

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 Passenger Fishing Vessel Fishing Communities in Relation to the MPA Network

Members of Santa Barbara and Ventura/Channel Islands Area's Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessel Community

The Marine Protected Area (MPA) Human Uses Project Team¹ anticipates hosting over 25 virtual focus group conversations with commercial fishermen and Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessel (CPFV) owner/operators 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 CPFV fishing communities in California, including impacts from MPAs. A key goal of this study is to convey commercial fishermen's and CPFV owner/operators' 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 CPFV owner/operators were brought together to:

- provide their perspectives on their fishing community's health and well-being, including environmental conditions, income, allocation of resources, 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 commercial fishermen and CPFV owner/operators 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.

Regional CPFV Port Group: Santa Barbara and Ventura/Channel Islands Area Ports

Date: Thursday, March 11, 2021

Participants: Jason Diamond, John Fuqua, Shawn Steward

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.

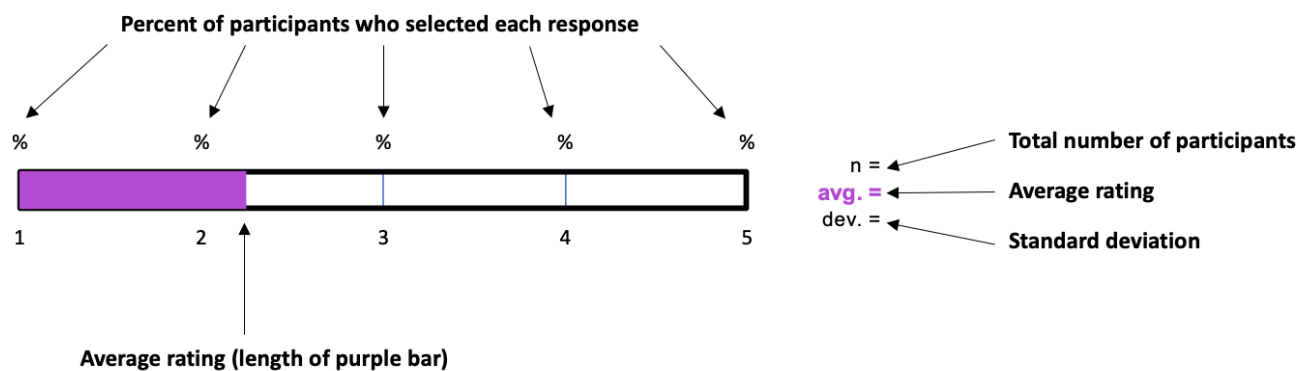
Overview

On March 11, 2021, three CPFV owner/operators out of the Santa Barbara and Ventura/Channel Islands area participated in the twenty-second focus group conversation overall/fifth CPFV focus group conversation. A detailed summary of the conversation is captured below, including:

- the final numerical 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 14 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 11 and 20 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:

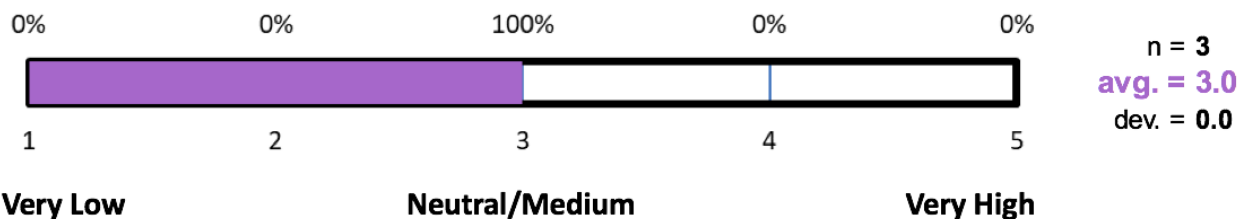
- [California Fisheries Data Explorer](#): This interactive site allows users to visualize commercial landings data (i.e., number of fishermen, pounds of fish landed, and revenue from fish landed) and CPFV logbook data (i.e., number of anglers, vessels, trips, and fish caught from specific fisheries and ports).
- [MPA Baseline Monitoring Program: South Coast](#)
 - [Summary of Findings from Baseline Monitoring of Marine Protected Areas, 2011–2015, South Coast](#)
- [CDFW's MPA Management webpage](#)
- [CDFW's MPA Monitoring webpage](#)
- [Sea Grant's Marine Protected Area Monitoring Program - current statewide monitoring projects, 2019-2021](#)

Our Project Team would like to express our appreciation to the three Santa Barbara and Ventura/Channel Islands area CPFV owner/operators—Jason Diamond, John Fuqua, and Shawn Steward—for their time and contributions to the focus group conversation.

Perceptions of Fishing Community Well-being

Well-Being, Environmental

1. Marine Resources - Present State Overall, how would you rate the current health and sustainability of the marine resources on which CPFV owner/operators from this region rely?



Very Low

Neutral/Medium

Very High

Discussion Summary Participants believed current marine resource health is mainly a factor of natural fluctuations within the species they primarily target, including sea bass, yellowtail, and groundfish.

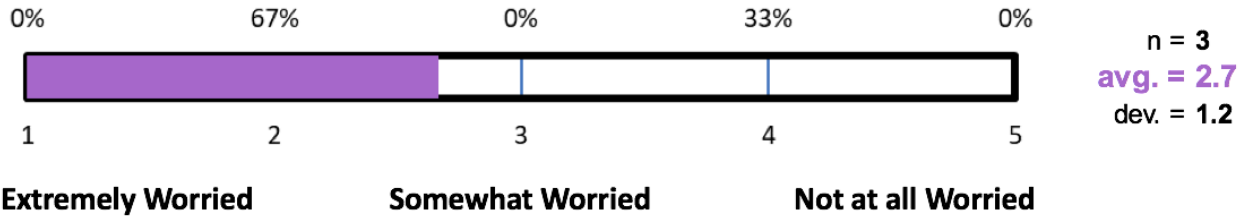
- One participant highlighted that fishermen have to navigate the natural fluctuations that exist with ocean and fishery cycles. However, this did not cause them to have concerns about marine resources' current health and sustainability in the local area.
- Several participants indicated marine resource health is more deficient in areas where there is more fishing pressure.

Participant Quotes

"And the reason I chose 'Neutral' is only based on natural fluctuations because of what we've seen over the last ten years with sea bass, yellowtail, [and] groundfish opportunities. But it's all based on natural fluctuations."

"I think it [marine resource health] has to do with those two different zones that we fish as well because [name redacted] is in an area that has a lot less pressure than the areas that [name redacted] and I fish. And so we see a little bit differently. But it is absolutely the same thing... he just doesn't have the pressure that we have."

2. Marine Resources - Future Concerns Overall, how worried are CPFV owner/operators from your region about the future long-term health and sustainability of the marine resource populations on which you rely?



Discussion Summary Overall, participants were less worried about the future health of the ocean and the fisheries they target. However, they expressed their concerns and fears about the future of the marine resources they rely on due to perceived mismanagement.

