You haven't come up with anything yet?

Ed Smith 20:16

I haven't.

Sean Horgan 20:17

You'll still be working on that?

Ed Smith 20:18

I don't think I'm well suited for a bunch of other ...

Sean Horgan 20:22

Bob, did you ever want to be a fisherman?

Bob Koeller 20:25

Myself?

Sean Horgan 20:25

Yes.

Bob Koeller 20:26

No, not really. Not a fisherman. No, I have support business, like many others in Gloucester. Seatronics has been in business since 1973. Prior to that, nine years with Raytheon Marine Division, and I came to Gloucester in '70... '64. And for that time, working for Raytheon Marine Division, and I was a young kid. Raytheon had a two-man office here, and I was the young guy.

Bob Koeller 21:01

I had a, an Englishman, named Lesley Tom King. And he was in the British submarine service. And he was my mentor. I learned a lot from him about sonar and underwater [?]. And he retired in 1973. And at that time, Raytheon closed the office in Gloucester, they closed the one in Fairhaven, they closed the one at the Boston Fish Pier. And they opened one in Woburn. And the boss really wanted everyone to be there in Woburn, and nine times out of 10 I'd turn around, and come back to Gloucester because I knew the equipment. I knew the fisherman. And so after a while, I decided to just quit... to do my commuting back and forth and then coming back, it didn't make much sense. So that's when I started Seatronics.

Sean Horgan 22:04

And what does Seatronics do?

Bob Koeller 22:06

It's marine electronics. It's sonar, autopilots, VHF radios, single sideband, satellite TV, satellite phones, loud hailers just about everything that a commercial fishing boat needs. And a lot of it's some pleasure boat stuff too.

Sean Horgan 22:30

And do they come to you? Or do you go to them?

Bob Koeller 22:32

They... they come to the shop. They come on call on the radio, they call on the phone. And we set up a schedule to do the repair work, to do the sales. And just... I'm basically the secretary now. I had to downsize because of what's happened to the industry, that's happening back, as it has with others, the support businesses, and just going along. And that's what I do every day. There's still business there. We've diversified a little bit more into the pleasurable market. And things are still going along all this time, after 42 years.

Sean Horgan 23:14

Besides being a business, is it also a point of pride for you to be part of what Ed was just describing — a sort of fraternal aspect of the waterfront and the fishery?

Bob Koeller 23:27

Yes, there is a camaraderie as Ed said, and fishermen from Maine through Cape May know of Seatronics. Sometimes they don't have your stuff fixed till you get to Gloucester. Boats used to come up here for scalloping and other work. There is that camaraderie between the fishermen. Others in the same business, or related businesses, and we refer each other to different businesses that, if we can't help them, somebody else will. And they appreciate that. Also the ability to repair something that's 20 years old... there aren't too many that can do that. I'm a ratpack... I keep all the equipment for many years in order to fix something that the manufacturers no longer have possible. They're interested in selling new equipment, that's, that's what they want. And to have a place where you can still get something that's vintage equipment, is unique in this business.

Sean Horgan 24:40

As, since you've been here since '64, you're, at least here on the panel, you're here the longest serving part of the waterfront. What has been the most dramatic change from your viewpoint?

Bob Koeller 24:56

Your dramatic change is the decline of the fishing industry. When I first started here, there were three electronics businesses, there were a lot of machine shops, there were a lot of fish processors. But there's been a dramatic change in that. Now everything is, is declined. There's not too many fish processing plants, there's only two auctions, I believe. And so it's had an impact on the infrastructure of the city, as well. The fact that people on Main Street and working people and some families that have depended on their husband and brothers in order to generate income. The impact has been pretty severe because of the draconian restrictions that have been imposed.

Sean Horgan 25:54

And as fishermen have been squeezed tighter and tighter, obviously, repair work goes not undone for long periods of time, they maybe can keep up the maintenance on their boats. In some regards, I would imagine that spikes your business a little bit. But on the other hand, it must have give you pause.

Bob Koeller 26:14

Well it has a definitely made an impact, like Al said, that he doesn't know what to do in the future. He doesn't want to spend the money on new equipment upgrades. Because it's a gray area. What's going to

happen? The, the fishermen don't... they're reluctant to buy something right now. Because we just don't know how severe it's going to go and where it's going to end up. So yes, there's less repair work; there's less sales of finished goods. And there's, but all in all, see, frogs are still able to keep his head above water, because of business from out of town. Repair business. Not that much in sales anymore, but repair business, keeping old stuff going, which is kind of a niche. That's.. so I'm glad that I keep, kept all that old stuff.

Sean Horgan 27:16

Speaking of niche markets, Ann, why don't you tell us a little bit about your business, that Ocean Crest and Neptune's Harvest.

Ann Molloy 27:23

So we're a wholesale fish company as Crest Seafoods. And we unload fishing boats, and we sell the filet to restaurants, and 60 to 70% of that fish is leftover. And when we started this back in the early '80s, it was being taken on fishing boats and dumped back out at sea. So there was clearly a better way to utilize it. And we do it and make great fertilizer. And my father was approached and said, you know, would you like to use a big problem for all the fish processers in the city—in the '80s there was a lot of fish being unloaded, and there was a lot of waste. So now we take that 60-70%, that gurry that's leftover, and we grind it out, we liquefy it, we stabilize it, we screen it and we turn it into a liquid organic fertilizer and sell it all over the country in bulk and small bottles.

Sean Horgan 28:11

And what type of farmers and gardeners and growers use that fertilizer?

Ann Molloy 28:17

Everything, honestly. We sell it to a lot of people that put it on hay and pasture. That's probably our biggest customer base in bulk. But then we do a lot of you know, just vegetables and fruit trees and golf courses and landscapers and we sell it anywhere from a pint to a 4500 gallon tanker truck.

Sean Horgan 28:35

And, wasn't there something about a record pumpkin that ...

