

## 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 Santa Cruz's Commercial Fishing Community*

The Marine Protected Area (MPA) Human Uses Project Team<sup>1</sup> anticipates hosting over 25 virtual focus group conversations with fishermen throughout California from July 2020 through Spring 2021.<sup>2</sup> 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](mailto:hello@mpahumanuses.com).

**Port: Santa Cruz**

**Date: Tuesday, December 8, 2020**

**Participants: Kevin Butler, John Koeppen, Khevin Mellengers, Tim Obert, David Toriumi**

---

<sup>1</sup> Consisting of Humboldt State University researchers, Ecotrust, and Strategic Earth Consulting

<sup>2</sup> 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.

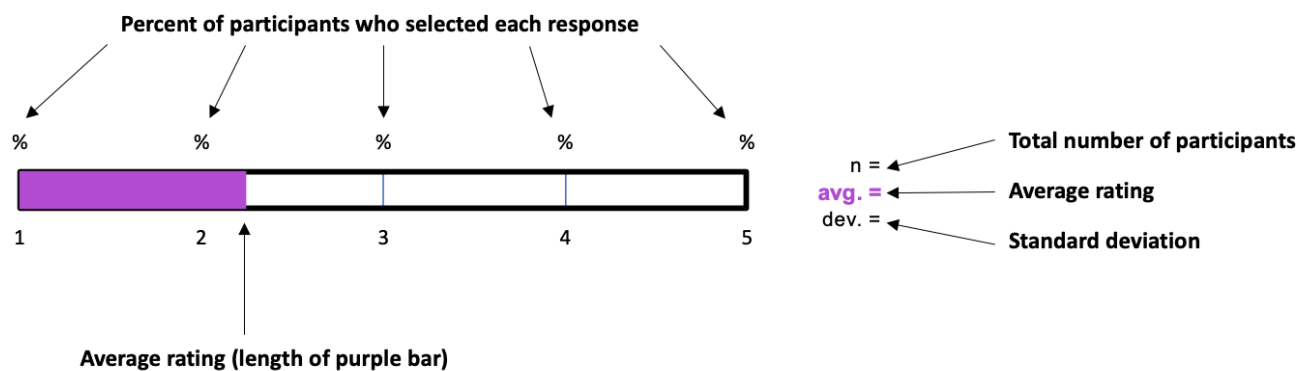
## Overview

On December 8, 2020, five commercial fishermen operating out of Santa Cruz participated in the fourteenth focus group conversation. A detailed summary of the conversation is captured below, including:

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

## Guidance for Interpreting Figures

There are 16 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 17 and 26 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:

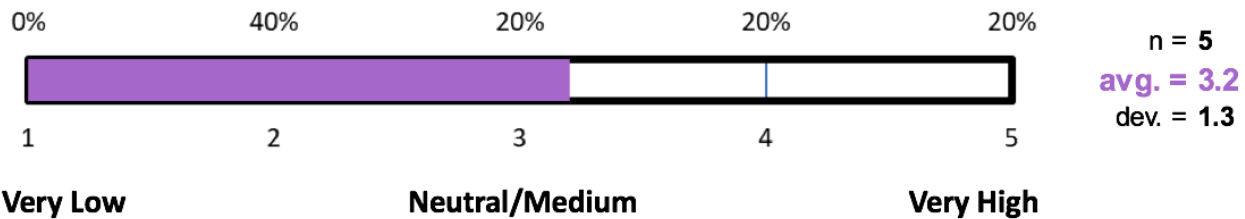
- [California Fisheries Data Explorer](#): This interactive site allows users to visualize commercial landings data (i.e., number of fishermen, pounds of fish landed, and revenue from fish landed) and CPFV logbook data (i.e., number of anglers, vessels, trips, and fish caught from specific fisheries and ports).
- [MPA Baseline Monitoring Program: Central Coast](#)
  - [Summary of Results from Baseline Monitoring of Marine Protected Areas 2007–2012, Central Coast](#)
- [Marine Protected Area Monitoring Program, 2019–2021](#)

Our Project Team would like to express our appreciation to the five Santa Cruz fishermen—Kevin Butler, John Koeppen, Khevin Mellengers, Tim Obert, and David Toriumi—for their time and contributions to the focus group conversation.

## Perceptions of Fishing Community Well-being

### Well-Being, Environmental

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



**Discussion Summary** Participants expressed a wide range of perspectives when considering marine resource health. Several participants highlighted that specific species are thriving, while other participants shared broader concerns about the current health of California fisheries, habitat, and water quality.

