

Long-term Marine Protected Area Socioeconomic Monitoring Program for Commercial and Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessel Fisheries in the State of California

Perspectives on the Health and Well-being of California's Commercial Fishing Communities in Relation to the MPA Network

Members of Eureka's Commercial Fishing Community

The Marine Protected Area (MPA) Human Uses Project Team¹ anticipates hosting over 25 virtual focus group conversations with fishermen throughout California from July 2020 through Spring 2021.² The information shared during these discussions is a core component of a study to gather and communicate information about the health and well-being of commercial and Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessel (CPFV) fishing communities in California, including impacts from MPAs. A key goal of this study is to convey fishermen's perspectives about the unique challenges and opportunities that fishing communities are facing to managers and decision-makers through a series of summaries and other products. The results of this study will be made available to inform discussions about MPA and fisheries management, including California's 10-year MPA network performance review.

For each focus group, a small number of fishermen representing a range of fishing interests were brought together to:

- provide their perspectives on their fishing community's health and well-being, including environmental conditions, markets, infrastructure, and social and political relationships, including impacts from MPAs; and
- share feedback about their focus group experience to help improve the process for future focus groups.

The focus groups included quantitative questions where fishermen were asked to score their port on various topics, and an open-ended qualitative discussion followed each question. This document summarizes both quantitative and qualitative findings from the focus group. More details about the methods used for each focus group discussion, including questions asked to participants and the approach to recruiting focus group participants, is available on the Project Team's website, <https://mpahumanuses.com/>. The website also hosts focus group conversation summaries and an interactive data explorer, which will be components of the final products developed upon completion of this project in 2021. For questions about this project, including focus group engagement and the content of this document, please contact us at hello@mpahumanuses.com.

Port: Eureka

Date: Thursday, October 8, 2020

Participants: Ken Bates, Deenie Davis, Paddy Davis, Vivian Helliwell, Harrison Ibach, Brenden Semmes, Jeff Stackhouse, one anonymous participant

¹ Consisting of Humboldt State University researchers, Ecotrust, and Strategic Earth Consulting

² Previous versions of the summaries from other ports suggest there would be 30 focus groups through February 2021. The project has since evolved based on the needs of the fishing community and is reflected in all summaries moving forward.

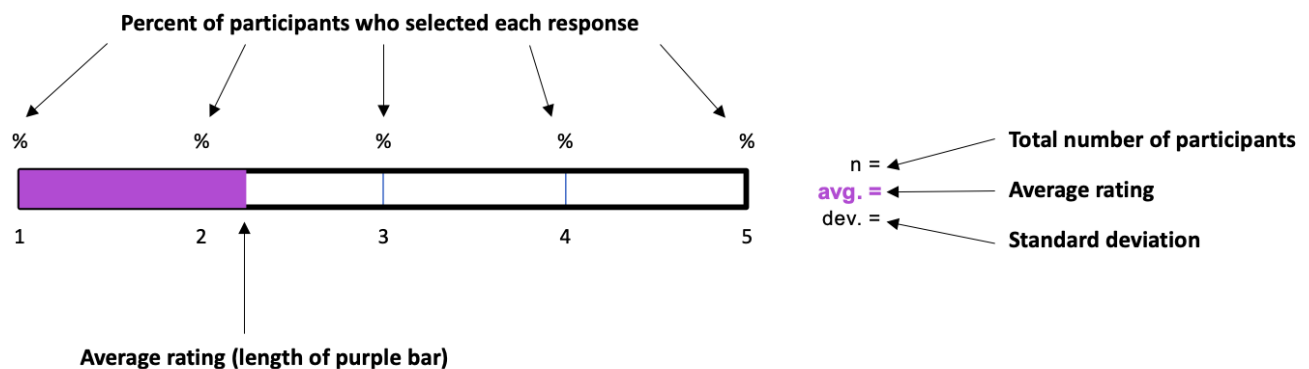
Overview

On October 8, 2020, eight members of Eureka's commercial fishing community participated in the seventh focus group conversation. A detailed summary of the conversation is captured below, including:

- the numerical final scores (gathered via Zoom polls) for questions asked within each theme;
- a summary of participants' perceptions, insights, and perspectives related to each question; and
- direct quotes from participants that help to illustrate sentiments in their own words.

Guidance for Interpreting Figures

There are 17 figures displaying participant responses for questions that had a numerical/quantitative component. In those figures, the percentages located directly above the bar (between 1 (low) and 5 (high)) represent the percent of participants in the focus group who selected that response. The total number of focus group participants is labeled 'n' to the right of each figure. The length of the purple bar indicates the average rating for each question, also labeled 'avg.' to the right, and 'dev.' refers to standard deviation, or the extent to which scores deviated from one another. See below for an example figure. There are also two figures on pages 15 and 23 that display the average responses for each question in the well-being and MPA sections, respectively, from highest to lowest.



In addition to providing feedback to help refine our process and approach for future focus groups, participants requested several resources be shared with them, including:

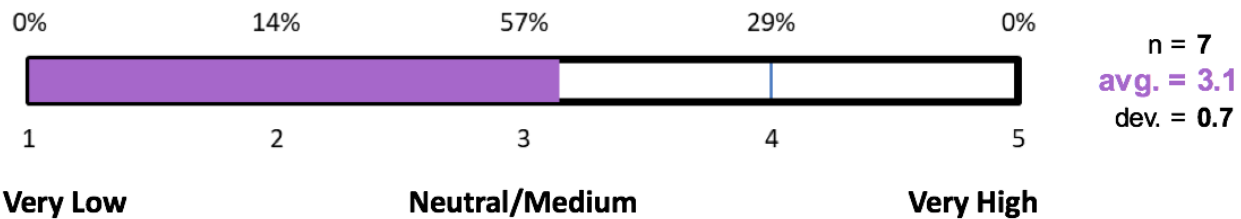
- [California Fisheries Data Explorer](#): This interactive site allows users to visualize commercial landings data (i.e., number of fishermen, pounds of fish landed, and revenue from fish landed) and CPFV logbook data (i.e., number of anglers, vessels, trips, and fish caught from specific fisheries and ports).
- [MPA Baseline Monitoring Program: North Coast](#)
 - [Summary of Findings from Baseline Monitoring of Marine Protected Areas, 2013–2017, North Coast](#)

Our Project Team would like to express our appreciation to the eight members of the Eureka fishing community—Ken Bates, Deenie Davis, Paddy Davis, Vivian Helliwell, Harrison Ibach, Brenden Semmes, Jeff Stackhouse, and one anonymous participant—for their time and contributions to the focus group conversation.

Perceptions of Fishing Community Well-being

Well-Being, Environmental

1. Marine Resource Health - Present Overall, how would you rate the current health and sustainability of the marine resources on which fishermen from this port rely?



Discussion Summary Participants shared it was difficult to rate/score this question accurately when considering the three main fisheries that Eureka fishermen rely on. They expressed the belief that an average score would not appropriately convey the variability in marine resource health, for example participants felt that some fisheries were doing well (e.g., Dungeness crab) and others were doing very poorly (e.g., salmon).

- Several participants expressed concern over the current health and sustainability of the salmon resource due to very poor riparian habitat conditions and water management.
- One participant stated that Dungeness crab resource sustainability in Eureka is overall doing well due to careful management (i.e., commercial fishermen can harvest only certain sized mature males).
- One participant said that the rockfish fishery has recovered since earlier times, which they believe is due to conservative management.
- One participant expressed frustration that California's lack of real-time monitoring of marine resource populations makes it impossible to know the status of marine resources. In comparing California's monitoring efforts with Alaska's, participants believed that Alaska has a more robust monitoring system that provides precise information about where fish resources are located in a given time, and managers convey this information to fishermen in real-time.

