

North Pacific Fishery Management Council: Oral History Interviews

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ALASKA SEA GRANT
**State
Fellowship**
PROGRAM



Outline

Introduction: Why Oral History?

Project Partners

Project Process

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Introduction: Why Oral History?

“Oral history is a field of study and a method of gathering, preserving and interpreting the voices and memories of people, communities, and participants in past events. Oral history is both the oldest type of historical inquiry, predating the written word, and one of the most modern, initiated with tape recorders in the 1940s and now using 21st-century digital technologies.”

– Oral History Association

- ▶ Documented history through written accounts (ex: [30th](#) and [40th](#) MSA anniversaries)
- ▶ Capturing the essence of people: personalities, perspectives and how these inform their experience with the Council process
- ▶ Focusing on themes, reflections, and lessons learned
- ▶ Archive for learning, research in perpetuity



Partners

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(<https://voices.nmfs.noaa.gov/> & <https://archives.consortiumlibrary.org/>)



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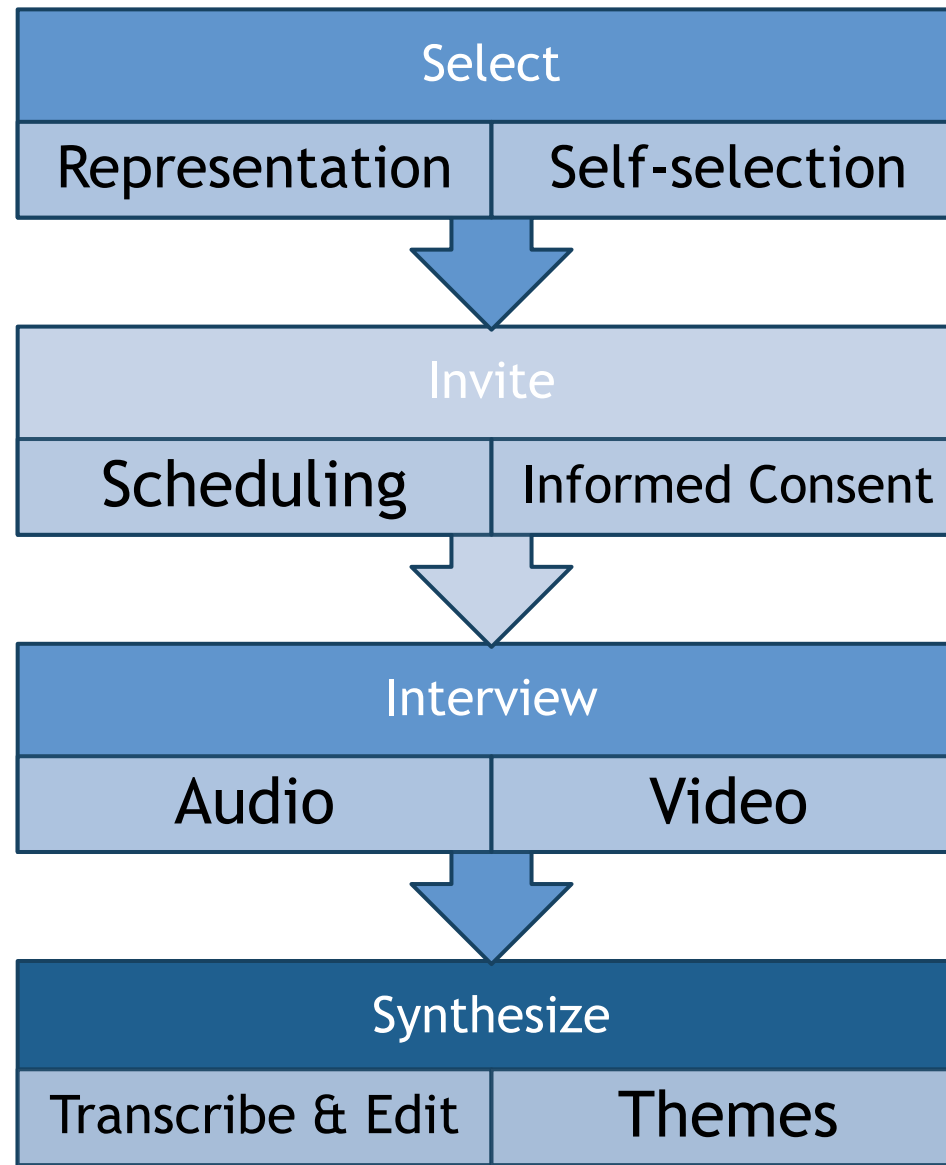


