

Report of the Fisheries for Fishers (F4F) Activities

74th Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI)
Virtual due to COVID 19



June 2022



1. Acknowledgements

The organizing committee for the 2021 Fisher Forum included Don DeMaria, Scott Hickman, Cecil Marquez, Ruth Perry, Maria Pena, Bertha Simmons, and Will Heyman. Major funding was provided by Shell Energy and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, NOAA. The Fishers Forum would not have been possible without the assistance and facilitation of Fadilah Ali who coordinated and curated digital material and facilitated the live presentations.

2. Introduction

This is a report on the 2021 Fisheries for Fishers (F4F) activities at the 74th Annual Meeting of the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute, held virtually, November 2021. The abbreviated activities were reduced to a plenary Fishers Forum that included presentation of two GMA award winners. A recording of the session is available on [YouTube](#).

Gladding Memorial Awards were extended to two fishers, from the region – Mimi Stafford from the Florida Keys and Prescott Smith from Andros in The Bahamas. Two awardees were selected since none were offered during 2020 as it was felt that these persons would not receive appropriate recognition at a virtual meeting. As it turned out 2021 was also virtual.

Based on increasing interest and leadership from Don DeMaria and other past GMA winners (Appendix 1), this year's forum was centered around Fishers Experiences – the theme of the plenary session. Don suggested the format whereby presenting fishers created videos and presented them orally.

3. Fisher Features

COVID 19 prevented in-person meetings of the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute in 2020 and 2021. To maintain continuity and interaction among interested fishers and others, the group developed the concept of Fisher Features – highlighting the work of many GMA winners. These were posted on the [GCFI Website](#).

GLADDING MEMORIAL AWARD WINNER HIGHLIGHT

FISHER FEATURE



ABEL RUIZ
HICACO, PANAMA

GLADDING MEMORIAL AWARD WINNER 2015

FISHER FEATURE



ANDERSON KINCH
BARBADOS

GLADDING MEMORIAL AWARD WINNER 2005

FISHER FEATURE



ANDRES MALDONADO
PUERTO RICO

GLADDING MEMORIAL AWARD WINNER 2009

FISHER FEATURE



ANGELICA MENDEZ
GUATEMALA

GLADDING MEMORIAL AWARD WINNER 2010

FISHER FEATURE



CASIMIRO NEWBALL
PROVIDENCIA, COLOMBIA

GLADDING MEMORIAL AWARD WINNER 2012

FISHER FEATURE



CECIL MARQUEZ
GRENADA

GLADDING MEMORIAL AWARD WINNER 2018

FISHER FEATURE



CEYLON CLAYTON
JAMAICA

GLADDING MEMORIAL AWARD WINNER 2006

FISHER FEATURE



DON DE MARIA
FLORIDA, UNITED STATES

GLADDING MEMORIAL AWARD WINNER 2004

FISHER FEATURE



EDDIE TOOMER
FLORIDA, UNITED STATES

GLADDING MEMORIAL AWARD WINNER 2013

GLADDING MEMORIAL AWARD WINNER HIGHLIGHT

FISHER FEATURE



EDWIN FONT
PUERTO RICO

GLADDING MEMORIAL AWARD WINNER 2015

FISHER FEATURE



ELOY CUEVAS
BELIZE

GLADDING MEMORIAL AWARD WINNER 2005

FISHER FEATURE



MITCH LAY
ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

GLADDING MEMORIAL AWARD WINNER 2009

FISHER FEATURE



RUBEN PENOT
CUMANA, VENEZUELA

GLADDING MEMORIAL AWARD WINNER 2009

FISHER FEATURE



SCOTT HICKMAN
GALVESTON, TEXAS, USA

GLADDING MEMORIAL AWARD WINNER 2017

4. Virtual Fishers Forum 2021

Following tradition, the Fishers Forum took place the first day of the GCFI conference, Monday 2 November 2021. Given the virtual format for the 2021, organizers selected an abbreviated session following the agenda provided below.

