Interviewee Name: Joanna Fogg

Project/Collection Title: Frenchman Bay Oral History Project

Interviewers Names and Affiliation: Tiegan Paulson – Mapping Ocean Stories, Melanie Powers – Mapping Ocean Stories

Interview Location: Bar Harbor

Date of Interview: 05/05/2023

Interview Description: Joanna Fogg has lived on Mount Desert Island her whole life, and her time here has involved lobstering, working on yachts, and most recently, oyster farming near the Mount Desert Narrows. Her business has been growing in the last six years, even as she sells almost exclusively on-island.

Key Words: Oysters, aquaculture, oyster farm, sea farm, Frenchman Bay, Mount Desert Island, Southwest Harbor, lobsters, lobstermen, lobstering, Cranberry Islands, tourism, eco-tourism, yachts, yachting,

Collection Description: Started in 2022, this project aims to document the lived experiences and observations of residents with extensive knowledge and history on Frenchman Bay. Stories and knowledge collected in interviews are aggregated to paint a comprehensive picture of the diverse uses of Frenchman Bay using maps, storyboards, and other public exhibits.

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Transcribed By: Tiegan Paulson

TP: Tiegan Paulson

JF: Joanna Fogg

MP: Melanie Powers

Length of interview: [0:49:35]

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Tiegan Paulson: We are rolling. So I'm going to need a moment to get levels figured out.

Joanna Fogg: Sure. No problem.

TP: At that time. Do you want to tell me what you had for breakfast this morning?

JF: I had the part of my daughter's breakfast burrito that she didn't finish and a piece of homemade toast and a cup of coffee and a cup of tea -- and a banana. It was kind of a grazing breakfast. [laughs]

TP: Is that normal, that kind of breakfast?

JF: Yes, coffee is definite. That's the first thing. Get the coffee, get that going and make sure my daughter gets breakfast and then shove something into my mouth normally on the way out the door.

TP: All right, awesome. Thank you. Getting into the interview itself, can you tell me a little bit about your background in the area?

JF: I was born and raised here. I have lived most of my life on a desert island. I grew up in Seal Harbor and I've always been drawn to being near the water. I did not grow up in a fishing family or a family that was part of the lobstering bit, but I also have a few mariners in my family. I've always been interested in being close to and working on the water.

TP: Can you tell me a little bit about what it is that you do on the water -- you have the Bar Harbor Oyster Company.

JF: Yep.

TP: What does that entail?

JF: In 2014 I started Bar Harbor Oyster Company with my husband and it has evolved over that amount of time. When we first started we really didn't know anything about oyster farming. We started very small with a limited purpose aquaculture site. We had an interest in sea farming here and we both had other jobs at the time where we were working. I was working on private yachts and my husband is a commercial fisherman.

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He's a chief engineer and a long liner and is still doing that. We decided that we wanted to make a living on the water and be here. I was shipping out on yachts and he is in Dutch Harbor right now, so he works out of Alaska. And we wanted to be here on the island where we grew up and we wanted to work on the water. We knew that lobster fishing was -- there were issues with it. It was also a closed fishery, we couldn't just get licenses. And we were a little bit apprehensive about the future of it and had also both done it and wanted something maybe a little bit different for ourselves. We thought about oyster farming and we literally watched YouTube and I started to see this is like nothing that we could do. We got a really small lease while we worked on attaining a larger lease and started by -- I think we started with maybe eight or twelve oyster cages and literally a bag of seed and tried to see if we could grow oysters while we kept our other jobs. It was three years to get our standard lease, which is something we're granted from the state of Maine and also the Army Corps of Engineers. By the end of 2016, we had a 22.5 acre standard lease in addition to these other small plots where we started the limited purpose sites. We started with -- I think the first year we brought 75,000 seeds and now we're buying up to 600,000 seeds. And we started with eight cages and now I have 750 cages. My husband still ships out, so he is gone about half of the year in Alaska and I'm home running the company and raising our now six-year old. The company is -- in the summer we're really busy. So spring, April through December, we're really busy harvesting and maintaining everything. That's the out season. I've got five full time employees now in the season who are helping us with all of those farm operations from getting the tiny seed that we buy into the right size, mesh bags and density and starting that bit or in our boiler system all the way to market.

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We're also a wholesaler and a dealer. We deal all of our own products. About ninety-eight percent of it stays on MDI [Mount Desert Island] and we harvest and deliver the same day. Right before you guys showed up, we had -- our truck went from Hadley Point where we picked up -- we went and harvested a couple thousand oysters, put them in the bed of a small pickup truck that has a reefer unit on it and my driver left like five minutes before you guys pulled in. And so we harvest and deliver the same day, twice a week in the season and once a week in the winter. And everything stays on the island pretty much.

