

Long-term Marine Protected Areas Socioeconomic Monitoring Program for California's Commercial and Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessel Fisheries

Informing Final Project Reporting Products Key Communicators Webinar #2 Key Takeaways Summary

The Marine Protected Area (MPA) Human Uses project team hosted the second of three webinars on August 27, 2021, to gain guidance and feedback from commercial fishermen and Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessel (CPFV) owners/operators*, researchers, and managers on the project's final reporting products.

The goals of these webinars were to gather a small group of leaders, or Key Communicators (KCs), across these primary audiences and:

- Gain guidance from webinar participants on the design, utility, and accessibility of draft final reporting products, including a public-facing website.
- Provide the opportunity for webinar participants to help ensure that fishermen's port community well-being perspectives and available spatial information is effectively communicated and available to help evaluate the performance of California's marine protected area (MPA) network.

The following provides a high-level summary of the guidance and perspectives shared between webinar participants and members of the project team. A [feedback table](#) has been updated to reflect how input from participants has informed the final reporting products.

Materials and other resources reviewed during this webinar, and linked throughout this document, include:

- [Webinar #2 Agenda](#)
- [Webinar #2 Slide Deck](#)
- [Draft key findings and port profiles](#)
- [Webinar #1 Key Takeaways Summary](#)
- [Project website](#), specifically the 'Project Resources' page

For more information about the webinar or the MPA Human Uses project, including Webinar #1 materials, please visit <https://mpahumanuses.com>. If you would like to participate in future webinar discussions or have questions about this project, please contact hello@strategiearth.com.

Key Takeaways

KCs were invited to provide feedback on sample products that are in development, including two port profiles (Santa Barbara and Crescent City) and a key finding (COVID-19 Impacts and Adaptations). Highlights of this feedback and related discussions are included below. In some places, the project team has included additional context to what was shared during the webinar in response to questions asked/concerns raised by participants. [This additional information is highlighted in blue text.](#)

Project Scope

Similar to during the start of Webinar #1, several KCs expressed an interest to continue learning how the MPA Human Uses project relates to other [statewide MPA monitoring work](#), the [MPA Decadal Management Review](#),

*Unfortunately, there was no representation from the CPFV industry who were available to attend the webinar. The project team continues to take steps to follow up with CPFV KCs to gain their insights and guidance on the draft reporting products.

and the [Governor's Executive Order](#) to conserve at least 30 percent of California's land and coastal waters by 2030.

- Fishermen and fishing industry representatives sought to better understand how the information gathered through the MPA Human Uses project would be considered in the design and development of the state's 30x30 initiative. Specifically, several participants asked if focus group conversations about fishing community well-being could be included in 30x30 deliberations.
 - A state agency representative explained the results of the Review may be used to develop recommendations on better management of the MPA network. Prior to the completion of the Review, MPA network expansion will not be a component of meeting the state's 30x30 marine conservation goals.
 - An OPC representative added the state is in the midst of preparing for the first Decadal Management Review (Review) of the MPA Management Program. Governor Newsom's recent Executive Order seeks to advance land and coastal water marine conservation to protect California's biodiversity and build climate resilience. About half a million acres of California's oceans are "protected" (approximately 16 percent) through its network of 124 MPAs. While the State's MPA network is world-renowned for the conservation measures it advances for certain marine waters zero to three miles off California's coast, the creation of no-take and partial take areas was controversial in recreational and commercial fishing communities, as well as with some Tribes.
 - An OPC representative shared the Executive Order's commitment to reaching 30 percent of coastal marine conservation is based on advancing measures beyond the MPAs (such as enhancing biodiversity safeguards in National Marine Sanctuaries, National Estuary Programs, and Areas of Special Biological Significance) and through the collaborative stakeholder process. The final strategy for achieving protection of 30 percent of state coastal waters can be developed as part of the state biodiversity plan and modified as needed after completion of the Review of the MPA network. Additional information is available on [CNRA's 30x30 website](#).
- Several participants expressed concerns that existing MPAs would be made larger in size or that additional MPAs would be put into place in state waters to meet 30x30 objectives. A participant referenced a recent document, [Advancing 30x30: Conservation of Coastal Waters](#) released by the California Natural Resources Agency (CRNA) that speaks to the benefits of additional MPAs. They recommended the state agencies involved in the Review and 30x30 become better aligned in their communications and messaging.
 - An OPC representative clarified OPC is anticipating a 30x30 pathways document to be released this fall, with more guidance on how the state will advance this initiative. MPA expansion is not the singular goal. MPAs are one competent of protection, but many other avenues are being considered. The [30x30 coastal waters summary](#) does reflect on the importance of MPAs, however, the State is committed to looking at all forms of protection, including National Marine Sanctuaries, conservation areas, etc.
- There were additional questions raised as to whether expanding or adding MPAs was an appropriate measure when the evaluation of the MPA Network's performance is still ongoing. One participant highlighted that any additional MPAs that restrict fishermen's access to resources would be detrimental to California's fishing communities, particularly for younger/newer entrants just entering the fishing business. A participant emphasized that MPAs are not the only challenge facing fishermen, citing offshore wind as another potential impact.
 - A project team member shared this project report will set the context of challenges fishing communities are facing and also summarize fishermen's perceptions and experiences about the MPA implementation process. The report can be used by fishermen as additional data to convey key messages to decision-makers regarding how additional/expansion of the MPA network may affect the industry. For example, many focus group participants highlighted that ocean resources