Ann Molloy 28:38

Yeah, all the giant pumpkin growers love us. We have like a cult-like following of giant pumpkin growers. They're all like two thousand pounds now.

Sean Horgan 28:51

There's a whole new market...

Ann Molloy 28:52

Then they make boats out of them. They hollow them out, put a motor on and race them in a regatta the next day.

Sean Horgan 29:01

Did you ever think that this is the turn that your business would take?

Ann Molloy 29:06

I can tell you my father said you know, we have five kids working in this family here and we use 30 to 40% of the fish, maybe if we can utilize 100% of the fish, we can keep everybody employed. And thank god he had the foresight to do that, because if it was just counting on the fishing industry, we would not be... I don't even know if we'd be in business period, let alone all the family. We have 45 employees and sixteen are family.

Sean Horgan 29:31

And how are some of you getting along?

Sean Horgan 29:37

As the fishermen face more and more restrictions and regulation, your business does as well. I know one of the key issues is wastewater treatment and the expense for that, for keeping up with the regulations. Could you talk a little bit about that and the pressures of that?

Ann Molloy 29:56

Well, four hundred years ago with you unloaded a fishing boat in Gloucester, you took [?] ... the restrictions one after another after another. I mean, you know, these guys have to buy permits, and they have to, they have a huge amount of expense. But we also have a huge amount of expensive regulations. And I mean, that's just the fishing that's keeping the working waterfront in an area that's getting squeezed all the time, it's harder and harder. And then, you know, with the fertilizer, you'd have to register every label in every state every year, you have to pay a tonnage report. Once they will say, you can use this word. Then you change that word on the label and the other state doesn't allow it. And I mean, the regulations... people are like, why is it \$40 A gallon when you buy it on the [?] shelf? Well, if you knew all that goes into this, you know... when we first started doing it, we were like, we'll charge \$10 a gallon; we can make a ton of money. Yeah, it's like the amount that comes out of the pie... it's just so excessive. It's amazing how much you have to sell to just break even.

Sean Horgan 30:51

Are you able now to diversify that product line? Are there other other things down the road that you think you might be able to introduce to the market and maybe expand your commercial market?

Ann Molloy 31:01

Yeah, we're always looking for new products; always expanding. You never know what's going on with the fishing industry. No fish, no gurry, no fertilizer. So we have seaweed now. And you know, there's seaweed that's harvested around here too that we could tap into eventually. That all comes out of Maine. And then we have crab shell and lobster shell another way to utilize 100% of the shellfish industry, which is fantastic. And we're getting that out of Canada right now. But we're really trying hard to get the machinery to bring that to Gloucester right now.

Sean Horgan 31:30

How do you develop a product. From the idea, take us from the idea, to putting it up, getting the line up and running and getting it onto the shows.

Ann Molloy 31:42

Well we do trade shows all over the country. And we talk to farmers and gardeners and garden center owners and we get feedback on what they're looking for. We also, everything we sell pretty much comes from the North Atlantic Ocean, which is nature's perfect source for plants, you know, everything... the

whole world was under ocean water at one point and ever since then it's been demineralizing, and the North Atlantic Ocean has really cold, dark, mineral rich water. That's why a lot of everything that comes out of there, the protein, you know, it's so healthy for us. It's also so healthy for plants. I mean, it's like the blood that runs through our veins is one element off from saltwater. So it's just normal nutrients in the perfect balance. You don't have to make them in the lab. You know, nature's done it for us. You just have to tap into what's out there. So you know, we're using the seaweed, the crab shell has calcium and people say oh my plants, you know, calcium magnesium deficiency. It's like, oh look at this analysis. This is perfect for that, you know. So we just kind of go like that and then we do a lot of trial and error and make sure things don't blow up on the shelves in the bottles. With organics, it's you never know, the bottles can blow up. We had a 275 gallon [?] erupt like a volcano the other day. Yeah we do a lot of trial and error.

Sean Horgan 32:58

What do you do when that happens?

Ann Molloy 33:03

I don't clean it up. Somebody definitely has to, obviously. But, you know, he learned from it. You're in the lab and you figure out what went wrong and you try again until you get it right.

Sean Horgan 33:14

And we thought fishing was dangerous, we had no idea where the danger was. If there's a better name along the waterfront than Viking Gustafson I have not come across it. Tell us a little bit about how you came to be in Gloucester and what it is that you do.

Viking Gustafson 33:31

Okay, I'm going to apologize once for my audio problems... I don't have a voice here. But I tell you, it's gone a long way in the [?] business, you know, that game. I get my phone calls returned and I'm sure, I guarantee you it's been helpful. Your question was...

Sean Horgan 33:52

How did you come to Gloucester?

Viking Gustafson 33:57

I came to the Boston area to go to school and I ended up in, kind of hanging with long distance swimming crowd. And I was leaving my job a lot to go down to the beach and go swimming, and I decided to get a job on the water. I went around the Boston waterfront... any job, any boat, any job, any boat. And I got a job on a boat that came up to Smith's Cove as a passenger boat. And the first day on that job when I looked at the guy driving the boat I said, I want his job. And it took a couple years, and I got a captain's license and I started running the commuter boats and party boats in Boston, which I do to this day—nights and weekends in the summertime. So, in 1978 was the year that I started working on that bowl coming to Smith's Cove and we had a fire on one of the trips. And we ended up on the railways in 1978 under repair.

Sean Horgan 35:01

As you were on the water, a fire erupted on the boat?

Viking Gustafson 35:05

Underway. We got everybody off the boat at the Coast Guard base. You know, Fire Department running through, Coast Guard running through, and we ended up at the railways. And that's my first visit to the railways. I'd gone by it a while, that summer. And if anyone would have ever told me in 1978 that I would be running that joint, it's just, I can, it's just unimaginable.

Sean Horgan 35:31

So what is it like to run that joint?