TP: Can you, can you walk me through the path that a seed would take from the point that you get it to the point that you're giving it to?

JF: Sure, oysters are native to Maine but they're not typically native to MDI, -- Frenchman Bay. Sea temperatures have to be around seventy degrees pretty consistently for oysters to spawn. We are using seed that is purchased from a hatchery. We use Muscongus Bay Aquaculture, which is

[in] Mid-Coast Maine. Every year we buy hundreds of thousands of oyster seeds and we put them in -- this year we're just buying larger seeds, and this is kind of similar. Nine to thirteen millimeter seed is a larger seed, but it still is very tiny. It's smaller than my pinky nail. It goes into mesh bags that are in floating cages in our system. The mesh bags are enough so that the oyster seed stays inside, but also it allows an optimal amount of water flow which contains all of the feed that's naturally in our main waters. It floats on the surface where the water is warm, we put it on a part of our lease where it is the warmest and the most protected. It's the most inland place on our lease and it just feeds there naturally at the right density.

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Over the course of its life there is a lot of handling that has to happen. One of the main things that we have to do is to keep it at the proper density. You can imagine if we have a couple of thousand, say nine to thirteen millimeter seed in a mesh bag, over time it's going to take up more and more of that mesh bag as the seed grows. If it's too crowded it's not going to have enough access to the feed that's in the water or enough space, and it also naturally wants to grow next to it -- or grow into others. Oysters naturally grow in reefs, so as they are forming shells they want to grow into each other, which makes oyster chunk, right? And I can't sell oyster chunks. I need to sell beautifully shaped, cupped oysters. So we handle them and tumble them. We have a grading system. It goes through a grater which is a big tube that sorts them by size and keeps them from growing into one another -- and cleans them. Over the course of the season it will go through the grater and tumbler and it will go from a tiny mesh size, a four millimeter mesh size bag, into a nine millimeter mesh size bag. It has slightly bigger holes, it won't fall out because it has also gotten bigger, but it will allow more water flow to go through and will decrease the density so that it's optimal again. That's one operation that will happen many times over the course of its life. We sell three-year oysters now, which are older than like our Southern counterparts -- mainly due to water temperatures. Oysters only grow when the sea temps are about forty five [degrees] or higher, which is only like half of our year. Down south you might be eating a one year old oyster and up here you're eating a three year old oyster, which means we have to get a premium for them because it takes us that much longer to grow them. But they're definitely worth it. Maine oysters are the best. I'm not prejudiced at all, they definitely are the best. That's one thing, is decreasing the stocking density, keeping it from growing into other oysters and putting it through that tumbler, which helps the shape of it.

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Another big operation that has to happen a few times -- well, it happens several times a season -- about every ten days or two weeks in the summer when things are growing rapidly, it will grow on the cages and on the bags. Any other marine organism wants a home. You can think about barnacles, mussel spat, squirts, tunicates, all of these other marine organisms that are growing --

kelp -- want something to affix themselves to. Oyster gear is there and available and it's warm and sunny and it's in optimal growing conditions. That's why we chose it. So we consider anything that is not an oyster in our cages bio fouling. It's basically a weed in our garden, and we have to prevent the bio fouling or else it will take away from the feed and the space that the oysters need. So the system is designed, the cages are floating on the surface, and they have large plastic pontoons that are full of air, which is keeping them buoyant. The oysters are just beneath that. But the cages are designed so that we can flip them upside down so that the oysters are out of the water and the pontoons are beneath them. About every ten days or two weeks -- it kind of depends on the amount of growth and what the weather condition is -- we flip the entire farm upside down so that the oysters are exposed to the sunlight and to the wind. So is the entire cage, basically, except for the pontoons. Most marine organisms cannot handle being out of the water for twenty-four or thirty-six -- sometimes we'll even do it forty hours if we have a muscle spawn and we have all those mussels seeds trying to attach to stuff. If those continue to live, they will smother everything. We will not have oysters on any of that stuff. If there is a muscle spawn or barnacle set we know is happening, we'll flip everything upside down so that it's exposed to the air, it doesn't attach the gear, or it dies, or it can't survive being outside of the water and in the sunlight for that amount of time. It's a really labor intensive project. I mean like I said, we started with eight cages and now we have close to 780 cages that have to be flipped upside down manually.