- Several participants shared that certain stocks—specifically sablefish, halibut, rockfish, and salmon—are rebuilt due to management restrictions such as Rockfish Conservation Areas (RCAs) and MPAs. One participant scored the current health and sustainability of marine resources as ‘Very High’ when considering fish size, weight, and abundance.
  - Several participants highlighted the lack of opportunity to access abundant resources as a result of restrictions. One participant suggested that because stocks are healthy, fishermen should be provided the opportunity to harvest these resources, including in areas currently closed to fishing.
- Several participants expressed concerns about the current health of marine resources. One participant’s perspective that California fisheries are unsustainable is informed by their involvement with the Pacific Fisheries Management Council.
  - One participant reflected they were uncertain of water quality and habitat health. Another participant conveyed the complexities of inland water use and the impacts on salmon populations.

### Participant Quotes

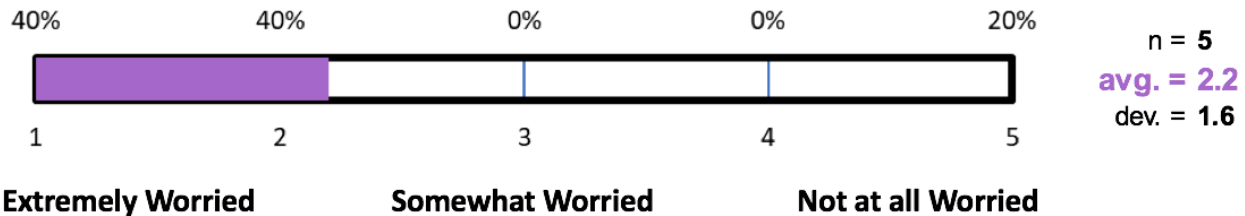
“So I said very high abundance, diversity, size, weight [...] The only one I was kind of iffy on was maybe water quality and habitat. [...] But we feel like the stocks are rebuilt and that we should have a chance to get them. The stocks that we are able to get right now, the halibut, the cod, the salmon, there's a lot of them around. We're having good seasons.”

“Our resources have rebounded. Salmon is another thing that's so complicated with water and where they spawn. We don't have any control over that, it seems.”

“I look at it overall and I consider I'm primarily a salmon fisherman and I also fish open access rockfish. You know, being involved in the [Pacific Fisheries Management Council] process, you talk with people on all the different fisheries and we really are in bad shape. [...] Quality overall

is not low [...] when they look at a small sector of the fishery. But if you look at that overall, we're really in trouble."

**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** Several participants expressed concerns about future access to resources, while others identified changing ocean conditions as their most significant concern regarding the future health and sustainability of local marine resources.

- Several participants expressed worries about the impacts of changing ocean conditions on the future health of fisheries.
- Several participants shared they were not worried about the future, based on the current status of stocks, which they perceive as healthy. However, they highlighted the uncertainty around future management decisions as a concern.
  - Several participants expressed worries that future restrictions will limit access to marine resources, specifically the Dungeness crab, salmon, and hook-and-line fisheries.

**Participant Quotes**

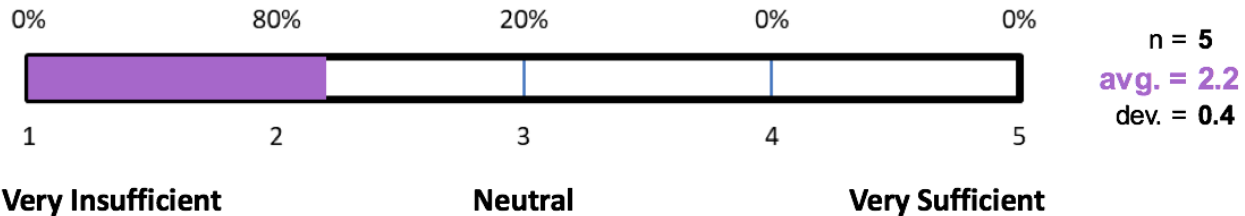
"I do have some concerns for the future that we may reach some type of tipping point when it comes to ocean acidification and stuff like that. I think we've all noticed that the world has been a changing place. I don't know how that's going to relate back over to the species that we rely on. And I think the one thing about California is that we're kind of cutting edge. We're very scrutinized and we're probably the most sustainable state on any of the seaboards, really, when it comes to what we're allowed to do and whatnot."

"If we look at the future, with global warming, I'm very concerned. [...] And I look at the crab guys this year wondering if they're even going to get to go crab fishing. And looking at salmon, [it has] been restricted for years and will likely be as restricted this year as it was last year. And I look to the future, all I see is more restrictions and more interest groups taking more of our time, whether it be the southern resident killer whale or Center for Biodiversity suing the [California Department of Fish Wildlife] over access to the crab fishery. And so, again, as I look at it in the broadest perspective as I can, and I'm not feeling comfortable with it."

"I'm not worried at all [about the future health of marine resources] because that kind of goes with the healthy stocks we're seeing now. From what we see, it looks good, so I'm not really worried. I'd be more worried about getting to access them."

## Well-Being, Economic

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



**Discussion Summary** Participants shared their dissatisfaction regarding access to marine resources, citing management restrictions as the primary barrier. Several participants made connections between limited access to resources and the decline of artisanal fishing operations.