Viking Gustafson 35:34

Different today than 17 years... I've been doing it for 17 years. But I've been in the marine industry: I've been a crew member on a boat at the railways, I've been a captain on a boat at the railways. And so I felt like, when they were looking for a manager, and I was looking for another job at the time, you know, I've been on the other side of the table, you know, I've been a customer. So I knew what it was like to spend a lot of money at a high rate of speed, you know, chase Harry Cusick around the yard in his yellow cap getting no response whatsoever. You know, I just basically, you know, I liken it to a root canal really. Nobody goes to the shipyard because they're having a good time. You know, they're gonna spend a lot of money on the same damn boat, and at the end of the day, you know, they're just hoping to get out alive. So I kind of consider, you know, my job, just trying to find out what people are trying to accomplish and make it a little less painful.

Sean Horgan 36:40

Beyond the question of volume, how is your business different now? Are there different types of boats that are coming in, or different types of work that you're doing? Or is it, or is that part still pretty much the same?

Viking Gustafson 36:53

Well, everyone's talked about regulation and environmental concerns. And, you know, I would add to that technology. You know, a railway is a certain method of getting boats out of the water. It's tried and true, the same thing has been going on in Rocky Neck since before the Civil War. There's probably better ways to do that. There's more environmentally friendly ways to do that. There are boats that are being, I mean, a passenger boat today is going to be 30-40 feet wide. And you know, you're getting.. you want speed and passenger boats? You're gonna have, go to [?]. So I mean, we don't do wide. We don't do wide well. We don't do you know, the design of tow boats today have, what I unfortunately discovered terminology for, called point loading. You know, a schooner, those things were built for schooners, those railways. As a great example, upstairs there's a model. And you know, the weight is transferred over a long reach. You know, boats today a tugboat, for example, with those azimuth drives, it has a shape where all the weight's in a very small area. We've hauled a kind of a crew boat type affair a few years ago, and you'd like to think, you know, there's a lot of risk when you're dragging a boat out of the water with antique equipment. And you'd like to think it's over when it's over, right? Go home, come back have like, bearers roll. And the boat not in the position you just left it because it's too much weight at one point. So you know that there's, there's technology on the customer side, we know that isn't really ideal for that. But I kind of consider what we do there kind of an art history and science project. I mean, it's the science of that's gotta be right. I can tell you all kinds of ways you could blow things up just like that. There's a lot of ways, I'm looking at the ladders back there going, is that ladder tied off? You know, so there's a science component.

Sean Horgan 39:08

Is it a lost art? Is it an art that's disappearing? Hauling a boat out the way you guys haul it up?

Viking Gustafson 39:17

Certainly. It's not... it's not rocket science. You know, it's... I think ordinary people could learn the mechanics of that. You can see the mechanics upstairs, the mechanics... till you do it, though, I would say it's always felt like magic. But once you had to do it a few times you can get the hang of it. It's a lost art because they're not going to make these things again, you know. That there are better ways to do it; more modern methods of dry docking. You're not going to be working over the water like we do. You know, the environmental component of that is intense. So it's going to become a lost art. Unless we consider this an art project too, which I do. You know, it's a science project, it's got to work. It's an art project; it's actually quite beautiful. And it's a history project because you're not gonna, this is not going to be recreated, here. I mean, they're not going to make railways looking out over the water. So, you know, the potential for loss is not... if somebody like me can run that, which they're playing... your kid, your daughters, they're gonna be able to do that, right. But the need for it, the way technology is going to recreate... if we don't, we don't consider what we're doing out there. Also, the artwork of Rocky Neck and the history of Gloucester, the science of it's going another way. So my goal is to keep those three components working together. And I'm proud to be trying.

Sean Horgan 41:01

You have one of the great views of Gloucester from your from your brand new dock. When you stand out there at night, the sun's coming down in the summer, what few boats have gone out are coming back in, the sun is going down, and you look across to the hills of Gloucester and the churches... what do you think?

Viking Gustafson 41:24

You know, I got a pretty good long run on that... '78 to, you know, what is this, 2015? You know, the activity level, the enthusiasm level, the discouragement, you know. I mean that—when we were kind of talking about doing this, I was afraid we'd get into some moment when, you know, people were going to ask a question where you needed to be enthusiastic, or where's the answer? Oh, you know, like, where's it going? And you need to... I mean, camaraderie, you know, I wasn't part of that camaraderie to start, you know. I'm a survivor, and I feel a part of it today. That was hard, hard fought, hard won. And I don't, you know, I don't want to lose what we've got there. I just feel sorry, on the people component that, you know, there are I mean... I'm not one of a million people in my family doing this. But for, you know, there has been family business. I know lots of families. I've learned a whole other culture here. And, you know, it seems like honest work to me. And it seems like a kind of work that depends upon each; you can't do this stuff alone. So the the failures of the outside, you know, what's, what's been wrought here is going to be very hard to maintain and recreate, you know, creation. Just hold on until the fishing industry comes back. I've been hearing that for 17 years. And we're not in the worst shape we've ever been, you know. Luckily, you know, a boat's, some of the little... a boat's a boat's a boat, you know. But not being able to go fishing... that has its own trajectory of trouble. And I don't know how to solve that at this point. I mean, obviously, but you know, there is a crisis in this that, that I don't think anybody here has an answer for. And we're bi— we're very happy to see this turnout on a bad day. I mean, there is concern for this. And I share that concern.

Sean Horgan 43:48

Great, thank you. You guys wanna open up to the audience?

Courtney Richardson 43:51

Sure. Is this on? Does anyone have any questions? In the... we're turning the mic on, so hopefully it will work.

Audience Member 44:10

Thank you. I'm Sue Waller, I'm from Rockport. This question is for Ann Molloy. What are you doing trying to develop with the green crabs, dealing with the green crabs?