4.1. Cecil Marquez (GMA 2018): Introduction to the Fishers Forum

Cecil thanked the supreme being and the funders and organizers of the program) including Ruth Perry, Will Heyman, Maria Pena, Michelle Schärer, Don DeMaria, Scott Hickman, and Bertha Simmons), funding agencies, members of the GMA committee, and all attendees of the Forum. He explained that fishers throughout the region were still reeling from the aftershock of COVID-19 and associated disruptions in the local way of life and national economies. Communities and fishers have responded to the challenges in innovative ways. Cecil provided the agenda for the meeting, including recognition of the 2021 GMA winners, Mimi Stafford and Prescott Smith who were nominated by previous GMA winners, Don DeMaria and Scott Hickman, respectively.



4.2. Mimi Stafford (GMA 2021): Lobster Fishing in the Florida Cayes



Mimi Stafford presented a short video about her life's work in marine fisheries and conservation. In summary, she noted that she and her husband were trained in oceanography and marine biology and then moved to the Florida Cayes in the early 1970's because of their love of the sea. Without finding work in their fields, they began a life-long career in commercial diving and trapping for lobster, stone crab, and sponges. Their son was born in the Keys, followed in their footsteps, and continues to fish with them commercially.

During Mimi's time on the water, she noted continued degradation of the fisheries (for lobster and sponges) and the entire marine systems in which she worked. She also observed that the lobster fishery and stone crab fisheries were over-capitalized. While continuing to work in commercial fisheries, Mimi invested heavily in marine conservation and continues to work towards a brighter future. She described some of her efforts in sponge restoration and her role in supporting a cap on the total number of lobster traps in Florida waters.

Mimi ended her presentation stating that she had two grandchildren and that she sees a hopeful future in which our generation would leave the world a better place for future generations. To achieve this, she suggested that there is lots of work to be done and encouraged anyone and everyone to get involved in working towards solutions.



Several of Mimi's contributions to marine conservation were presented in her nomination:

- Current Chairwoman, University of Florida Sea Grant Extension Marine Committee
- Current Member, Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council
- Current member, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council – Lobster AP
- Current Board member, Reef Relief, an NGO dedicated to coral reef conservation.
- Present participant in sponge rehabilitation project.
- Past board positions include Monroe County Port Advisory Board, Lobster Advisory Board for FWC, Restoration Advisory Board with NAS Boca Chica, Last Stand Environmental Organization, Organized Fishermen of Florida, and Florida Keys Commercial Fishermen.
- Volunteered for multiple research and monitoring programs e.g., water quality monitoring, plankton tows for lobster recruitment studies



4.3. Prescott Smith (GMA 2021): Marine Conservation in The Bahamas



Prescott Smith was raised in Andros Island in the Bahamas and is the son of Crazy Charlie Smith, the first fly fishing guide and lodge owner in The Bahamas. Prescott realized early in his life that the global (and Bahamian) economic development model was on a collision course with the maintenance of vulnerable natural resources and local communities – a path in which everyone loses. By contrast, and following in the footsteps of his father, Prescott recognized that catch-and-release fly fishing provided an alternative economic development model that could use resources sustainably and empower local communities.

Prescott became aware that The Bahamas has extensive natural resources including the world’s largest tropical mangrove system, most extensive system of flats, the 3rd largest barrier reef and the largest bonefish population in the world. He has dedicated his life to conservation of these resources and the promotion of sustainable livelihoods for Bahamians.

Based on his nomination form, Prescott has an impressive list of accomplishments including:

- President and founder, The Bahamas Sportfishing and Conservation Association
- President and founder of The Bahamas Fly Fishing Industry Association
- Current board member and a founding member, The Bahamas Natural Resources Foundation, opposing aragonite sand mining
- Successfully advocated for creation of the West Side National Park on Andros Island – which now protects 1.5 million acres of mangrove nursery habitat



- Worked with organizations, businesses, and government officials to get national fly-fishing legislation passed in 2017, which codified a license system, a fisheries conservation fund and science-based recreational fisheries management.
- Successfully advocated for a national fishing guide certification program to train and educate the next generation of Bahamian guides on sustainable fishing practices

4.4. Winsbert Harry (GMA 2019): St. Vincent and the Grenadines



Winsbert Harry, fisherman presented both some of his history with fishing a video entitled, *Improving fisherfolk engagement and enhancing overall capacity to participate in ecosystem stewardship*. Winsbert described some of the challenges and dangers of fishing, including a harrowing story about sinking at sea during a relief-supply trip to neighbouring islands.