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We have a pot hauler -- which is similar to one you might not recognize from a lobster boat to help us get the cage alongside and up. But it still has to be kind of like flipped and shaken out by hand so that those oysters are out of the water and it prevents the bio fouling. And then about -- again, it depends on how bad the set is and what the weather is like. If we have a really hot, sunny day, twenty-four hours is probably enough to kill the other things. But if it's like, oh, if it's in the sixties and it's a little bit cloudy, it might take thirty-six hours to have a good dry. We let them sit up that long and then we come back and we flip them all upside down. That happens several times a summer during the height of the growing season. Then in about November we start to sink everything. The cages that have pontoons that are keeping them afloat in the growing season have caps on them that are holding the air inside. In November and December, we take those caps off and we flip the cage upside down and we have a cage sticking tool -- which looks like a really long trident -- and we push the cage down to the bottom. There they sit for the course of the winter. December, January, February and March are mainly -- the oysters that are all just sitting on the bottom. This is something that a Southern farm doesn't have to do because they don't contend with ice, but we do. This bay can sometimes have several inches of ice in it, or ice floes that come in and out that would tear our gear right out of the ground. It's to protect the oysters themselves from freezing in the ice and also to keep our gear in place. It's just

resting on the bottom. Somewhat dormant, they're not really growing. They're filtering a tiny bit, but they're not -- they're just kind of like resting there for the winter. We do at this point now have a different site in a lobster pound where we can harvest year round. It does also freeze over, but we keep them in lobster crates. In November, last November and early December, we moved about forty thousand market-size oysters up to this other site. That was our winter stock so we could harvest from there. But the other millions of oysters, all of the other year classes, our first years and second years, and things that weren't big enough to go to market all went to the bottom of the ocean where they just sat.

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Then in April we did the reverse, which is really -- again is like everything is like one cage at a time, one boat, and you can really only work within a couple hours of low water because if there's too much water there you can't see what you're doing and things don't come up easily enough. You don't have enough line on your gear? So every oyster gets a field trip to the bottom for the winter and then they come back to the surface, and those are the main operations. Then around year three we hand sort them. We go through the largest mesh size bags. We know that we have them pretty well organized, so we know where all of our year classes are. They get dumped out onto a table and we have a team of people who have practice picking out exactly the ones we think are ready for market. Mainly that's measured by length, but also width and depth and the quality of it. If there's a really odd, misshapen one -- we call them 'fuglies' -- it's going to go into a separate pile and then we're going to get a less price for that. Or if it's -- maybe it's long enough, but it's too flat, that one might not make the cut and it will get put back and hopefully wait to go to market until it's filled out a little bit. We hand sort all of them before they're ready, and then when we think they're ready to go we count them out in bags of one hundred. We wash them down with a pressure washer and salt water and dump them into market bags and then they go to the reefer truck and off to market.

TP: How do you get around?

JF: We have three Carolinas. We started with one boat, but now we have three Carolina skiffs that are all between twenty-one and twenty-eight feet. We've got all the cages in three different boats and then we have a twenty-by-twenty pontoon barge that has a grater on it, which is a station or that's not a power unit. We tell it out and just use it as a workspace surface out there.

TP: You mentioned that you had started this in 2014.

JF: Yes.

TP: What had you been doing before that? You mentioned lobstering.

[0:14:03]

JF: Yes, my husband grew up lobstering. That was what his father did and what his family had done for a while. I did not grow up doing that, but in 2017 -- the summer that I was, I'm going to date myself here. The summer I was about to graduate high school, right after I graduated high school, I started working at a lobster boat. I wanted to go on a backpacking trip around the world and I wanted to make some money. I found a job on a boat with the first person who would take me without having any experience, really. I did that for many seasons. I mean, that was in 2000 -- it was like 2002. The fishing was good and the price was high and bait prices and fuel prices were reasonable. You can make a really good -- working lobster boat was really good summer pay. I did that for several years in this season in the summer. This was when I was also going to college. Then I --

TP: Can you tell me a little bit about what that was like?

JF: There are parts of it that I loved. I loved waking up before the sunrise. I loved being on the water. I was the only woman working out of that harbor at that time, which -- I felt like I kind of had to prove myself. I was very aware that I was only female at that time, working out of the harbor, but for the most part people were good to me and I liked seeing what came up. It was stimulating to know that you were getting paid based on what you caught. There were parts where it was like, “Okay, is it going to be a good day or is it going to be a bad day?” You didn't know. The weather was changing, always. I did work for one fisherman who was really in-tune with the natural environment. He would have a sense of like, when he saw his first bumblebee, there would be a certain hole that he wanted to go to because that was a sign for him.

