

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 Orange County Area's Commercial Fishing Community*

The Marine Protected Area (MPA) Human Uses Project Team¹ is hosting over 30 virtual focus group conversations with fishermen throughout California from July 2020 to February 2021. 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 Group: Orange County Area Ports

Date: Wednesday, September 9, 2020

Participants: Dan Cludy, Greg George, Rodger Healy, Ivar Southern, Linda Southern, one anonymous participant

Overview

On September 9, 2020, six commercial fishermen operating out of the Orange County area participated in the fifth focus group conversation. A high-level summary of the conversation is captured below, including:

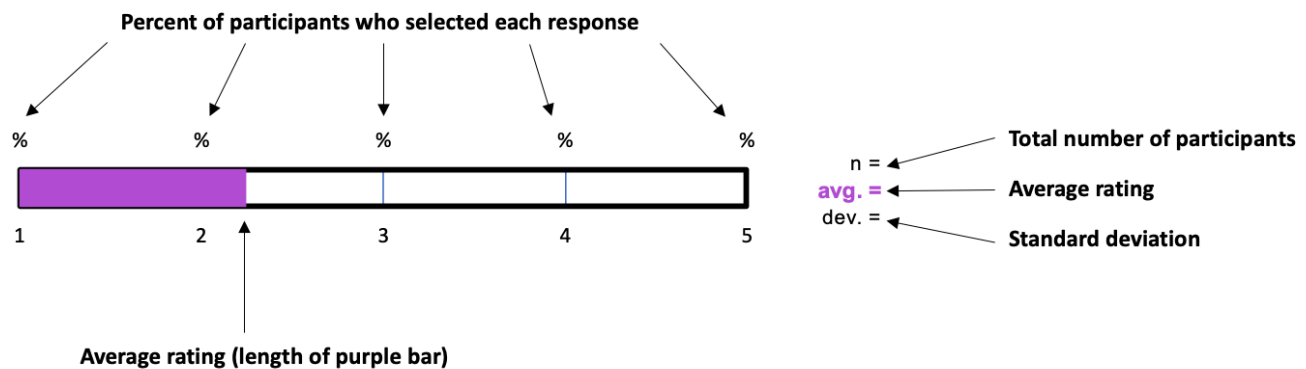
- the numerical final scores (via Zoom polls) for questions asked within each theme;

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

- 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 21 that display all of 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:

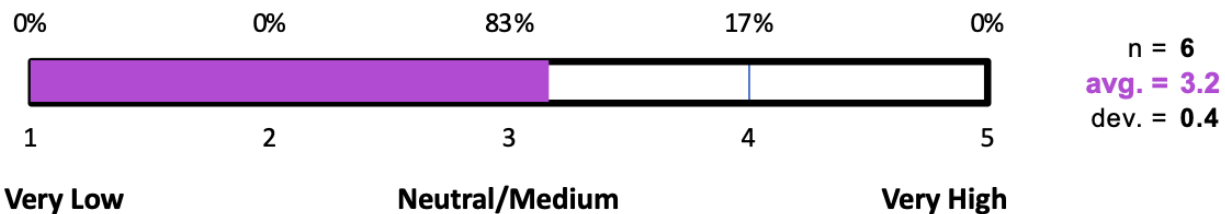
- [California Fisheries Data Explorer](#): This interactive site allows users to visualize commercial landings data (i.e., number of fishermen, pounds of fish landed, and revenue from fish landed) and CPFV logbook data (i.e., number of anglers, vessels, trips, and fish caught from specific fisheries and ports).
- [MPA Baseline Monitoring Program: South Coast](#)
 - [Summary of Findings from Baseline Monitoring of Marine Protected Areas, 2011-2015, South Coast](#)

Our Project Team would like to express our appreciation to the six Orange County area fishermen—Dan Cludy, Greg George, Rodger Healy, Ivar Southern, Linda Southern, 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 Regarding the current health and sustainability of marine resources, participants shared their beliefs that their fisheries are overall healthy because the fishermen manage themselves and each other, and added that the abundance and diversity of species in the Orange County area follow natural ocean cycles. Fishermen also discussed how area closures have led to compaction of fishing effort, which has resulted in diminished health for some species.

- One participant reported there is sufficient lobster abundance to support the fishery each year. Another participant explained how the location of lobster often follows yearly warm or cold water events.
- Several participants expressed marine resources would be more abundant if fishermen had more area to harvest from. One fisherman noted how abundance and diversity has declined in recent years following the creation of area closures like MPAs.
- One participant described how fishermen are only allowed to harvest select species from Newport Beach to Dana Point, including primarily lobster, urchin, and squid, though urchin and squid are not very abundant in this area. They explained that crab, kelleet's whelk, and nearshore species populations are healthy, but that fishermen are no longer allowed to access them.

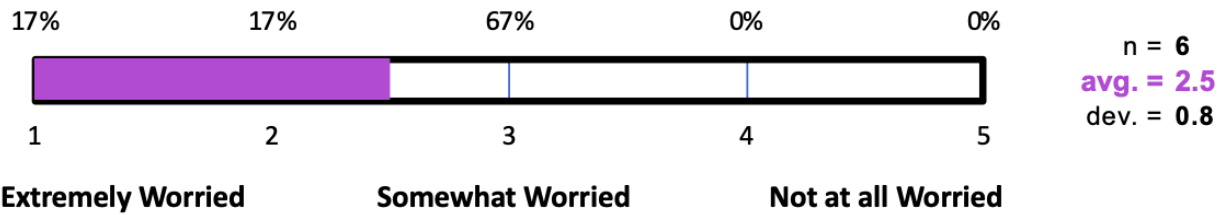
Participant Quotes

"It's all around cycles of the ocean, I mean, if there's a warm water year there are lobsters over here, and cold they're over here. And if it's too hot they're somewhere else."

"It would be a lot more abundant if we'd be able to spread out, if we had more turf to fish. But we're all in one big corner now. We've had good years, but I've watched it decline over the last six or seven years and [we] used to have a lot more diversity but everything's just kind of been taken away. There's nothing we can do about it."

"[The] health of our resources are strong, our inability to be able to harvest them is at our deficit."

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?



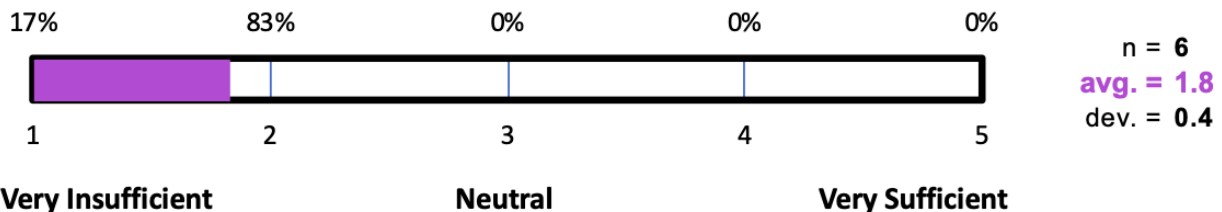
Discussion Summary One participant shared their perceptions related to the future health of marine resources. They believe that the future health of the lobster fishery will depend on natural ocean temperature fluctuations and weather conditions, in addition to spillover from the MPAs.