Ann Molloy 44:31

So, what we're trying to do is start with crab shell drying plants. And if we can get that successfully up and running, we'll be able to take all the crab shell, lobster shell which is currently being a lot of it that isn't getting, you know, being harvested and plucked in Canada is going into landfills right now. Waste Management's paying to take it away. So, or getting paid to take it away. So when that plant gets up and running, we will also be able to take the green crabs as a, just if they don't want... if they want to just get rid of them, and give them to us to get rid of them, we can grind them in that machine and be able to, you know, get rid of them and turn them into fertilizer. Right now, there's no market for them. And, you know, they've called us several times to see if we could put it in our liquid fish grinder, but we can't with the, all the sand. But if we get that crab dryer up and running, we'll be able to take them

Ed Smith 45:32

I might add there is a limited market for bait. Down south they use it. So you might see some traps set in the Annisquam River, for example. Or some buoys adjacent to the channels and they are harvesting small amounts of them. But it's a limited market. So you can't have a wide scale fishery.

Audience Member 45:54

How long would you... how long away would you be able to do that?

Ann Molloy 46:02

We don't know yet. Right now we're just trying to get the funding to make it happen.

Audience Member 46:14

So I don't know what I think about this, but is fish farming something that is anathema to you all? Is it an opportunity, something Gloucester and this area could benefit from?

Al Cottone 46:27

Me personally, I don't think ground fish farming—which is what, you know, we fish for the cod, haddock, and flounder species—I don't think that'll work in this area. Because of the you know, just the way the coastline is, is put together, and there's no way to hide these fish farms. And if you put them too far offshore they'll get destroyed in storms. I just don't think the groundfish that we catch are farmable.

Ann Molloy 46:55

I can tell you that we sell fertilizers, a lot of people that also you know... we were aware of other fertilizer manufacturers from fish in the country, and there are some fish farms that make fertilizer out of their their remains also. And the quality is just so different. These fish farms, they have to feed them, are feeding them GMO soy. They're not healthy fish normally, because you're taking it out of their natural environment and trying to force something. So they end up needing antibiotics. And they've

come a long way, but we're still have way too far to go. In my opinion. I don't think the fish is healthy for human consumption. I don't even think it's good for fertilizer. And the rest is really...

Audience Member 47:46

I was wondering, it came into my head just now, about how, are fishermen doing better in other areas? And if so, where? And why?

Ed Smith 48:02

Yeah. I would say, by and large in Gloucester, the ground fish industry obviously is down. The lobster industry is actually probably at its height. But there's been a natural ebb and flow. I've lobstered for 35 years. And I've seen when you couldn't go out and harvest half a pound a pod. And so you have these natural fluctuations. And so my sense is the ground fish will come back and but, to answer the question, our guys, other avenues where guys are doing really well... and, because you don't have access to other species, because you're bound by limitations for codfish, for example, we can't go out and harvest other stocks that are more plentiful. And that's the problem. We... between the closed areas, which by the way, we do advocate. In finite areas, all of us commercial fishermen we're in agreement that we need some areas during spawning seasons, for example, that are very important, to be closed. But to have these broad areas closed when there's very little spawning taking place, but we would have access to different species that we could actually do well on and not interact with codfish, for example, is an issue.

Audience Member 49:28

Actually, I didn't say it clear enough. Other parts of the country, other places other than Gloucester, where fishermen are doing better and why?

Ed Smith 49:40

There are, you know, you have some niche fisheries. But overall, I mean, as you look at where the fisheries are doing really well it's the heavily capitalized industries like scalloping, for example. New Bedford's doing well only because of scalloping. And that's more or less a monopoly. It's... most of these companies that own the permits now, they're vertically integrated. So they have the boats, they catch, they process, and then they sell the end product. And there's very few people that can afford it... your average person, you can't get into scalloping. It's prohibitively expensive. And on the West Coast, you have the large processor, ocean processing vessels. And those are owned by just a few entities. And so, as a whole, I would say, no. There aren't very many bright lights. And that's not to say that some of the stocks aren't doing well, it's just that we don't have access to those for various reasons.

Al Cottone 50:46

And just to add that also, what we have here is called catch share, just, I don't know if you're all aware of that. The catch share system: it's everyone's allocated a certain amount of each species, or in a multi-species fishery, and it's lumped into one catch share. When you go to the West Coast, they have catch share for individual species. So those fisheries tend to do better because they're, well, they're better managed, and you can control your quota if you're only managing one species. Whereas here, if you get low on one particular species inside the multi-species spectrum, you're in trouble because you have to go purchase it on the open market, just to keep going. And I'm 100% groundfish. I've never lobstered, or scalloped. I used to whiting fish and shrimp fish, when that was a viable business back in the '90s. And the days when we go fishing, right now, we're catching a lot of fish. And that seems to be the problem with this catch share. When one species seems to come in and dominate, you catch too much of it. And then you'd have to stop because you have to go purchase it to go catch your other species.

Al Cottone 52:01

The problem isn't really, we're not catching fish. The problem is, sometimes you're catching too much of certain species. And that's where the groundfishermen get in trouble.

Ann Molloy 52:12

The regulations, I think, that are in a problem, more than overfishing or anything else. And when we went down to Washington, DC, for the rally for the fishermen to gain awareness, there was fishermen from all over the country that we met, but had the exact same story. You know, crazy government regulations that don't make sense. It's what's really hurting the industry.

Sean Horgan 52:35

And can you foresee a day where lobstermen will be in the same sort of regulation as the groundfishermen are, in terms of observers on boats, really heavy, sort of, handed regulatory restrictions?

