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Oculina Bank Oral History Project
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(DK)

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Terry Howard: Hello, good afternoon. This is Terry Howard. Today is May 3. Is that correct?

Frederick Dunn: Mm-hm.

TH: Two thousand ten [2010], and I am on the—

FD and **David Knight:** *Lady Stuart II*.

TH: —*Lady Stuart II*, docked at the Harbortown Marina in Fort Pierce, conducting an oral history with—

DK: David Knight and Fred Dunn.

TH: David Knight, and his—

DK: —captain, Fred Dunn.

TH: Fred Dunn. Okay. I just lost that. No, anyway—for the Gulf and South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation's project with Fort Pierce fishermen on the Oculina Bank HAPC [Habitat Area of Particular Concern]. So, welcome, Dave. Please state your name, spell your name, your place of birth, and date of birth.

DK: David Knight. D-a-v-i-d K-n-i-g-h-t. You want my age? (fumbling with microphone)

TH: Place of birth and date of birth.

DK: Place of birth, Belfast, Maine, and 3-30-60 [May 30, 1960].

TH: 3-30-60 [May 30, 1960], okay. When did you move to Fort Pierce, and what brought you to Fort Pierce?

DK: I don't live in Fort Pierce, I live in Palm City. [I moved here] about six years ago, just about exactly six years ago.

TH: What brought you here?

DK: Ninety-four [1994]. Well, the weather. (inaudible) living up north.

TH: Did you have a fishing business up north?

DK: No, I did not.

TH: Okay. Are you married?

DK: Yes.

TH: How old were you when you got married? (FD laughs)

DK: I was thirty-two, I think. Yeah, thirty-two.

TH: Okay. Do you have children? How many and how old?

DK: Two kids, twelve and fifteen.

TH: Okay. You have a young family. Okay, how much schooling have you had?

DK: Two years of college, two years plus other trainings, other things.

TH: Okay. Do you have another job besides charter boat fishing?

DK: No.

TH: Okay. This is your only job. Do you currently own a boat? What kind and length?

DK: I have—

FD: Two.

DK: —two boats now. I have *Lady Stuart II*, which is sixty-four feet at the water line, and I have the *Lady Stuart I*, which is fifty-six feet at the water line.

TH: Okay.

DK: Length overall.

TH: What kind? You know, is there a make or kind, or are they custom made?

DK: This one is a Tiffany, made in Virginia, and the other boat's a DMR, made up in Maine.

TH: Okay. I'd like to ask you some questions about the Oculina Bank. How familiar are you with the Oculina Bank?

FD: Not very.

DK: Not very.

TH: Okay. Do you know why it was designated as an area to protect?

DK: I do not.

TH: Is there anything else you can tell me about the Oculina Bank? What do you know about it? Do you know anything?

DK: I don't know anything about it. We don't fish out there.

TH: Okay. Would you if you could?

DK: If somebody wanted to, but we're bottom fishing. It's a hundred and what, a hundred and fifty feet deep there? Yeah, pretty tough for us, you know, there's probably more in the Gulf Stream that we would like. I don't know.

TH: The fellows that used to fish there, they'd very seldom anchor. They would—

DK: Drift.

FD: Drift.

TH: —drift fish or power fish: hold the boat on a place. So, how has—so, you moved here in 1994? Or, no, no, six—

DK: Ought-four [2004].

TH: Ought-four, yeah, 2004. Okay. So, you came after it was already closed. The Oculina Bank was closed in 1986 to dragging and then, in the 1990s, it was closed to all anchoring and bottom fishing.

DK: I didn't know that.

FD: Yeah.

TH: Okay. So, the closure has not affected your fishing. If anchoring and bottom fishing in the Oculina Bank was not prohibited—in other words, if you could do it, would you fish—?

DK: I don't know. It depends on how far away it is. I don't even know where it is.

TH: It's—

FD: It's twenty—

TH: It's about twenty miles northeast of Fort Pierce Inlet.

DK: Probably not.

TH: It's great fishing, great bottom fishing.

FD: I know it is, but—

TH: Okay.

FD: We're an eleven knot boat, so you may not want to take us to get there.

TH: It'd take you a long time. Okay, that's Fred speaking now. Okay, overall, how has fishing—okay, so you would probably not go because of the distance.

DK: Yeah, right. Well, I mean, we would; if somebody wanted to charter the boat, we would give them the option, you know. Yeah, absolutely, we'd go anywhere if somebody wants to fish there. We do private charters a lot, although we are an open boat.