Participant Quotes

“The long term health of the fishery? There'll be lobsters to catch, it just depends on the [ocean] cycles - if it's warm water, cold water. And then you're going to hope for a bleed off out of the closures, because that's helped out quite a bit in the last few years. And then we have to rely on the weather. [If] we don't have the weather, they're not going to be there either. We'll see what happens.”

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 highlighted several barriers that inhibit access to commercial fish resources for fishermen in the Orange County area.

- Several participants shared that fishermen face economic barriers to their access of marine resources, specifically citing expensive fishing permits. In addition, if permits are only available through a lottery system, access is not guaranteed.
 - One fisherman shared their experience trying to obtain a gill net permit, and said they believed the regulations were changed specifically to not allow them, personally, into that fishery. They added that this and similar circumstances related to permit access creates difficulties, especially for newer fishermen.
- Several participants explained how more established fishermen are better able to diversify their fisheries of participation compared to newer fishermen because they have already acquired the gear and dock space needed to support fishing activities, whereas current access to key infrastructure is limited, expensive, and difficult to obtain.

- One participant described the lack of diversity in fisheries operating out of Dana Point, with the majority being lobster fishermen, though a small portion of the fleet fishes for kellet’s whelk and other species at different points throughout the year.
- Several participants considered lobster theft around Dana Point to decrease access to catch that fishermen in the area would otherwise be able to harvest.
- One fisherman shared their opinion that the decrease in the lobster trap limit was going to be detrimental for the fishery and stated that fishermen are still able to catch the same amount they used to but with less effort.

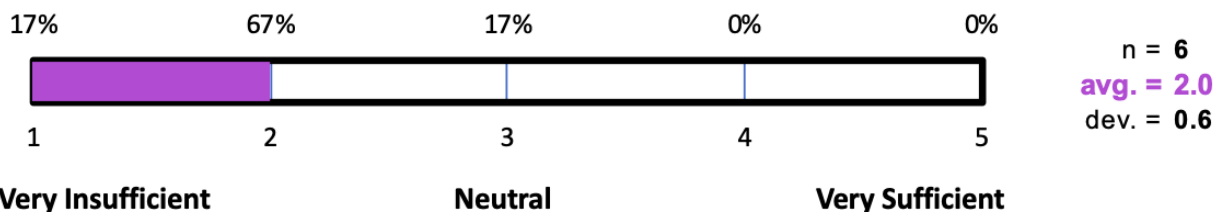
Participant Quotes

“I bet you 80 percent of our guys in our harbor [in Dana Point] are lobster [fishermen]. [. . .] I mean, everybody does lobster. There's a little bit of kellet’s whelk. There's some other stuff like [name redacted] does during the summer time, but most of our guys are lobster fishermen.”

“It's not just the restrictions on access like the permit values and being able to acquire a permit for a value set, but the convoluted nature of how people get into fisheries now, whether it’s maybe an overpriced permit or some screwed up lottery system.”

“[As a new guy and getting berthing and everything else], that’s not good. Because where are you gonna put your boat? You're gonna have to go to the launch ramp and the launch ramp is the only thing that's available. And [. . .] I see people complaining all the time about the launch ramp. There's no access. There's nowhere to park half the time with the launch ramp.”

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 When discussing income and livelihoods from fishing, participants discussed the difficulty associated with sustaining a living from commercial fishing alone and the need for fishermen to have multiple sources of income.

- Several participants said they believed almost all fishermen operating out of the Orange County area have two or more sources of income. They attributed this need for multiple income sources to the financial investments associated with fishing, including slip fees and boat maintenance, in addition to the high cost of living in Orange County.
 - One participant explained if they had to pay rent, they would not be commercially fishing because they would need a job that generates more income.
 - One fisherman shared that they are moving out of Orange County to fish in another state due to the high cost of living, in addition to other factors including tariffs, MPAs, and effects from COVID-19.
 - Another participant estimated that a new fisherman would require years to earn back the money needed to invest as a new entrant in the fishing industry.

- One fisherman indicated they are able to comfortably support themselves with the fishing business they built over the years, but that newer fishermen would not be able to do the same by fishing full time, specifically because of the lack of available permits.
- One participant highlighted how lobster fishing generates sufficient income, whereas other fisheries such as swordfish cannot support commercial fishermen as a primary source of income.
- One participant attributed their inability to afford to pay crew members as a reason why they fish alone, while another participant shared they prefer to fish alone even though they can afford crew members.

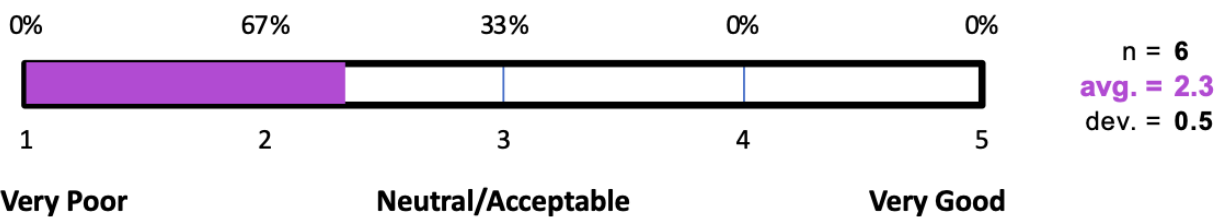
Participant Quotes

“Everyone has a secondary means of employment or of financial stability because of the fact that fishing is no longer the mainstay. It's hard to derive a sole livelihood from fishing anymore in Orange County.”

“We make good money, but we put a lot of money back into [fishing]. [If] somebody saw how much you made, they'd go, ‘wow, that's pretty good’ thinking the only thing in your garage is your car [. . .] we have a lot of stuff we have to pay for to keep going. And if I was a guy trying to get into the fishery like lobster fishing, I couldn't do it. I couldn't see where you would get the money back.”

“The thing about lobster fishing is you go out, you're going to generate an income every day [. . .] Most of us are lobster fisherman and that's probably the only game in town if you're going to be fishing locally and if you're going to be able to generate any kind of income on a regular basis.”

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 When discussing markets, participants noted challenges associated with both overseas and local markets. Several participants said that there is potential for more direct marketing to the public locally, though one participant noted that there was a limit to local markets.

- Several participants identified tariffs as a barrier for fishermen to earn a profit, and reported that lobster from Mexico is not tarified, whereas lobster from Orange County is tarified.
- One participant explained that buyers are reluctant to buy local products because the markets are flooded with products from Canada and Mexico.
- One participant shared that local markets are supplied with lobster from the East Coast and have been nearly eliminated for local fishermen. As a result, fishermen in the Orange County area are dependent on overseas lobster markets.