- One participant explained they are moderately worried about the future because of how the resources have been managed in recent years by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). They expressed concerns with CDFW using MPAs as a fisheries management tool, which they believe does not constitute good/adaptive management.
- One participant identified the political pressures from conservation organizations that advocate for more significant fisheries restrictions, leading to more mismanagement of the fisheries, as the biggest concern for the future of marine resources.

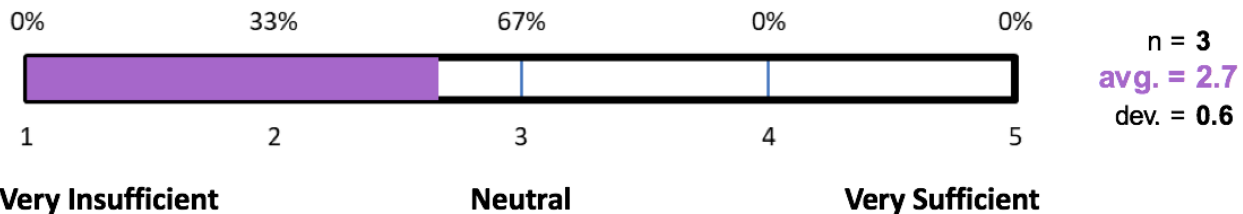
Participant Quotes

“Everybody took all the best spots we can possibly fish, right? I mean, if you took any more, there wouldn't be anything left. The literally best spots you could possibly fish on our coast have been taken. I don't think any more is going to get taken, so I'm not so worried about it at the moment, but I could be extremely worried if something came down the pike. [...] And that would mess up our sustainability.”

“...that ocean [is] awesome out there... you've never seen so many whales, dolphins, birds... the fishing's really good. [You] should check it out sometime, rather than just people just sitting around going 'the ocean [is] screwed.' It isn't! It's amazing!”

Well-Being, Economic

3. Income from Fishing Overall, how would you rate the income that CPFV owner/operators (including crew) from your port earn from fishing to support livelihoods?



Discussion Summary Participants discussed the trade-offs of making a living from fishing alone versus the need for additional income sources and increasing costs of doing business.

- One participant shared that crew members can typically make enough money to pay bills but struggle to save for the future; boat owners can make enough to put away as savings. However, one participant recently had to supplement their income with commercial lobster fishing to set aside money for savings.
- Multiple participants highlighted the imbalance between what CPFV owner/operators make as a living compared to the costs of doing business. Fuel, maintenance, crew wages, and materials were all identified as costs that continue to increase while revenue stays the same or decreases (i.e., due to COVID-19 impacts).

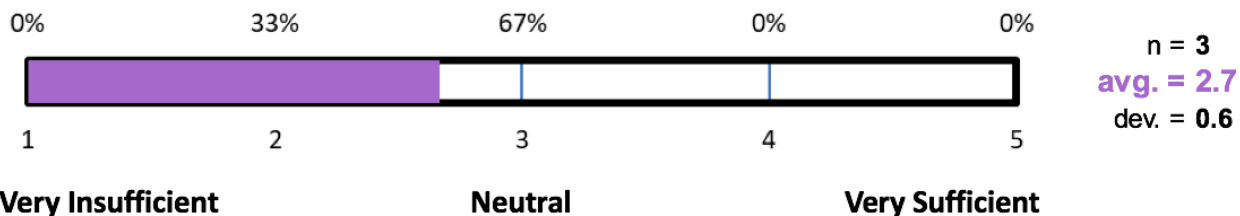
Participant Quotes

“I mean, as crew members, I think they make enough to pay the bills. Not so much put away for their futures. As far as myself, I mean, I can make a good livelihood, a decent livelihood - not a good livelihood, a decent livelihood - pay bills, put a bit of money away. As an owner... I've had to supplement [my income] by lobster fishing now... during the slower time of the year to make ends [meet], to make sure I could put away for my future down the road.”

“I chose ‘Insufficient’ just because of the cost of everything from fuel to parts and pieces, to the maintenance of boats and everything. I mean, that really digs into our day-to-day profit, including crew. And I'm not knocking crew because I feel crew should get fair pay. But with mandated minimum wage and stuff like that, we haven't been able to keep our prices at the same increase.”

“The cost of just steel for metalwork, which entails pumps and whatever else we do, went up 20 percent this year from what it has been. And that's just one item that we use. Metal is... every time something breaks, it's part of it. So that's just one item... the margins for profit - should nothing break during the day - is very, very slim.”

4. Allocation of Resources Overall, how would you rate the allocation of fish resources for CPFV fisheries in terms of supporting the CPFV industry?



Discussion Summary Participants expressed frustration with the management, particularly concerning MPAs, and allocation of several fisheries they rely on, specifically rockfish. For a more detailed discussion related to MPAs and how they have affected CPFV owner/operators' access to marine resources, please see the **Discussion Summary** on page 13.

- One participant stated the restrictions CPFV owner/operators face (e.g., Rockfish Conservation Areas (RCAs) and MPAs) make it difficult for them to access available resources and make a profit from fishing.
- One participant highlighted the need for a new vermilion rockfish stock assessment. They expressed frustration regarding the lack of urgency among agency leadership to conduct the

assessment, which has continued to greatly affect the CPFV fleet due to limited bag limits resulting from this inaction.

- One participant stated the CPFV industry has minimal impact on the resource due to management restrictions currently in place (e.g., limits on the number of hooks allowed per fishing line) and low bag limits.

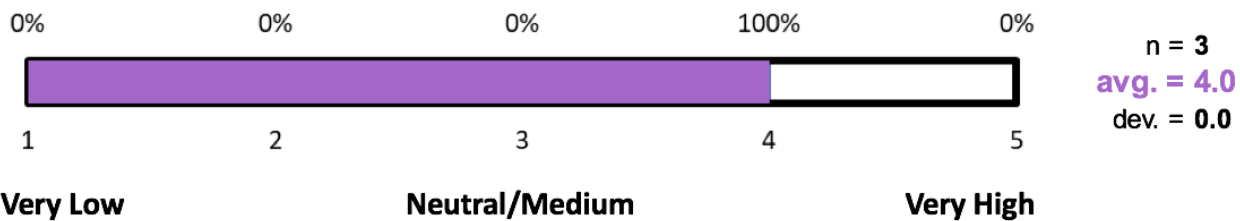
Participant Quotes

“Insufficient. You take MPAs, rockfish closures, or bag limits into consideration. I mean, the bottom line is the more restrictive [CDFW makes us]... the harder it is to do our job, the harder it is to make a profit from it and the more pressure [is] put in smaller areas.”

“[We’re seeing] the biggest explosion of reds [vermillion rockfish] out there, and we get to keep five. That is the strangest thing I've ever seen, you know, and there's also like, what, three thousand miles of closed area? I mean, full of fish. Kind of nuts, don't you think?”