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If the shade trees were blooming, there was another place. It was the fish -- "The [shedders?] are going to be here now," that kind of thing. Which I really appreciated, that connection that he had with nature, really. Knowing that bit, that ecological knowledge that he had of the landscape. There were other other types that were maybe less -- that I was less interested in being around. There were definitely some lewd comments and rough and tumble aspects of it. Showing up in the dark to do a work that was physically demanding as a pretty small woman sometimes made it uncomfortable. But overall I was really glad I did it and the pay was awesome. The pay was great. But then after I graduated school I continued to do it for a bit. I remember thinking, I don't know -- taking up cages before Christmas in December. The days were so short and so cold and there was like only so many times going to stick your hands in the hot water barrel to warm them up. Like, "All right, this might be -- this might be it." And of course all summer you're seeing these gorgeous yachts go by. I was a very beginner sailor, but I had done the sailing team for a season in high school and I was like, "You know what? Maybe you want to get on one of those

boats, they're going somewhere else in the winter and maybe that's what I want to do." So after about six seasons of fishing I started working on yachts -- and actually at COA [College of the Atlantic] I did Ecology and Literature of the Sea class and got on some tall ships and was like, "Okay, this is this cool. I think sailing is maybe where I wanted -- let's get away from lobstering and see about sailing." And so I started working on private yachts as a chef. I had some catering experience, kind of 'fake it till you make it,' but I was versatile. I knew how to tie a few knots. I knew how to be on the water, I had good balance, I didn't get seasick, and I was willing to work hard.

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I started working as a deckhand and a mate and and a cook on private yachts and was doing that for a private family and Seal Harbor for several seasons and working the Caribbean and the Mediterranean circuit in the winters. I did that for about five or six years, but it took me everywhere. I was not -- I was never home in the winter, I was chasing gigs on boats -- which is awesome. I mean, it was great some times. I'd be in the Caribbean or in the Mediterranean, and that's just sailing around and working on boats. But it didn't leave me here. It was very hard to think about ever starting a family that way. It also meant that I saw my husband very little because he was shipping back and forth between Alaska and home, and I was shipping out all over to chase sailing jobs. It was like, "If we're ever going to be together where we're going to start a family, we need to find something near MDI that is going to support us." I didn't want to give up working on the water and the type of job that I was looking for didn't exist here, so we created it. And it's been working mostly.

TP: Do you have another family that works on the Bay, or has worked on the Bay?

JF: I don't have other family that works on the Bay. My brother is a mariner, but he's on tankers now that go back and forth between Valdez and Samara. He's back and forth between California and Long Beach in Valdez, mainly, and Singapore. My great grandfather was another mariner, but no one else that's worked on the Bay. My husband does, his father and grandfather have grown up working the bay. I'll give you his contact info, he'd be a great candidate for the interview.

TP: Can you tell me a little bit about your perception of the Bay?

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JF: Yeah, I. I mean, for me, it feels a lot like home. I am up in -- now what feels like home to me is this part. I mean, I actually grew up in Seal Harbor and so I'm more familiar with -- growing up, I was more familiar with the south end of the Bay and those rocky coastlines. What you picture with Acadia and where the yachts would go for beautiful pictures. Now I'm like really

tucked up into -- it's almost like a millpond, although it hasn't been this week -- way up in the North Western part of it there on the causeway between MDI and the mainland. It feels like my office and it feels like my home and I feel like I know everyone that's up there, and I care a lot about what goes on there. I think that there's a good network of people who are working in the water and who are recreating up there. Yes, I see it as both of those things. It's where I go for pleasure and where I go for work. That's where I go all the time. It's home.

TP: What is it about Frenchman Bay, do you think,that makes it that way? Is it just familiar or is it --

[0:21:15]

JF: There's no place quite like it. I mean, I think -- I go up the Skillings [river] a fair bit to go to our other lease sites there, and there is something that's. So striking. There are very few places -- I think on the planet, and I've seen a bit of it -- where you can have a coastline that has the mountains that we have, that has like the weather patterns that we have. There is something that smells right about it, and part of that, I'm sure, is just my familiarity with it. But when I'm coming out of the Skillings River and zooming back to MDI, there is this -- there is a feeling of going to where I belong, I guess. I think there is -- the landscape is so stunning, and to know that I can make a living here is a part of it -- It's like I can belong here. I can stay here. I think there's been a lot of shift along the bay and the entire coast of Maine that has been this huge gentrification of the coastline, and I'm very afraid of it. I think it's one of the largest threats that we see as a working waterfront. Access to the shore and to working waterfront is one of the largest challenges that I think that we're going to face as wild harvesters and as sea farmers. As people who are working right on the water. I can't compete with someone who wants to buy their third home and who has really deep pockets. I can't compete with that. I think it's something that needs to be protected as a cultural way of life and also as a resource. The ocean is not just a view, it's a resource. We have great waters and the Gulf of Maine is warming faster than any body of water on the planet. We know that, science says that, things are shifting north and we need food systems. We need local food systems, and we need food systems that are sustainable and that can help decrease our carbon footprint. I believe wholeheartedly shellfish farming and doing it here and keeping product as low as possible until that market is saturated and then moving as little as we need to. I mean, sea farms produce some of the best protein with the least amount of impact on the planet. I'm behind it. I'm not doing it to get rich because I sure as hell knows that's not happening. I am my husband still ships out, he's still -- I mean, like I said, he's gone more than half the year, so he's still kind of like funding my oyster project, but someday we're going to make enough money. I said he won't have to do that.