- One participant said that when fishermen have few markets to sell to, they will sell to local restaurants and to the public, but the permits needed to do this are expensive. They added there is only so much they can sell directly to the public.
 - Another participant mentioned they are helping to develop more localized markets through selling directly to the public in Dana Point.
- One participant who fishes out of Newport explained that one of their buyers charges more to pick up their product because the buyer is only picking up from one fisherman. They related this to the small commercial fishing presence in Newport.

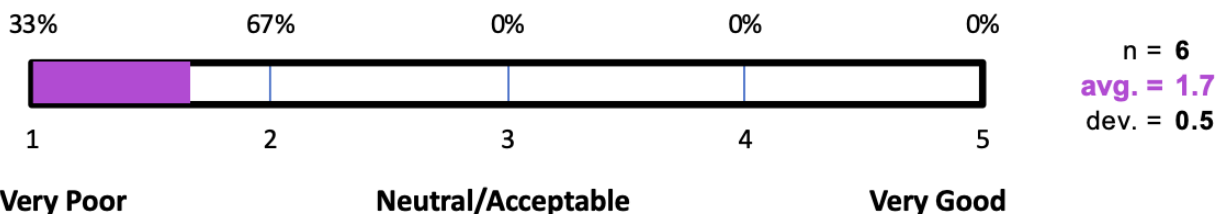
Participant Quotes

“The tariffs were a big hit the last three years, lowered [the price for lobster] from \$17.50 on an opener to \$11 - that was huge because there goes all the money. We're hoping to put some money in the bank, but then it's all gone once [the tariffs] come back around.”

“We do have buyers that come to Dana Point but, like last year when we ran out of buyers because they had no market to sell to, our only option then was to try to find restaurants or maybe to sell to the public - that permit to sell lobsters to the wholesale businesses is outrageous. I mean, it's an \$800 or \$900 permit on top of what we've already spent, \$1,350 or something for the year, for us to license ourselves. Now we have to spend another thousand dollars so we can sell our lobsters. That to me seems pretty ridiculous. That should be something that's a \$25 permit.”

“There is a permit to sell to the public but you can only sell so many lobsters to your neighbors. You want to sell to a restaurant and you want to sell somewhere where they're going to buy a bulk amount because you know if you catch a good catch, it's gonna take you a month to get rid of it to the public.”

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



Discussion Summary Related to infrastructure in the Orange County area, participants discussed the poor availability and quality of infrastructure and services to support commercial fishing.

- Participants described how in Dana Point, there is limited boat parking, little to no gear storage, and a ten-year waiting list for boat slips, which are preferred over having to dock their boat at the wharf for a fee and then using the launch ramp, which is not wide enough to accommodate most boats and gear.
 - One participant added that the docks are in poor condition, and another participant added there is no ice machine and that the restrooms are often locked so fishermen cannot use them.

- One participant contrasted the state of infrastructure in Dana Point to that in Santa Barbara, where fishermen have access to key infrastructure like ice and gear storage. They commented that it feels as if the county would rather not have commercial fishing infrastructure at the harbor, even though fishermen keep the areas they use clean, and gave the example of fishermen having to sue the county to be able to use the docks.
- One participant highlighted how the fuel dock in Dana Point is one of their least concerns because it is good quality and the person who runs it charges a fair price for fuel.
- One participant described the lack of amenities in Newport Beach even though the harbor receives federal funding to support the commercial fishing industry.
 - They reported that fishermen have to pay about \$500 a month for a private dock or more for a private facility. They added how there are only a couple docks available for fishermen.
 - They explained that bait is not available at the public docks, and fishermen need to go to the wharf, which is further away, to purchase bait.

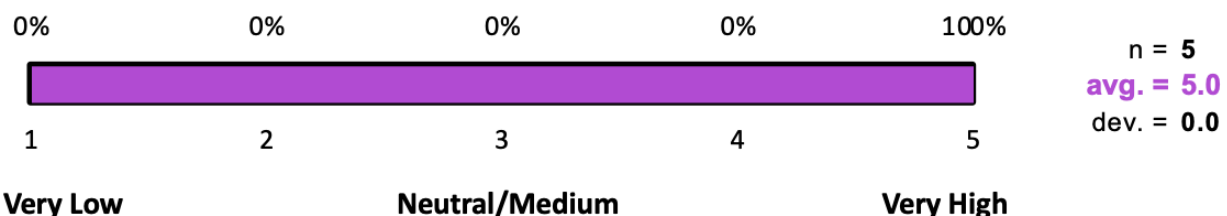
Participant Quotes

“We actually have no commercial infrastructure [in Dana Point]. We have no ice machines. The restrooms at the top of the dock are locked and aren't even open till seven o'clock in the morning, so we can't even use the facilities if we were to need them. [. . .] Our parking is limited. We have nowhere to store gear. The county is nice enough to allot 18 or 20 docks for the commercial guys, but we have absolutely no support mechanisms such as winches. We don't even have a large, wide ramp where we can go down and load a large load of traps - I think it's about a three foot wide ramp. So even that's very, very difficult.”

“In my opinion, if the harbor had their choice, they would do without commercial fishing altogether and just get rid of us. They don't want to see us there. They think that we're an eyesore to the community, the people that walk around, and they don't want to smell us and they don't want to see us, but they love to eat our lobsters. They just don't want to know that we're there.”

“Well, Newport Beach, there's no place to dock your boat, period. You can get a private dock for \$500 a month if you're lucky, or you can go to a private facility and pay another fortune there per month [. . .] We have to go all the way back to the wharf which takes an hour one way to unload gear and pick up bait and you can't pick up bait or offload at public docks. It's a joke. I mean, you can't do anything in the harbor.”

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



Discussion Summary Participants shared the detrimental effects that COVID-19 has had on markets for the commercial fishing industry in the Orange County area, especially the lobster fishery.

- Several participants recounted how they could start to feel the market effects from COVID-19 at the end of the 2019-2020 lobster season. One participant said they knew to sell their lobster catch locally rather than wait for buyers to come through Dana Point.
- One participant communicated how COVID-19 effects rippled through nearly every aspect of the fishery, including export and local markets, and said the public is not currently buying lobsters.
- Several participants explained how the international markets, especially the Chinese market for lobster, were extremely negatively affected by COVID-19.
 - One participant highlighted how the lobster market is half of what it was before COVID-19 but with the same number of lobster fishermen, and added that they cannot get the price they normally would per pound of lobster.
 - One participant explained that local lobster fishermen will be relying on the domestic market during the 2020-2021 lobster season because there are no export markets available. They added how fishermen will likely do what they can to make a profit in these instances, even if it is not economically sustainable.
- Participants mentioned how fishermen only have a few buyers supplying their markets, which are very limited due to COVID-19. One participant added that buyers continue to pick up lobster in Dana Point, but that there are currently almost no buyers going through Newport Beach.
- One participant highlighted that even though lobster prices are lower than usual due to COVID-19, fishermen are still paying the same prices that they were before COVID-19 for bait, fuel, and slip fees.
- One participant shared the belief that management agencies could not respond to the effects of COVID-19 on the fishing industry enough to provide the support needed for local fishermen.
- One participant said they suspected that if conditions due to COVID-19 do not improve, fishermen will continue to not have restaurants to sell to, but they will also likely not have tariffs during the 2020-2021 lobster season.