“For God's sakes, we're only allowed two hooks. Our limits are very low. We're taking people fishing. Why do we get hammered so hard? We're not killing it. We're not killing the ocean, and it's not being killed. It's awesome out there. I don't understand what the concern is. That ocean is better than it's been in a long time out there... and I just can't understand why we keep getting hammered on stuff. We're allowed two hooks, two hooks! We used to be allowed like 15 or unlimited! Two. That's it. Everybody's allowed like ten fish of one species and another ten combined in others. I mean, big deal. We cannot hammer the ocean with what we can take. Sorry, we can't.”

5. COVID-19 Impacts *How disruptive do you think COVID-19 has been to your region’s CPFV fishing operations?*



Discussion Summary Participants said COVID-19 has highly disrupted their businesses. Impacts have included closing their operations down for extended periods, increased costs to purchase personal protective equipment (PPE), and a high degree of uncertainty that adds financial and mental pressure and hardship.

- One participant said they have experienced impacts related to changes in available crew members. The remaining staff has been working without days off, which has led to a high degree of burnout.
- One participant closed their operations for a few weeks over the December holidays to ensure the crew could have time to quarantine and spend time with their families.
- Several participants mentioned the increased costs they have incurred to pay for PPE (i.e., gloves, masks, foggers) which has led to thousands of dollars spent to keep their crew and clients safe.

- Since Ventura County manages Channel Islands Harbor, one participant shared that they have experienced delays in accessing docks, marinas, and landings in Ventura County due to county-level COVID-19 protocol.
- One participant highlighted the increase of private vessels purchased during the pandemic as another source of pressure on marine resources in the Santa Barbara and Ventura/Channel Islands area.

Participant Quotes

“The stress level with our crew members and everybody else is huge, man. I mean, it really sucks: are we going to get shut down any minute? What's going to happen? And we did get shut down. Then we got opened back up again. There are threats of shutting down again. I mean, that really wears on everybody for sure.”

“We've had to run short on crew members. We've had to stress our crew members out because of the work every single day. There is really not much time off... I mean, [the crew] just busted it out, you know. Thank God they did.”

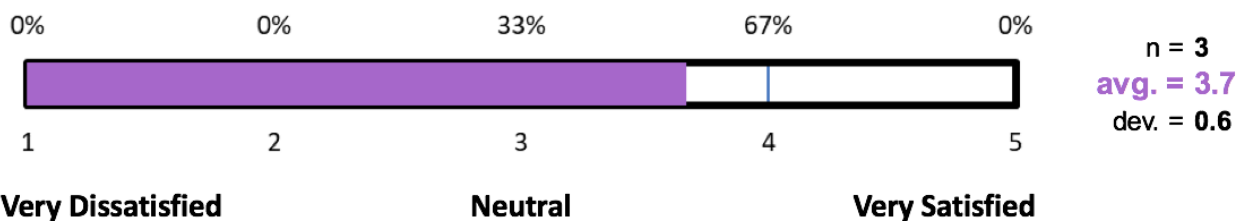
“I ended up shutting the boat down the second week of December just so [my crew] had time to quarantine so they could be with their families during Christmas and, you know, obviously lost revenue with all that and everything else. But it was definitely a tough thing, a tough decision to make.”

“I bought foggers, I got gallons of sanicide, I got gloves, boxes and boxes, which are really hard to find, and they ain't cheap anymore. Lots of masks. I mean, you name it, we got it, you know. I got a shed full of stuff. And we use that stuff daily, hourly, minute-ly sometimes. That stuff costs a fortune. You know, I can't tell you how many thousands of dollars [were] spent...”

“Now [from pandemic fatigue/things starting to open up again,] people are getting outside more. Now we have an increase in private boats, too. It's not just CPFVs that are affecting those other areas [outside of MPAs].”

Well-Being, Social/Political

6. Job Satisfaction Overall, how satisfied do you think CPFV owner/operators from the region are with their jobs?



Discussion Summary Participants shared they were generally satisfied with their jobs but expressed some dissatisfaction with consistently advocating for their jobs and future fishing opportunities due to current constraints on fishing access.

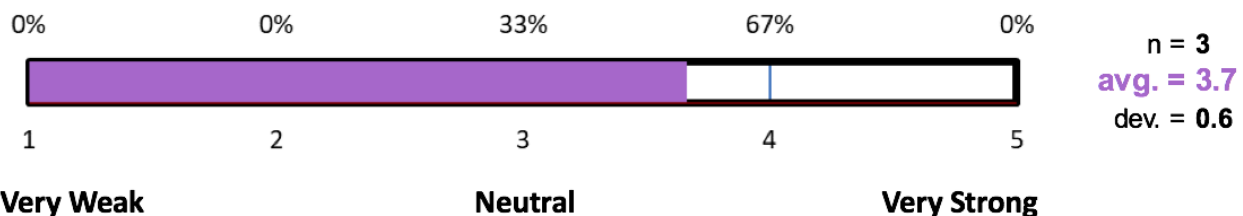
- One participant explained that they love their job. For over 40 years, they have been taking people to fish and offering a positive on-the-water experience and connection between customers and the state’s natural resources.
- One participant highlighted that while they are happy with their job, there are significant stresses due to the closing of sport fishing areas. The impacts of the closures coupled with weather constraints lead to additional pressure to ensure clients are satisfied customers.

Participant Quotes

“I'd go ‘Very Satisfied’ if it wasn't for this type of crap we have to do all the time, to be honest with you. [It’s] the fighting that sucks. Why can't we just take people fishing? It's not like we're killing the ocean or anything. We should be the last concern on everybody's mind. For some reason, we seem to be a frickin’ focal point, which I have no idea why. We take families and people fishing, you know... they catch a bag of fish... take them home for dinner. They love it. Why are we beating people up over this? I don't understand. [...] We just want to take people fishing and show them an amazing day on the ocean, that's all.”

“I'm happy with the job. I mean, I do love what I do, but there's stress there, and a lot of it comes back to the same thing that we have to deal with: weather, [and] we're limited to our little bubble of where we're actually allowed to fish. It really makes for very, very tough, stressful days. And so that'd be my main complaint, really. Weather is the weather, but being that we can't fish where we might have a lead of fish in or have an opportunity to put a good day together, it really makes it tough. That's definitely a stressful part of it.”

7. Social Relationships - Internal Overall, how would you rate the strength of social relationships (or social capital) among CPFV owner/operators in your region?



Discussion Summary Participants shared a range of views regarding the strength of social relationships between CPFV owner/operators in the Santa Barbara and Ventura/Channel Islands area. While fisherman-to-fisherman relationships are generally strong, participants felt that some CPFV owner/operators do not conduct themselves in a manner that helps to strengthen and uplift the sport fleet overall.