TH: Private for groups?

FD: Mm-hm.

DK: Yeah, it's one—people pay individually, \$40, \$50 to come on the boat and fish with a group of other people, but we do get companies or individuals and families that charter the boat.

TH: Okay. Overall, how has fishing changed since you began fishing in the Fort Pierce area?

DK: It's been pretty steady.

FD: It's been very good.

DK: Yeah, very good for us.

TH: Okay. Now, Fred, where are you from, too?

DK: I'm from New Jersey.

TH: Okay. Have you had any experience with law enforcement within or regarding the Oculina Bank?

DK: No.

FD: No.

TH: Okay. I want to talk about your fishing history specifically. What is your earliest memory of fishing and how old were you? This is your personal experience.

DK: My earliest memories of fishing were going out with my father, fishing up in Maine, little seventeen, eighteen foot wood boat with an eighteen horse[power] Johnson on the back, and fishing, trolling for mackerel.

TH: Spanish mackerel, or just—

DK: I don't know what, just regular mackerel.

FD: It's probably tinker mackerel.

DK: Tinker mackerel, yeah. Those are a great thrill for me. I love those.

TH: So, your father taught you to fish, your first one?

DK: Yeah. Then a neighbor, a guy across the street would take me out. He was a commercial guy. He fished for his—he had a fish market. He was an older French Canadian, and we'd fish for cod—

TH: Okay.

DK: —and halibut. That was a lot of fun.

TH: Did you fish for cod and halibut with him?

DK: Yeah. Yeah.

TH: Bottom fish?

DK: Yeah.

TH: Okay. How did you fish for cod and halibut?

DK: Hand lines.

TH: Okay. How did—

DK: Put a block on over the rail, had a little notch in it, and you'd just jig with a hand line and clams on a treble hook.

TH: Clams on a treble hook. Okay. Cool.

DK: Big treble hook. (laughs)

TH: About how deep?

DK: I have no idea, back then. Jeez, it was deep. It was probably a couple hundred feet.

FD: Probably out there, they probably went to—

DK: Yeah. I mean we couldn't see land, I know that.

FD: Were you in-banks?

DK: No. This is up in Maine. It was out there. It was amazing. He would— just with a compass— he could take that boat and get to a lobster buoy through the fog. It was unbelievable.

FD: It's always foggy there, isn't it?

DK: Huh?

FD: It's always foggy out.

DK: Yeah.

TH: Okay. How did you decide to become a charter boat captain?

DK: I fell into it, basically. Not fell into it, we were looking for a business to buy, something that would be fun. I didn't mind—instead of a UPS store or a Sylvan Learning Center or a liquor store or something, we saw it for sale and so we decided to buy it. I wasn't even a captain, didn't even know what a head boat was the time. It was advertised as a party boat and I called up and said, "What is it? Like, you go out and booze cruise?" And he said, "No, it's party fishing." I said, "All right." So we looked, I went out on a trip. It seemed like a lot of fun. So, foolishly, I bought the business. (FD laughs)

TH: Okay. When did you start fishing in Fort Pierce, age and year? That would be—

DK: This boat's four years old, so, ninety-six [1996]?

FD: Well, was it ten? Yeah, ninety-six [1996]?

DK: Ninety-six [1996] I guess would—

FD: No, ought-six [2006].

DK: Ought-six [2006]. We bought the boat, actually, just about exactly four years ago. We bought the boat in May and then we started fishing in July of ought-six [2006].

FD: Ought-six [2006].

TH: Okay. Have you—

DK: Big success right away, big. Everybody loved it. We're probably the most—I'd say the *Lady Stuart II*, this boat here, even though I'm the captain of the other boat—I'll be fair—this is probably the most loved boat. I've been on the east coast of Florida—

TH: I know it goes out a lot.

DK: We have coming from Michigan just to fish the boat. They'll stay at the Days Inn for a week. We bring a lot of business to this area that people don't realize we bring. I bet a hundred people a week come to Fort Pierce just to come on the *Lady Stuart*. Then you add on top of that how many people are visiting their parents or their sister or brother and people that live here that come out. So, I mean we bring a lot of revenue to this area, definitely.

FD: Spring breakers are a very good time. Spring breakers down here, the families and the college—

TH: A lot of college students?

FD: And families with younger kids off from school.

DK: A lot of people from around Florida; people from Orlando are regulars on this boat.