Participant Quotes

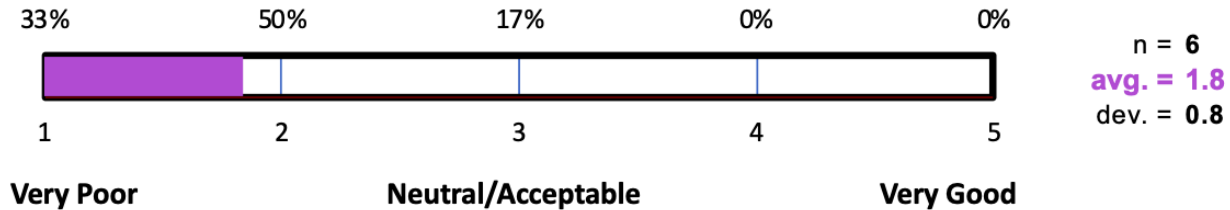
“The COVID thing basically killed us last year. I mean, that was, that was a kiss of death as soon as I saw that on the TV. I texted [name redacted]. And I said ‘we're in trouble’ and the buyers basically quit coming down a week later. That was it. They were done.”

“All of us have fished long enough. We've seen booms and busts in our fishery as far as the marketing part of it, but this is something that is unprecedented that we are going to struggle through. It's going to probably hit a huge reset button on our fishery.”

“We have weaned [the domestic market] off of our lobsters and they've fulfilled all their needs for lobsters with lobster from Maine or everywhere else. There's no way our domestic market can handle the volume of lobsters that we're going to produce in the month of October.”

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 When discussing labor, participants indicated that recruitment and retention of participants in the commercial fishing industry is somewhat poor with regard to the number and quality of new entrants.

- Several participants discussed a steep learning curve associated with entering and surviving in the fishing industry. They added that the quality of the labor pool is better among those who have prior fishing experience.
 - Several participants said they are willing to help new fishermen who enter the industry, but that new entrants need to learn several skills on their own, including areas to catch lobster.
 - One participant mentioned that newer fishermen will sometimes crowd other fishermen and not have adequate gear for lobster fishing, which can be dangerous.
 - One participant added that newer fishermen need to have good marketing strategies to stay in the industry.
- Participants shared the difficulties associated with entering the fishing industry, including the lack of commercial boat slips to support fishing needs, especially in Dana Point.
 - One participant added that those who enter the industry are often serious about fishing because substantial financial investments are required for fishing permits.
- Another participant recounted how they have spoken to several fishermen who have been in the industry only one or two years and are already thinking about leaving.
 - One participant shared the opinion that sometimes fishermen do not stay in the fishery long because they think they will get rich fast, but they do not have a love for the ocean.
- One participant highlighted the substantial financial investment needed to start in the fishing industry and to be competitive, which is one reason why when older fishermen start to leave the fishing industry, newer fishermen are not coming in.

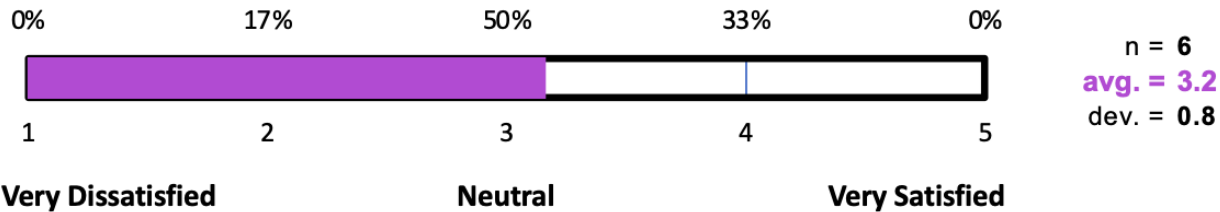
Participant Quotes

“There is a huge learning curve to any business you get into, and I came from the fishing industry so I knew a little bit about fishing. If you're fishing with a rod and reel, a trap, I think there's a lot of similarities between reading the electronics on the bottom and all that sort of stuff. But if I were to come off the street and say ‘I'm tired of sitting behind a computer and I'm going to get into the fishing business,’ if you ever catch up, it'll take you 5 to 10 years to be competitive.”

“I feel that it's very hard for a new entrant to get into the fishery in Dana Point mainly because of the lack of slips and [the Harbor] will not let them go into a recreational slip and commercial fish out of a recreational slip. It's either in their commercial slips or on a trailer and most people aren't going to want to launch the trailer every morning, so they don't do it.”

“The problem is the younger guys don't have the money to buy into the fishery right now. If you're going to do it right, you need a couple hundred thousand dollars to buy a permit, a good boat, and good gear to maybe be competitive, and that's as the old guys get out because of maybe their age and their limitations. You don't have the younger guys moving in behind them because they don't have the resources.”

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



Discussion Summary Related to job satisfaction, several participants explained that fishermen enjoy what they do and continue to fish despite the challenges they face.

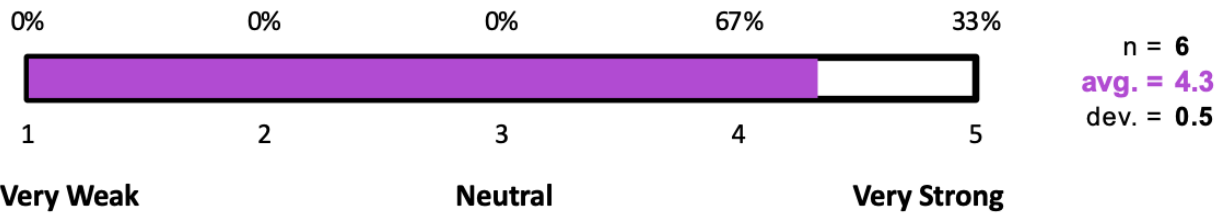
- Participants shared how they grew up fishing and developed a love for the ocean.
- One participant shared the opinion that more established fishermen likely have greater satisfaction than newer entrants.

Participant Quotes

“Well, most of us do it because we enjoy it. You don't know us personally, but I've been on the water, gosh, since I was 12 years old and [name redacted] has been fishing forever. [Name redacted] grew up fishing. I know [name redacted] up in Newport has been around forever. So we do it because of the love of the ocean and I think I had mentioned that this is not a full time career for me, but I've been fishing so long, I hate to give it up and it gets in your blood. So for us, there's a lot of satisfaction.”

“The quality of it is awesome, once you're out on the water, doing what we do. I can't miss it for anything. I'll take the stakes, I'll risk my life, whatever I can. I love fishing. It's a challenge, but it's worth the challenge.”

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



Discussion Summary Overall, participants reported they felt social relationships within the Dana Point fishing community were strong.