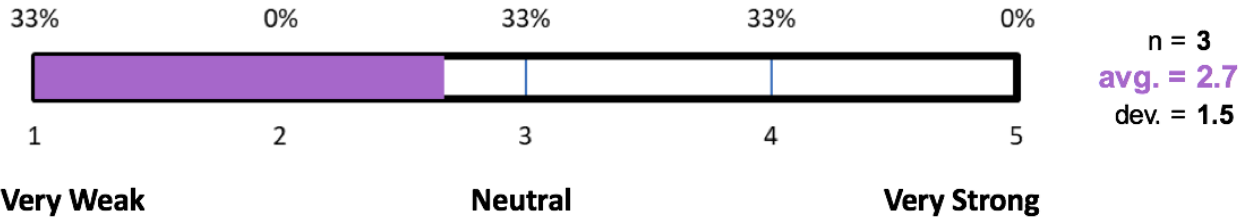
- One participant said they have made life-long friends in the industry but believed some CPFV owner/operators do not have the entire industry’s best interest in mind when making decisions on and off the water.
- One participant explained that individuals choose not to adhere to rules and regulations, affecting everyone in the industry.

Participant Quotes

“I mean, no matter what happens with us, we still come together, you know, no matter what.”

“I picked ‘Strong.’ And the only reason I didn't pick ‘Very Strong’ is because there are some owner/operators that we've dealt with in the last several years that [don't] have the group as a whole in their best interest, and I'm putting that in a polite way. [...] We've had certain individuals in our fleet that don't follow the rules, and when they don't follow the rules, it affects everyone.”

8. Social Relationships - External Overall, how would you rate the strength of relationships between CPFV owner/operators in your region and external groups who could help support industry needs?



Discussion Summary Participants offered a range of perspectives regarding the strength of relationships with external groups, from very weak to strong.

- One participant expressed frustration towards resource managers and decision-makers for not collecting, reviewing, and translating data to update the current management of rockfishes (e.g., bocaccio, cowcod, vermillion, etc.).
- One participant said the industry has solid communications with managers and decision-makers due to the Sportfishing Association of California (SAC) leadership, which helps to advance the industry’s priorities.
- One participant expressed concerns that the management of the CPFV fleet mirrors the commercial industry. They shared that rod and reel/charter fishing does not have as much of an impact on the resource and habitat as some commercial sectors do.
- One participant felt there are open lines of communication with managers on a surface level. However, they highlighted the need for improved relationships about establishing lasting trust and engaging in a meaningful exchange of listening and learning between fishermen and managers.

Participant Quotes

“Very weak, because they [managers] don't listen. And [name redacted] brought up a point with the vermilion, which is a red snapper: there's a strong population of that, and the data they've collected over the last several years, it's wrong. Right? It's wrong to the point where they say that we increased our catches by three hundred percent as a group, and they wouldn't listen to us to say that's an impossible feat. You know, even though we are aware that there's a lot of vermilion there. [...] When the bocaccio and the rockfish studies came down, we said there's plenty of the species of fish. There's no need to close it. Same thing with the cowcod. They said it's going to take 99 years [to recover]. Twenty, 15 years later, they say ‘oh, you guys were right.’ Time and time again, we've been proven correct in our assessment of what is there. And they never listen to it, not once did they listen to it, so that's why I put ‘Very Weak.’”

“I'm going to say our relationship is strong, but it doesn't mean anything's right about it. We have good communication with these people. SAC, our sportfishing association, is super strong - that's an external group, of course. But I'm just saying we do have good communication [with

managers]. The fact is they don't listen to us. We're out there every day. They're not. And the fact that that stock assessment did not get done right away is weird. I mean, like, why are you dragging your feet? They're not low on money. Oh, my gosh. The amount of fishing licenses, our fleet... it's unbelievable how much money they make off that.”

Well-Being, Overall/Additional Comments

9. 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 CPFV fisheries?*
- *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 offered additional suggestions for how managers could partner with the CPFV fleet, including more vital trust, relationships, and mutual understanding to promote more collaboration.

- One participant emphasized the importance of a proper stock assessment schedule that fishermen could track and rely on for the best available science and information.
- Several participants highlighted the importance of managers listening and trusting the information they receive from fishermen who are on the water every day and have valuable knowledge to share. One participant emphasized the importance of decision-makers to consider fishermen’s perspectives and expertise to help inform fisheries management decisions.
 - A participant shared concerns about the disconnect between management decisions and what fishermen are experiencing on the water (i.e., the abundance of certain species).
 - Several participants encouraged resources managers, decision-makers, and researchers to involve the sport fleet when interpreting and analyzing data.
- One participant encouraged CDFW to conduct more data collection as an agency (i.e., rely less on outside research groups). Additionally, they believed CDFW should stand behind their work and avoid the possibility of external entities influencing available data.

Participant Quotes

“I think a proper stock assessment schedule should be done. That's for sure.”

“State, local agencies: the agencies need to listen; they just need to listen to us. And I'm not saying they don't listen to us verbatim, but there needs to be more cooperation and understanding...”

“They expected us to catch other fish. They expect us to catch other fish like the big Boscós, the chilies. Maybe more grouper, stuff like that. They expected us to catch more of that stuff rather than [vermillion rockfish].”

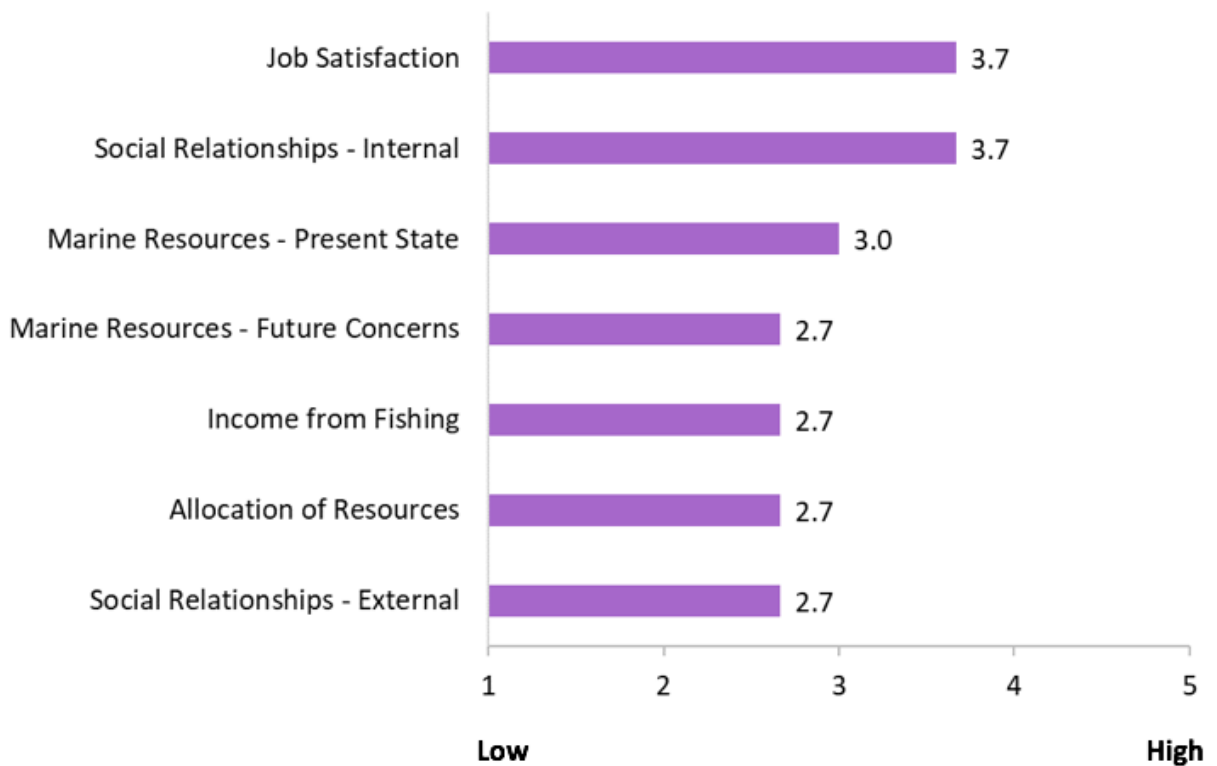
“That would be way cool: that a group [of researchers or resource managers] would say ‘hey, are we looking at this right in the eyes of a fisherman or in the eyes of the group that uses it?’