FD: Yes, regulars. They come from Orlando just to go out on the boat.

DK: They come from Tampa.

FD: Yes, they do. We have a group that comes from Tampa about once a month or so.

DK: And that's just what we can remember.

TH: What do you attribute it to? Because before you bought the business, was it—

DK: There wasn't anything here. Well, there was one boat here. I think it's, you know, customer service, and we have a great crew. We have Fred and Wayne and Bill, the mates—just, you know, customer service, treating everybody good. And fishing, good fishing, fishing's good.

FD: We do everything we can to see if they can catch fish.

DK: And to be polite and fair and honest and all that. So, I think we run a good ship, definitely.

TH: That's cool. That's good.

FD: Customer service.

TH: Were you fishing commercially, recreationally, or working in the charter boat sector before you came to Fort Pierce?

DK: No. I wasn't. Fred may have been.

FD: Recreation, recreation.

DK: Yeah, recreation fishery.

TH: So, let's see, what did you fish for and how did you fish for whatever you fished for? What did you first fish for? You talked about cod, and then you got out of fishing altogether. Is that correct?

DK: Yeah. Well, I lived in the Caribbean for a little while. I did some, you know, I fished for kingfish and that's about it. Caught a lot of kingfish, but other than that, I never really fished much. (laughs)

TH: Okay, not commercially?

DK: No, no.

TH: Okay. So, I guess once you started fishing this boat— what do you target primarily with this boat?

FD: Strictly bottom fishing. We target the sea bass, triggerfish, and various snapper.

DK: Vermillion snapper, lane snapper.

FD: Mostly (inaudible) lanes.

DK: We catch kingfish.

FD: Mutton snapper, and some mangrove [snapper] now are coming back for us. And we do try to catch—on the surface—the kingfish.

DK: Do you get porgies here?

FD: Porgies, we do get some porgies.

DK: Yeah, and grouper, when they are in season.

FD: Yep, grouper.

DK: And kingfish, mahi and cobia.

TH: So, what do you fish with? What do you use for bait?

FD: Squid.

DK: And cut up grunts.

FD: Cut up grunts.

TH: Do you catch your own bait or do you—

FD: Yeah, not the squid, but the grunts and perch.

TH: How do you catch fish?

FD: On a hook and—

DK: Just chicken rigs, little hooks.

FD: Little hooks, yeah.

DK: Even just the regular chicken rig that we use, two-ought hooks, three-oughts. I guess we're using the five-ought now.

FD: But we still catch 'em. Some of the fellows use the Sabiki rigs to catch 'em.

TH: Okay. We're gonna have to get a permission form from Fred, 'cause I think—Fred, did you fish commercially before you came on board with David?

FD: No, all recreation.

TH: All recreation. Here in Fort Pierce?

FD: I started in New Jersey. That's where I grew up and that's where I started fishin'. I had a boat up there, which I brought back down here. I still have it here.

TH: What kind of boat is that?

FD: It's a twenty-foot Atlas (inaudible).

TH: That's a nice boat.

FD: Yep.

TH: All right, during what months do you fish for what fish down here?

DK: We fish the same all year.

TH: Pretty much just—

DK: Yeah. I mean in the summertime, when the current's not so strong—and the wind, actually, the wind—we'll do a lot more drifting. In the wintertime, we generally anchor up. It's a mixed bag in the spring and the fall.

TH: How long does a fishing trip last?

DK: Five or seven hours, and once a month, we do a ten hour trip.

TH: Okay. I see—do you do two-a-days?

DK: Yes.

FD: If there's five hour trips, we'll do two-a-days if we have the people.

TH: Okay. I've seen you going out twice.

DK: Yes. (inaudible)

TH: How much is an average catch?

DK: What do you mean? How many fish?

TH: Yeah, or how many pounds?

FD: That's hard to say.

TH: Do you fill a cooler or everybody has their own cooler?

DK: Everybody has a bucket.

FD: We have the five-gallon buckets and we put ice in it for the people.

DK: I'd say keeper-wise, probably like seven keepers per person, on average.

FD: On the—

DK: Including a combination of sea bass, triggerfish. Some people will have one fish, some people will have twenty, you know.

TH: Do people— do they reserve certain spots around the boat to fish?

DK: Well, it's first come, first served.

TH: So, if you get here first, the first people try to get the stern?

FD: Correct, correct.

TH: Okay. I know some of the people get arguments over who gets to be in the stern.