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TP: You've been around places beyond Frenchman Bay. Is there a particular kind of person who works on it?

JF: Yes, I think so. You have to have a fair bit of grit. You have to care about what you're doing. It's not always easy. The weather changes quickly. I think a lot of times we have this romanticized vision of what it is. There's a lot of lugging shit around, day in and day out and moving stuff and sorting stuff. And that's whether you're a lobsterman or a sea farmer. You need a little bit of grit, but I think that everybody who's out there does it because they have a sense of pride in that and they enjoy working and they enjoy feeding people and providing and being outside. There are so many of us who are just like, "I'm just not going to -- I'm not going to go inside. I'm not going to go work at a desk. I'm not going to go be a part of that rat race." There's a certain type of person that's like, this is what we do and this is how I do it. I think in general, people are pretty resistant to change. But also, Mainers are really resilient and I think that's a big part of the working waterfront. I think there is this cultural kind of grit and connection to the outdoors that people on the bay have.

TP: What, what kind of change or what kind of change immediately comes to mind.

JF: When I say people are afraid of change?

TP: Yes.

JF: New Englanders in general, I think, are pretty wary of change. I mean, they don't want anyone telling them what they're going to do or how to do it, and they don't want anyone -- I mean, any new regulation or new way of doing something might be met with a certain amount of resilience.

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But to the same effect, working waterfront -- people who work on the water in the bay are also innovative and can also create their own change, which is something I think aquaculture is really helping to develop in Maine. I mean, we used to harvest dozens of species, wild species. That was part of what we did. Then I slowly went down as things were overfished and things climate change happened to really only harvesting one, which is lobster. We almost harvested monoculture along the coast of Maine now. But I think that one of the best things about sea farming is getting people to shift from using their traditional skills of working on the water to a slightly different model that's going to allow us to take things out of the ocean for food in new ways, but to keep our eye -- to maintain our cultural heritage of working on the water, but just by applying skills in a different way. I think people want to believe it's their own idea. People want to think that they're doing something original. People don't want to be told what to do or how to do it. I think the change people are resilient to is the change that comes from outside, and

Mainers in particular -- there are outsiders and there are insiders and that's just ingrained in the way I think people are. Part of it is because we have such a seasonal economy. Either you're from away or you're from here, either one of us or not. I hope that that kind of loosens a bit as we progress as a culture. But I think that's part of the changes is if people from a way want to tell us what to do, then they're they're wrong.

TP: You mentioned aquaculture is one of the things that is building -- it's getting some momentum.

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It's one of these ingenuitive ways Mainers in particular are adapting to new circumstances. Are there other differences in the ways that people on the water -- how they function, what they're doing?

JF: I'm sure there are. I feel like for the past few years, I've been very immersed in getting my own company off of the ground. I do see more people potentially moving into aquaculture. One in six people who have an aquaculture license now also have commercial fishing licenses. You see a little bit of that. I'm sure there are some different boat sizes, different technologies, different engines, different types of packaging gear, things like that I think are starting to get greener, which I'm hopeful about. Then I think there are things that you've had to shift because prices have gone up for so many things. I think where our product goes -- I know that lobster pounds used to be really prevalent and now we have a lease in a lobster pound that's abandoned because that's kind of a thing of the past. It's not done anymore. That's not how the market works anymore, that's not how the processing of lobster works anymore. Things do shift and change, and we have to pivot with them. Outside of how things have changed for me, I'm not exactly sure what specifically other people in the Bay are doing to make that happen. I guess that's that.

TP: Shift gears just slightly.

JF: Mhm.

TP: I guess a more reflective thing for the left. Like what? What do you value about Frenchman Bay?

JF: I value the cleanliness of it. I value that people care about it. I mean, for me to have -- and the location of it. It's valuable to me in the sense that I can tap into a resource and the resource is good because it is appropriate to biological a home for a species that is really high in nutritional value and can be cost effective and sustainable to grow.