We've never had that [type of engagement]; we've never had anything like that... no, they've never said 'what do you guys think about this?' So that would be cool."

"And I also think that [CDFW], they need to stand behind their work and not let outside influences skew their... mess stuff up. [...] Sure, charter us, use us more often... [but] I don't see [managers] doing [on the water research]."

Perceptions of Fishing Community Well-being, Average Responses for Questions 1-4, 6-8

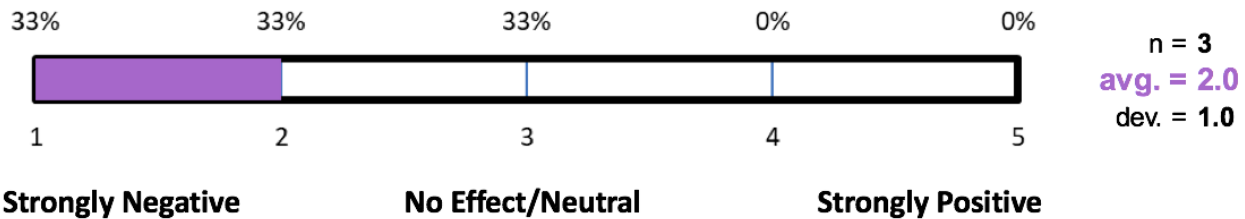
(Note: The following figure does not include the average rating for question 5. COVID-19 Impacts.)



Perceptions of MPAs

MPAs, Outcomes/Effects

10. MPA Ecological Outcomes How would you rate the effect that the California MPA network has had on marine resource health in your area?



Discussion Summary Participants shared an array of views about the effect that the MPA network has had on the health of marine ecosystems in the Santa Barbara and Ventura/Channel Islands area, ranging from strongly negative to no effect.

- Several participants highlighted the difficulty of quantifying the effects of MPAs on marine resource health without access to MPA monitoring information. Acquiring this information could help fishermen understand what is happening inside MPAs, particularly regarding the abundance, size, and density of priority species.
 - One participant who has participated in local MPA monitoring studies shared their observations of marine resource health inside versus outside MPAs, including differences in fish abundance. They acknowledged that fish tend to reside in areas where there is less pressure, such as MPAs. However, they felt the areas that remain open to fishing are experiencing heavier fishing pressure because there are such limited areas to fish. If more areas were open and available, fishermen would rotate between areas and mitigate their potential impact.
 - Another participant stated they did not see differences in marine resource health inside versus outside MPAs.
- One participant stated they are not seeing any single species doing better than another due to the MPAs, nor are they observing the spillover effect promoted during the MPA implementation process. They felt the protected areas negatively affected fish stocks because of increased fishing pressure outside of the MPAs.
 - While recognizing the potential for spillover, one participant questioned if fish were moving out of the MPAs since fish prefer to stay in larger schools (i.e., under increased protection). The participant imagined higher concentrations of certain fish species in the closures.

Participant Quotes

“I can't say if it's [the MPA network] done anything because I can't fish there anymore.”

“I put ‘Negative,’ but you can't quantify that. There's no way that anyone can quantify what effect [the MPA network] has had [on marine resource health] outside of [an MPA] because you don't know where we would be now without them.”

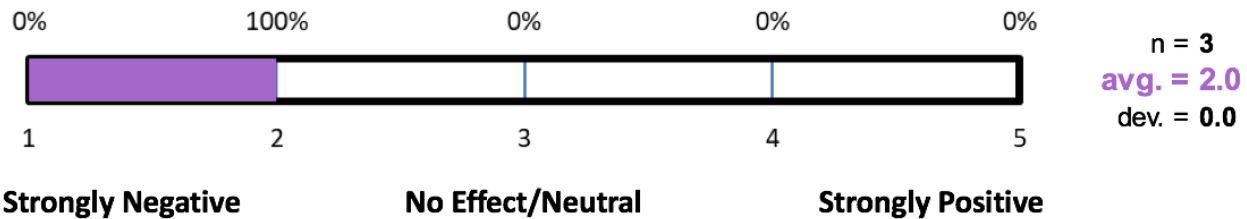
“So it had to be a negative effect because [the MPAs] put more pressure outside [the closures].”

“No, the spillover effect never happens. That would be the exact question that you're asking: are we seeing increased stocks because these areas have been protected? No.”

“So I can honestly say that there’s definitely a stronghold of fish in the closure. Do they move? Absolutely. We know that. But do they reside more where there's less pressure? Yes. But what had happened is, when we lost those areas, the other side of the island got absolutely pummeled because that's the only place we could fish.”

“For us, with the monitoring and stuff like that that we do... there's not much of a difference between inside and out, really. Not much of a difference at all. There really isn't. And some days there is a difference. Some days there isn't, 'cuz fish move. They got tails. They swim around a little bit, you know. I'll fish ridges in the closure and out of the closure. Some days it's going to be really good in that closure. Some days it can be better outside the closure. Those fish move around a little bit, or that area is fired up or something like that or whatever. And I see no management out there. I see no other boats checkin’ out... anything. You know, I see nobody. There is nobody checking MPAs. Period. Basically, they're closed off, and that's it.”

11a. MPA Livelihood Outcomes Overall, how would you rate the effect that the MPA network has had on the ability for CPFV owner/operators from your region to earn a living?



Discussion Summary Please see the **Discussion Summary** following question 11b. *MPA Effects - Overall* which summarizes the conversations related to questions 11a and 11b.

11b. MPA Effects - Overall What other types of effects or impacts have CPFV owner/operators from your region experienced from MPA implementation?