FD: We do it fairly. The first in (inaudible)—

DK: Yeah, it's first come, first serve.

TH: They sign up?

DK: That eliminates any argument.

TH: Okay.

DK: If you're here before the other guy, there's no—you have no—

FD: You have your choice of where you want to go there.

DK: Some people choose not to go there.

FD: (inaudible)

TH: Does his wife go inside?

DK: Yeah. If—

FD: One fellow likes to fish right up on the bow here, he always fishes here. He does very well.

TH: Okay. So, these are repeat questions. You've already answered this: Where do you go to fish? Okay, when you go out to fish, when you leave Fort Pierce Inlet, how do you know where you're going and how do you decide? When do you decide?

FD: Normally, we decide before we leave the dock.

TH: You have— in your mind?

DK: Oh, absolutely.

FD: Yeah, we have a lot of white points out there on the reefs that we fish; and in wintertime, [there is a] place about seven miles off that's very good in the winter. It doesn't do well in the summer.

TH: Northeast, southeast?

FD: Southeast.

TH: That'd be north of 12 [Buoy 12], seven miles.

FD: Yeah.

TH: We call it the kingfishery.

FD High bar?

TH: Yeah.

FD: Okay.

TH: In seventy foot?

FD: Fifty-five to sixty.

TH: Okay.

FD: In the winter, that's a very good spot. In the summertime, for some reason it's not, and it's dropped off now, of course. So we now go out northeast.

TH: Northeast Grounds, mostly?

FD: Yeah, mostly out there.

DK: Okay, and are you inshore or offshore bar, Northeast Grounds?

FD: We start at the inshore.

TH: If you don't have good fish there you—

FD: Then we'll move off.

TH: If you have good fish, you just stay there.

FD: Then we just move up the line sometimes and then we'll move off, check that out. Right now the inshore bar has been very good for us.

TH: Okay. Kingfish have been there, too.

FD: Yeah, there's a large kingfish fleet out there the last month.

TH: Yeah.

DK: Very large.

TH: I was there.

FD: Were you there?

TH: Yeah.

FD: There was about thirty boats out there, wasn't there?

TH: Oh, yeah. They came from Sebastian.

FD: Yep.

TH: Okay. How long does a fishing trip last? Average trip? Now we're getting down to the Oculina Bank. For how many years have you been a charter boat captain? You've only been a charter, Dave, for—

DK: Well, my ticket—I've only my ticket for, I guess, three and a half, four years.

TH: Okay, and Fred?

FD: For this boat, I've had it a year now, and I had a six-pack license before that for a couple of years.

TH: Okay.

DK: We both have 100 ton licenses.

FD: It's required.

TH: Finally, I'd like to talk about how your fishing has changed over time in regards to the Oculina Bank. Since—bear with me here. Since 1984, several changes have been made in the regulations of the Oculina Bank. I'd like to know if any of these regulations affected your fishing; if so, how? Okay, the Oculina Bank was initially closed to trawling, dredging, and bottom longlining in 1984. Did this affect your fishing?

DK: No.

FD: No.

TH: In 1994, the Oculina Bank was designated as an Experimental Closed Area where fishing for and retention of snapper grouper species was prohibited—and it was a very hot snapper grouper area. Snapper grouper fishing boats were also prohibited from anchoring. Was your fishing impacted by this regulation in 1994?

DK: No.

TH: Okay. In 1996, all anchoring was prohibited within the Oculina Bank. Did this impact your fishing at all?

DK: No.

TH: I told you we'd go through this rapidly. We're gonna get down to something you will want to answer in a minute. In 1996, trawling for rock shrimp was prohibited in the area east and north of the Oculina Bank; and in 1998, this area was incorporated in the Oculina Bank HAPC. Fishing with bottom longline, trawl and dredge was prohibited in the expanded area, as was anchoring it by any vessel. Was your fishing impacted by this regulation?

DK: No.

TH: Okay.

DK: Can you drift on the Oculina Bank now? You can't drift; you can't fish it at all?

FD: You can troll it, can't you?

TH: You can troll on top.

FD: On top.

DK: But no bottom fishing.

TH: And I don't—no bottom fishing. Not in the original—

DK: I don't think it's the Oculina Bank.

FD: (inaudible)

TH: Here, I'll show you [on] a map.

DK: Why is it still closed?

TH: They extended it north, but that's the area right there.

DK: Why is it closed?