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The conditions of it are great. Our waters are so full of oyster feed. There is so much biomass in our waters. People are like, "Oh," and think the Caribbean waters are so clean and clear because you can see the bottom and the white sand below, but our oceans are rich. That green color is fed for the oysters. I'm not feeding them anything, it's just there. The biomass that's in our waters, the cold of them -- I swim in the ocean year round. There is something really healing about water and salt water. I mean, we're made of it. I appreciate that. Then we have this stark beauty of Acadia National Park, the mountains and everything that's with that. Because of that, we have millions of people who come here, and the location at Frenchman Bay is very optimal for me as a business owner because I can move all of my oysters here. I don't have to put them in Styrofoam boxes. I don't have to airfreight them. I have people who want me to ship them, but I don't need to because I sell it locally. I will sell hundreds of thousands of oysters a year on MDI, and I'm growing them all here. I harvest them and deliver them on the same day and a regular sized pickup truck using three little boats that have outboard motors that are more fuel efficient than your lawnmower. It's just -- it's just possible. It blows my mind sometimes. This should be happening everywhere and it can't necessarily happen everywhere, but the location of it and the amount that it can actually produce is so optimal for what we're doing that I'm really grateful that it's here, that it's the type that it is. We're lucky to be here. It's a privilege.

[0:31:59]

TP: Where does the biomass come from?

JF: Phytoplankton, marine algae. We've got cold, healthy waters, I guess. That's just a healthy system. We're not dumping pollution into the water and it's a clean, healthy system. We're trying to keep that biodiversity alive. Adding shellfish to the water helps that. You see things often start to rebound, eelgrass populations often rebound. We've seen the bay where we are shift a little bit. It was a really muddy bottom, which in a way was good because it wasn't good fishing grounds. It would be really hard to get a lease on good fishing grounds, and you really can't if the other people are already using it for fishing, then you can't start a sea farm there. But it was an area that was historically dragged for mussels. It was either, they moved out of there or they were over dragged or dragged enough that they moved. It was really just this vacant mud. And now we're creating some substrate and we see more eelgrass and we see fish and we see things changing a little bit. We're creating a little bit more of an ecosystem from a species that's native by just adding this shell matter essentially. And sea temps are rising so we do see some wild -- some of our oysters will spawn now because we see those sea temps where it's happening. It is possible that we'll be creating, at some point, beds where oysters can be. You might see wild oysters. There is one cove now -- it's not actually in Frenchman Bay, it's in Blue Hill Bay -- but Clark Cove has some oysters there that are wild. They are probably feral escapees from an oyster farm -- not ours, but one that's over there -- and they have enough tidal flow and the water gets warm enough that they spawn and they affix to hard substrate and they're cleaning up the water.

We've seen a huge decline in the populations of soft shell clams. That used to be a pretty big fishery here on the island and now in the town of Bar Harbor we have one commercial harvester. There are so few clams now, and I think that's awful.

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I think it's mainly because of predation, and some climate change, but also because green crabs can get in there. As we see those types of shifts I think we have to have some awareness of the balance of what species can grow and why species can survive and what is happening when something like that -- something like a green crab can come and devastate it. I'm hoping that we see more of a rebound of that, but if we don't then what can we put here that will live that we can then harvest and eat and use and that will allow us to keep working on the waterfront.

TP: If you could have any future for Frenchman Bay, what would it entail?

JF: I think that it belongs to all of us. I think that just some existence of it being a place for people to continue to do wild harvesting and to do a combination of that with sea farming and recreating -- I think it just needs to be a place that is shared and for people to respect and understand that it's for everybody. To keep it clean and to be good stewards of the resource that we all share.

TP: Okay, well, I've got some charts here.

JF: Okay.

TP: I'm going to pull these now with a little pen and what we're going to do is we're going to run to the list of places that Melanie has been keeping.

JF: Okay.

TP: We can get a bead on where those are.

[0:36:01]

TP: Okay, I have some options.

Speaker 4: The first one is, you said that your first site is -- is that the same as it is now, or do you have a different site?

JF: So our first ones were just a little LPAs, [Limited Purpose Aquaculture site] and they were right here. I still have them -- do you want met to mark it, really?

TP: Yeah. You can draw on it.

JF: Okay. I have some LPAs that are right here. That was where they first started. And LPAs are Limited Purpose Aquaculture sites and they're limited to four hundred square feet. So now I have 22.5 acres that are here.

TP: Do you want a good number by each of them?

JF: They're split.

TP: I need to do one here.

JF: This is a nice chart -- like --

TP: It's alright, I had a bunch of them printed out.

JF: Okay.

TP: One and two.

Speaker 4: And then you said in the winter you have a winter stock --

JF: Yes.