Participant Quotes

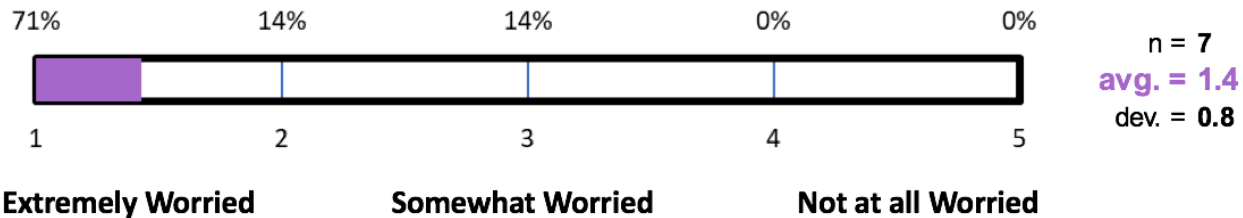
"The salmon are in trouble in their riverine and estuarine habitat, and the whole effort to put a whole lot of money into MPAs just doesn't deal with the salmon problem, and the state has allowed [salmon] to go down. [The state was] supposed to double the salmon populations by 2000; they crashed instead. There's a lack of will for enforcement of water law in the rivers."

"I think we got lucky with the Dungeness crab fishery just in how we've managed it throughout time before, just where, you know, we only harvest certain size male crabs, leave short males, leave females. So overall sustainability, good."

"California ocean fisheries are very conservatively managed and [there has been] much recovery of rockfish over a long time."

"If you look at Alaska, Alaska is real time management. You know, fish show up at a particular area, salmon or whatever, and they've got someone doing the monitoring. They can tell you whether you can fish there or not, those kind of things. And we don't have that here. So our management is miles and miles and miles behind abundance or lack of abundance for a given species."

2. Marine Resource Health - Future Concerns Overall, how worried are fishermen from your port about the future long-term health and sustainability of the marine resource populations on which you rely?



Discussion Summary Participants identified changing ocean conditions as a big concern regarding the future health of Eureka's fishery resources. They discussed the future sustainability of resources within the context of regulation, and emphasized that too much regulation would negatively impact the future of the industry.

- Several participants were hopeful for the future sustainability of most West Coast fisheries, and expressed doubt specifically about the sustainability of salmon, groundfish, and Dungeness crab, which they believe are over regulated.
- Several participants expressed concern about the impacts of ocean acidification, algal blooms, and domoic acid on the future health of marine resources.
- One participant described a concerning issue in Eureka where artisanal/small scale fishing operations are being replaced by larger, corporate operations. They worry corporate fishing operations will cause more environmental degradation than small scale fishing; similar to the pattern seen in farming, where family farming operations have been replaced by corporate farming operations resulting in environmental damage.
- One participant expressed concern over the future trajectory of the Dungeness crab fishery as a whole, but did not share specific concerns about the sustainability of the resource.

Participant Quotes

"Ocean acidification is obviously a major concern. I mean, a lot of it is the future health and sustainability of our other fisheries, besides salmon, groundfish and crab, in general are somewhat promising, I believe, just because of how strict we are with so many restrictions these days. I mean, we have the most sustainable fisheries in the world here on the West Coast and especially in California. And that's just because of how highly regulated they are."

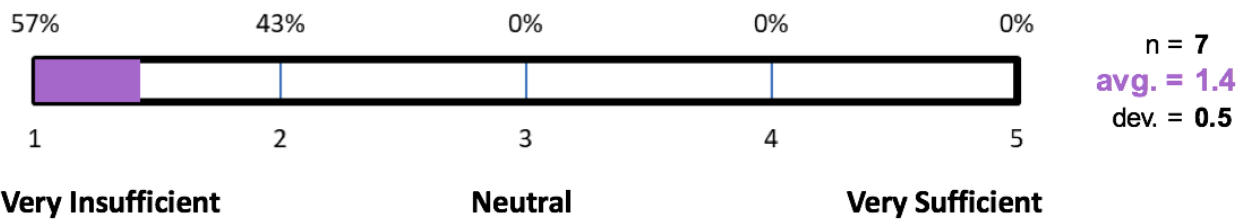
"I talk to people sometimes about ... comparing what's going on in the fisheries with what went on with farming, and farming got so overregulated that it forced out, you know, the vast majority of the family farmers. That wasn't the end of farming, [...] the vast amount of farming in this country now is corporate farming. And all those people who pushed these regulations, because of concerns and things about the environment, once the corporations took over, that

was out the window because [the corporations] have all the power is all these places in the country that just have huge environmental damage from these corporate farms, and nobody can do anything about it.”

“My big thing is crab. And we all know how that's been beaten up the last few years. I'm very concerned about it, where it's going.”

Well-Being, Economic

3. Access to Harvestable Resources Overall, how would you rate your port in terms of the level of access that fishermen have to marine resources to support the local fishing fleet?



Discussion Summary Participants shared that access to fishing grounds is very limited as a result of area closures, limited entry programs, and gear restrictions. Access limitations are compounded by challenging weather on the North Coast, which further restricts fishing opportunities for small boats, and other environmental conditions, such as whale entanglements and domoic acid issues. One participant expressed concerns about future access restrictions.

- One participant stated that half or more of the state waters off Eureka have restricted access for most fisheries due to area closures including MPAs and Rockfish Conservation Areas (RCAs), and other types of area restrictions.
- Several participants expressed frustration about restrictions that have historically impacted small scale fishing operations, while allowing access for larger operations (e.g., trawl fishing). One fisherman described how prohibitively expensive limited entry permits are. They also shared that the squid management plan “wiped out” all the small scale squid fishermen in California, and the herring limited entry program was very restrictive due to minimal permit availability and gear limitations.
- Several participants shared that there is no longer any meaningful access to salmon fishing for Eureka commercial fishermen, due to population declines resulting from habitat degradation (e.g., dams).
- One participant discussed concerns about potential future restrictions (e.g., Assembly Bill (AB) 3030 (2019-2020)) on fishing that would limit access and impact the viability of their fishing businesses.

Participant Quotes

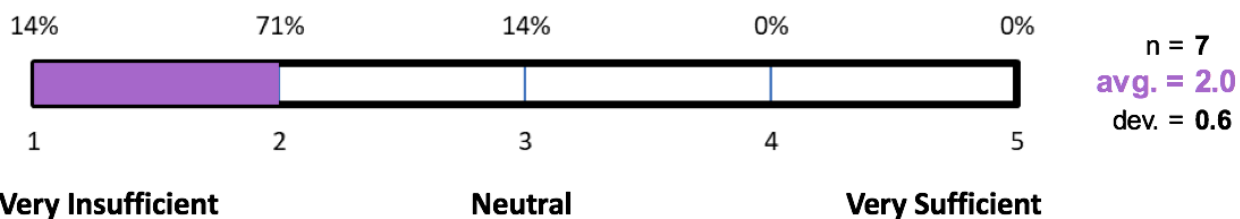
“You can't really have a discussion about access and just talk about MPAs -- they're just a part of a network of so many closures and they come in all different kinds of acronyms.”

"We're down to three fisheries [in Eureka] and it's groundfish, it's crabs and our tiny scrap of salmon. That's it. The other [fisheries] that we could access here, we do not have access to."

"I'm extremely worried for younger fishermen because we have gone to great lengths to restrict access at any kind of artisanal or small level throughout the state. Basically, for the last 30 years or 40 years, we have pushed and pushed and pushed for bigger boats, bigger permits and more industrialized fishing, which takes away from all the little scraps and pieces and all these coastal communities."

"We would not be able to survive with any more restricted access... AB 3030 is a direct threat specifically to, I mean, the entire state, but also up here. If we're to take away more grounds from state waters, you could pretty much stick a fork in it. That's a wrap. If we want good sustainable fisheries to survive, we cannot lose any more access."

4. Income from Fishing Overall, how would you rate the income that fishermen from your port earn from fishing in terms of supporting livelihoods?



Discussion Summary Participants expressed difficulties maintaining the financial viability of their fishing operations due to restricted access to fishing grounds, high costs of running their fishing businesses, and lack of government support programs.