TH: Because it's a method of preserving the fish, and I'll get to that in just a minute here. In fact, we're winding down. The designation—here we go. The designation of marine areas that are closed to fishing is being used more frequently as a fishery management tool. What do you think about the use of closed areas to fishing compared to other types of management regulations like quotas, closed seasons, et cetera? Now, this is where—what do you think, like what if they said the Northeast Grounds was gonna be an HAPC?

DK: That would be devastating.

TH: Okay.

DK: I—

TH: Say that the question—let's step back. The question on the table—and this probably the most important part of this whole interview—what do you think about the use of closed areas to fishing, compared to other types of management regulations? Let's start with David.

DK: Well, I think if you have a quota system and it's actually enforced, I think that would be much better for everybody. If you—the problem that I see is that there's no enforcement. I hardly ever see an FWC [Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission] looking at boats, little boats that come in with two guys out there. And I know they're taking undersized mangrove snapper, mutton snapper, throwing twelve inch mutton snappers from the—

TH: From recreational boats?

DK: Recreational boats. Divers are a huge impact on the grouper. They go down there, they look—grouper are like moose, they're curious, they'll come up them. They'll spear a thirty pound grouper and off they go. Shutting it down will just kill this whole area.

I mean, you know, if you're looking for some sort of stimulus, this is not the way to go because there's so much revenue that's generated for this area. So many people make their livelihoods from fishing, whether it's recreational or commercial or otherwise. I don't think this area could withstand that kind of blow. If they—I didn't have a problem, personally, and maybe I shouldn't—I didn't have a problem with the closure of grouper. I really didn't. I think that we needed to close it. I'm happy that we did. I think that we're seeing them come back now. And so they open the season and I don't have a problem with that. I did have a problem with the vermilion snapper, because there's like—I can't go to some spots because all there is is vermilion snapper.

TH: Lots of people are saying they're thicker now than they ever were.

DK: Very thick out there, and big, too. We're getting nice sized ones. But to close the whole area would just kill a lot of people. It would put a lot of people out of business. You know, you think you have bankruptcies now? Try closing fishing. All the tackle shops, everybody that makes tackle, all the guys that pour lead, all the guys that work on boats, nobody's gonna want to buy a boat because then nobody's gonna—'cause they want to fish. Almost all the boats that are being sold now are center consoles, and those are strictly fishing boats; they're not pleasure boats. They're not, you know, cabin cruisers.

TH: Well, let me take it one step. The Oculina is a living reef and it has peaks, and the draggers, shrimp and scallop draggers, would go right along and tear up the reefs, and that's pretty substantial. Would you accept closing an area to dragging or trawling?

DK: Yeah, I would. I mean, I think you have to preserve the reef.

FD: Until they come up with gear that would not destroy the banks.

DK: Yeah, I can't see that. I can—

FD: Yeah, because that's the (inaudible)—

DK: I don't know. I mean, I don't want to put somebody else out of business, you know. It's always easy to kick the can down the road. But to me, we don't—what we do, we don't devastate the reef or destroy the reef. As a matter of fact, we clean it up a lot of times. You know, we're constantly picking trash out. Every time I see a bottle on the water or something, we're constantly netting it and getting it out of there.

TH: Okay, then let me—this last question is: If you could manage the fisheries, how do you—what methods would you use? You've touched on it, but you haven't—this is, you know—how would you manage the fisheries? Would it be quotas, trip limits?

FD: Fair quotas.

DK: Fair quotas, yeah. I think if you see a huge drop off in a certain species, yeah, then shut that down. I have no problem with that. I don't think—

FD: And within reason. Like this grouper shutdown and—well, let's stick with the grouper. I don't think that was devastating. We got—we caught several of what would have been keeper groupers that we had to return. The people were disappointed, but they understood. But if you're totally gonna totally shut that fishery down forever, an area or whatever, just shut it down, no more, like you've done with this bank, that would be devastating to a lot of people. It would.

DK: Yeah, you can't do that. There's plenty of fish out there.

FD: Red snapper is a good example of what's going on. Nobody knows what's going on with that. The feds can't make up their mind.

TH: On snapper?

FD: Yeah, the red snapper, the red snapper.

TH: And you say there's plenty of them out there, more than there's ever been?

DK: The vermillion snapper.

FD: The vermillion snapper has.

DK: We're seeing huge numbers of those.