- Several participants shared how fishermen generally try to get along with each other and emphasized that they know others will help them if they are out on the water and need assistance, such as needing someone to tow their boat or retrieve their gear.
- One participant explained how there is more camaraderie among fishermen who have been in the port longer, compared to newer fishermen.
- One participant identified one fisherman who has a leadership role in the fishing community, but added how it can be difficult to play many roles like leader, marketer, and fisherman.
- One participant from Dana Point assured another participant from Newport Beach that they are welcome with open arms in Dana Point whenever they like.

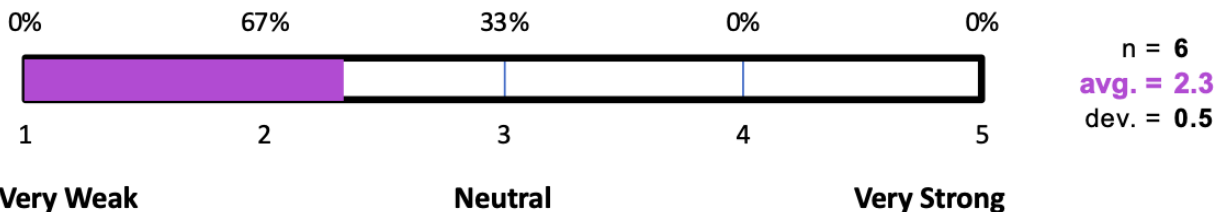
Participant Quotes

“I think we all try to get along as best we can. Of course, at times we all have our issues, but as far as trying to work together - if something was to happen to somebody else, oh, we're right there on top of it. We're going to go help somebody else; there's no doubt in my mind.”

“The people that fish together for years and years, we're all there to help one another, and it's a wonderful thing, it really adds to the fishery. You don't find that with newcomers very often.”

“As far as our leadership and our harbor, I think we've been very lucky. We've had [name redacted] who's very proactive as far as speaking up for us and our rights.”

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 With regard to the fishing community's relationships with external groups, several participants expressed the belief that the broader community generally does not support the local fishing industry.

- Several participants explained how the local lobster festival is indicative of this because vendors at the festival do not sell local lobster. One participant commented that by selling local lobster,

this would help to inform the local community of what fishermen in the area do. Another participant shared that they were asked to go to the festival and talk to the public about the local fishing industry and about the value it adds to the community, yet the festival continues to sell lobsters from the East Coast rather than local lobsters.

- One participant mentioned how the local fisheries are sustainable, but that outside groups are constantly trying to undermine them and shut the fisheries down.
- Another participant said that due to the small commercial fishing presence in the area, fishermen do not matter to the broader community.
- Several participants described how Newport Beach does not have a commercial fishing port to support fishermen, and related this to the community's lack of appreciation for the fishing industry.
- One participant shared how fishermen in Dana Point have good relationships with the local wardens and marina staff, but added that the district attorney (DA) is often unwilling to prosecute those that break fishing laws based on reports from local officers alone, and that the DA requires more substantial evidence such as video footage in order to prosecute.
- One participant described how the group Harbor Partners out of Newport Beach are an indication of the external community's support moving in a positive direction in terms of supporting fishermen in their efforts to be more local and sustainable.
- One participant said they believed fishermen should engage more with politicians, business people, and others who can help fishermen meet their collective needs.

Participant Quotes

"Our community at Dana Point actually has a lobster festival which happens two weeks prior to our opening of our fishery, and they don't even use our Pacific spiny lobsters. They bring in lobsters from Maine and to me, that's ridiculous. Support us as fishermen in your local community; sell our lobsters, do it within our season. [. . .] But with that lobster fest, it would have opened up the knowledge that we have lobster in the Pacific Ocean. You talk to most people - they don't even know that we have [a lobster fishery]. They're like 'what? They don't even have claws? You have lobsters here?'"

"[Newport Beach fishermen have] been pressured and lobbied to be pushed out of that Harbor. Like we've used that little commercial public access dock to try to load traps in the past up there and everyone, every entity, every municipality will try to lobby and get you out of there as a commercial fisherman, because we're the dregs of society."

"I think there's a couple things that I find difficult. [One] is that our Fish and Game - and we have a very good rapport with our local wardens in our marina - but it's very tough if there's an infraction or a breaking of the law, it's very hard for them to prosecute because of the unwillingness of the DA to take a case. They've got to have this cold hard evidence rather than the word of an officer. I mean, the officers are sworn into this oath to speak the truth and yet they don't take the truth from them. They have to have hard cold footage of this happening as opposed to the officer catching them. So I find that a problem."

"We need to be wise enough to get outside of our club and talk to the politicians, the business people, the people that run the Harbor and do it properly and follow an agenda that we may be

given. I think we as fishermen have let ourselves down in that respect. [. . .] I think if we're able to voice our opinion and just get the word out that we're all searching for the common goal of having the ocean remain clean and be able to support us all, and I think this is where we've let ourselves down in the fishery because fishermen are really an independent lot and I attended several of these meetings and a lot of people say 'well, I don't want to give any input' or 'screw that meeting, I don't want to go cuz they don't know what my needs are.' But I think at the end of the day, [. . .] we all want the same thing, and it's just how we get there. If we can agree and share some of our needs, wants, and desires, I think we all come out a little bit better."

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 One participant reiterated the challenges associated with commercial fishing in Orange County. Another participant added that if fishermen are constantly sharing how they are disgruntled with management, then this is something that needs to be addressed.