- Several participants described the challenges of keeping up with the costs of running their fishing business and earning a living, citing the high cost of permits and boat operations.
- One participant recalled many fishermen in Eureka's salmon fleet losing equity of their boats in the 1990s, and leaving the fishing industry for other jobs.
- Several participants shared that they have diversified income sources by taking on other jobs to support their fishing businesses / livelihoods. One fisherman said that they tried getting another job to supplement their income, but even that decent wage paying job could not support their fishing business due to high permit costs and boat expenses.
- One participant highlighted the discrepancies between government financial support for agriculture versus commercial fishing. They explained that there are federal and state government incentives (ie., subsidies and loans) for farmers, but none for commercial fishermen. Another fisherman agreed and explained that government support for younger fishermen and new entrants to the fishing industry would be helpful. Additionally, this fisherman recalled the original implementation of the Magnuson-Stevens Act when government support programs were available (i.e, the Capital Construction Fund Program and the Federal Ship Financing Program) which led to the overcapitalization of the trawl fleet, and resulted in reduction of government support.

Participant Quotes

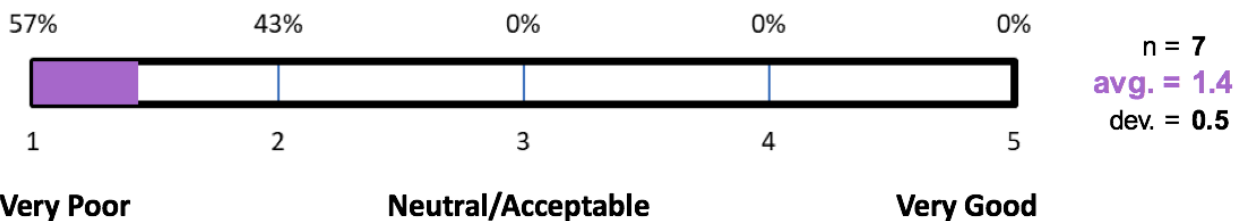
"We're kind of jaded at this point. We've had so much removed from us...all we can be is worried about our future... We need every little piece of [fishing grounds] to cobble together a living as fisherman."

"I'm still a general contractor...I try to fish for a living, but I'm pretty diversified. I [also] charter fish, and that's the bulk of my income, probably three months a year. And then I commercial fishing year round. And that kind of floats the boat the rest of the year there."

"A crab permit in this state cost me a thousand dollars more than my house was to buy...you need to make hundreds of thousands of dollars to make these payments and to keep up just to squeeze a little tiny income out of it."

"I'm well in tune with the agriculture commodities and government incentives and everything else that are thrown at beginning farmers and every other facet of food production in our nation. And yet, if you want to become a commercial fisherman and produce food... to be consumed by Americans in our nation, there are no beginning fisherman loans, there's no government incentives, there's no subsidies to help you get through the regulatory hurdles and the cost at the state or the federal level. Like if you want to be a dairyman or grow carrots or anything else, you can go to an NRCS [Natural Resources Conservation Service office], you can go to FSA [Farm Service Agency office]. There's government handouts everywhere to help you buy tractors, to help you buy equipment, to help you buy land."

5. Markets Overall, how would you rate the quality of the markets to which fishermen from your port are able to sell their catch?



Discussion Summary Participants explained that Eureka's markets have declined in quantity and quality compared to earlier times. Despite the availability of some markets for fishermen to sell their catch, participants said that they believe buyers offer much lower prices than the catch is worth. Eureka fishermen have been turning to alternative markets such as small fish companies or direct marketing their catch themselves, rather than relying on the few traditional fish companies in the Eureka area who they believe undervalue the product.

- One participant described how markets have changed for Eureka fishermen since the mid-1990s when there were a dozen fish buyers who would all compete to buy salmon, but since the decline of Eureka's salmon fishery, these buyers went out of business, and now there is only one primary buyer that pays low prices.
- One participant explained that to work around the dearth of good quality buyers, they became a fish buyer themselves. They took out a line of credit, bought a fish pump, and contracted out processing operations. This and other creative direct marketing techniques enabled this

fisherman to sell their product when no buyers were available, and to get better prices when available buyers were offering low prices.

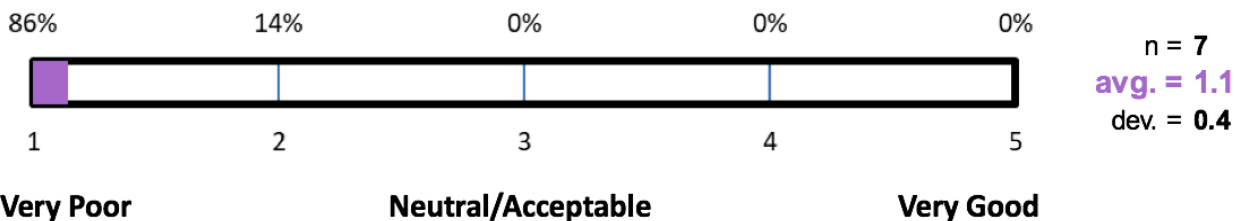
- Several participants described their direct marketing efforts, including off-the-dock sales. While they have experienced some success with direct marketing, they said selling catch this way is very time and labor intensive.
- Several participants discussed the financial hardships that American export tariffs have created for their businesses, specifically for the Dungeness crab fishery. One participant noted a recent federal program for disaster relief for tariff impacts.

Participant Quotes

“I don't think a rockfish should be worth twenty five cents. We can get paid a heck of a lot more than that, but trying to find those markets is hard to do. And the same comes to crab as well...we have a lot of crab that comes into this port ... and the vast majority also has to succumb to what the bigger processors are willing to pay. And generally that is, you know, lower than what we possibly could get. So market availability is, I guess, there, but for a good, reasonable market? No, not really there.”

“We used to have a dozen fish buyers, processors who would compete with each other for our salmon, which was the big deal at the time, and that whole fishery went down and those companies closed. And now we have an oligarchy of mainly one large fish company and a couple of little small trucking buyers...They'll take your fish, but they give you a small price for it. And there's no competition to bring that price up, basically.”

6. Infrastructure Overall, how would you rate the state of infrastructure and services that support commercial fishing in your port?



Discussion Summary Participants described many infrastructure challenges in Eureka, including too few unloading docks, decaying dock infrastructure, a lack of cold storage capacity, limited ice facilities, and inadequate moorings, launching spaces, and docking spaces. One participant described a historical trend of the decline of Eureka’s fishing infrastructure and worried that proposed projects to develop offshore wind energy facilities and lay submarine cables will lead to further loss of fishing grounds in the future, continuing the decline of support for fishing infrastructure.

- One participant highlighted that freezer capacity has been a known food security shortfall throughout Humboldt County for many years, and that securing funding for cold storage facilities for fishermen continues to impede solutions for this county-wide issue.
- Several participants described the connection between the availability of markets and the state of infrastructure, whereby buyers require certain infrastructure that is lacking in Eureka for

buyers to conduct business (e.g., a live fish dock for unloading to live buyers, freezer storage, etc.), which has ultimately impacted Eureka fishermen's bottom line.

- One participant was concerned about loss of fishing grounds from the proposed offshore wind energy project for the Humboldt Coast by the Redwood Coast Energy Authority and other projects involving submarine cables. They worried that the loss of fishing grounds from these projects would result in further loss of fishing revenue, which is necessary to support port infrastructure for fishing.

Participant Quotes

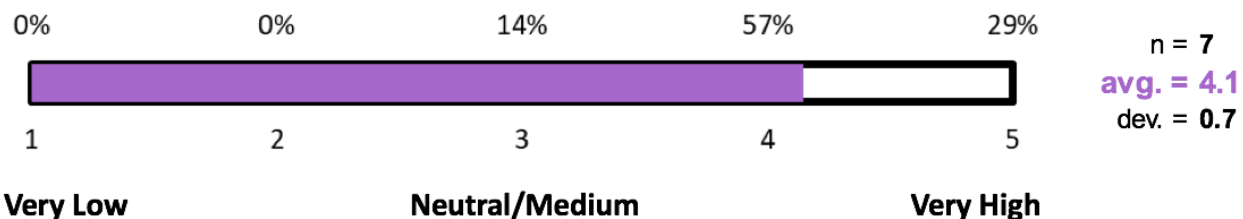
"In terms of infrastructure, freezer capacity is a well known food security shortfall for the entire county that has been identified for many years. But at the county level, securing funds, that has not been easy to build facilities to meet those needs. We have limited ice facilities, just one limited moorings, launchings, parking, at least for the mosquito fleet."