FD: I've caught several red snappers during this closure season. Some were not keeper size. Some were. There are some species that I think you have to shut down. I think you have to do what you did with the grouper, a closed season on them. But to eliminate a whole area from all fishing, that would—as Dave just said—would devastate the economy, especially in Fort Pierce.

DK: It would put us out of business, obviously. I mean, I've got seven full-time employees, not including me and my wife. That's nine. Nine people make their living off this boat and feed families and make a living. I mean, that's just me.

FD: And we buy ice, and we buy bait and—

DK: Tons of bait and hooks and leads.

FD: —we have repairs, mechanical repairs, you know, the tackle. These people would all be impacted by us not being here.

DK: Just today, for bottom paint, I spent \$900. I spent \$300 on paint for the hull, and then all the other things that I get at Sherwin-Williams. I dropped a couple hundred bucks just on rollers and that kind of thing. I'm getting ready to paint the bottom on this boat. So, I mean, I spend a lot. I bet—on the business—I probably spend a quarter of a million dollars a year in Fort Pierce and Stuart and Jensen Beach, just in that area.

FD: And then the customers that we draw that go and stay in motels and hotels. We draw a lot of people that do that.

DK: A lot of people. A lot of people spend a lot of money here, you know, eat at the restaurants. And that's just me. I mean, there's hundreds of other charter boats in the area. You add all that up, plus all the recreational guys that go to West Marine. "Hey, I need new fishing line," or they go to De Brooks or whatever.¹ I mean, all those tackle shops would go out of business and—

¹ De Brooks Fishing Corner was once owned by William Glenn Middlebrooks. He was also interviewed for the Oculina Bank Oral History Project. The DOI for his interview is O6-00005.

FD: All the fuel docks.

DK: —would just shrivel up and die. This whole area would be creamed.

FD: Yep.

TH: Excellent, excellent. Thinking ahead into the future, what do you think fishing in Fort Pierce will be like in ten years?

DK: I think the fishing's strong. I think there's good—

FD: I think there some very good fishing right now. I spent fishing—

DK: It's been getting better.

FD: Yeah. I've been on this boat two years now, and from the day I started till now, I've seen an increase in the quality of fishing.

DK: Yeah, yeah. The size of the snapper, for some reason, are getting bigger; and the sea bass are getting stronger.

FD: Stronger and bigger.

DK: The biggest worry for us right now, we were just talking about this oil spill in the Gulf. It's really horrible.

TH: It's getting scary, scary, scary. And they don't have a clue as what to do.

DK: Yeah, I know.

TH: A mile down.

FD: Yeah, that's a long ways.

TH: What do you attribute the better fishing to? You're new in the industry, but—

DK: Here, I think it's just the cleaner water.

FD: I think the ecology of the ocean out there is just—

DK: The water's very clean lately.

FD: Yeah, the water's clean, but the reefs are good. They haven't been destroyed by anything.

TH: We had two years of drought. So, there was less runoff—

DK: From Lake Okeechobee. That makes a big difference.

TH: Lake Okeechobee.

FD: I go out to St. Lucie Inlet a lot. My boat's down there.

DK: And I fish that area.

FD: Dave goes out every day.

DK: Every day.

FD: I see what that river looks like when they're dumping. I was there when that water was green. I remember that. They're destroying that river.

DK: There's so many—when they do that, you get so much algae on the bottom, it just destroys the reefs. All that green slime gets all over your tackle. You come up—I mean, the fish can't breathe. So, you have to go deeper and deeper. It's horrible.

FD: I've been there when you go out to St. Lucie Inlet, you can see bottom. You can't now.

DK: You can't now. You could yesterday.

FD: Could you?

DK: You could see the bottom. They're releasing today.

FD: They're gonna increase the dumping today. They're starting an increase today. You won't see anything.

TH: This is the time of year when—

DK: It's like a toilet bowl.

TH: —it's like Keys and the Bahamas out here in Fort Pierce.

DK: It's beautiful.

TH: In the springtime, you can see—

FD: You won't down there where they're dumping.

DK: No.

FD: There'll be a—it'll look like black coffee.

DK: That's horrible. Why are they doing that to St. Lucie? Why can't they divert some of it to the West Coast?

FD: They do.

TH: They are. The West Coast and—

DK: But why can't some of it go down to West Palm?

TH: I don't know.

DK: I mean, divert it evenly. Pollute us all.

FD: It has to go back to where it originally went.

TH: It should go right south. (laughs)

DK: Straight into the Everglades.