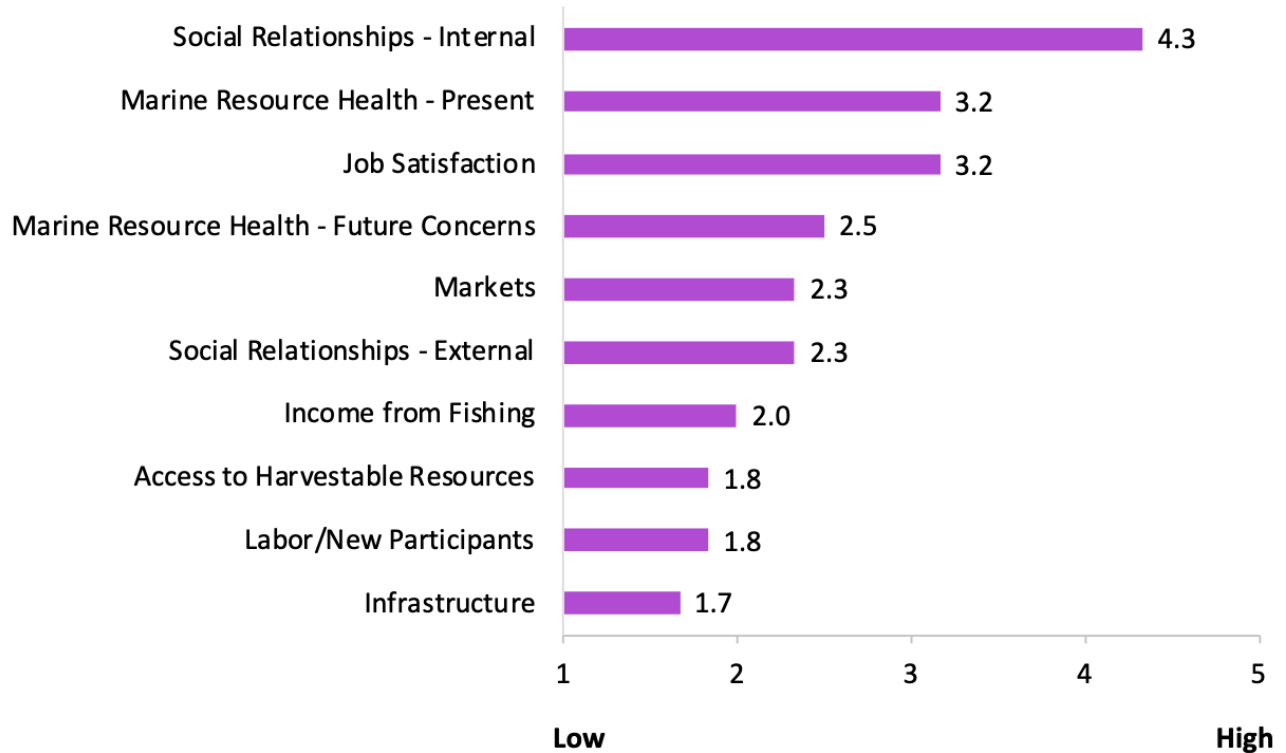
Participant Quotes

"I will interject real fast and compound what everyone has said already. The difficulties of berthing, difficulties of just competition and being like what [name redacted] said a lot earlier about trying to put your foot in a shoe that's already full of feet. It's a very daunting endeavor to be able to be a commercial fisherman and try to get your feet in and actually survive."

"I guarantee every single group meeting you [the MPA Human Uses Project Team] have is a pity fest - fishermen dumping on you, telling you all their woes and how they're pissed off and how they're disgruntled and how everything else [. . .] If the commonality of that theme is what we're at right now, there's something wrong with the management."

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

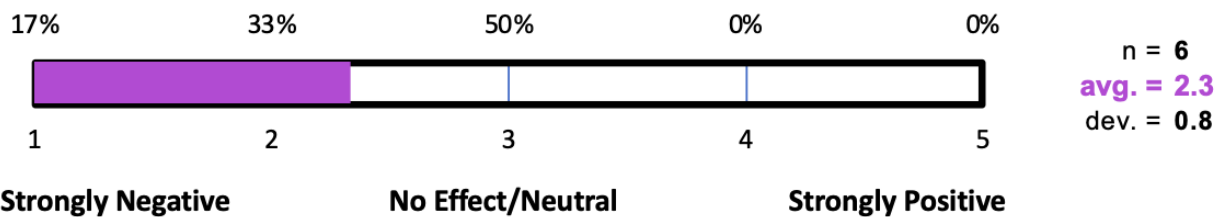
(Note: The following figure does not include the average rating for question 7. COVID-19 Impacts.)



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 When asked about ecological outcomes or impacts from the MPA network, several participants shared their perspective that the fisheries in the Orange County area were sustainable before MPA implementation, but that the MPAs have diminished this.

- Participants described their opinions about the negative effects that MPAs have had on the abundance and market quality of lobster.

- Several participants said that lobster abundance used to be greater before the MPAs were put in place, but now, with the same number of fishermen and traps in a smaller area outside MPAs, there is less lobster of sufficient market size to harvest.
- One participant said that fishing pressure in smaller areas is affecting the ability of lobsters to repopulate those areas due to the removal of legal, reproductive sized lobsters, which results in fewer market quality lobsters. They added that fishermen do not see lobster spillover outside of MPA boundaries.
- One participant described how fishermen are no longer allowed to fish California sheephead in the MPAs, which in their opinion, has resulted in increased lobster predation and less lobster abundance.

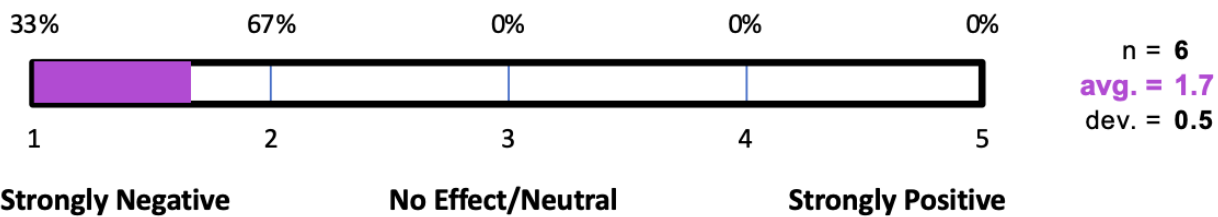
Participant Quotes

“If you had 400 traps in the water at the time [before MPA implementation] and you lose 100 traps because they close the area, you don't take those traps home. You take them down to where your other traps are. So now, the abundance down below [the MPAs] is not as much because you're fishing more gear down there.”

“For size, you get more shorts because more more legals are being taken out and it's hard to repopulate the area when you're fishing to where you catch almost all the legals in the season it seems, and all you're catching now are shorts at the end of the season or in the middle of the season, so the quality isn't there as well.”

“Fishing sheephead is not just a marketing strategy. It's also diminishing the amount of predation you would get on the lobsters and your lobster traps [. . .] now our lobsters get pretty predated upon by sheephead on a regular basis. That's a whole other issue that we had to deal with. So as far as abundance of resources, there's resources there, it's our inability to be able to harvest them.”

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 how the MPA network has added to the difficulties of making a living from fishing, and has resulted in negative effects with regard to decreased fishing area.

- Participants explained how the MPAs have resulted in the displacement of fishermen outside of MPAs which has led to extreme gear compaction and crowding along MPA boundaries. As a result, fishermen cannot catch the amount of resources they need to support livelihoods from fishing.
 - One participant noted that fishermen now have to compete for the diminished area in which they are allowed to fish.
 - Another participant described how they have had to move further south to fish.
 - One participant emphasized that fishermen are still trying to work through the dynamics that have emerged as a result of MPA implementation, and are trying to determine how fishermen can continue to make a livelihood from fishing.
- Several participants shared how the fishing fleet in the area was cut in half after MPA implementation.
 - One participant explained that the MPAs were one factor that made them decide to leave the Orange County area and move to another state. They described how they were no longer able to fish the diversity of species they need to sustain their livelihood, and added that the MPAs made life harder for them and their family.

Participant Quotes

“The compaction kills us because we're all fishing in one little area to try to get what little bit [of resource] is able to come out of [the MPAs] in the Orange County region.”

“[The MPAs] took away some of the best area that we had. It's gone forever. They took away the rocky kelp area that most of us fished in and they spread us all back out to the edges where we all had to fight for what was left.”

“I think once the closures happened, it's like they took a living away from me and they made it into a hobby, and fishing kind of - more or less - became a hobby.”

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 shared that MPAs in their area have closed much of their fishing grounds, and highlighted two specific MPAs along Laguna Beach which have negatively affected fishermen in the area.