"I try and bring in the smaller, out of town, live buyers, but the problem with that is we don't really have any infrastructure to bring them to. We had a dock that was built in Eureka that was supposed to be on Fisherman's Terminal, a live fish dock for unloading to live buyers and stuff like that, and it's basically been hijacked and taken over by a couple of processors and they charge astronomical prices to the guys that are unloading there... so we've got to go to a dock on the other side of the bay, a redwood dock that we unload through and it's a total disaster. You're lucky to survive the walk out from the gate to the boat."

"Infrastructure has been a problem in Eureka since the Magnuson-Stevens Act went in. We have continued to lose infrastructure. We have lost it through waterfront planning and land use and zoning, a whole bunch of different things. It's complicated. It took the Fishermen's Marketing Association...18 years of going to meetings and meetings and meetings to get Fisherman's Terminal funded and built...[and another] ten years doing the same thing...to figure out how to get cold storage here."

"The infrastructure is problematic because without the infrastructure, you can't have the fishing. And if you don't have the fishing, you can't have the [funding to support] infrastructure."

7. COVID-19 Impacts *How disruptive do you think COVID-19 has been to your port's fishing operations?*



Discussion Summary Participants shared that COVID-19 heavily impacted their fishing operations at several levels, including by closing markets completely, by removing demand when restaurants shut down, and by lowering prices to the point where it was not financially viable to fish. One participant

believed COVID-19 has made it easier for people to stay home and collect unemployment checks rather than work, which has reduced the potential labor force for crew members.

- Several participants described how their buyers closed down operations for a time due to COVID-19, leaving fishermen with no opportunity to sell their catch and thus putting them temporarily out of work. When the markets opened up again, participants said that the prices they were offered were very low, specifically for crab.
- One participant thought that COVID-19 had possibly slightly increased the demand for off the dock sales for them personally in Eureka, and said they heard similar stories of increased dock sales up and down the California coast and on the southern Oregon coast.

Participant Quotes

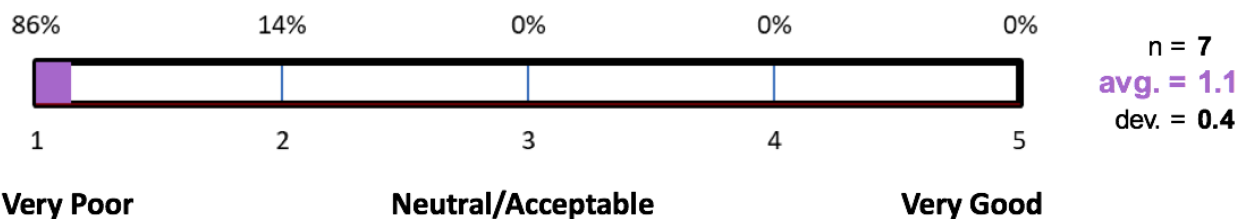
“COVID-19 has really affected me this year. Our markets have been very slow in Los Angeles, as far as the buyers I deal with all the time. The other thing is I was on track to go to Kodiak [Alaska] and fish crab this summer and we had a lot of our gear shipped to Seattle to go on a boat to get to Kodiak. And the price came in so low in Kodiak because of COVID-19, we had to pull the plug. So it's cost me probably three months.”

“[Due to COVID-19] we were looking at a situation where there was going to be no buyers for our seafood products. We were getting ready to go salmon fishing while the crab price was tanking and our buyers wouldn't even commit to buying one load. I finally left town and just said, ‘I'm coming down there to go fishin’ one way or the other. People got to eat. We're going to go to work.’...Fishermen are adaptive, that's what we have to do to survive... we were forced into it, basically.”

“I'm new to the whole off the dock sales thing...other fishermen in this port have many years worth of experience more than I do...I think that maybe the demand has always been there for getting your seafood off the dock and directly from the source [and] maybe COVID-19 has helped push that demand a little bit further and increased that demand maybe slightly.”

Well-Being, Social/Political

8. Labor/New Participants Overall, how would you rate your port in terms of being able to recruit new entrants to the industry and being able to retain current participants?



Discussion Summary Participants discussed challenges recruiting and retaining fishing industry participants, including potential fishing business owners and crew. One participant believed high costs to enter the industry are to blame for the decline in new entrants. Several participants

highlighted that the crew labor force in Eureka has declined so dramatically that finding quality deckhands is extremely difficult.

- One participant explained that the costs of entering the fishing industry have risen so significantly that potential entrants to the fishery can no longer expect to build enough capital for their own fishing businesses by crewing and working their way up the ranks from deckhands to fishing business/boat owners.
- One participant suggested that the labor force has moved from Eureka to Alaska, where there is more money being made. They cited delayed and shortened crab seasons (e.g., due to whale entanglements and domoic acid) as the reason deckhands are financially incentivized to find work elsewhere. One participant reflected that although much of the labor force has disappeared in the Eureka area, there are still some boats that are able to supply a good livelihood for crew because they work very hard around the clock, year round.
- One participant suggested that the crew labor force shortages were a result of the marijuana industry pulling labor away from the docks to process the marijuana harvest.
- One participant described their preference for working alone without crew, mostly due to the liabilities of employing crew, but also because of high expectations for a strong work ethic that they don't believe the current labor force could achieve.

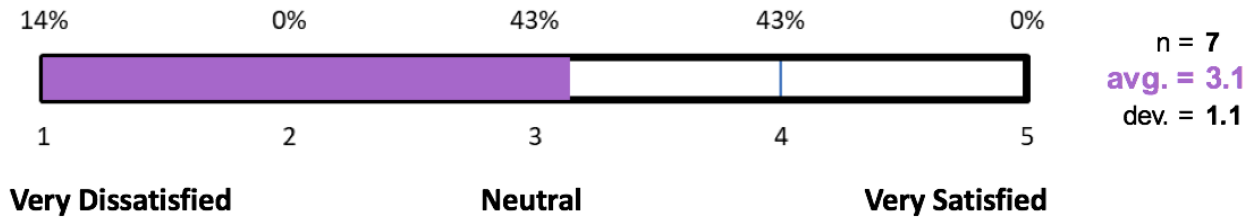
Participant Quotes

"One of the problems with recruitment is the cost to get into the industry is so high that you used to have crew members that looked to a future of moving up. You start as the bait person and then you work up and you run the block on the boat and then you maybe get to run the boat a little bit. And then all of a sudden you've made enough money in a season where you can put down on your own boat and your own permit. But because the costs of getting into the industry have gotten so high, I think that's part of the problem. You don't have good crew that wants to build up to getting their own vessels because the ceiling is just unobtainable."

"There's just no real crew left. They've gone and moved on to Alaska or somewhere where there's more money being made and we're left with the scraps down on this end. I mean, some of the guys make pretty damn good money real quick, but, crab season, we've lost three months off... since the whole whale situation and domoic acid and everything else. We see the difference in what we earn, it's huge...you can't blame that guys move on. So the labor end of it is terrible."

"I mean, obviously, to find work is damn near impossible anymore these days. I believe that historically people were actually coming down to the docks really looking for jobs and whatnot... In our local area, obviously, the weed industry is pretty big. I think that kind of sucked a lot of people away from the fishing industry, they'd rather hang out up in the hills and do whatever they do... trim weed or whatever."

9. Job Satisfaction Overall, how satisfied do you think fishermen from the port are with their jobs in the fishing industry?



Discussion Summary Participants expressed general satisfaction with their jobs due to their love for the ocean and their passion for fishing, despite the demanding work and other negatives.