Discussion Summary Participants rated MPA network impacts on fishermen’s livelihoods as unfavorable. They identified adverse effects from MPAs, including limiting the on-the-water experience for their customers and longer travel time to fishing grounds.

- Several participants discussed the economic impacts of MPAs on their livelihoods and business models, including increased fuel costs due to needing to travel more considerable distances on a single-day trip due to MPAs placed close to ports/harbors. Multiple participants spoke about the increases in their emissions as a result of extended travel time.
- Participants discussed their shared concerns about the impact their increased overhead would have on their customers, who are bearing the burden of increases in ticket prices/day rates.
- One fisherman shared their experience of leaving the Santa Barbara and Ventura/Channel Islands area when the MPAs first went into effect due to economic hardship. They worked on several fishing vessels in California and out of state to fish year-round and make a viable

income. Once they had a family, they had to find another primary non-fishing job to make ends meet. This participant felt concerned about the feasibility of their son becoming a fisherman.

- One participant shared that there are generally fewer concerns with MPA impacts in years where the fish are moving outside the closures and are accessible at the surface. However, during years/seasons when the fish are at the bottom and not moving across reefs, the MPAs directly affect their ability to make a living.

Participant Quotes

“I mean, the fuel, the cost increase of everything, you know, and just the added pressure outside the MPAs, I mean, there's been no positive influence on the sportfishing community by MPAs.”

“I'm not running 13 miles anymore. I'm running 26, 30, 30 plus miles to go fishing now. I'm burning two, three times the fuel that I would normally burn.”

“And also, we don't carry rich people; we carry, you know, guys that work for a living, kind of like ourselves who have a, they have a job. Some people don't have a job. We carry people that can't go out in their own boat and go fishing by themselves and do all that stuff. We carry people that want to come out and catch a nice bag of fish and have a good time at a decent price. If we priced ourselves much higher, people wouldn't come.”

“I'm not sure I want my son at 15 right now to be following in my footsteps in this because I see how hard it is to make a living right now. I'd rather have him go fishing because he wants to go fishing, not because he has to.”

MPAs, Discussion of Specific MPAs

12. MPA Effects - MPA Specific Which MPAs have had the most impact on CPFV owner/operators from your region and why?

Discussion Summary Participants shared that MPAs in their area have restricted much of their fishing grounds. While all of the MPAs in the area have affected CPFV owner/operators, participants highlighted the MPAs located on the Northern Channel Islands as well as those just north/south of the Santa Barbara and Channel Islands harbors. Participants also noted that before MPA implementation, charter boats did not spend all of their time in the areas now restricted to sport fishing. Instead, charter boats visited these areas in rotation or at certain times of the year to reduce pressure in other areas. Due to the MPAs, this seasonal rotation of fishing effort is no longer available.

- *Anacapa Island State Marine Reserve (SMR), Anacapa Island State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA), Footprint SMR, Scorpion SMR, Gull Island SMR, and Carrington Point SMR:* Participants reported these MPAs were prime fishing grounds for Santa Barbara and Channel Islands-based CPFV owner/operators. Closing these areas to sportfishing has had damaging impacts on the local fleet. One participant highlighted that before the state MPAs went into effect, most of these areas provided charter boats with accessible fishing grounds that consistently made a successful day-trip for passengers.

- *San Miguel Island MPAs (Harris Point SMR, Richardson Rock SMR, and Judith Rock SMR):* San Miguel Island was an important area to the local CPFV fleet before the MPA designations. One participant stated that day boats and charter boats with overnight accommodations would frequent the island before the MPAs.
- *Point Conception SMR:* One participant expressed frustration with the MPA at Point Conception now that they have an overnight boat that could accommodate passengers to make the more extended trip. Since this area is no longer accessible, they have not traveled to this area.
- *Naples SMCA:* One participant shared this MPA has restricted their access to a productive mainland area that would provide customers with a range of fishing experiences on a shorter day trip. Because of this, they have had to change their business model (i.e., length of trip offered to customers and associated costs).
- *Point Dume SMR and SMCA:* Before these MPAs, participants noted that charter boats from Santa Barbara and Channel Islands Harbors would travel to Point Dume since it provided productive mainland fishing grounds for sea bass and pelagic finfish.

Participant Quotes

“And, you know, here's something else to pinpoint that needs to be brought up about MLPAs and the lack of us having abilities to fish in those: we didn't live there all the time. We used those as part of our repertoire for making the day. Like [name redacted] said, in the springtime, we would spend some time on the Footprint. In the fall, we would spend a lot more time on the front side of Anacapa. In midsummer, we'd be at the Scorpion closure down the coast to Point Dume; we didn't live in these places. [...] We just used some part of it. And that's what we were getting at, is when you take chunks like that out of your greater overall area, you put more pressure everywhere else...”

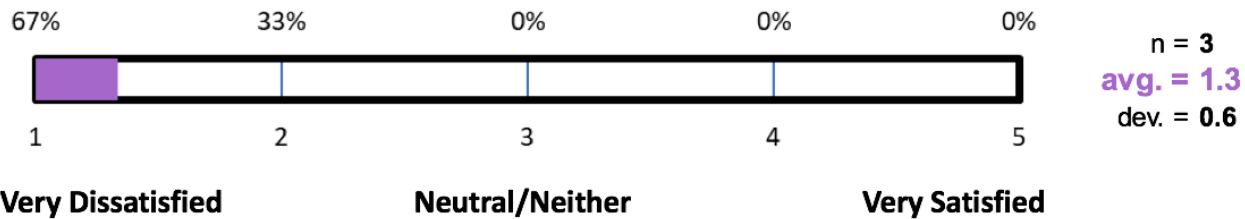
“The Carrington [Point SMR], the Gull [Island SMR], the Footprint [SMR], and the frontside of Anacapa [Island]: those were places you can just go to. You knew you could go there and make your living.”

“The bottom structure in those areas [Carrington Point SMR, Gull Island SMR, Footprint SMR, and the Anacapa Island closures] and what it gave us for options was huge. And when they took it and just put all the pressure on everything else, and now it's paying the price.”

“I mean, [losing] Naples really sucks more than anything... we can't Calico bass fish anymore. That was so good, and I can't fish it anymore. It's just a stupid little reef out in the middle of nowhere that comes up to like, I don't know, what, 30 feet or something. Yeah, I mean, it was awesome, covered in kelp; it was really cool. Caught a lot of Calico and other stuff, you know, some white sea bass, halibut, yellowtail, stuff like that, but that's gone. So I just don't do that anymore. I don't carry surface fishermen anymore.”

MPAs, Management

13. MPA Management Overall, how satisfied do you think CPFV owner/operators from your region are with the management of the MPA network?



Discussion Summary Participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the management of the MPA network. There was general confusion on MPA goals and the evaluation of MPA success, and concerns about the MPA planning process for the Northern Channel Islands.