Pre-Archive Process

Between the Narrator & Interviewer



My role (the interviewer) is to create a safe and comfortable environment for the guided interview, acting as a conduit helping to capture and share history, personal experience, and knowledge of those who agree to participate.



Questions & Interview Themes

Life History

- Childhood / growing up
- Education
- Career
- Council experience

North Pacific Fisheries

- Meaning & value (economic, cultural, social, etc.)
- Community impacts
- Changes over time

Council Reflections

- Challenging / rewarding actions
- Public engagement over time
- Policy challenges
- Memories

Experience Dependent

- Agency
- AP, Council, SSC
- Public (industry, advocacy, etc.)



Analysis, Results, and Themes

15 interviews completed so far, plan to
complete more

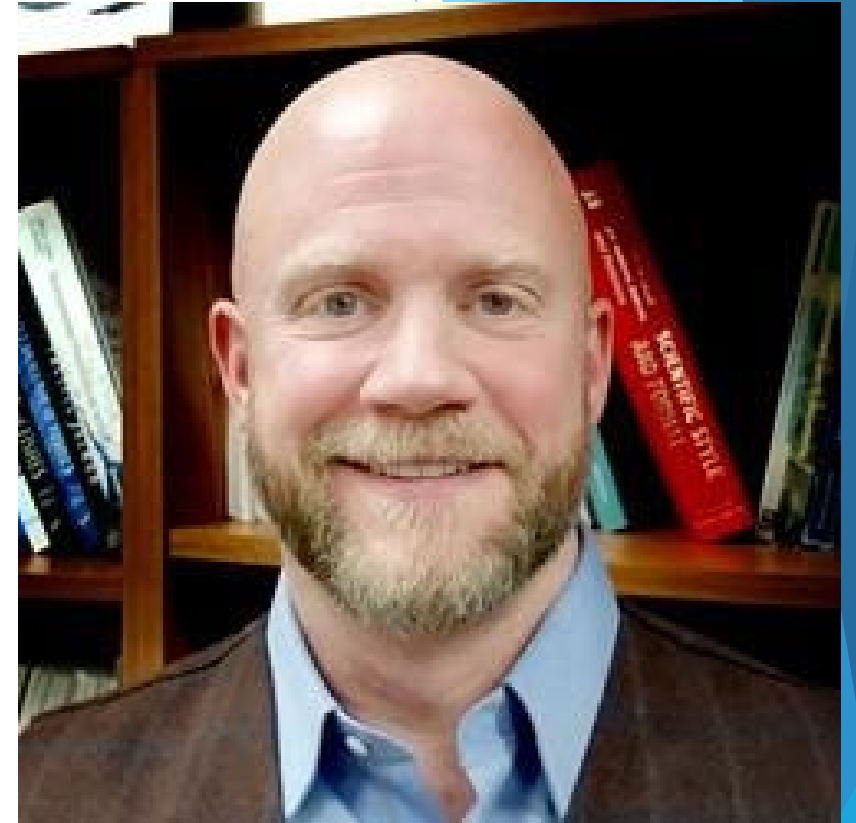
(Anchorage, Juneau, Kodiak, and Sitka)

Themes

- ▶ Growth of accessibility to the process over time
- ▶ 10 National Standards
- ▶ Lessons learned & advocacy advice
- ▶ Centering human connectivity & importance of relationship building
- ▶ Council & agency staff
- ▶ Resilience through system destabilization
- ▶ Changes to fishing communities: hardship & perseverance
- ▶ Rationalization impacts
- ▶ Phasing out of foreign interests in fishing fleet & management process