Speaker 4: Is that the same as your --

JF: in the summers we have an -- in the winters, up until this season, we've also had an upwelling system -- which is kind of like a nursery for young oysters. In the summers up until this year -- Well, for a few years anyway -- we would take our boats from Hadley Point up through here and go up to the Skillings River. This, I believe, is the -- that's probably, right there. Yes, I have other lease sites. Again, they're small, but it's enough to put forty thousand oysters on. Well, it's forty thousand market-size oysters or hundreds of thousands of tiny oysters right here. I can write 'L-P' there. This is where we would keep our nursery site in the summer and also where our winter harvest is. In the summer we go up there by boat, in the winter I drive down there and take the truck to harvest.

TP: Okay, that was right here.

[0:38:00]

JF: But we're pretty familiar with -- yes, that right there, this actual pound.

TP: Gotcha, okay.

JF: We are really -- I mean, the only reason we have -- the people who owned this property where that lobster pound are -- they have a seasonal house there and they have a fish market in New Hampshire. The pound was not being used anymore and they also cared about working waterfront and wanted it to be used in a capacity that was going to help somebody do something along those lines and they were generous in letting us use that. It would be so easy for someone to want that beautiful waterfront property for their second or third home who didn't really care if people wanted to grow oysters or harvest oysters near there. That's the kind of stuff that I think you're going to see more and more. We are seeing more and more is that people are buying up a lot of this coastal area that would be way too expensive for us to afford but that allows us access. As you see more and more of these places being purchased access is going [to be] limited. For us that meant that we could save tens of thousands of dollars in oyster seed by buying it smaller and having our upweller up there for years. It also meant that we could sell forty thousand oysters in the winter, which we just wouldn't have been able to. I can't afford that property, but we were lucky enough to be able to use it that way.

TP: Upweller -- you said here?

JF: Yes, it's there. That whole same spot.

TP: Okay, cool.

Speaker 4: That's all I got.

TP: That's all? Okay.

JF: When I was yachting I was working -- I grew up in Seal Harbor. This, when I was little was -- I would fish out of Seal Harbor. That was the pier that I was -- or the harbor that I was fishing out of. That's also where the yachts were kept in the summer. Sailing around these islands and fishing around here. We would go up into here a little bit, but this was more of it.

[0:39:59]

Sometimes we go to a harbor on the boats and even -- I mean I've been those have been all those places.

TP: Seal Harbor?

JF: Seal Harbor is where I grew up and that was where I was fishing from, yes.

TP: Okay.

JF: And also yachting from in the summer after my fishing career.

TP: Where is your home port?

JF: That was home for when I was little. It still kind of feels like home because I grew up there, but Hadley Point is where we keep our boats. That's like two miles from here. About two miles from my house is where the mooring field is. This is where I work. It's convenient for us. And during our somewhat contentious lease application some people be like, "Why does it have to be here?" and and people who maybe don't want to have oyster farms in their view -- there's a fair bit of that with aquaculture. "Why couldn't you just have it somewhere down east?" And it's like, "Well, I live here. I want to sell my product here, and I don't want to drive an hour and a half downeast to have a farm. So there's a little bit of ['nimby?'] stuff. But yes, I get to drive about two miles and this is only a ten minute boat ride, depending on the weather from Hadley Point to my main lease. We do kayak tours. We do three kayak tours a week in the summer and now. We partner with Maine State Sea Kayak and they launch out of Hadley Point. They paddle out to our farm and we show them around the farm. We tell them our story. We tell them everything we know about the grow out, we shuck oysters for them. It's really a great way to connect different types of working waterfronts so that people who are doing eco-tourism and food production pairing together. It's one of my favorite parts of the summer.

TP: Cool is that -- that's just --

JF: Yes, they come out -- they come out, they paddle from there. If it's high water they'll go on this side because it's more scenic and fun and interesting.

[0:41:59]

If not they'll go there -- sometimes they'll do both, they'll go out and do a loop that way. It's about an hour paddle for the average average group to go out and around those islands. But yes, that's a beautiful thing that integrates different, different types of stuff. And it feels great to have actual people who -- I mean, I get asked -- I can't even tell you the number of times in a week in the summer I get asked for tours. People want me to take them out on my boat. I'm like, "My boat is twenty-one feet and I need every inch of it with my crew to actually be moving product," that kind of bit. But because we offer these we do get dozens of people out a week. They're always great people because they want to paddle and they can get out there and they're -- they're going to paddle for a couple of hours to go there and back. Tey actually are really invested and they care about it, which is pretty cool. It helps a lot because for me to actually -- the insurance alone

to take people on my boats, if I were to offer commercial tours would be nuts. I care more about producing food. It's great to have someone else paddle out.

TP: Where do you sell?