- One participant shared that access is sufficient for some fisheries, specifically open access fisheries and those fisheries that are executed in close proximity to the port. However, they highlighted the need for increased access for fisheries conducted in deeper waters further offshore in order to meet their full quota potential.
  - One participant suggested that even if additional access to resources is allocated, current area restrictions (i.e., RCAs, MPAs) and financial barriers (i.e., increased travel costs to fish open areas and fill quotas) inhibit the ability to harvest a profitable catch.
- One participant described the high cost of permits, specifically Dungeness crab, as a barrier to entering the commercial fishing industry.
  - One participant suggested the high cost of permits would result in a reduction in permits in Monterey Bay ports. They expressed concerns that without the support and opportunity offered by retiring fishermen willing to sell their permits at a reasonable price, they would not have been able to enter into specific fisheries.
- Several participants described how small boats can't compete with the larger scale operations and competing prices with international markets. They expressed concerns that declining access threatens the long-term viability of the local small boat fleet.
- One participant expressed interest in using available fisheries information, including the data compiled as part of this project via the [California Fisheries Data Explorer](#), to help inform fishermen and decision-makers when considering making increases to access.

### Participant Quotes

"Some of the open access [...] guys do great. The halibut guys, they've been doing great and sand dabbing and sea bass and other [resources that are] kind of close to home is what's mainly targeted. But we need to be able to open up the deeper stuff so we can actually go out and fill our quotas so we don't have to go back to construction, or whatever, for the mainstay."

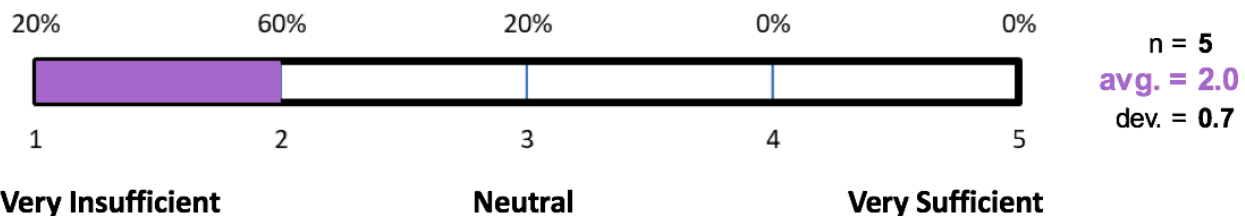
"For me to go get my [deeper nearshore] quota, I got to do literally a 100 mile round trip down to Big Sur and back just to go get what I can. I can literally get five miles out of the port if we were able to go to Portuguese Ledge or Soquel Hole or the reef outside Davenport [which are all now inaccessible due to MPA protections]. It's kind of mind-boggling that they give us all this poundage, but then our environmental footprint has to be so big just to access [it]."

“I really got lucky [the way I got into commercial fishing]. [Name redacted] offered me to run his boat and said ‘do you want to take it over?’ I told him I had the money and I just ran. And then the same thing with the deeper nearshore. [Name redacted] wanted his permit to go to someone who was really into it, really wanted to fish. So [in the] grand scheme of things, me and name redacted] are lucky. We're both hard workers and that's why we're in the position we were in, but imagine if we didn't have that kind of help from those guys. And that's why you don't see a lot of [younger participants] taking over operations from the older guys that are selling out. Our permits are going to be leaving Monterey Bay.”

“The MPAs and the [National Marine Sanctuaries] have all limited our access to resources [...] Without having access to these fisheries, we see a decline in the overall health of the small boat fleet, [which is] especially in jeopardy from my perspective.”

“One reason I'm interested in [the California Fisheries Data Explorer tool] is that we're working on efforts to gain broader access to the RCA. Having data on open access fisheries in the past and current would be very helpful in that effort.”

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



**Discussion Summary** Participants described the increasing difficulty for local fishermen to earn a living from commercial fishing due to the high cost of permits and limited access to resources as a result of management restrictions.

- Several participants believed many local fishermen have additional jobs to supplement their income, particularly those fishermen who want to fish locally in Monterey Bay and live nearby, where the cost of living is high.
  - Several participants expressed concerns that because of management restrictions, it was not possible to make sufficient income fishing locally. Participants shared they need to travel further, which means higher operational costs and more time spent away from their families.
- Several participants highlighted that the uncertainty of some fishing seasons makes it incredibly difficult to rely on a secure income. They suggested this is even more challenging for younger fishermen who made large investments in start-up costs and have not yet established a financial safety net.
  - One participant worked two jobs to cover their expenses during extended delays in the opening of the Dungeness crab fishery due to the elevated risk of marine life entanglements. Another participant said they pay for boat slips in multiple marinas to be able to move their operations and optimize fishing opportunities, which adds a financial strain.