Despite COVID-19 restrictions, limited management capacity and a volcanic eruption, the project largely accomplished its stated objectives between November 2020 and April 2021. The project developed an electronic registry of FFO members and completed three training workshops on business and resource management.

4.5. Tylon Joseph (Caribbean Network of Fisher Folk Organizations), Grenada



Tylon Joseph, Grenadian fisher, Gouyave Fisherman Cooperative Society, University Student studying Marine and Wildlife Conservation and Biology. He is also a facilitator and mentor in the Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organizations (CNFO) Leadership Institute. The Institute was started in April 2020 as a result of partnership between University of West Indies, Center for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES) and the FAO Stewardfish Project. Leadership training is being offered to small scale fisherfolk and fisherfolk leaders of members states, to build their leadership capabilities in a familiar and relatable environment.

The Leadership Institute program is divided into Mentoring, Forum, and Library modules, tailored to the needs of fisherfolk. The mentoring program is led by Mitch Lay (GMA winner 2009) and Nadine Nemhard (CNFO secretary). The Forum provides a virtual platform for discussion on WhatsApp. The library provides a digital repository of training materials and other resources.

One of the greatest achievements of the Training Institute is that mentored participants transitioned to facilitators, through mentorship. Additionally, the project spread awareness of the Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF) Guidelines of the Caribbean Community Common Fisheries Policy, and strengthened partnerships between leaders throughout the region, using tools learned in the Leadership Institute. A review of the program highlighted the existing and future need for resources and capacity for leadership in SSF organizations and to spread training to include more participants and more topics. See also <http://cnfo.fish>.

4.6. Gladding Memorial Award (GMA)

The aim of the GMA has been to recognize fishers from around the region who share enduring visions and demonstrate active support for the sustainable use of marine resources in their home countries and beyond. There have been 21 GMA winners from around the region to date based on nominations using a standardized form and review by an independent group of rotating judges using standardized criteria (Appendix 1).

Six GMA nominations were received describing the impressive accomplishments of six different fisherfolk from Haiti, the Virgin Islands, Belize, The Bahamas, and Florida. Nominations were carefully reviewed by a group of 8 judges, using pre-determined criteria and a quantitative ranking system.

After careful deliberations among the excellent candidates, it was decided that two winners should be selected, given that no winner was selected in 2020. The 2021 GMA award was bestowed upon both Mimi Stafford from the Florida Keys (USA) and Prescott Smith from The Bahamas. Both awardees provided presentations, by recorded video and live virtual presentations available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kIFTL2d-yUg> and summarized below in sections 4.2 and 4.3 above.

Appendix 1: GMA Winners 2004 - 2021



#	GMA Winner	Affiliation, Country	Year Won
1	Don DeMaria	Sea Samples, Summerland Key, Florida, USA	2004
2	Eloy Cuevas	Monkey River, Belize , Central America	2005
3	Anderson Kinch	Barbados Fishing Cooperative Society, Oistins, Barbados	2005
4	Harvey Robinson	Fish and Farming Cooperative, Providencia, Columbia	2005
5	Carleton (Jack) Young, Sr.	Placencia Fisherman's Cooperative, Placencia, Belize	2006
6	Ceylon Clayton	Negril Coral Reef Preservation Society, Little Bay, Jamaica	2006
7	Linwood Outerbridge	Bermuda Marine Resources Board, Hamilton, Bermuda	2007
8	Claudio Gonzalez	Jaragua National Park, Jaragua, Dominican Republic	2007
9	Toribio Mata	Los Roques Archipelago National Park, Los Roques, Venezuela	2008
10	Jaime Medina	Federation of Quintana Roo Fishing Cooperatives, Cancun, Mexico	2008
11	Ruben Penot	Mochimo, Venezuela	2009
12	Andres Maldonado	Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico	2009
13	Mitch Lay	Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organizations, Antigua and Barbuda	2009
14	Angelica Maria Mendez Parham	Red de Pescadores Artesanales , Livingston, Guatemala	2010
15	Martha Gomez	Quintana Roo, Mexico	2011
16	Casimiro Newball	Providencia, Columbia	2012
17	Eddie Toomer	Captain Eddie's Fishin', Venice, FL, United States	2013
18	Edwin Font-Acevedo	Rincón, Puerto Rico	2015
19	Abel Ruiz	Corregimiento de Hicaco, Soná, Veraguas. Panamá	2015
20	Scott Hickman	Circle H Charters, Galveston TX USA	2017
21	Cecil Marquez	Gouyave, St. John's, Grenada W.I.	2018
22	Winsbert Harry	St. Vincent and the Grenadines	2019
23	Mimi Stafford	354 Boca Chica Road, Key West, FL 33040 USA	2021
24	Prescott Smith	P.O. Box FC-23302, North Blanket Sound, Andros Island, Bahamas	2021