"And there's not always agreement, sometimes we have to pivot. When we had the 2020 Pandemic, we weren't able to go to sea and collect information. We had to make very tough decisions, and it was an easy decision to protect staff and take care of staff and take care of the people we work with in the industry and communities. Tough decision not to be able to collect information. And we—the proof there—is that it was the same year of the snow crab stock collapse. So, it was extremely difficult not to be there to capture the collapse. Which you can go back and look at now, our—the fishermen who were negatively impacted because they didn't know what was coming; the Council process that didn't have the right numbers in order to make the management decision along the way. **So that, horrible, confluence of a pandemic, lack of data, and the crash of the stock because of the heat wave, all happening at the same time, really points to the value of the information; the value of the scientific process; the value of the relationships between everybody collecting information and those using it in the Council process.**"



Bob Foy on the consequences of destabilizing the system
(ecological and management)



"I think those probably were the biggest challenges. The biggest challenges that I faced were analytical challenges. The analysis though, is just a part of the process. And I was always really aware of that and tried to keep that in perspective because I think that—I really appreciated the Council process for many reasons. But one of them is that the decisionmakers, they relied on a lot of different sources of information. And the analysis done by staff was just one part of it. And the public testimony and the advice from their advisory groups, I think a lot of the things that we struggled with analytically were much better brought into the process through those different avenues. **And I think that if you attend council meetings for any length of time, you really understand and appreciate how powerful good, heartfelt public testimony can be. And I know that, even if it wasn't reflected in an analysis, that is part of the analytical process, that public record and that presentation.** And you could—issues were affected by, tremendously by the public testimony. So, I guess it was challenging to me personally, but probably not the most challenging aspect of the process because decisions got made even if things weren't exactly reflected in an analysis."



Sally Bibb on the importance of the public process & public testimony as part of the decision-making framework of the Council



Theresa Peterson on the importance of diversity of inputs and representation in making management decisions

“And so, it was a really valuable opportunity to sit at the table and always kind of vote with a conservation hat on. I found—with the guidance of our guiding principles, and the Board, and the organization—it was fairly easy for me to always vote on the side of conservation. And during those times, we worked through some pretty controversial issues on the Council in regards to bycatch restrictions. You know, when you’re reducing bycatch of halibut, salmon, and crab, inherently you have some competing National Standards: with the National Standard 1 (optimum yield) and then the National Standards to reduce bycatch and sustain fishing communities. So, there’s inherent tension with the guidance. Which then kind of creates tension between user groups because quite often when you’re restricting bycatch, there’s a very real potential to negatively affect another harvester. **So, sitting at the table, and listening to all the different perspectives, it’s really showed and illustrated the need to me to be open minded and have these important conversations and be prepared to seek a balance and a compromise. And I think that’s what the council system is set up well to do: to kind of balance competing interests and making sure when you are looking at means to reduce impacts on other species, you’re also considering the other user groups.”**



Ernie Weiss on the Council's iterative, deliberative approach

[In response to a question about what federal fisheries management might look like absent the Council system:]

"You would hope that there would still be an avenue for public input. I think that's the most important part of the Council: is being able to come and listen to people and ask questions when they give their opinion. Yeah, I can't even imagine it without a Council. How would that be? I don't know. No, I think the council process is really a good one. It's different than, say, the Board of Fish. You can go to the Board of Fish, and you bring a proposal, and they'll say, "Yeah, we're going with that," and make that change. **Whereas the Council, it comes back and comes back and comes back real deliberative. And I think that's good. It's kind of slow sometimes, and—but that's good, because they try to get it right, and I think they usually get it right.**"



Next Steps

- ▶ Getting transcriptions and materials ready to submit to archives
 - ▶ 20 – 40 hours per interview
- ▶ Creating video compilation combining many clips around a single theme
 - ▶ Open to input on what theme you'd like to see
 - Growth of accessibility to the process over time
 - 10 National Standards
 - Lessons learned & advocacy advice
 - Centering human connectivity & importance of relationship building
 - Council & agency staff
 - Resilience through system destabilization
 - Changes to fishing communities: hardship & perseverance
 - Rationalization impacts
 - Phasing out of foreign interests in fishing fleet & management process
- ▶ Very limited capacity for more interviews
 - ▶ To provide a project template/guide for potential continuation
- ▶ Project will be posted on our website & will link to archives



Questions?

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