- Several participants highlighted the high costs of permits and the difficulty of purchasing them and paying off debt due to the limited income that commercial fishing provides.
  - One participant said they run another person's boat and are unable to make sufficient income for living expenses and to purchase their own boat or fishing permits. They expressed frustration that younger fishermen have to invest a tremendous amount of capital to enter certain fisheries.
- Several participants shared they are watching for warning signs to leave the industry. One participant had to downsize their operations because their income from fishing could not cover their costs.

### Participant Quotes

"We don't have the resources here to stay fishing in our local ports. The worst thing is that you could not make a living in your own backyard. We have to travel to multiple areas in order to access these fish or even have the opportunity to catch it. That's for crabs, salmon, rockfish, everything. If we had an opportunity to catch some fish in these MPAs and maybe increase our quotas, then we could have an opportunity to make a living at home. But for now, guys like myself, we have to go other places."

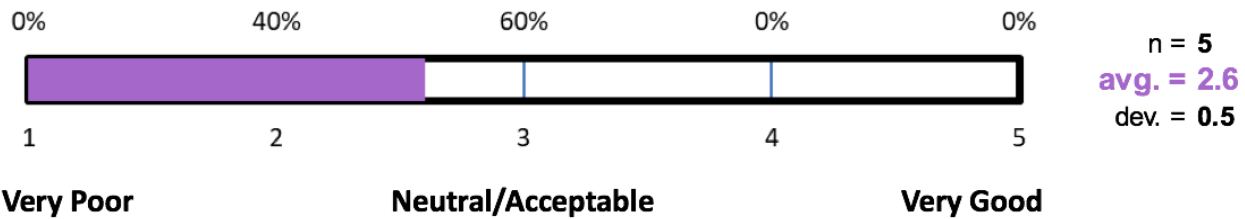
"[In terms of being able to get into the fisheries,] it's almost impossible right now. It's the same as in every port. We can't afford the permits to go fish for live rockfish. You have to buy two permits. That [Dungeness] crab permit nowadays is a couple hundred thousand dollars, if you want anything that can actually make you a living. The guys who had them walked into the [California Department of Fish and Wildlife] office and bought them for nothing. So it's kind of unfair to the younger generation [who] really don't have a chance of getting into [a fishery unless] dad or a grandpa leaves [a permit] to them."

"I know a lot of deckhands that have just got into [commercial fishing], some have just bought boats, especially from Bodega Bay. [...] And they're rethinking their entire career right now. They just bought these boats and now we're not going crabbing [because of] these whales. A lot of these [older] owners may have enough money saved to support them through it, but these deckhands really don't. So for them to see a future in the fishery, it's like an ending point for them. They understand that they have no opportunity."

"I sold my boat recently because I saw what was happening with the [Dungeness] crab season. I chose to sell my boat, which I loved, and purchase a boat that was cheaper. I've been downsizing. [...] For a lot of people, being able to afford to live and fish in California with what's going on is extremely challenging. It creates a lot of fights in the family and stress. You drink a couple of extra beers."

"Fishermen are the most optimistic people in the world. [...] But it gets to the point where you hear fishermen wanting to quit. That sucks, that's just disheartening, that's just a broken soul, that means we have nowhere to go, it's a bummer. It really hurts because everyone's in this because they love it. We're not here to ruin the environment. We're just trying to make a living doing something we love to do and bring that fresh catch to the table, but it is becoming harder and harder."

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



**Discussion Summary** Participants shared that markets for Dungeness crab and salmon are fairly stable, while markets for California halibut and rockfish are variable due to gluts in the market and international competition, respectively.

- Several participants expressed frustration that their buyers were not actively working to expand markets to help fishermen sell their catch. A participant suggested buyers were not financially incentivized to expand markets.
  - Several participants expressed concerns with the influx of halibut at certain times of the year, due to it being an open access fishery. They explained the large volume of product leads buyers to offer a low price or to not purchase the fish at all. One participant suggested buyers could move more product if additional markets were established.
- One participant recalled that after RCAs were established, open access fishermen lost markets because of competition with large-scale operations (i.e., draggers) or foreign/import markets. They stated this has affected smaller vessels that rely on selling to buyers at a higher price per pound.
- One participant highlighted the barriers to establishing a direct-to-consumer dockside market in Santa Cruz, including the limited number of commercial fishing boats that are able to provide a reliable amount of product to support demand for direct markets.
  - One participant explained direct marketing efforts are time-intensive and take away from fishing opportunities. One participant described local demand for dockside sales and specified that customers from the San Jose area are likely to purchase salmon or halibut, but not rockfish.

**Participant Quotes**

"I'm mostly [Dungeness] crab and salmon, and I feel like [those markets are] acceptable. It's not great, but we have an opportunity to sell our catch usually when a price is established for the coast."