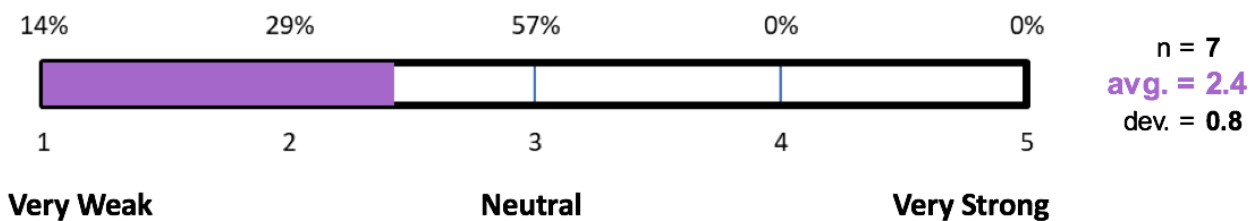
- Several participants acknowledged that working as a commercial fisherman is hard work, and not ideal for everyone.

Participant Quotes

"All of us that are fishing, that have stuck with it, with it. We're doing it because we really like it. It's probably a sickness. I'm at the point now I'm as enthusiastic about fishing right now as I was when I was a kid. And so, you know, fishermen that have enthusiasm for what they do...Everybody on this call will put up with stuff that no other businessman would put up in order to do what they're doing."

"As far as job satisfaction, you really have [to] love fishing. Some people do. Working out on the ocean is a fabulous experience, if you like physical work. It is a lot of work. Just standing up on a boat, anchoring up a little coves, it's worth a hard day of fishing."

10. Social Relationships - Internal Overall, how would you rate the strength of social relationships (or social capital) within your port?



Discussion Summary Participants' opinions on social relationships within their port were diverse. Some participants believed relationships to be very weak citing the dramatic decline at port association meetings over the last 40 years. Others expressed appreciation for their fellow fishermen and the Eureka commercial fishing community and used words like 'respect,' 'camaraderie,' and 'friends' when describing their port's internal social relationships. One fisherman shared they felt they were too new to the port to answer this question adequately, and so scored this question as 'Neutral.'

- Several participants reflected positively about fellow fishermen and their shared sense of commitment to the future of Eureka's fishing industry and community. They described the trust between Eureka fishermen who watch out for each other's safety and the shared responsibility for keeping the ocean clean of derelict fishing gear.

- Several participants acknowledged that the social landscape has changed since decades past, when many fishermen would meet in-person in the same place consistently. One fisherman attributed the shifting social situation to new technology that younger fishermen use for social connection, such as smartphones.
- One fisherman expressed disappointment about declining engagement in the Fishermen's Marketing Association compared to decades past, when the port of Eureka was home to a much larger fishing fleet.

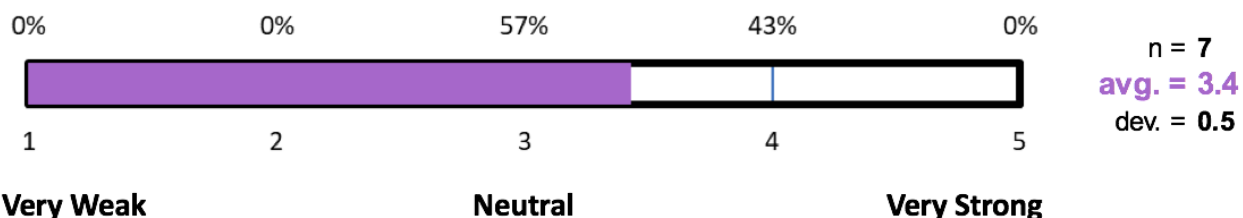
Participant Quotes

"I truly think that we do have a good group of guys up here. And I think it was last year or this past year... we got a decent amount of crab guys from other areas that came up. And they had been coming to our crab meetings and they had said that they didn't quite understand how all of us kind of sat in a room together, actually all getting along. They're like, 'Wow, you guys don't argue, fight, go outside, this and that?' We have a good group of guys that all really work together well."

"When I was a young person sitting in the back of the meetings at Humboldt Fishermen's Marketing Association in '74, '75, '76, there was 40 or 50 guys in the room. You know, there were places where fishermen met every morning when the weather was bad. If you were looking for a particular guy...you drove down to the fish company in the morning, those guys were all there. [There was] a card room... Now there's no place that I know where fishermen of all different ages routinely meet...I don't see that connection anymore that I had when I was younger with the older fishermen that were here."

"I talk to you guys all the time, [name redacted] is one of my best friends. Brewpubs are a place where we hang out. But I think that we all have respect for each other because we all know that we're part of this industry and that we care a lot about it and we want to see a future in it. And then I think that we all do pretty well working together in our fisheries, like as far as keeping an eye out for each other, taking care of cleaning up the ocean from crab gear, working together in those fisheries sort of aspects."

11. Social Relationships - External Overall, how would you rate the strength of the port's relationship with external groups who could help support community needs?



Discussion Summary Participants expressed a broad spectrum of views on the strength of relationships between Eureka's commercial fishing fleet and external groups, and shared that it was difficult to rate/score this question accurately when asked to consider this wide range of external groups, from government to NGOs to the local community.

- One participant thought Eureka fishermen's relationships with government groups are often problematic. They cited challenges with enforcement and ambiguities in regulations that vary from the original intent of regulations.
- One participant described how the fishing community's relationship with NGOs ranges from catastrophic to positive, depending on the organization.
- Several participants gave specific examples of Eureka fishermen's engagement in policy processes, including the Dungeness Crab Task Force, Pacific Fishery Management Council committees, California Advisory Committee on Salmon and Steelhead, Pacific Coast Federation of Fishing Associations, and Humboldt Fishermen's Marketing Association.
- One participant believed that fishermen become more engaged in policy processes once their businesses are more established and stable, and once their young families grow and they have more time to commit to engaging.
- One participant described their intense efforts to support engagement between the Fishermen's Marketing Association and various local jurisdictions, including the County of Humboldt and the Eureka City Council, to promote dialogue between the fishing community and offshore developers. They expressed deep disappointment that these efforts ultimately failed due to lack of interest and/or political will by the respective jurisdictions.

Participant Quotes

"I think we work with policymakers because ... it's kind of been put upon us that we are to work with policymakers..There are some younger guys that are potentially getting a bit more engaged into the process, whether it's the Council process or whatnot. I mean, this [focus group] right here...is kind of one of those...It's fishermen knowing that this conversation is directly going to go into policymaking, or be reviewed by policymakers, I should say. So I think in this day and age, you kind of have to work with policymakers and communicate with them."

"[Regarding] community support, many folks aren't aware of what our problems are. We look really nice in the harbor for tourists, we're iconic on wine bottles, but as far as the needs of the fisheries, we really have to go to the Harbor, to the Board of Supes and so on and state our case. And sometimes we have lacked the time and energy to engage in that way. But when we do and people do become aware, then they're supportive."

Well-Being, Overall/Additional Comments

12. Overall/Open-ended *Is there anything not captured above that you would like managers and other readers to know about your fishing community/industry?*

- *What do you think federal and state managers could do to better support California's fishing communities?*
- *What do you think members of your fishing industry could do to support the well-being or sustainability of your fishing community?*

Discussion Summary Participants discussed their desire for CDFW and FGC leadership to be more proactive managers. Several participants expressed that more support is needed to recover salmon populations in Northern California.

- Several participants expressed frustration that CDFW and FGC leadership is so risk averse that they will not act to fix issues within fisheries, where the benefits to California fishing ports would far outweigh the costs of action.
- Several participants re-emphasized that more attention and resources are needed to support salmon population recovery. One of these participants suggested that brood stock hatcheries with high production, accompanied by trucking fish to estuaries and bays, would be a good starting place.

Participant Quotes

“The Department of Fish and Wildlife is very passive in management and seems to only make changes in response to lawsuits instead of being proactive managers.”

“We're needing more support for salmon population recovery and less for closing down fisheries.”