- *Laguna Beach State Marine Reserve (SMR)*: Participants described how this MPA closed off several square miles of the Laguna Beach coast that fishermen can no longer access, and said that this MPA could have been smaller with better spacing in relation to surrounding MPAs, which could have allowed fishermen to still fish some of this area.
 - One participant shared how this MPA resulted in a decrease of almost 50 percent of their income from fishing.
- *Laguna Beach State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA) (No-Take)*: One participant highlighted that this MPA includes an artificial reef that was built to cover a pipeline. The pipeline needs to be serviced, which disturbs the habitat, yet fishing is not allowed here.

- One participant noted how this MPA made some of the best Orange County fishing area inaccessible to fishermen.

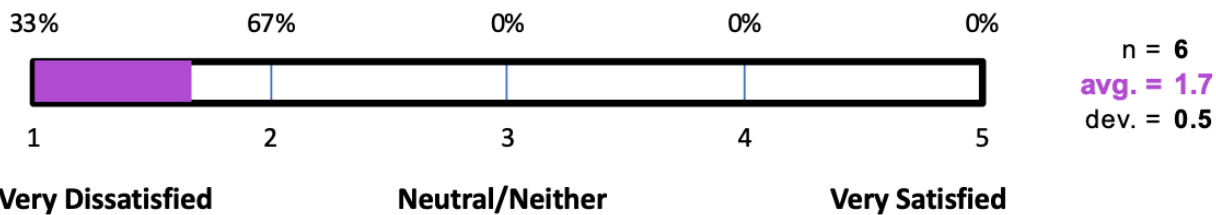
Participant Quotes

“Look at the size of that MPA they put in Laguna Beach, with all the [other MPAs around] it. It's like they hated us. Look at every other MPA - [the Laguna Beach SMR] is a completely different shape. And they go ahead and put this big giant triangle and take the entire coast of Laguna Beach, except for a mile and a half, two miles at the bottom. That's ridiculous, that is absolutely ridiculous. They could have taken prime area but made it much smaller and left a lot of good area and you would have still had a lot of good guys left in this fishery.”

“[The Laguna Beach SMCA (No-Take)] took the entire Aliso Beach pipeline which is an artificial reef that was established to cover the pipeline. That's a non-natural habitat that they had closed to us, but they can't close it because they still need to service it, yet it's closed to us fishing. That is a no-take conservation area that only allows them to go in there and diminish and destroy the habitat that they put in place, but we're not allowed to harvest from it.”

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 shared their perspectives that commercial fishing interests were not seriously considered during the MPA implementation process, nor are they considered in the current management of MPAs.

- With regard to current MPA management, participants expressed how there is not a clear agenda for achieving MPA goals, and that management is overwhelmingly one-sided with few opportunities for fishermen involvement. They added that it seems as though fishermen are being managed out of their livelihoods when areas are closed off from fishing and designated as MPAs.
- Several participants recounted spending much time and money attending meetings during the MPA planning process, and said that when fishermen got up to speak, it seemed like no one would listen or care about what they had to say. They explained how fishermen were told they could go to MPA meetings, but did not feel that their input would prevent areas they wanted to continue to access from being designated as MPAs.
 - One participant shared how they spent a lot of time during the MPA implementation process trying to communicate how the proposed MPAs would devastate the local fishing community and negotiating for less or different MPA areas.

- One participant recalled how during the MPA planning process, representatives from Laguna Beach said the local community was strongly in favor of the MPAs, but that the opposite was true.
- One participant shared how funding for the MPA planning process was dominated by special interest groups.
- One participant said they felt that an individual from Ecotrust supported and collaborated with the local fishermen during the MPA planning process.
- One participant said they believed that the MPA process was unfair, especially for Orange County fishermen, given that they lost almost the entire Laguna Beach coast for fishing.

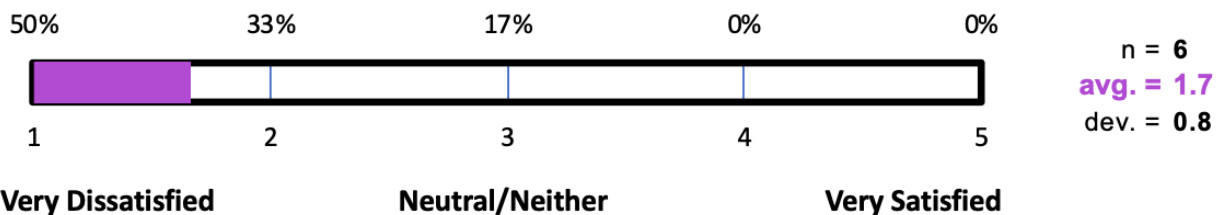
Participant Quotes

“I was always sitting and listening and watching [during the MPA planning meetings], and I could tell by the atmosphere in those meetings that they didn't even care that we were there. [. . .] I just didn't feel like we needed to even be there because we weren't being listened to.”

“This thing's been a travesty since the onset and as fishermen, we all knew it was coming. We knew we were going to get railroaded. We knew we were going to get sold down the pike. It is basically an allocation from fishermen deriving livelihoods from the ocean and giving taxes and supplying seafood to the local markets, as well as exporting.”

“What are we managing? Because with the Cowcod Conservation Areas and all the closures we did for the rockfish closures, we had an agenda. Our agenda was to reestablish, rehabilitate the diminished bocaccio species and then the cowcod [. . .] Are we managing the social and economic part of the fishermen and making sure that they stay out of [the MPAs]? The bottom line is [the environmentalists'] agenda is different from ours. And as far as the management, I see like CDFW and all the politics of the state are managing us out of our livelihoods, and we're just trying to survive.”

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



Discussion Summary One fisherman shared their experience with involvement in MPA monitoring efforts, and suggested additional opportunities where fishermen can be more involved in MPA monitoring, especially with regard to tagging and monitoring lobsters.

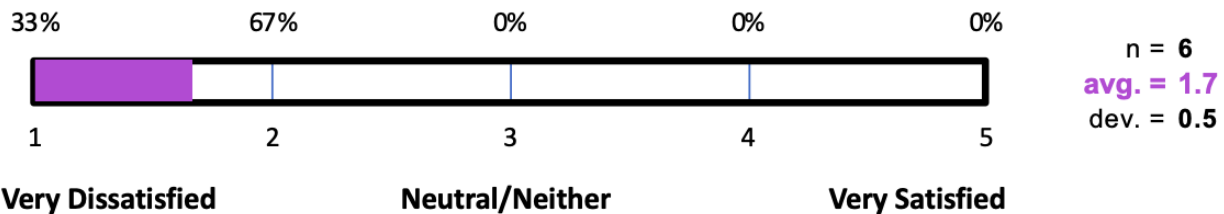
- They added how there are currently not many opportunities for collaboration with fishermen in MPA monitoring, and that they had a difficult time getting involved in lobster tagging studies. They believed MPA monitoring studies like those involving fish counts are done by unqualified and untrained individuals.