"In the past when I used to fish rod and reel halibut, sea bass, there was a lot less people doing it. So I will say that the influx of people actually fishing is also creating an issue for our ports, as far as how much abundance of fish is coming to the dock. [...] But it's a hard road too, it's not as easy as people think to go sell thousands of pounds of small halibut when they're catching them."

"Over the last 20 years when the RCAs were established, those markets we had with open access went away, the fillet lines went away. The only place you'll find a buyer that can handle any volume is where the draggers are. [...] They're the ones that can bring in 30,000 pounds. But small boat guys like me, we try to catch 500 pounds and sell them at a higher price, but our

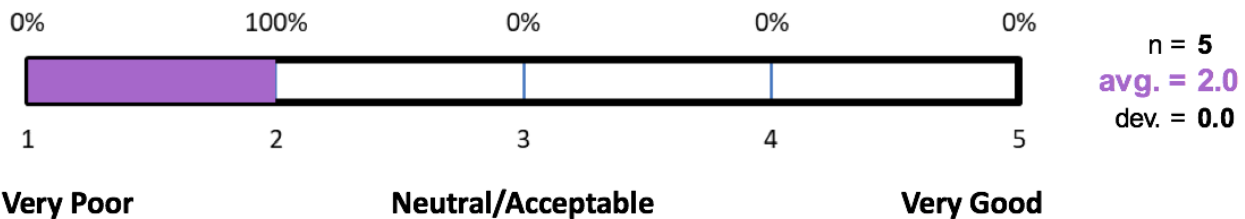


buyers can't take that volume of fish because they can't put the labor into processing it at a competitive price [compared] to the draggers or particularly the Canadian imported products.”

“We're also battling out-of-town rockfish from Canada. [...] We're told by our buyers that [they] can get it [rockfish] filleted to their door for \$1.75 per pound or whatever it is when usually we get \$3.00 per pound or something. And that's really disheartening to us because we know our product is fresh and local and for them to take time to [process the fish] or whatnot might be the same, but it also gives other people jobs. So we're actually battling other people from out of town [...] just as far as rockfish goes. And I really feel that [rockfish] is the entry-level that a lot of young guys are going to want to go after, it's the open access stuff that's easy. So that's a really big concern.”

“We look at the Half Moon Bay model and how successful they've been [and] why or how they became successful [with direct-to-consumer sales]. There are boats that fish there every day [...] and there's always something available. So [inland customers] can go to Half Moon Bay and there'll be something there to purchase. [Compare this to] Santa Cruz, there's only maybe a dozen boats that even commercially fish. And so there's not enough vessels there that can support reliable off-the-dock sales. I mean, if you put your money into it, you build a customer base, you get all the things that you have to do to market it, it could be successful, but it just is an awful lot of work. And you question, am I a fisherman or am I a marketer? It's making decisions on where your time goes in order to be able to make your business model work.”

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



**Discussion Summary** All participants rated the state of infrastructure as ‘Poor,’ and specifically identified the inconsistent access to ice to preserve their catch, insufficient infrastructure to offload their catch, and a lack of parking for potential customers for dockside sales.

- Several participants explained the lack of 24-hour access to ice was a significant challenge. One participant said ice must be trucked in from Salinas to the Santa Cruz harbor. They elaborated the ice melts in transit, which decreases the time fishermen can remain on the water before their ice is melted and they must return to port to keep their catch fresh.
  - One participant understood Santa Cruz harbor received grant funding for commercial fishing infrastructure and recommended prioritizing making ice accessible to local fishermen.
  - Another participant said the ice machine manufacturers have all gone out of business, which creates delays in getting custom machine parts for broken machines. One participant said access to fresh ice is a challenge for ports throughout California. They had firsthand experience with broken ice machines in Half Moon Bay, Bodega Bay, and Fort Bragg over the past year.

- One participant said Santa Cruz harbor’s offloading infrastructure (e.g., hoist, dock space) was insufficient to support the needs of the local salmon fleet, which must unload in other ports because of this constraint.
- One participant described local fishermen’s desires and efforts to improve infrastructure to support dockside sales, including access to free parking for customers.

### Participant Quotes

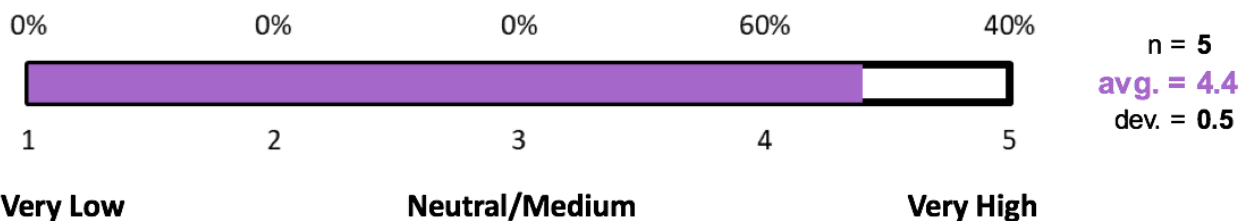
“There's no ice to speak of, fresh ice in Santa Cruz. All or most of the ice that's used is trucked in from Salinas. And that ice is half gone by the time that it gets on a boat. So instead of having five to ten days for that ice surviving and keeping your catch fresh and marketable, you have maybe three to five days. This means that if the fishing is not that hot, you're going to have to come in before you've loaded the boat.”