Perceptions of Fishing Community Well-being, Average Responses for Questions 1-6, 8-11

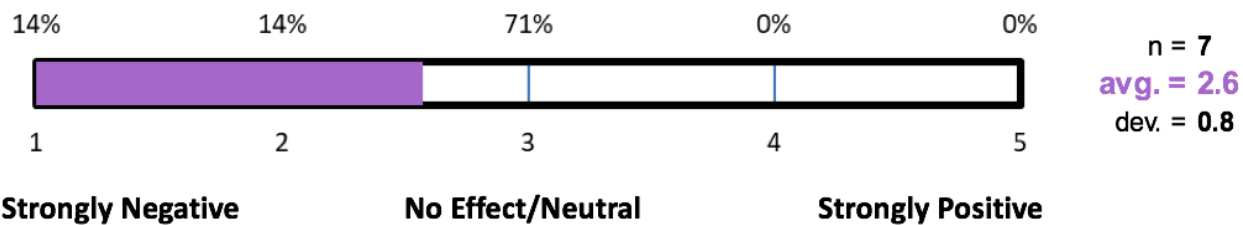
(Note: The following figure does not include the average rating for question 7. *COVID-19 Impacts*.)



Perceptions of MPAs

MPAs, Outcomes/Effects

13. MPA Ecological Outcomes Overall, how would you rate the effect that the California MPA network has had on marine resource health in your area?



Discussion Summary Participants shared that they haven't seen monitoring data from the MPAs, so they don't know how marine resource health has been impacted by MPAs.

- Several participants believed the MPAs have not had a noticeable effect on marine resource health and/or there is no baseline against which to measure the impacts of the MPAs. It is difficult to tease out MPA effects from other variables.
- Several participants described how MPAs have increased fishing pressure in areas that have not historically experienced intense fishing pressure, which they believed might be a negative effect from MPAs.
- Another fisherman highlighted the negative effects MPAs had on kelp following the sea star wasting disease since fishermen could not help weed out purple sea urchins to save the kelp forests.
- One participant thought MPAs do not provide a safe haven for fish due to their seasonal migrations outside of MPA boundaries.

Participant Quotes

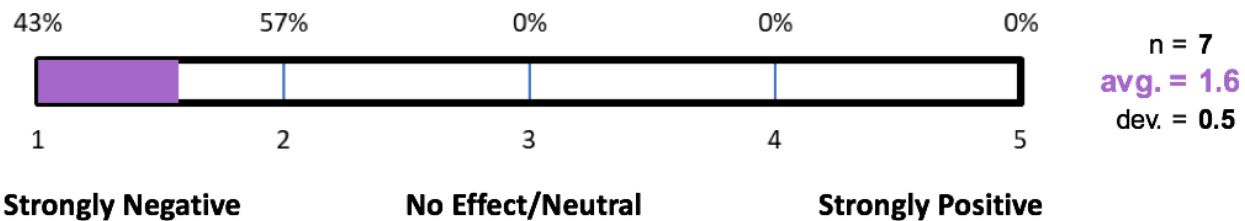
"You don't know if these [MPAs] have or haven't had a positive impact on the marine resources because...we haven't really been able to go in there and look at what's happened...Just a suggestion that if you want to get an idea of what's happening in these areas, to hire fishermen to do that, commercial fishermen specifically... Everything in our lives has to do with being on the water. And so we have a pretty good understanding of how the health of these ecosystems work. We see it on a day to day."

"There's no baseline to compare with to show effects. The 10 year review will be a baseline, but after major ocean changes, [and] we can't fish rockfish anymore. So no sampling is taking place in state waters and salmon swims through. There's no way to measure the effects, there are too many confounding variables. Since there was no original baseline to justify the MPAs and some of our best areas were closed, MPAs cannot claim to have recovered the rockfish fishery; that recovery was well underway."

"A negative effect is that remediation is impossible within MPAs where the purple urchin proliferation that ate all the kelp after the top predator starfish died off from wasting disease."

Loss of the kelp is a significant loss of nurseries for many species. The urchin divers can't go in the MPAs to fix that now, to harvest those invasive urchins. This was a classic trophic cascade of loss of the top predator. And it's a huge problem for many species. The MPAs don't help."

14a. MPA Livelihood Outcomes Overall, how would you rate the effect that the MPA network has had on the ability for fishermen from your port to earn a living/gain income from fishing?



Discussion Summary Please see the **Discussion Summary** following question 14b. *MPA Effects - Overall* which summarizes the conversations related to questions 14a and 14b.

14b. MPA Effects - Overall What other types of effects or impacts have fishermen from your port experienced from MPA implementation?

Discussion Summary Participants shared that the MPA network has greatly impacted their ability to earn a living from fishing for multiple reasons, as described below. They discussed compounding impacts of the many layers of closures and restrictions, in addition to MPAs, that add to the challenges of gaining income from fishing. Several participants said MPAs create compaction issues and increase fishing pressure on smaller fishing grounds, which creates negative impacts on marine resources.

- One participant explained that MPAs cause fishermen to travel further to fishing grounds, which negatively affects safety and operating costs. They said they don't see benefits from the MPAs to make up for these added impacts.
- Several participants discussed the various restrictions they must heed on top of MPA closures (i.e., depth restrictions, target species, gear type, season delays and early closures, etc.), and described the direct negative impacts these cumulative restrictions have on their ability to harvest catch and gain income.
- One participant believed older fishermen have given up on nearshore rockfish fishing, and the MPAs solidified the decline of older generations participating in this fishery. They said the majority of fishermen targeting rockfish are the younger generation.
- One participant supported an alternative approach to sustainable fisheries management as outlined in Ray Hilborn's book, *Ocean Recovery*. According to this participant, the author suggests that instead of trying to closely protect 20% of fishing grounds (e.g., with MPAs), a better approach might be to thoroughly monitor and regulate fishing on 100% of fishing grounds.

Participant Quotes

"You can't talk about MPA impacts without talking about all closure impacts, because as a fisherman, that's what we're dealing with. We don't wake up...go fishing and just go 'MPAs are

the only thing that we have to worry about today.' We go out there and we go, 'We can't go here. We can't go here. We can't go here. We can't go here.' And so we're forced into smaller and smaller areas. [The MPAs] have strongly, negatively impacted us [and our] ability to catch fish and bring fish back to port to sell."

"I think the vast majority of the older fishermen truly believe that there is no more rockfish fishery and MPAs kind of solidified that. I mean, as the rockfish stocks were declining and the rockfish opportunities were going away, also came about the MPAs, which took away way more grounds where the rockfish lived. And that was kind of the nail in the coffin for most people. And if you notice, the vast majority of people that are participating in the limited rockfish fisheries that still exist to this day are the younger generation. And that's because the vast majority of the older generation have given up on the groundfish stuff, or at least the nearshore groundfish fisheries."

MPAs, Discussion of Specific MPAs

15. MPA Effects - MPA Specific Which MPAs have had the most impact (positive or negative) on fishermen from your port and why?

Discussion Summary Participants identified MPAs near Humboldt Bay and throughout California that have affected commercial fishermen from Eureka. Several participants said that all MPAs have negatively impacted their livelihoods, particularly State Marine Reserves where all fishing is prohibited. One participant said North Coast MPAs have made half their fishable area inaccessible to nearshore groundfish harvest. Several participants highlighted that compounding impacts from other restrictions (ie., Rockfish Conservation Areas (RCAs), submarine cables, etc.) in addition to MPAs, which creates challenges for fishermen. One participant was frustrated that MPAs do not address industrial impacts such as oil spills, mining, sonar arrays, and U.S. Navy sonar testing.