Ed Smith 52:51

It's amazing that you ask that question, because it's already happening. We've essentially from Middle Bank south has been closed. There was some wrangling; we went back and forth. But ultimately, they closed it. And they were gonna close it from January 1, going forward through April 31, for right whale protection. And ultimately, they rescinded that to February 1. But now, there's already talk that they want to expand that area to Jeffrey's Ledge, and this is just to eliminate vertical lines within the water column. So already, we're facing that obstacle on the lobster front. And it's pretty daunting. And we've done a lot, as far as the lobster industry goes. Even the fixed gear industry goes, when you're a gillnetter, for example, you have vertical lines in the water, a marked region. We have whale breaks on the gear now. So they break at a specified amount of hull. At 600 pounds they break. It's actually, it's not a bad thing. That's where fishermen and science and environmental advocates can come together and try to find a reasonable solution. For what's being kind of forced down our hands and into our laps now is really untenable, because you're... you lobster in certain areas now for four months. Next year, it's going to be even greater areas. And it's going to be an extended period of time. It's going to be during the time of the year for example, in the fall, which is when you catch probably 80% of your lobster. So the horizon's... it's a scary scenario. And we're already being faced with observer coverage. And so, that's ultimately going to... observers are going to be on lobster boats in the near term. It's not mandatory yet but it will happen.

Jackie Odell 54:50

I think we have a few questions on... there was a man over here, I... Go ahead. Go ahead.

Audience Member 54:57

I noticed that the government agencies that predict the next year's fish population is the same government agency all over different things that predicts whether or not it's going to rain tomorrow, and they're not always a hundred percent accurate. Does the fishing industry, either do or think about doing, having your own scientists and their own predictions, so that they can have an active voice and counter, what number is given perhaps through universities?

Ed Smith 55:31

No question, I think Al would agree too.

Al Cottone 55:34

You know, we're 100%, you know, in favor of trying to contribute to the scientific gap. You know, I mean, Jackie can attest that we're working on it every day. It's just, you know, right now, it's, it's a tug of war—we're pushing a rock up the hill, basically trying to get our data into the system.

Ed Smith 55:55

They don't, they don't want to you... back, they used to have us, something referred to as CPU: catch per unit of effort. And I always said, just catching this much fish with very little effort... shouldn't that be used as a barometer of the stock health? And then they take that spin, and they say, well, the fish are congregating because they're trying to, they're becoming tighter and tighter. And you guys are getting better at finding these tight masses of fish. And it's the fish's mechanism to sustain the species. And so, I mean, they'll put a spin on it.

Ed Smith 56:31

And anyway, getting back to the industry surveys, I couldn't agree more. And I've been an advocate for that for a long time. For every government tow, I think that should be an industry tow. And that way, if you have a zero with the government ship, and you have 100 count with a industry ship, something's wrong here. Let's throw them both out. And let's try it again. There's so much wrong with the way they do the surveys.

Sean Horgan 56:58

...congressional delegation?

Ed Smith 57:01

I'm sorry?

Sean Horgan 57:02

Are you getting support from our congressional delegation?

Ed Smith 57:05

I think so. I'm not, well versed... Al is...

Al Cottone 57:09

I think we are, we definitely are. I mean, it's a small delegation compared to the rest of the country. And, you know, the way Washington is today, you're making deals left and right, you know, for somebody in Iowa to back somebody in Massachusetts and Maine, and the person Massachusetts may not want to back with the person that Iowa wants. And it's politics. And, but we do, they do listen, and we do have their support. It's just a... it's a tough hill to climb right now.

Jackie Odell 57:39

So just, can I just jump in that answer? So the Northeast Seafood Coalition, we are a membership organization, and we represent commercial fishermen and fishing businesses. And we actually do hire various folks from the scientific community, non-government scientists, to come on, come in and look at the the models and evaluate the information that's been, you know, is being used, you know, the process that's being followed for stock assessments. But it seems that, you know, we actually have some more assessments that are coming up this year, which we're preparing for now. But it seems like even if

you... it's also the selective use of the datasets that are used and are not used. I'll give you an example just night... We had a meeting in Gloucester last Friday, and I wasn't able to talk about this that much, but Gulf of Maine haddock... a few years ago, there were, Gulf of Maine haddock had received not such a great assessment report. And they lowered the allowable catch on Gulf of Maine haddock. And that was based primarily on the trawl survey, NOAA trawl survey had gone out and had some very optimistic tows that they downweighted because they didn't think that those, you know, it might have been an anomaly. And maybe that's not a good picture. You know, putting those high numbers into the assessment might not be so good. It could, you know, overly inflate what they thought was in the ocean. And so they downweighted um, that was the 2010 year class. And now the fishermen are seeing those, kind of recently, they had an assessment done this summer for Gulf of Maine haddock and they saw oops, we downweighted those... we're seeing it a lot more in other trawl surveys, we can actually increase the amount now. So they increase the amount of Gulf of Maine haddock. There's reports of Gulf of Maine haddock being seen everywhere, all sorts of age classes. But now, for this week in Gloucester, they've... because now there's a cod crisis. They've closed a lot of the areas where guys could target haddock over this winter and this spring. So, you know, so we are involved in the science. It's very difficult and I actually do applaud the stock assessment scientists for doing the best that they can do. It's like, especially rebuilding groundfish stocks require a level of precision that the science just is not able to deliver. Yet, you know, the fishermen are held accountable to that. So it's really, in any given year, it's not really any more about what they catch, or what they don't catch. It's just, you know, sit down in your seat and hold on, because there's a stock assessment, and we don't know what's going to come out of it. You know, we don't know what's going to happen, you know what... a stock that's healthy today could be a stock they assess a few years from now and say, oops, we made a mistake. But, you know, our rebuilding laws, and the federal laws, require that we're always moving in a certain direction. So there's a lot of there's a lot of instability, which, you know, impacts the ability of these guys to have any sort of a business plan and in the community to be viable over the long term. So we're working on it. And we do get support from from our congressional folks. But unfortunately, this, it's so technical now. And the details are so difficult that, you know, we've had a lot of folks and elected officials who have been, you know, willing to roll up their sleeves and really get into the details and try to implement laws that make common sense, like what Ann said. You know, there's a lot of, you know... we need common sense, and we need to rebuild stocks, and we need healthy communities. So we're hoping that we get there, and we do have some elected officials that are helping us. But again, it's being willing and able to commit yourself to really understand what the issues are. And I think we're, you know, it's not always politically correct to help the fishing industry. Let's just put it that way.