- One participant felt the MPA designation process was highly politicized and that there is an inaccurate picture of the effects MPAs have had on the fishing industry. They highlighted the process did not consider sufficient socioeconomic information when putting MPA restrictions into place, specifically the cumulative impacts of other fishing restrictions/area closures already in place.
 - Another participant expressed concerns about the placement of MPAs in high-value areas close to the port.
- Another participant expressed frustration that CDFW did not reevaluate the existing Northern Channel Islands MPAs established before the statewide MPA network during the South Coast planning process for the coastal MPAs. They recounted an understanding among fishermen that CDFW would update the Northern Channel Islands MPAs to align with the same size/spacing requirements as the coastal MPAs that would eventually make up the statewide MPA network.
- Participants shared they are unclear of how CDFW and other decision-makers have defined the goals, metrics, and indicators of success for MPA management. One participant shared they would like to see management changes, such as rotating sport fishermen’s access in MPAs, to relieve fishing pressure on other areas.

Participant Quotes

“... what I'm concerned about is how do they quantify the socioeconomic impact of just the MPAs during those data years (1992-2020) without taking into consideration the impacts of the rockfish closures. Because they're hand in hand, all that stuff works together. So that's what I mean, there's no single data point that can give you what the MPAs cost the fishermen or didn't cost the fishermen because you have rockfish closures, you have more restrictions, you have things opening up, you have years of phenomenal yellowtail fishing or surface fishing in the Southern California Bight. And there's a lot of things, other than just logbook data and commercial landings.”

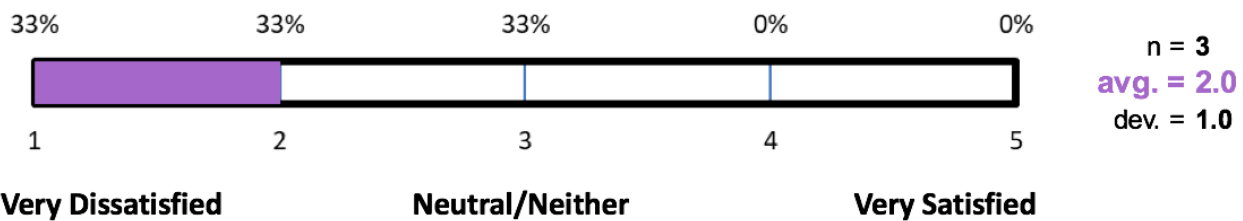
“When they made the MPAs at the islands, they did not take the socioeconomic impacts into consideration. They made them. They made them close [nearby]. They sat us down in a room and said ‘what can you guys not live without?’ We all put it on a chart. And two-thirds of what we put on the chart is what they took [...] there's no cooperation with us.”

“You know, we don't want to be politicians, right? Last thing I wanted to be was a politician, that's for sure.”

“Well, I think it touches on what... [CDFW's] goals were. A lot of it was not just cowcod, but rockfish in general, bocaccio, stuff like that. But you don't see any of that stuff in the Scorpion closure. You never saw any of those things in the Scorpion closures, like certain places they put those [MPAs] didn't make sense for their overall goal when they put all the other blocks in there. Fairness? I mean, I didn't think it was fair when they did it the way they did it.”

“... you really see the difference between the side of the island [Anacapa] that gets all the pressure and the side of the island that has been closed. And that's great for management reasons. But the way I see it is maybe open something else up and give something else a break, because what it has done is when all those closures went into effect, it just dogpiled boats into a smaller area. And it kind of defeats the purpose of the thing.”

14. MPA Monitoring Overall, how satisfied do you think CPFV owner/operators from your region are with the monitoring of the MPA network?



Discussion Summary Participants cited the lack of clear monitoring goals and managers’ failure to communicate information from monitoring studies as significant sources of dissatisfaction with the monitoring of the MPA network.

- Participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to be involved in a monitoring project studying MPA impacts on marine resources inside and outside the MPAs around Santa Barbara and Channel Islands Harbors, including the Northern Channel Islands.
 - One participant shared their support for using on-the-water monitoring projects to assess MPAs rather than relying solely on logbook and/or landings data.
- One participant expressed concern that, even with their participation in the monitoring work, they remained unclear about the project’s goals and how decision-makers will use the collected information.
- One participant stated that aside from the research they are involved in, they don’t see other monitoring work or other research boats on the water. One participant reiterated that they would like to see CDFW more involved in MPA-related research.
- Two participants suggested monitoring occur more than once a year to capture the monthly and seasonal changes on the water.

Participant Quotes

“[...] I mean, I'm happy about the fact we get the opportunities to help do some of the science. I would like to see more of it be in effect for what we're trying to achieve here.”

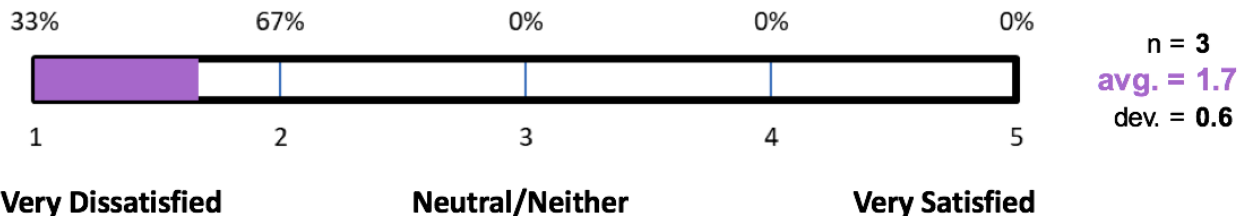
“I'm glad we're doing these rod and reel samples with the Caselle labs and the Mirage, and the Amigo and the Newport guys. That, to me, is the right way to do it: rod and reel, as opposed to just the landings from the commercial guys, because I think it's two different methods of fishing [commercial versus CPFV], basically is what it boils down to.”

“There's been no communication, right? There was no baseline study of what was there prior to the MPAs taking place. So you have nowhere to know, obviously. And then opportunities for involvement? Obviously, there's some because the guys do some research with it; I know the other guys do, but what goals? There's never been anything put out to us CPFV guys [about] what the goals of these are. So the only goal we know is to keep us out.”

“The other thing is like there's scientific stuff, they do these studies with [names redacted], but they do them a couple of times a year in the summertime. They should be done monthly.”

“Things change so much in our seasons, I mean, we see it: things sometimes just don't bite at certain times of the year. We know that you go up the north side later in the year, and you can go up the back in the summer - it's just always different. So we get the same data at the same time of year. That's great for that area, maybe. But if you did that same type of data and try to do it somewhere else, you might not have the same results. The data would change.”

15. MPA Enforcement Overall, how satisfied do you think CPFV owner/operators from your region are with the enforcement of MPAs?



Discussion Summary All participants were dissatisfied with CDFW’s enforcement of MPAs.