“The ice machines are just in bad shape. Most of them are 1950s generations. The companies that built the ice machines are all out of business. If there's a part that breaks, it has to be machined, special order. And invariably, they all break during the salmon season. And so if you talk about a rockfish fishery - that is a bridge fishery between salmon and crab and can be done all year round - it cannot survive because the ice machines died. And so somebody is going to have to step up and put the infrastructure in place where these fisheries can survive year-round, you know, once we have access to them. [...] It's very, very troubling. [...] it's about the survivability of the fleet. These are the kinds of infrastructure issues that make it more and more difficult for people to enter the fishery.”

“In Santa Cruz, we have one unloading site. So when you have an influx of salmon, for example, they have a hard time. In fact, they moved the fleet. The salmon fleet goes to other ports because of the difficulty of getting in and out and having access to the hoist in Santa Cruz. And that has to do with the overall decline of the fishery infrastructure more than anything else.”

“We were really going to start ramping up and working on dock sales before COVID hit. [We were going to try to have] the city or county or port district or whoever, give us free parking and get the funding for advertising to really get [customers] to start coming over the hill [from the Bay Area] to start buying fresh seafood. That's a huge part of the infrastructure for the small boat guys to really get on their feet and put some money away.”

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



**Discussion Summary** Participants described disruptions from COVID-19 for commercial fishermen in Santa Cruz, including a temporary loss in fresh fish markets, increased demand at grocery stores and dockside markets for salmon, and continued uncertainty regarding the long-term impacts of the pandemic on fishing operations.

- One participant highlighted they lost 60 to 70 percent of their fresh fish market in early 2020, which rebounded in the summer. They stated it was too early to determine the long-term impacts of COVID-19 on local restaurants; however, they were aware of several that had gone out of business.
- One participant experienced an increase in demand and price per pound from grocery stores, specifically for salmon, since people were cooking meals at home. Another participant saw a drop in demand for Dungeness crab as COVID-19 progressed in Spring/Summer 2020 due to customers purchasing less expensive protein sources (i.e., beef, chicken).
- One participant said social media marketing increased the demand for dockside sales, which provided customers an outside experience that was considered safer. They explained fishermen experienced an increase in revenue, with dockside sales bringing in an additional \$2.00 to \$3.00 per pound.
- One participant noted COVID-19 was just one of the many challenging factors (i.e., season delays) when negotiating pricing with buyers. Several participants expressed concerns about how the fishing seasons would fare moving forward if COVID-19 persists, including continued loss of certain markets.

### Participant Quotes

“What we saw with COVID-19 in the early part of the year [2020], 60 to 70 percent of the fresh fish market just went away when the restaurants were closed, and they came back in summer. What we didn't realize was, because everybody stayed home, the demand picked up in the grocery store. So that kind of saved the salmon season because instead of selling to the local restaurant, Safeway and Lucky's picked up some slack there as far as demand. But what we see going forward is that some percentage of the restaurants will never come back. There's a long-term residual effect that COVID-19 will have, a negative impact that we've yet to be able to quantify.”

“The impacts of COVID-19 for us as crabbers, it's huge. We're actually in discussions right now about possibly being able to go fishing, but not having a market. [...] Last year, I was selling to Safeway grocery stores pretty much exclusively through a couple of processors. Come to COVID in about the middle of February into March, they completely stopped buying our product. And that was mainly because people were freaking out about losing their jobs. Unemployment was a pretty big mess, people hadn't even got the money yet, so they were buying chicken, pork, and ground beef. They were not buying Dungeness crab. They weren't exactly having crab feeds at their house while everyone was worried they had COVID. So now we're dealing with the aftermath of that.”

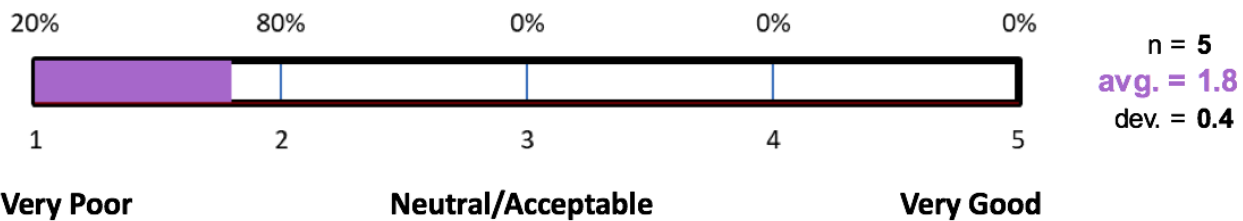
“Guys did sell off the boats in Santa Cruz, through social media it became very easy. All you had to do is post you were coming in with a certain amount of fish and a lot of times they were sold within the hour it took you to hit the dock. And they'd be waiting there. [...] They got paid pretty good for them. They got paid a lot more than we did, \$2.00 to \$3.00 more per pound, selling them privately like that. And people enjoy that during COVID, because they know that no one's touching it, it's not going through a processing facility where 500 people are playing with it. They know it's coming from your boat, from the ocean one hour ago, to their hands. The protein