Audience Member 1:01:44

Yeah. So I'm always the boogey man in the room. I spend a lot of time working with and around people in Gloucester. And it always amazes me, how the citizens of Gloucester, in the private rooms, talk about how corporate privatization of the oceans is the driving force behind all this over regulation. And then when it comes to a panel like this, that never gets mentioned. So I would like questions for both of the fishermen, how... the general consensus to the people that I talk with is there's a more profitable harvest from the ocean floor, whether it's geothermal, potential fracking, oil, sand aggregates, fish farming, all these things that people stand to make millions and millions and millions of dollars off. So you guys need to smash, we need to get rid of the fishermen so that all these other uses. So for Al and Ed, can I want to know what the fishermen would... do you believe that corporate privatization of the oceans is the driving force behind the local regulations?

Al Cottone 1:02:49

It may not necessarily be extracting the natural resources from the ocean floor, it could be trying to downsize the industry to a point where companies can come in and just buy it up and harvest the fish. Because the fishing potential is still very big in this area. I mean, just I mean, seen through my own eyes, you know, everyday that I go fishing, I catch fish. Which is I don't have a lot of quota to go fishing every day, not even once a week anymore. That's the problem. So a lot of us believe that they're trying to squeeze this down to a point where they devalue a permit, which was...you can, you're going to sell out on pennies on the dollar, and then a big company could come in and conceivably own the whole thing. That's what, that's what some of us, some believe, but I mean, there's also the natural resource aspect of it. Some people believe that. I don't know what to think anymore. I really don't.

Audience Member 1:03:44

How much bycatch are you guys having to throw over?

Al Cottone 1:03:52

What was that question?

Audience Member 1:03:52

Bycatch? How much bycatch?

Al Cottone 1:03:54

Little to none. We, I chose six and a half inch net. And especially for the ground fish—cod, haddock, pollock— it is basically zero. And the flounder is... the yellowtail flounder you get a little bit of bycatch when they're really heavy, and you get big sets. But besides that, I mean, I don't have any figures with us, but we have a discard rate for days we don't have observers. And that fish is automatically taken off our [?]. The last two years, the discard rate on basically every species is almost down to nothing.

Audience Member 1:04:28

Hey, could I get an answer to my question? Once again, how much do you believe the corporate privatization of the ocean is contributing to the control over over-regulating? Or do you believe not at all?

Ed Smith 1:04:41

I never believed it. I'm starting to think a little bit at this point that maybe there is a strong movement to basically reduce the fishing fleet to such a level that there isn't that resistance to ocean mining and things of that nature. But I think, you know, some of those things maybe aren't that horrible. I really, I think there's a natural resource there, if it's done safely and reasonably, and safeguards in place, that we could coexist. But until recently, I never thought that there was, you know, a conspiracy theory that, you know, they're trying to eradicate the fishing industry, so that they, you know, the oil industry, for example, would come in, and, you know, own Middle Bank. And, but the way things have gone, sometimes, I'm at the point now, where I don't know what to believe. And it's very, very daunting, and it wasn't too far back, I said, you know, what, with all these regulations, and the way the government has enacted, and basically it... you can't plan six months ahead. There's no way you can get a loan, there's no way you can structure your business going forward. You're just gonna get... you're doing well if you can just basically exist and carry forward as you, you know, year to year. And when I say that, I really mean this. If you're paying your bills and holding your own, then you're doing great. Because right now, it's just insanely frustrating. And I've shot off thinking, you know, Jesus, we should have joined the oil company back in '76 when they came in with a two hundred mile on it. We should have... and

everybody's like, oh, that's crazy. It's better than aligning ourselves with big government, because we're getting nowhere. And it's pretty frustrating.

Al Cottone 1:06:40

But, just to add to that, the... you're all aware of the LNG pipe lines that we have offshore. Well, after the scare of 9/11 and all that went down, what the LNG companies use that to put these offshore buoys to try and stop the flow of traffic in the emirate because of the threat of terrorism. And it never stopped the flow of the LNG tankers going into emirate. They've unloaded one tanker, and I think it's been there seven or eight years now. These two offshore loading, unloading facilities for LNG. So, you know, in the last year or two, the whole fracking boom has kind of taken over the country. And you're hearing all the reports of these giant deposits of natural gas that we have domestically, and I wouldn't put it past the LNG companies that they were thinking ahead, and these pipes were actually put in to export gas. You know, I don't know if they were ever put into to receive the gas, maybe they were here to export it.

Audience Member 1:07:51

I have a question about the disaster relief. I guess it was last year, the government had a package for the fishing industry. And I've been trying to figure out for the life of me, has it ever trickled down to the actual fishermen? Has anyone gotten any governmental relief? Like say the farmers get paid for not farming, but the fishermen are regulated and they are not paid? Or even sort of helped with? And not only that, but you talked about observers... Do you have to pay the observers to be on your boat?

Al Cottone 1:08:31

Right now, we don't. But it's... we battled every year to get that insufficient service budget observer coverage.

Audience Member 1:08:41

Could you explain that to people that they may not understand what that program is exactly.

Al Cottone 1:08:48

Every sector has to have 28% observer coverage, I believe, to well, throughout the sector, and every sector through that observer coverage, you get a discount rate, because the observers will check your catch that you just got so that unobserved trips can have their discard taken away from them, basically. And when was it, 2012 when observer coverage was expiring? In 2011, the government was paying for observer coverage. And in 2011, it wasn't written in their budget anymore. We were going to be on through the Magnuson Act to pay for observer coverage. But every year we've lobbied the government to try to get them to find the funds to pay for observer coverage. And every year we've been successful. So every year around this time, it's a battle to get the Fishery Service to put that in their budget. The year that they don't put that in the budget, this whole thing is going to implode. Because, you know, a one day for myself on a dayfishing boat, it's gonna cost anywhere from six to \$700 a day just to have an observer onboard, and, I mean, that's just the breaking point.