- Participants expressed concern about the number of private recreational fishing boats they observe fishing in local MPAs. They shared their frustrations with CDFW Law Enforcement Division (LED) not responding to calls from CPFV owner/operators reporting vessels in closed areas.
- One participant highlighted the negative impacts that the entire sportfishing community experiences when a select few choose to fish in MPAs. They acknowledged that many charter boats “fish the line”; however, they expressed concern for those choosing to fish in the MPAs to generate a more significant profit without any LED repercussions.
- One participant said the local CPFV fleet does an excellent job of self-policing themselves, using peer pressure to encourage owner/operators to follow MPA rules.

Participant Quotes

“I just see a lot of other people fishing in those closures sometimes. Not me: private boats out there fishing. They ain't gonna get in any trouble. There's a bunch of illegal charter boat operations running out of our harbor right now fishing in those places. They just fish right in the middle of that sucker. It's crazy. And nobody's there to bust them. Even if I called somebody,

there ain't nobody around to go get them, it's not like you can dial 911 and go 'there's a person fishing in the closure.'”

“I see enforcement at [Santa Cruz] island from the Park Service, but not from Fish and Wildlife. And we have instances where people fish - other CPFVs - in years past have fished in those closures a lot. I'm not going to say that I'm perfect, that I haven't ever pushed a line, because I have. But when guys make a living in those things, it's a problem.”

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

Discussion Summary Participants reiterated their concerns and frustrations about the MPA network and MPA management, including the lack of adaptive management of the Northern Channel Islands MPAs.

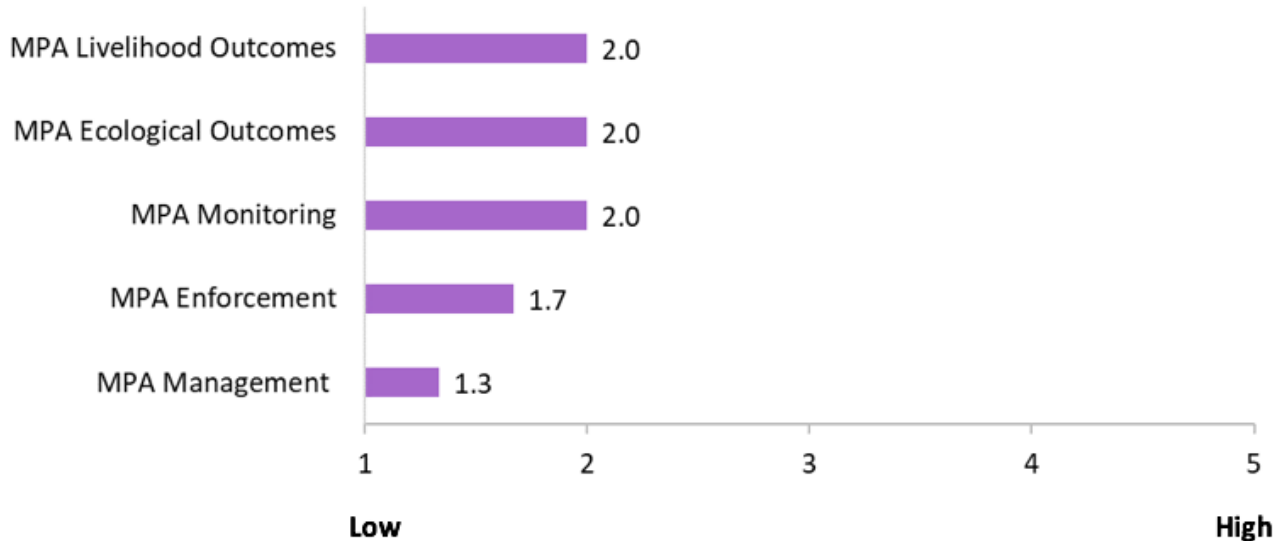
- Participants emphasized the negative impacts of MPAs on their operations, livelihoods, and overall well-being.
- One participant stated they could live with the current MPAs. However, they emphasized that any increase in current MPA sizes or creation of additional MPAs would have detrimental impacts.

Participant Quotes

“They've all impacted us. We just got done talking about that, didn't we? I mean, they literally have all impacted us. We can't fish there anymore. We have to burn more fuel. We have to go more places. I mean, we're out there longer. Sometimes it's really gnarly. You know, it's not that cool. That's all. It's not cool.”

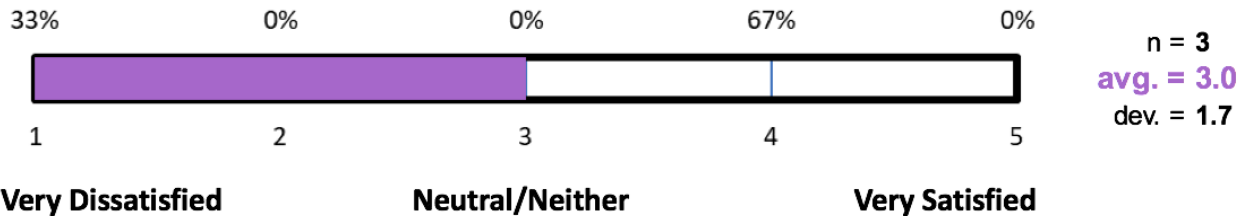
“The other thing is it [the MPA network] has depleted stocks in other places. In the grand scheme, we told them when they were making them 'you cannot close large areas and not expect increased pressure in other areas.'”

Perceptions of MPAs, Average Responses for Questions 10-11a, 13-15



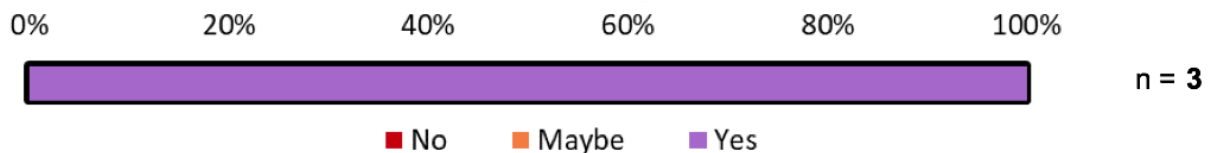
Feedback on Virtual Process

17a. Satisfaction with the Virtual Process Overall, how satisfied were you with your experience participating in this virtual focus group?



17b. 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 purple bar indicates the percent of participants who responded 'Yes' to question 17b. If participants responded 'No' or 'Maybe,' a red or orange bar would appear, respectively.)



17c. 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' satisfaction with the virtual process ranged from dissatisfied to satisfied. However, all participants expressed a willingness to participate in a virtual focus group discussion in the future.

- One participant shared that they tried to secure additional participation from other CPFV owner/operators. However, without the explicit endorsement of this project by SAC, sport fishermen were reluctant to participate.
- Participants expressed appreciation for the neutrality of the Project Team and the facilitation of the focus group discussion.

Participant Quotes

"When people call me, always my first thought is I'm skeptic[al] and I usually get a hold of the sport fishing [association - SAC]... I'll say 'hey, this is what the people are asking [the CPFV fleet to participate in].' I'm not sure if we want to go down this road because, like we said, [these types of discussions] always come back and bite us."