- **Reading Rock State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA) and State Marine Reserve (SMR):**
 - The proximity of these MPAs to adjacent RCAs results in more unavailable fishing ground than what is shown by MPA maps alone.
 - One participant said they had been fishing this area for their entire commercial fishing career, spanning approximately two decades, before it was made into an MPA.
 - One participant said they've lost substantial income due to this MPA.
- **South Cape Mendocino SMR, Mattole Canyon SMR, Sea Lion Rock SMR, Big Flat SMCA:**
 - Various participants said they were negatively impacted by the MPAs around Mattole Canyon.
 - One participant said if they could fish in these closures, their work day would be shorter and they would have access to more available fish.
 - One participant said their best fishing spots are now inaccessible due to these MPAs and another said they've lost substantial income due to these MPAs.
- **Ten Mile SMR:**
 - One participant said they successfully fished salmon here before this MPA was created.
- **Point St. George Offshore Reef SMCA:**

- One participant said this MPA doesn't impact them personally, since it is outside the thirty fathom boundary they are already restricted by.
- *Samoa SMCA:*
 - One participant identified this as the only MPA that doesn't negatively impact them because it encompasses only sandy bottom and fishermen are allowed to harvest crab.
- *(Various MPAs near Bodega Bay):*
 - One participant said they used to fish for salmon around Bodega Bay, and can no longer do so, which adds to many negative impacts fishermen experience from MPAs.
- *(Various MPAs in Southern California):*
 - One participant expressed frustration that MPAs do not address water quality issues, and specifically mentioned concerns about Los Angeles sewage being dumped into Santa Monica Bay.

Participant Quotes

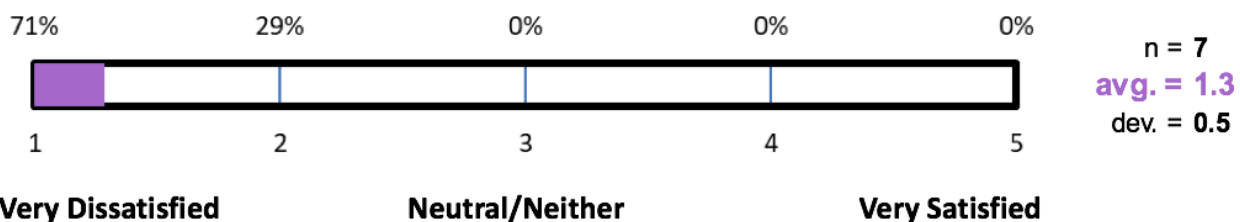
"Cumulative effects of MPAs plus other closures are difficult to work around and emotionally discouraging as well. A shorter day would mean more time with family and children."

"I measure the MPAs...like Reading Rock, Sea Lion Gulch, Ten Mile, and the other ones...on how much money they've taken out of my pocket since they've been implemented based on the previous years earnings in those areas. And it's a lot. [...] Sea Lion Gulch [SMR], we made a lot of money there in the springtime."

"A lot of gear goes to the Reading Rock area from Crescent City, Trinidad, Eureka, and to go up there since that MPA was put there, the concentration of gear on that three mile line is absolutely sickening. They talk about gear concentrations. You got guys that are fishing tight on that line and everybody's fighting for that inside line. You got thousands and thousands of pots, and I'm not exaggerating, all piled into one area because everybody knows there's a little bit more crab inside there and they're trying to draw it out. And I don't see any benefit yet at all, personally."

MPAs, Management

16. MPA Management Overall, how satisfied do you think fishermen from your port are with the management of the MPA network?



Discussion Summary Participants resoundingly agreed that original and ongoing MPA network management goals and efforts have not been clearly communicated to fishermen.

- One participant highlighted that fishermen desire measurable goals against which they can measure the potential success of the MPAs in achieving those goals.
- One participant was frustrated that baseline data was not collected before MPA implementation, which might have demonstrated the need for MPAs. They believed that closing fishing grounds without first collecting data that demonstrated the need for closures undermined the process.
- Several participants said they weren't aware of ongoing MPA monitoring efforts, and that without robust information about the status of marine resources in the MPAs, it is impossible for managers to know how to manage them.

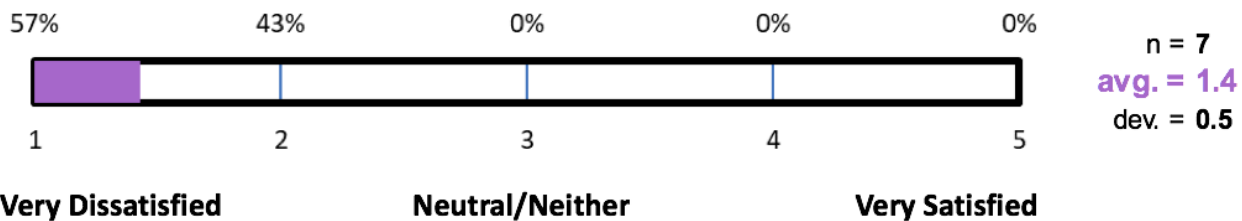
Participant Quotes

"I just think there's a lot of confusion about what the MPA's goal was, like, what they are trying to achieve. And they haven't put it in a measurable form for us, so fishermen have a hard time with that. Like, if you can say, hey, well, we're intending to increase rockfish stocks by this much or we're expecting the kelp to regrow this much or, you know, we're expecting to save the bottom by not letting people drag in there. Something that we can measure would be good for us to understand the goal of an MPA process. And I just haven't seen that to this point."

"I have never seen any scrap of evidence that there's been any management. I never see anybody on the water in these areas...There's no tangible evidence that there's actually anybody out there looking at these various sites. If you don't look at what you have, it's pretty hard to decide how to manage it."

"Is the goal to keep fishermen out? Because that's kind of what it feels like, as opposed to really looking at the stocks and trying to accomplish something with the stocks. Or is it just about keeping the fishermen out?"

17. MPA Monitoring Overall, how satisfied do you think fishermen from your port are with the monitoring of the MPA network?



Discussion Summary Participants expressed dissatisfaction with the monitoring of the MPA network since they haven't seen monitoring efforts occurring in local MPAs, nor outputs from monitoring studies.

- Participants stated that if monitoring was occurring, fishermen would have observed this activity due to their frequent presence on the water.
- One participant knew about hook and line sampling efforts by charter boats and said they were aware of tagging efforts because they caught tagged fish outside of MPAs. They recalled seeing one large vessel monitoring a local MPA many years ago.

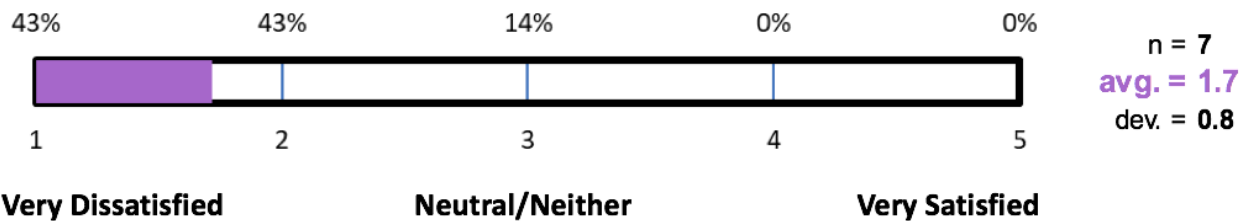
- One participant said that if monitoring efforts have occurred, this information has not been communicated effectively to fishermen.

Participant Quotes

"I've only seen one larger vessel monitoring the Reading Rock once, many years ago, but we don't really know what the management is or if there is really monitoring. I mean, we're on the water quite a bit. And if there is indeed some monitoring and management, we have not seen that information. It's not really made accessible for us to look into."

"Monitoring requires presence."

18. MPA Enforcement Overall, how satisfied do you think fishermen from your port are with the enforcement of MPAs?



Discussion Summary Participants expressed frustration about inconsistencies and lack of clarity in the enforcement of MPA regulations.

- Participants described their ongoing efforts to seek clarification about MPA regulations, and said their inquiries are often met with insufficient explanations and a lack of resources to support fishermen whose goal is to operate their businesses in compliance with the law. They recounted instances where CDFW Wardens provided vague explanations and sometimes inaccurate responses to questions about MPA boundaries.
- Several participants were frustrated about the layers of regulations and unclear boundaries, and stated their desire for better assistance from the state to clarify and explain MPA regulations and their relationship to other state and federal closures.
- Participants described their experiences with inconsistent enforcement and described Wardens as appearing arrogant and disrespectful. One fisherman recalled seeing fixed gear in MPAs throughout California, including one instance where they observed fixed gear clearly within an MPA boundary; a CDFW Warden boat was anchored up nearby for the night, then left in the morning without addressing the illegal gear.
- Several participants discussed the burden of being accused of a violation when, in many instances, they did not feel it was warranted. They described needing to balance the cost of accepting the citation and paying the fee (even if they felt they were innocent) versus the time and resource costs of fighting a citation. One participant recalled anecdotes of fishermen who were cited for violations that were ultimately thrown out of court, but who were still unable to participate in policy discussions and committees due to the violations.

