

The Nature
Conservancy



Protecting nature. Preserving life.

Focus Group with Conch Fishers in The Bahamas

LEANDER LACY
SOCIAL SCIENTIST

Background of Conch

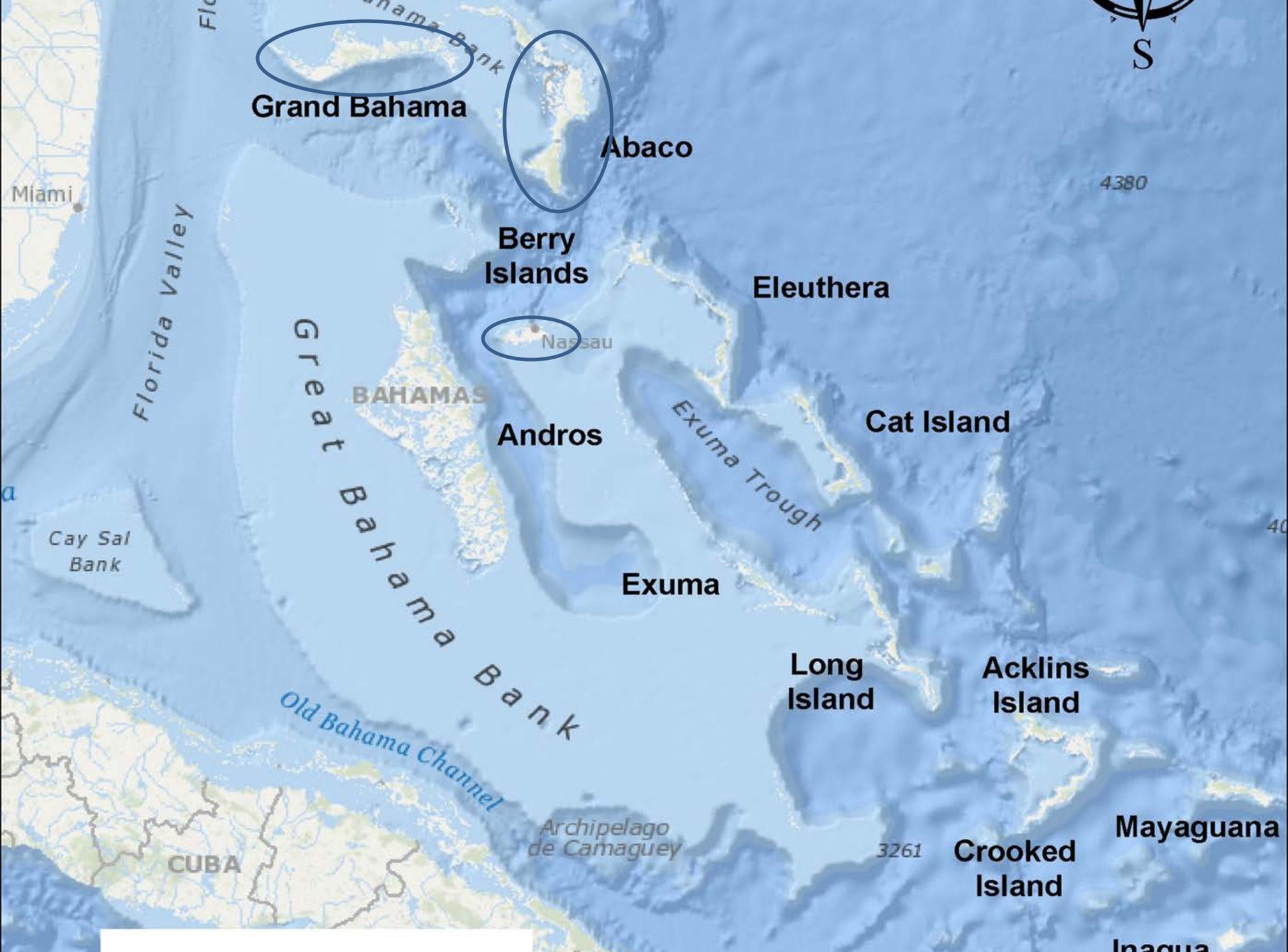
- Crawl to large, shallow sandy areas to spawn
- Bahamas has more conch habitat than any other place in the Caribbean
- 1970s Queen Conch populations crashed in Florida Keys and Bermuda
- Minimal regulations

Insider Information

- Conch is pronounced with a “k” = Konk
- Conch meat is a top source of protein
- The Minister of Agriculture, Marine Resources, and Local Government is from a southern island
- Fishermen have seen years of either inaction or opposing policies by fishery agencies

Insider information or assumptions?

- The topic of Dominicans as a top threat to conch
- Fishermen will be opposed to more regulation
- 3 year educational campaign will be needed



Grand Bahama

Abaco

Berry Islands

Eleuthera

Nassau

BAHAMAS

Andros

Cat Island

Exuma

Long Island

Acklins Island

Mayaguana

Crooked Island

Inagua

Focus Group Topics

- What are the conch issues of concern among fishermen?
- What is the level of importance given to each issue?
- Perception of how these issues can be addressed?
- What are the range of issues among conch fishermen in different communities so we can tailor the questions in the national survey?
- How can we best message the importance of sustaining conch populations?