sold very good. And salmon is the best for you as far as immune system building protein, that was a top one to sell.”

“There was a lot of uncertainty going into the salmon season. We started out at about \$5.00 per pound and it went up to \$7.00 per pound in a relatively short period of time, and we got to a pricing structure that was acceptable by the end of May or June. But going into the commercial salmon season in May, we were very, very concerned about the overall health of the fleet.”

## 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?



Very Poor

Neutral/Acceptable

Very Good

**Discussion Summary** Participants expressed concerns about the ability to recruit and retain commercial fishermen operating out of Santa Cruz harbor, highlighting the local cost of living, rising slip fees, and a shift in harbor businesses from fishing to tourism as contributing factors.

- One participant said commercial fishing is not a financially viable profession for the Santa Cruz area due to the high living costs. Several participants explained most local commercial fishermen do not live in Santa Cruz, fish opportunistically, and work part-time in other professions.
- One participant said a majority of the Santa Cruz fleet are small boats, run by younger fishermen who have jobs other than commercial fishing in order to make ends meet. Another participant expressed concerns about retaining deckhands, primarily because they are not able to make a viable living from fishing alone.
- Several participants shared there have been younger fishermen who have entered into commercial fishing, mostly through open access fisheries, though the realities of generating profit have made it difficult to retain those fishermen.
  - One participant highlighted the high cost of living and the gentrification of the Santa Cruz area as a barrier to retaining local fishermen.

### Participant Quotes

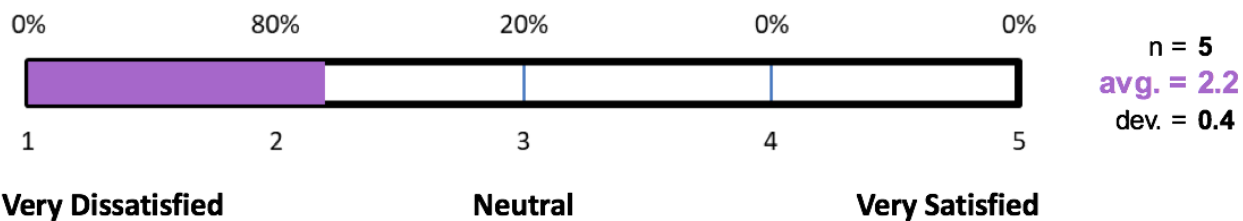
“You have to look at what the definition of [a commercial fishing] ‘participant’ is. Is it the schoolteacher that fishes in the summertime, or are you looking at people who are actually trying to make a living at commercial fishing? And there's people in between those two extremes. I kind of look at it from in order for commercial fishing to survive, you have to have a vibrant community of commercial fishermen that are dedicated to making this their living, their profession, that they are involved in all aspects of the fishery... and that is not being done. It is not viable in today's climate. And that's why I rated this as very poor.”

“It's very appealing, especially in the Santa Cruz port, because of our open access fisheries being so strong. They see these boats coming in with ten to 20 halibut. And that's something you do in a recreational sense beforehand that you really enjoy. So you're like ‘oh, man, I can go to the [California Department of Fish and Wildlife] office and just pick up an open access license and go out there and register my dad's boat. Next thing you know, I'm a commercial fisherman.’ And then you run into the same problem where you come in, and the buyer looks at you and says ‘I got nowhere to sell these things.’ [...] And a lot of guys do it part-time where they do construction half the year, or they work in an HVAC shop and then they go on the boat. There is a way to survive with that, just because our fisheries stocks are doing so well, but the marketing is bad and there are issues with the infrastructure.”

“Deckhands, that's the biggest challenge I think a lot of us deal with, especially in Santa Cruz, because it's really expensive to live here, period. There is a lack of opportunity to produce a lot more money so that you can afford to pay a deckhand a living wage. Most of [my deckhands], they've had either some other [additional, part-time] gig, which is really difficult, too, because it's not like a lot of people can work [some] months out of the year for somebody else and then quit [and] then come work for you.”

“Well, [fishermen are] also just leaving because they can't afford to live here where we fish. The price on dockside goes up, all of a sudden, you don't have the fish market, you have the taffies, you have the kites, you have the wine, you know, it's priced our profession out of our region. So we have to be bussed in, basically.”