Ann Molloy 1:09:57

So how many people in this room would like somebody to follow them around and watch them do their job every day? And not only that, you got to pay them \$600 to just watch you do your job every day.

Jackie Odell 1:10:08

And then you don't use their data for stock assessment. Then you don't use the data for stock assessment. You know, you...

Audience Member 1:10:16

You didn't answer the question about the money trickling down.

Al Cottone 1:10:19

Yes, the last round of disaster relief was cut into three segments, and the first segment, permit holders got a chunk of that. But that is not, it's not like farming—it's actually in the federal budget every year so every year... this is just a one time disaster relief.

Audience Member 1:10:35

Right.

Al Cottone 1:10:36

So all federal permit holders who qualify, got the first chunk of that money. We did receive a little bit of money.

Audience Member 1:10:43

But none of the dockside facilities...processors, Seatronics...

Al Cottone 1:10:47

Right, the second tier of that is supposed to cover dockside and crew and party boats as well.

Audience Member 1:10:54

And who oversees that program?

Al Cottone 1:10:57

It's a state program that has to be approved by NOAA. And it was actually been, NOAA just released the money last week, I think, to the state so that the states can start distributing it. But nobody knows what state has the programs. They haven't said anything.

Jackie Odell 1:11:13

The other problem with the money was that the actual... the loss was based on x vessel revenue loss. That's how they calculated what the reductions meant and how that was going to, you know, what loss revenue was going to occur and what was actually calculated in terms of loss. And when the Secretary of Commerce had declared the groundfish fishery disaster was much, much larger than actually the money that this region got. There was 75 million that was appropriated by Congress. But there were five or six different disasters that had already been declared around the country that they all had to share in. So there's been a lot of, you know, it's been whittled down across the country, then through the region, then through every state. So it's been whittled down. There has been one... federal permit holders did receive checks this summer, fall, the fall. So there has been... it's, I mean, but it's not.... I mean, it's nothing to make anyone whole. It helps them to pay their bills, but it's nothing that's... it's not a substantial amount. So I think that there were two... go ahead, Valerie. Yeah, you've had your hand up for a while.

Audience Member 1:12:23

I have a question for Al. On Channel 2 Greater Boston last week, there were chefs talking about trying to get customers to buy more what they're calling "trash fish" [?]. ... photos of redfish coming in to Gloucester. And John Willard, whether you believe he's sincere or not, probably not. He's quoted as saying that [?] would like to find ways to work with the fishermen and figure out how you guys can go out and get more of these fish that are typically not brought in, and Brian Rothschild and Steve Levitt have been making these statements that right now you're only able to harvest about 30% of the value of the groundfish stock itself. So there's huge value in these other fisheries, so what recommendations would you put to [?] about how to adjust this management system so that you fishermen can go out and get those fish, and what would you say to them?

Al Cottone 1:13:21

Well, you're talking about specifically redfish. That is a.. it's an illogical fishery. You have to get 80-90 miles offshore, you have to have a lot of power. Like guys like Ed and myself, we... it's not a sort of an option for us. But...

Audience Member 1:13:36

Are there other groundfish that you could go after if they fixed the management system?

Al Cottone 1:13:41

Well it's... you can't because of the catch share system, you need.... once you go negative balance on one species, you have to buy it to keep going fishing. So it's a very, very crazy situation that we're in.

Audience Member 1:13:58

And not catching cod, you can't solve that by gear type?

Al Cottone 1:14:04

Not catching cod by gear type? Probably not. Because cod... we're fishing inshore, we have to wait for the fish to come to us. I have a 15 mile range. I leave the breakwater, I go south, east or north 15 miles where I know I'm going to get my best yield for the day. And a lot of times, you know, I'll go grey sole fishing, you know, to try to stay away from everything else and, lo and behold, it's 1000 pounds of cod. You just, you can't predict these things. And when something like that happens, and you don't have the allocation to cover it, you have to go out and buy it. Like now, the price of grey sole on the open market... this is just leasing it in into your portfolio. It's \$2.50 a pound. I mean sometimes you don't even get to \$2 at the dock, so you can be paying \$2.50 to lease in grey sole to go catch yellowtail. And then you're losing money on the grey sole that you landed. So that, I mean, going to utilize... going to... the way the system is, it's almost impossible for a small boat to catch underutilized species, it's almost impossible.

Ed Smith 1:15:13

And not interact with other species...

Al Cottone 1:15:15

Right, and the thing about the redfish situation is, if you're not observed on a redfish trip, and you get 40-50,000 pounds of redfish, and you're in an area where discarding might be high, they might charge you 3,000 pounds of yellowtail on that redfish trip that you didn't even land one. And then if you don't have that allocation you have to go buy it on the open market, so...

Audience Member 1:15:34

Do you think they should throw catch shares out and start over?

Al Cottone 1:15:35

I don't know, at the beginning when we had the right allocation of everything, I thought it was a good system. But we were... everyone was saying we were one bad stock assessment away from the whole thing imploding. And that's basically what happened.

Ed Smith 1:15:53

And the other thing is we're very dependent on codfish here in Gloucester. That's the one species that I think that you can catch year round. Whereas most of the other stocks, you know, they're seasonal in nature. You know, dabs come inshore, for example, in the spring of the year. We don't tend to catch them in the fall. Whereas codfish, they're in the, you know, if you look at the typical dayboat that operates out of Gloucester, within that day boat's range from south to north, they're within that range all year long. And, and that's the one species that we interact with more than anything. So if anything, I think you really have to look at the science. And it's at this point, I think, woeful. And it's, we see cod, and they're, they've spread out. And so there's not this circling of the wagons, so to speak, and the concentrations that they're talking about, we're seeing more of that. And we're also seeing that the stock is quite prevalent, and more so than any other stock, you know, on a year round basis.