Participant Quotes

“Some [fishermen] got to tag lobsters [related to MPA monitoring]. We did a few; we tagged lobsters and we sized them.”

“There's not vessels of opportunity [for fishermen involvement in MPA monitoring]. I'm one of few vessels only because I lobby hard and I pushed hard to do a little bit of tagging.”

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



Discussion Summary Participants said they believe that MPA enforcement is unfair, and that the rules and regulations disproportionately affect commercial fishermen.

- Several participants described how fishermen are not allowed to fish or anchor in MPAs while other uses are allowed, including surfing and sand replenishment.
- One participant communicated how there is a lack of enforcement for some groups, such as recreational fishermen, including individuals who dive for lobster at night and others who use pole spears.
 - One participant explained that they were told this is due to budget concerns associated with not being able to pay the local wardens.
 - Another participant explained how, despite this lack of enforcement for some groups, commercial fishermen face the possibility of losing their fishing permits if they violate MPA regulations.
- One participant cited how commercial fishermen are penalized if their gear floats into an MPA even if they are not fishing in the MPA.
- Several participants said that local fishermen enforce each other and, as a result, have not violated MPA regulations.

Participant Quotes

“There's not been one commercial fisherman that's violated that MPA or has fished inside the closure [. . .] we've all abided by the rules and we're doing really well at doing it. And we get no reward for it, for being sustainable responsible fishermen [. . .] there's no pat on the back.”

“There's no enforcement. You can drive up to Laguna on a weekend night and I guarantee you're gonna watch a diver come out of the water with lobsters and run to his house.”

“I like the wardens, and we actually have a good relationship with them. And if you talk to them about [MPA enforcement], they'll say it's budget concerns and they can't get paid their overtime money if they go out there and work and try to catch someone. And that just seems pretty sad that the state is at that point that they won't give them the money to enforce the laws.”

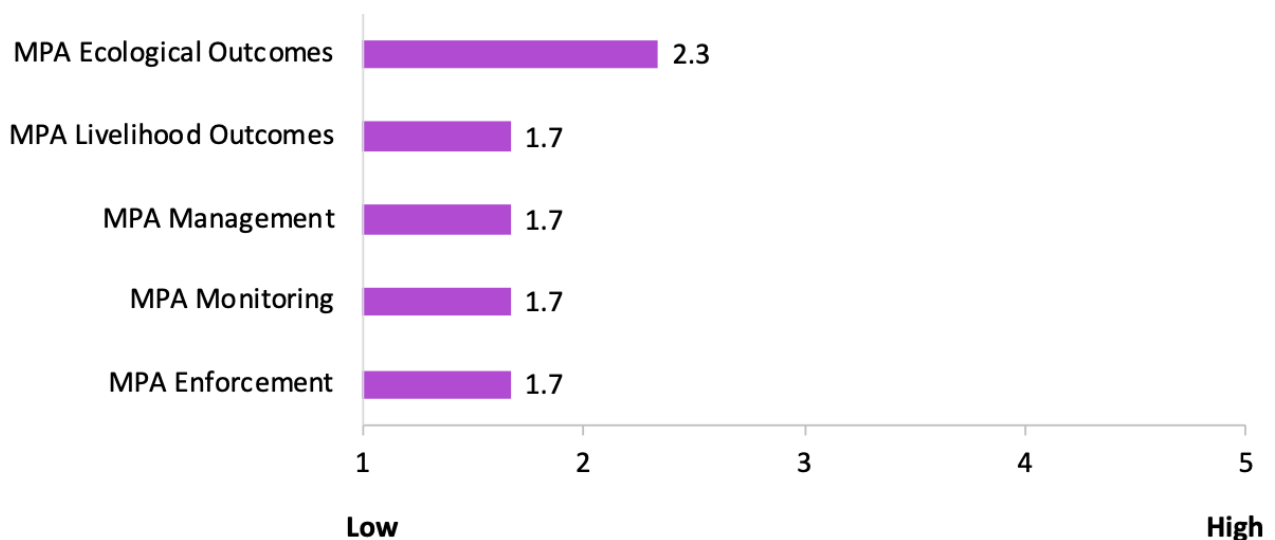
19. MPA Overall Any additional comments or concerns about the MPAs and MPA management you would like to communicate?

Discussion Summary One participant shared how the MPAs in the Orange County area not only decreased their fishing ability, but also their children’s opportunity to engage in recreational activities along Laguna Beach.

Participant Quotes

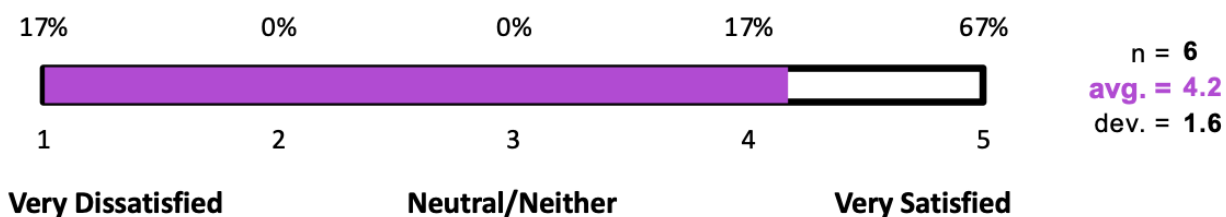
“I live in Laguna Beach and we live right by the beach, and not only did these MPAs take away fishing from us as as lobster fishermen, but it took away my children's opportunity to go down to the beach and go spear fishing or to go fishing off the beach - they can no longer do that here in Laguna Beach. That was kind of what Laguna Beach was built upon; it wasn't just artists, it was fishermen and people enjoying the beach for more than just sitting there with their frisbee.”

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



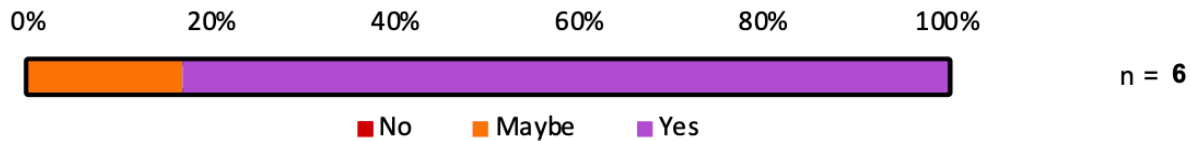
Feedback on Virtual Process

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 Participants said they appreciated the opportunity to have their voices heard through this focus group, and believed members of the Project Team were attentive and listened to what they had to say.

- One participant noted the timing of the focus group would have been better for fishermen if it was held earlier during the summer months and not around the opening of the lobster season.
- Another participant shared how they are willing to help their fellow fishermen and participate in these conversations in the future.

Participant Quotes

“I appreciate you [the Project Team] for reaching out and actually trying to do something [. . .] trying to get our voices heard a little bit.”

“This time of year, our time is very budgeted and this timing was pretty horrible, but I thank these guys for coming. [It would] have been nicer to have done this in a sooner time fashion.”