JF: I sell all over MDI. Like I said, almost all of it. In the height of the season, we go -- we have a couple of restaurants in Southwest and Manset. Northeast Harbor, Bar Harbor -- all over the island. Pretty much everything stays here. Then a lot of people pick up from our workshop here. We do it directly. People can buy directly from us. They come -- we have an honor system. It's super old school, people come and leave cash and take oysters. It works, it's great.

TP: Is that happening now?

JF: It is happening now, yes, right before you guys here I just got some off the water. You're welcome.

TP: How much did they go for?

JF: Eighteen dollars a dozen.

TP: Is there anywhere in particular that's popping out to you that we should know about or that we should reference on here?

[0:44:02]

JF: I mean, not as -- I guess not really. Again, most of my stuff here. I've been halibut fishing. I feel like you're going to have some other characters who are going to tell you more about other regions of the Bay. For us, this works well because it's not good for lobster fishing. The site is great because it's in the lee of the prevailing southwesterly winds. It's close to our home. I mean, I can't afford real estate over here or here. I had to move out of Seal Harbor for a reason. That works for us. It also -- for housing and employees and stuff, most of them are located here because again, it's really expensive to live on that side of the island.

TP: Everything south of the mountains?

JF: Yes, pretty much. Well, not quite so bad over here, but increasingly so.

TP: I actually just -- yoink. When, when you were lobster fishing, did that take place anywhere regionally or was that out?

JF: I mean, we went out of Seal Harbor and -- yes, we would haul anywhere inside the three mile line. I didn't go with anyone who had a federal permit that went offshore, so it was all really

-- basically if you're fishing at a seal harbor, you get kind of up to here and out towards Baker's and then maybe as far as here. Then you run into the Bar Harbor guys and their territory. That's the main part of where we would have been fishing.

TP: Okay.

JF: Actually not even quite that close to Cranberry, because some of them -- you can get in there a little bit, but then some of the Cranberry Island guys might get pissed off, so you're kind of in there. Tat was most of the grounds that I would be fishing in Seal Harbor. Then somewhere up -- you could go in around this area too.

TP: I'm actually curious now.I don't know how much you know about this, but lobster regions for different people -- different groups. You mentioned Cranberry Islands.

[0:46:06]

JF: I'm not going to draw the lobster region lines, but yes, they are there. If you're fishing out of Seal Harbor with the guys that I was fishing with -- twenty years ago, mind you -- we could go up inside this area and this area. Not actually into Northeast Harbor. Around here. We never set anything beyond -- we'd go into there a little bit. Where is --

TP: are the lines, or lack thereof, kind of a tentative --

JF: It's somewhat lawless, but also -- people get grandfathered into it. If you're used to fishing this far, those are the lines that you've historically had. If someone thinks that you're fishing in their territory they might cut off your gear, they might haul your traps or they might do something else. You stay within a certain area part of it is where you're used to fishing, where you have been allowed to fish over years and then things shift. Then maybe if someone dies off or falls out maybe you get to expand a little bit of territory or if someone comes in they might crunch your space a little bit. You might decide whether you want to throw your weight around a little bit and not let them crunch in on that territory. All of those are pretty fluid, literally and metaphorically. People know about how far they're going to go and what bottom they're culturally allowed to fish.

TP: It's pretty close though, relatively speaking?

JF: Yes.

TP: Did you have -- it sounds like it might not have been you, but folks out of Seal Harbor that would go out?

[0:47:55]

JF: Yes, some people would have their -- in the spring and summer you are close to the shore, and then the lobsters shed and they move offshore. In like the fall you get bigger boats and people who fish further off as they move. You've got some boats that go out to Mount Desert Rock. I was never fishing on a boat that was that big or that hardcore, but people do. Federal permits are expensive. It's an additional cost, it costs more to actually go fish offshore, essentially. You need a bigger boat and you need more fuel and you need more bait, so there's more in it. Often you take a third crew or maybe even four people if you go out that far. It's deeper water, but there is good fishing out there.

TP: Okay, thank you.

JF: Yes, sure. You guys must have some good lobstermen. Or, 'good.' It's a relative term. Have you got some?

TP: Yes and no. They're hard to pin down.

JF: No? They don't -- nobody wants to talk about.

TP: They're -- I think it's a mix of some of them not wanting to talk and some of them -- I get context from different people who know folks, and those people are giving me contacts are like, "Let me check with them first."

JF: Yes.

TP: I think they're also getting busy.

JF: Yes, spring is hard. Yes.

TP: Okay, well, that's all I have. Melanie, did you have any question you wanted to ask? Okay.

JF: All right, you're welcome.

[0:49:35]

————————————END OF INTERVIEW————————————

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