Appendix 2: Planning Meeting Summary (2019)ⁱ

Planning Meeting Summary Fisheries 4 Fishers Initiative Planning Meeting

5 November 2019, 7:30 – 9:00 PM
Punta Cana, Dominican Republic

Objective Enact Peter Gladding’s vision through a “Fisher Ambassadors Program”, i.e., GMA winners, travelling and promoting marine conservation

Participants GMA winners - Don DeMaria, Angelica Mendez Parham, Scott Hickman, Cecil Marquez, Andres Maldonado, Winsbert Harry; and others - Ruth Perry, Ron Surrey, Eric Castro, Fabio Palacio Howard, Manoj Shlivani, Will Heyman, and Bob Glazer

Recognizing potential

- GMA winners are strong leaders already but not unified, examples include:
 - Angelica represents all (5,000) artisanal fishers on the North Coast of Guatemala
 - Scott represents all charter boat captains in the Gulf of Mexico
- A unified voice can have powerful national and regional conservation impacts
- Groups of GMA ambassadors could travel to several countries to reinforce local winner conservation efforts – i.e. support access to and influence over decision makers

What we can provide to GCFI

- A lightning rod to show the importance and raise the status and value of GCFI
- A network of fishers that managers, students and scientists can reach out too for trustworthy cooperative research partners

Issues to address

- Fisheries decline and Illegal and unreported unregulated (IUU) fishing
- Gear issues e.g. flying fish mesh net size (Grenada)
- Recreational fisheries (Gulf of Mexico)
- Log books and fisheries monitoring
- Citizen science
- Marine Debris

Potential Products

- Ambassador program
- Cooperative research clearing house for students and scientists to identify and partner with pre-vetted fishers
- Simple messages and slogans to share and adopt
- Expanded website with links to existing GMA stories, websites, films, success stories
- New video products including clips of GMA winners addressing Marine debris issues

Strategy

Focus initial GCC efforts first on Marine Debris, a non-controversial issue that is relevant to all countries and regions. This sexy, attention catching focus will create a lightning rod for attention and funding. . .Work on all other issues can follow under the umbrella

Short term action steps

- Re-connect and re-engage all winners (Will, Manoj, Don, Angelica)
- Update GMA winner database (Will)
- All winners to complete Manoj's GMA survey
- Create What's App group for internal communications
- Expand the GCFI website presence to include GMA winners pages with photos, links, videos, articles, etc.

Institutional development steps

- Ruth and Manoj to work with Bob and GCFI board to re-frame the Fisher Engagement Committee renaming it as the Gladding Conservation Committee and gaining official recognition
- Define a process to select GCC governance positions (Chair, Assistant Chair, others?)
- Hold a virtual committee meeting (via webinar) (Bob to organize) to select/appoint chair holders and define next steps
- Evaluate possible linkages and funding support from GCFI Marine Debris Program (Bob) and Ocean Conservancy (Scott)

ⁱ This report is included as the most recent and comprehensive plan, given that 2020 and 2021 were virtual.