Participant Quotes

“What we find as fishermen constantly is that we know the rules better than the people that are supposed to be hired to enforce them. We call asking for help and education on these regulations and rules, especially the little nuances or gray areas [...] and it constantly falls on deaf ears. Nobody has the answer for you, or they give you a vague explanation, and then it's your ticket and your livelihood on the line if something goes wrong. But if you can't tell somebody what the rules are accurately or you don't understand them, then it's not fair to think that you can enforce them.”

“You know, you just hear the horror stories about how some guy got a ticket. It seems like if we don't have a management goals for this and we're not monitoring it at the level that it probably needs to be scientifically significant, all we're using it for is a fundraiser for the state to write people tickets.”

“[If you get a ticket, and] you go to court, and you win, it's still going to cost you seven, ten thousand dollars for an attorney for something that you're completely right about.”

“I know fishermen who have been accused of violations that were thrown out of court and then they could no longer serve on any committees. So they were no longer allowed to engage in policy engagement because they had been accused falsely.”

19. MPA Overall *Any additional comments or concerns about the MPAs and MPA management you would like to communicate?*

Discussion Summary Participants communicated several topics that they would like managers to know regarding MPAs and MPA management.

- One participant said the MPA implementation process took a negative toll on their community.
- One participant highlighted the value of hiring local commercial fishermen for MPA monitoring efforts.
- One participant anticipated increased landings of nearshore fish stocks and expressed concern that managers will attribute this increase to MPAs increasing nearshore stock abundance rather than other causes. This participant believed the real reason for future increased landings will be due to nearshore permits becoming transferable after two decades of non-transferability and limited use.

Participant Quotes

“We had the whole [MPA process] thing shoved down our throats. It was pretty horrible. Some of the people who were really happy to apply this process of, you know, choosing where to put the closed areas, they were well paid and proceeded to well-paying jobs in the administration. [...] The dissenting scientific opinion on the Blue Ribbon Task Force was that the requirements for amounts of different habitat to conserve were pulled out of their ear.”

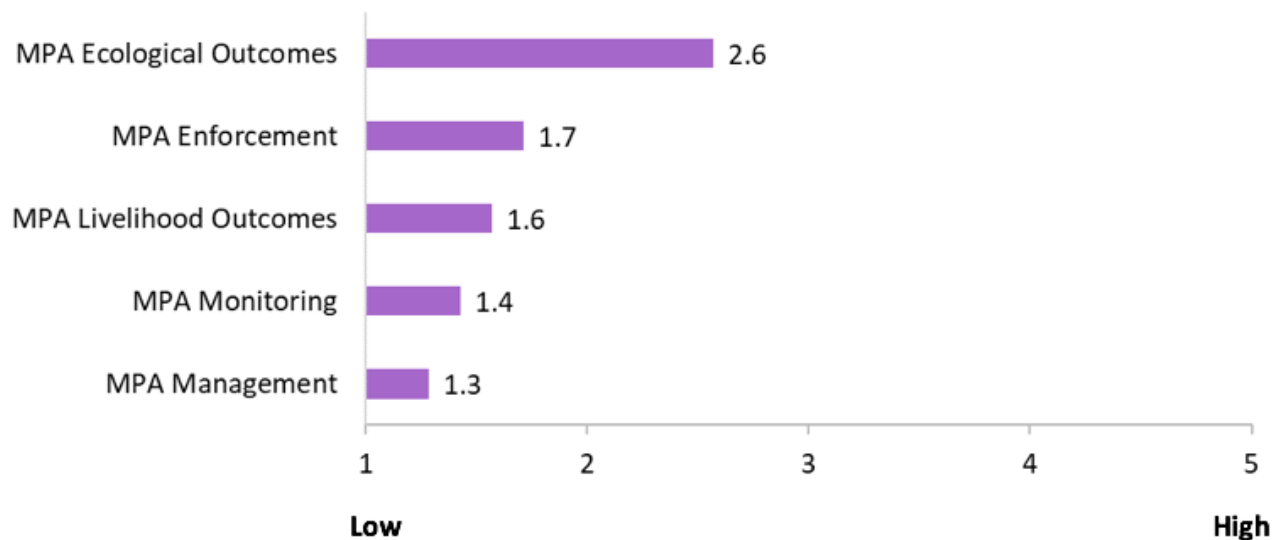
“The MPA process was the least transparent, most divisive issue to come to our community. Proponents crow about the unified proposal, but NGOs had paid staff while fishermen went on

their own time to try to preserve as much as we could save under duress. The process used up significant political capital of fishermen.”

“If we say that, you know, things are not doing well in the ocean, I'm concerned that people will say, ‘Oh, we need more MPAs.’ Right, to protect rockfish, which we don't get to fish anyway without quota and so on, and won't deal with the salmon problem of habitat.”

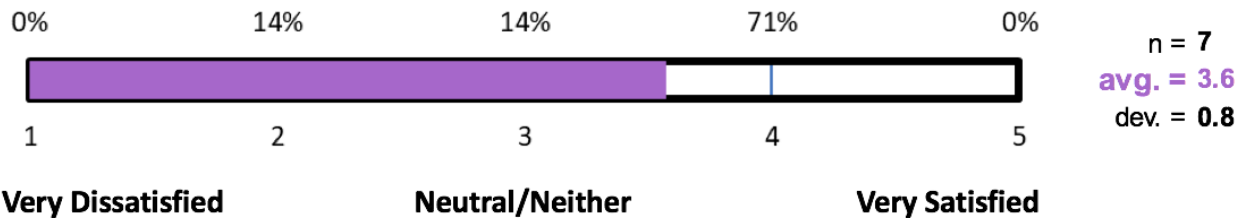
“I just want to reiterate the importance of these groundfish in state waters and these rock piles and no more closures, because these are the fish that are supporting these small communities. They're putting shoes on our kids' feet...if we start closing down more areas that's going to just shift the effort [for] meat production to the drag boat fleet, and those are dimes, not dollars per pound on these fish. These fish have value. And we're trying to do our best to bring them in. But we need infrastructure and we need open areas and quotas to do the work. And people love the products. [...] It's money from the community staying in the community, being spent by the community. It's all good. But these closures [have] been a hindrance, not a help for the fisheries. And we're not seeing the data that shows us that they're doing any good.”

Perceptions of MPAs, Average Responses for Questions 13-14a, 16-18



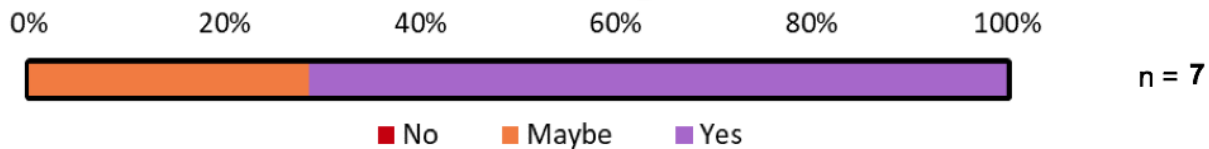
Feedback on Virtual Process

20a. Satisfaction with the Virtual Process Overall, how satisfied were you with your experience participating in this virtual focus group?



20b. Willingness to Participate in Virtual Process in Future Would you be open to participating in a virtual focus group or meeting like this in the future?

(Note: For the following figure, the length of the orange bar indicates the percent of participants who responded 'Maybe' to question 20b. The purple bar indicates the remaining percent of participants who responded 'Yes.' If participants responded 'No,' a red bar would appear.)



20c. Process Open-ended Can you share any additional comments about your experience in this virtual focus group? What do you think are some of the pros and cons of having a conversation like this online rather than in-person?

Discussion Summary (Due to time constraints during the focus group, participants rated this question, but did not discuss their responses.)