- are healthy statewide. However, due to management restrictions and high operations costs, it is difficult to make a viable living off fishing alone.
- Participants asked how the information gathered by this project specifically would be used to inform the adaptive management of California's MPA network and if adaptive management of MPAs would take place before, after, or during the Review process.
 - A state agency representative shared that during the Fish and Game Commission's December 2022 meeting, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) will submit a technical report and provide an update on the MPA network's performance based on available information. This will include considering the [seven statewide monitoring projects](#) that are currently underway (2019-2021). It is not anticipated there will be any management decisions made during this meeting. However, the statewide monitoring key findings may inform adaptive management decisions in 2023 and beyond.
 - They added that thanks to input shared via the focus group discussions, managers are understanding the need for better open lines of communication with the fishing industry to ensure fishermen have access and are aware of MPA Management Program information as it becomes available.

Port Profiles

The project team invited participants to provide feedback on the [draft port profiles](#) (Santa Barbara and Crescent City) to learn if the information was informative, useful, and presented in an understandable way.

- Several participants suggested including the number of focus group participants in each port profile would make it clearer that the perceptions shared may not reflect all of the perspectives of the port.
 - The project team agreed to include the number of focus group participants within each port profile (currently included in each focus group summary). There was also an agreement to make the [recruitment process document](#) readily accessible on the website.
- At the time when the MPA Human Uses project was being piloted (Spring 2020), the Review and 30x30 were not on fishermen's radars. KCs are now recognizing the importance of the data collected through the program and are concerned that there was insufficient participation to ensure the information is reflective of all California commercial fishermen.
 - Project team members shared that active attention was placed on engaging fishermen and others in the design of this project, including the process to recruit participants. This involved initial scoping calls conducted with select Key Communicators and a [webinar with Key Communicators](#) held in January 2020. Additionally, a pilot focus group was conducted where real-time feedback was received on the focus group process and our approach was subsequently updated to reflect this feedback.
 - The project team sought support and guidance from fishing leadership up and down the state to help get information out to their peers and solicit participation in the focus group conversations. To have this and any project like it be successful, there is a need for additional support from fishermen, researchers, managers, and others working in these port communities to help inspire and promote participation and involvement.
 - The project team appreciates that a lot has changed over the past 1.5 years. With the upcoming Review and 30x30, in addition to other pressures facing fishing communities. With this in mind, there is an increasing need for useful and accurate human dimensions data and information. The project team welcomes continued feedback on how projects like this can be most helpful to fishermen, decision-makers, and researchers.
- Based on the changing political conditions fishermen find themselves in and now with a better understanding of the connections to this project and the Decadal Management Review, a participant questioned if the quality of the focus group conversations (i.e., information shared by fishermen) would

have been different. Another participant asked if focus group participants were asked about their confidence in the future of commercial fishing in California.

- A project team member shared that the risks to participating in the focus group discussions were identified at the start of each conversation, including the uncertainty with how the information collected would be used to inform adaptive management of the MPA Network. The project was designed to monitor human dimensions at a statewide scale, while also considering port-specific information. Based on feedback from KCs, 1-on-1 interviews were avoided to try to reduce burnout from fishermen who are regularly requested to engage in these time-intensive activities. The goal of the project is for focus group participants' views on MPA to come through final products to accurately convey concerns and strengths, which will be useful for both fishermen and managers.
- Focus group participants were asked a series of questions about their perspectives on the future of marine resource health, as well as the recruitment of new participants in the fisheries and access to marine resources. All of the questions asked during the focus group are available in the Project Resources section of our website: <https://mpahumanuses.com/resources.html>. See 'prep packets' for both commercial and CPFV focus groups.

Key Findings

The project team invited participants to provide feedback on a [draft key finding](#) (COVID-19 Impacts and Adaptations) to learn if the information was informative, useful, and presented in an understandable way.