Al Cottone 1:16:58

And then, we had a similar problems in the early '90s with cod. And I witnessed it firsthand, and it was a lot worse than it is now. A lot worse. You would fish, you know, you can go everywhere flounder fishing and don't even interact with the cod fish. And that was three or four years. And then in the late '90s, the cod started to show up heavily. But we were told by the Fishery Service that this is the last band of cod; they congregate hard. That's their defense mechanism; you're gonna wipe them out in a year and you'll never see another cod. Well, the cod catch kept increasing year after year. And we had a 12 year run of unbelievable cod. And then 2010 when catch share started, you know, we still had the heavy cod catches. And then it started getting less and less. By 2012 and 13, he disappeared again. And the last three or four months, bam, they showed up again. Last time they were gone for four or five years, now they were gone for 18 months. And now they look back even heavier than ever. And they're telling us the same story. It's the last bunch of cod... they're calling it, that's their defense mechanism. I mean, you told us the story in the '90s.

Sean Horgan 1:18:11

Ed, when you lobster, what do you see in terms of other species in your traps?

Ed Smith 1:18:18

Well, we used to use a lot of fresh herring and so you'd see more in the way of ground fish. Now we generally catch lobster and that's primarily, a Jonah crab. But as far as ground fish go, it's very rare that we see codfish and haddock. If you use fresh bait, it's a different story. So the fish are there. But we tend to use salted herring because, I think as a whole industry, the herring industry is... we used to buy off purse seiners, now it's a big water fleet and that's a whole other story unto itself. But the fish size on the herring has gone down. So therefore they tend to salt it quickly. It doesn't hold as well refrigerated as the larger herring would. And so basically, we don't have a lot of interaction with ground fish in our traps, and that's, you know, to answer your question.

Jackie Odell 1:19:18

You had two questions... I think a woman in the front there and a woman in the back as well. You want to go first? Did you have a question as well?

Audience Member 1:19:23

Yes, I do. I saw a lot of codfish last year even inshore. My question is why is it so difficult for us line, single fishermen to catch cod fish? You guys move out your big boats and catch them. That's wonderful. We want to eat cod fish. We don't want to eat redfish What's it going to take for just us single fisherman to be able to catch a codfish? Or for you guys? I mean, is there an upside to any of this? That's why, I want to get something positive; I want to get next year maybe I can catch a codfish.

Ed Smith 1:20:00

Well, that's why we're hanging on. That's why we're still here.

Audience Member 1:20:03

I grew up on the waterfront in the '60s and '70s... is there hope for this industry? That's what I want to know.

Ed Smith 1:20:10

I think we all believe there is or we wouldn't be here.

Al Cottone 1:20:12

Resource-wise, that's... I wouldn't be here sticking this out if I wasn't catching fish. I'm 100% honest. If I wasn't catching fish, I would have bailed a longtime ago. But every day I go fishing, I catch fish. And I truly believe in the resource. The regulation part of it, I'm still hanging on. I'm still hoping beyond hope that someone's going to come to their senses. But the fish: the resource is there.

Al Cottone 1:20:29

The woman in the back, go ahead, yep.

Audience Member 1:20:41

Yeah, I'm really nervous about speaking in public. I've been to one meeting, I know there's been several things, called "Ocean Planning." And the ones that I haven't attended, friends of mine have, and said oh, there was a lot of people in the audience. And none of them were fishermen. Why is it when there's ocean planning meetings, there's no fishermen there. Are you not getting invited to these?

Jackie Odell 1:21:07

We have a lot of other meetings to be going to. We have a lot of meetings.

Audience Member 1:21:13

I know, but do you think there's big guys that are setting... I heard one, you know, this corporation is going to come in, and they're going to lease out this part of the ocean. If you damage it this much, we're gonna want... you're gonna get a \$50,000 fine. If you damage it this much, it's gonna be \$2 million fine. Well, if you totally destroyed during the time you're leasing this property, you totally destroy the natural environment, we're gonna fine you \$5 million. That's drop in the hat that for some people. I mean, if you couldn't afford the lease on the ocean, you've got billions. You know what?

Audience Member 1:21:55

If I may interject, Ed to be honest with you, it's crazy for me to hear you sit up there and say it's a conspiracy theory, when the reality is there is already privatization of the ocean. And if you guys aren't even aware of that, then that's part of the problem.

Audience Member 1:22:11

I'm just curious, do you get invited into the ocean planning meetings?

Al Cottone 1:22:13

We're aware of it....

Audience Member 1:22:15

...It's a real, very real force.

Ed Smith 1:22:20

Part of it is, we're just small entities. We're like the mom and pop store on the corner. And so you feel as though your voice doesn't mean a hell of a lot. And I've been to more meetings than I ever want to attend. It's just like, you sit there until you're blue in the face, or you speak until you're blue in the face, I should say. And it just it doesn't matter. That's our feeling. And so there is that sentiment within the industry that what's going to happen is going to happen and you know, and in our defense, we are kind of—as much as I mentioned earlier—there is a fraternity... we're not a very social fraternity. We do our own thing. When you're doing your own thing, you're usually not coming together and fighting the mass.

Audience Member 1:23:14

And that's and that's more specifically your opinion. All these little meetings here... do you want Coastal Zone Management... it's not an ocean planning meeting... they're setting the rules of what the privatization is going to be like... So ...

Courtney Richardson 1:23:39

I just want to thank our panelists so much. This was for educational purposes, and I have learned so much and we can't wait to see you again. Thank you so much: Ann, Al, Bob, Ed, Viking, and, of course, Sean. This was great.