TH: You got it. That's what they're trying to do.

DK: Who gives a crap about the sugar cane?

TH: Anyway, I think that's about it, gentlemen. Thinking ahead, you think if the oil spill in the Gulf does not impact us and if pollution does not impact us, and—

DK: It's going strong.

TH: —and with quotas, you do believe in quotas and trip limits, and you can accept—

DK: What do you mean by trip limits? I didn't say that I believed in that. (laughs)

TH: Well, that's what we have as kingfishermen. We're allowed fifty head a day or seventy-five head a day. Fifty head a day in the wintertime, the winter fish—

FD: Boat limits.

TH: Yeah, trip limits.

DK: Oh, okay.

TH: And really, for us, it stabilizes the price. However, north of us in the Carolinas and south of us in the Keys, they can catch all they want. Anyway, that's a different story, you know. But this is your interview. Thank you very much for sharing your fishing history with us, and—

FD: Bag limits are okay.

TH: Okay.

FD: We would call that a bag limit.

TH: Okay, yeah.

FD: In other words, he's allowed to take two grouper, for instance. Right now, it's fifteen per person for sea bass. There's nothing wrong with that. That preserves the fishery.

DK: I've stopped trips before and come back. But you know what? People—

TH: When you had too many fish?

DK: Yeah. People are happy, like, you know, "I got my limit." What am I gonna do? People are gonna freeze this fish and then, you know, it becomes a waste at that point. It becomes a slaughter, and I don't want to do that. We want to preserve what we have. I mean, absolutely. We're all for keepin'—I want my kids, my son to be able to take over the business some day.

FD: And my grandson loves to fish, and he's only seven years old. I want the fish to be there—

DK: To be there, yeah.

FD: —for him, you know?

TH: This had been consistent with all the fishermen across the board. Everybody wants to see it, you know, nobody wants a slaughter and wants to have no regulation. Everybody wants regulations.

FD: Reasonable.

DK: But let's regulate the recreational guy, too, and enforce it. I never see a FWC guy out there with the double engines. I see them running around and talk—but I never see them at the dock checking people and looking in their coolers. Maybe they do. I haven't seen it. You know, they'll board me and they'll check me every once in a while because we're this big, easy target. Maybe they'll listen, maybe. I don't care, but let's be a little more fair on that, you know, and start enforcing it with other people. I mean, we're very careful. Any undersize fish go back. Everything gets vetted. I have no problem with them boarding. They can board me every day. I don't care. But let's start looking at what the divers have. Let's start looking at the recreational boats, 'cause they—a boat with three good anglers can go out there and do a hurtin' on the reef a lot more than I can with thirty people, women and children that have never fished before.

TH: Excellent.

DK: I think. That's my thing, I—

FD: And we do get a lot of families that have never fished before, and they come out and if we can give them a good experience, we've developed some families that are regulars now.

DK: Yeah. Oh, yeah, a lot.

FD: They come out with their kids, their wives, the husbands, of course. Some of their wives come out with their son. I got one wife that comes out with her son all the time, Jane and Adam, and they'll bring the husband once in a while. (TH laughs) And then about a month ago, she brought—her daughter was down visiting; she brought her daughter, her grandkids, and everything else. They all came out. But they come out a couple times a month with us.

DK: Yeah, they don't want to buy a boat. For forty bucks, they can go fishing, have a good time, they can walk off the boat. They don't have to buy the license.

FD: We clean the fish for 'em.

DK: Clean the lane, yeah.

TH: You clean the fish. Do you supply the poles, the bait?

FD: Yes.

DK: Poles, bait's included.

TH: Is that included in the \$40?

DK: Yep.

FD: Forty dollars is the price, yep.

TH: I may go out with you here. (laughs)

FD: You should. It's fun.

TH: I will.

FD: And you're more than welcome to bring your own equipment, too.

DK: Yeah, people do.

FD: They do that, too. But we do supplies—

DK: And we run a fish pool, you know, so guys that are good, they come up. Some people try to make a living on the boat. They do.

FD: (laughs) But I've seen first-time fishermen win the pool.

DK: Oh, yeah, a lot, a lot.

FD: So, that's not unusual.

TH: Anything else you want to add? That's a very good interview, gentlemen. I want to thank you both very much. I will need to get a permission form from you, and I have a follow up form I need you to fill out for me. Thank you much. I'm gonna turn that off.

DK: Thank you.

End of interview