Focus Group Questions

10 questions in total

- We would like to go into a brainstorming exercise. What are all the potential threats to conch in The Bahamas region that the group can think of?
- Can we prioritize the top 3 threats to conchs in The Bahamas?
- We would like to go into another brainstorming session. What are some possible solutions for addressing these threats that the group can think of?
- Can we prioritize the top 3 solutions?

What I think I do.....



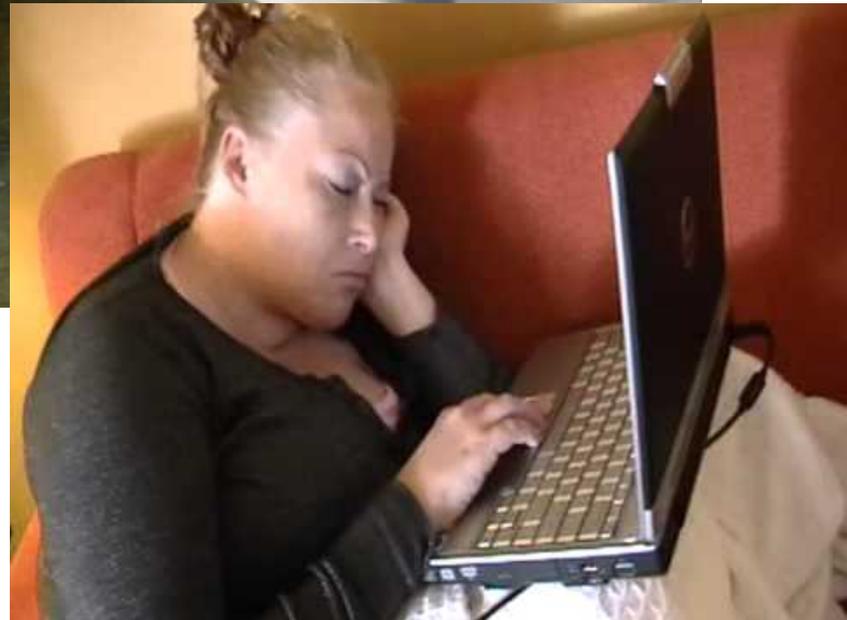
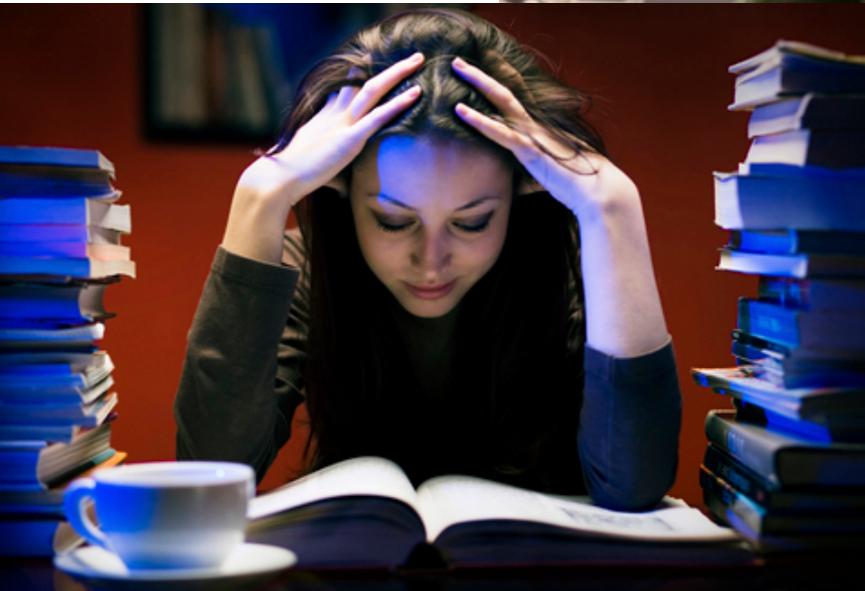
What my colleagues think I do...



What my friends think I do...



What I actually do...



Top Threats & Action

New Providence

1) Poaching

- Send Dominicans home and keep them away from conch

2) Harvesting juveniles

- Protective zones

3) Fishing during mating season

- Bring conch in with the shell

Top Threats & Action

Grand Bahamas

1) Breaking conch out of shells and dumping shells

- Make a law to demand conch be brought into port in the shell

2) Poaching

- Better border protection

3) Harvesting juveniles

- Create a bond (reimbursement strategy) for gas to offset gas prices

Top Threats & Action

Abaco

- 1) Breaking conch out of shells and dumping shells on breeding grounds**
 - Make a market for the shell
- 2) Lack of education about conch mating**
 - Educate fishermen on males versus female, how to identify an adult, life cycle of conch and location of breeding grounds through workshops
- 3) No season for harvesting conch (Poaching tied for 3rd)**
 - Add a season

Repeating Themes to address

- Unsustainable practice of breaking conch out of the shell
- Creation of no-take zones
- Harsher regulations and punishment for taking juveniles

Repeating Themes to address

- Need to address poaching problem
- Season for conch harvesting
- Create a formal, regulated, commercial market for the conch shell
- Dependency on government

Outcomes

- Partners understand importance of socioeconomic studies
- Bahamas National Trust has increased fundraising efforts due to success of the study
- Expansion of focus group project to other islands

Questions?



The Nature
Conservancy 

Protecting nature. Preserving life.