- Several participants expressed the importance of having the key findings connect to the effects of MPAs on fishermen's well-being and livelihoods. While KCs appreciated the opportunity to review the COVID-19 key finding, focus group comments on MPAs should be prioritized in the final reporting and website. It was also suggested that fishermen's well-being also be framed within the context of MPAs.
 - The project team shared the COVID-19 question was added to the focus group discussion at the state's request. The project's methods were designed to be responsive to changes/disturbances that may arise during the course of the project.
 - The project team will consider sharing an additional draft key finding with the Key Communicators when available. Additionally, the well-being perspectives of the focus group participants are considered within the MPA context.
 - **Anticipated Key Findings to be included on the website/final report include:**
 - **Regional comparison of MPA outcomes**
 - **Comparison of well-being across port-based fishing communities**
 - **Fishing community engagement/participation**
 - **COVID-19 impacts on fishing communities**
 - **Spatial and fisheries data analyses**
 - **CPFV (will consider the above 5 themes/findings)**

Updated Website

Participants provided additional input on what they would like to see included as part of the updated website, including content, design, and functionality.

General Design and Functionality

- A participant made suggestions to increase the size of the text/font used on the site, as well as to include more graphics and photos. Another participant suggested making maps interactive where information pops up when hovered over.
- A participant asked why the MPA maps on the website include federal MPAs, but other areas fishermen would consider MPAs (e.g., Rockfish Conservation Areas, Cowcod Conservation Areas, etc.) are not captured. They asked if there is a reason some closed areas are displayed while others are not.

- A project team member clarified the data layer comes from the CDFW GIS archive and included federal MPAs. The project team is updating spatial data relevant to this project and will note restricted areas beyond state MPAs.

Focus Group Summaries

- Several participants expressed concerns that the focus group summaries are not being circulated and reviewed by all commercial and CPFV fishermen within a given port/port grouping. Providing an opportunity to ask (via email, survey, etc.) if any information is missing, inaccurate, etc. was recommended as an important process step. The suggestion was made to include on the website a place where fishermen could submit comments on port profiles, focus group summaries, and other outputs if their perspectives were not captured.
 - While there are no plans or capacity to share each port/port grouping summary with all local permit holders, the project team will consider how to receive feedback from website viewers. The project team will discuss the idea of receiving comments while considering the feasibility of monitoring this type of feature, particularly when the website is intended to be hosted long-term by the state.
- A participant acknowledged that fishermen out of Monterey chose not to participate in the focus group conversations and asked how this would be noted in the final reporting and on the website.
 - The project team will work to update the website to identify those ports/port groupings that did not participate in a focus group conversation. Additionally, the rationale will be included in the Fishing Community Engagement/Participation key finding for why certain ports chose to not participate.
- During the first final reporting webinar, participants discussed the need for final reporting products to clearly convey demographics information of those who participated in the focus groups to help interpret MPA effects. A participant asked if there was any progress on this.
 - The project team acknowledged they continue to hear the need for demographic information of those who participated in the focus groups. This will be summarized by port/port group-based focus group as part of the final reporting. Additionally, the team is working on including longitudinal demographic information across all permit holders to look at shifts since 1992.

CDFW Landings/Logbook and Spatial Data

Participants asked questions about the specifics of the available commercial landings and CPFV logbook data from CDFW.

- A participant inquired how far back the spatial data go, and specifically if it includes the Northern Channel Islands MPA process (prior to 2005).
 - The modeled spatial data ranges from 2005 to 2020 and the tabular data from 1992 to 2020. We used this range of years for the spatial modeling because the Ecotrust data were initially collected starting in 2005 and this range provides a pre-MPA summary along with an estimation of activity since MPA implementation.
- Another participant asked how the project team extrapolated CDFW's landings data which is at a scale of 100 square miles to the 1 square mile scale.
 - The project team developed a refactoring value from the Ecotrust survey data gathered during MPA planning and implementation process. This value was used to redistribute the total pounds caught within a 100 square mile area to 1 square mile blocks.
- A participant recommended including sea urchin logbook data, as well as focus on the near shore fisheries that have been most affected by MPAs (lobster, nearshore finfish, sea urchin), and group these together spatially. They suggested it could be helpful to have an umbrella of all California fisheries and then drill into details of specific fisheries.

- Ecotrust's data-sharing agreement with CDFW was focused on commercial landings across all species and fisheries. The project team did not request the urchin dive logbooks, so developing the urchin spatial information for this analysis is not feasible at this late stage of our study. Part of our recommendations includes gathering better source data like the urchin logbooks to do future comparative analyses.
- A participant shared that since MPA implementation, there has been an 80% drop in sea urchin landings due to lack of kelp, warm water blob, El Niño conditions, etc. Currently, purple urchins are not harvestable. During the MPA planning process, fishermen brought up the point that culling would be a positive for urchin/kelp populations. However, at the time, they were told by scientists that this was not a cause for concern. They questioned how this will be considered in the final reporting for this project.
 - The final website will consider spatial and demographic data to illustrate shifts in landings over time. Urchin landings from 2005-2020 will be included in the spatial dataset, and the project team is currently working to update the Data Explorer to be responsive to these questions/needs.