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



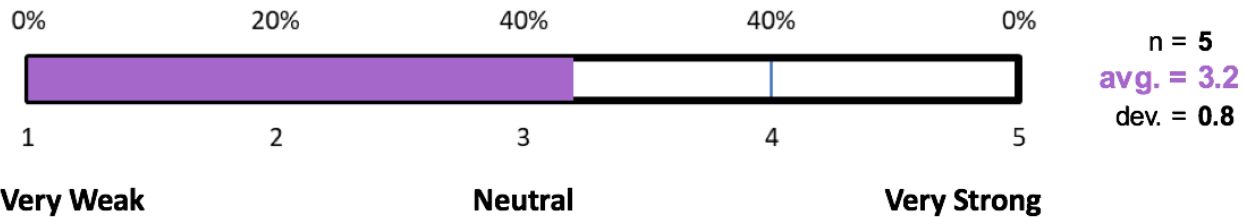
**Discussion Summary** Participants discussed their satisfaction and fulfillment from fishing itself. However, many said the stress from uncertainties (i.e., related to finances, restricted access, limited entry fisheries, and climate conditions) outweighs the positive aspects of fishing.

**Participant Quotes**

“I think anybody that calls ourselves a commercial fisherman says there's a high degree of job satisfaction in doing what we do, running up and down the coast, being on the water, seeing things that the typical person can't even imagine. And it's a huge amount of satisfaction in being able to figure out how to catch the fish and actually put them on the boat and then sell them. But the dissatisfaction comes from the uncertainty that we've outlined throughout this entire meeting [which is] the lack of access to some of the grounds, the uncertainty of restricted fisheries, the uncertainty of what the climate is going to do. It just grates on you every day as to whether or not you're going to be able to support your family into the future.”

“The fulfilment is great. And we all get that, which numbs the stress for a while. But I think the stress outweighs the positives all year long, regardless of age group or regardless of where you're at in this industry, that's the biggest thing. And stress, I mean, we can go on for hours on why we're stressed out.”

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



**Discussion Summary** Participants expressed their appreciation for the strong relationships they have with many commercial fishermen out of Santa Cruz harbor. They also acknowledged the opportunity to expand the involvement of deckhands, part-time fishermen, and others when addressing high-stakes issues as a port (e.g., marine life entanglements).

- Several participants highlighted the camaraderie and support commercial fishermen offer one another. One participant recognized the independent nature of fishermen, which can make it challenging to bring everyone together.
  - One participant highlighted the need to improve relationships with part-time fishermen who are less involved and invested in fisheries politics and resource management. Another fisherman suggested there is an opportunity to better educate deckhands on priority issues to help build their awareness and involvement.
- One participant characterized the fishing community as having strong leadership involved with a number of fishing organizations and advisory bodies. Another participant acknowledged that this participation involved a select few and would like to see others involved to help shoulder the burden of engagement in fisheries policy processes.

**Participant Quotes**

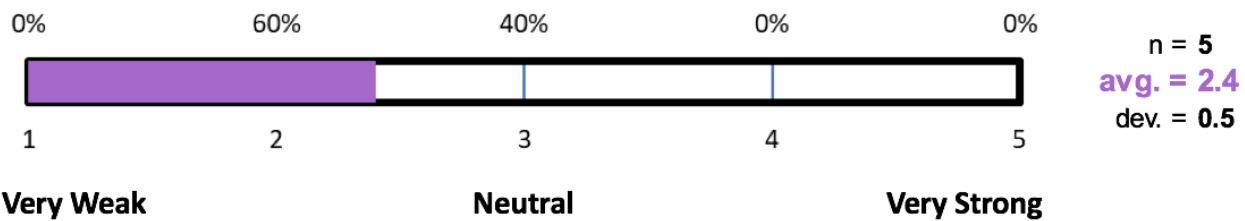
“There is very much a brotherhood or whatnot that goes on and people are very willing to help each other out. It's a good place to be for sure. We're all in this together. I mean, getting everybody to think the same way, it's kind of like herding cats. It's a bunch of independent people.”

“We [recently] had some port meetings for [Dungeness] crab. We've never really had that in the last ten years that I remember, coming together as a group and having a vote. I thought it was awesome because it showed that people that don't get along the greatest sometimes can come together and maybe make a decision.”

“Yeah, [name redacted] has been very instrumental in helping out with what's been going on with the [California Salmon Council], and rockfish, and stuff like that. Leadership-wise, [name redacted] has been doing a phenomenal job. And a lot of the other people as well. I guess we're trying to figure out how everybody fits into the whole equation with things that are changing within the industry. But I think it's going along pretty well.”

“There's a portion of the commercial fishermen, the small boat guys, that [are] not participating. They fish commercially [part-time] and they go home. [...] They need to be part of the community. I haven't figured out how to engage those people. So that's why I would rate this as weak, because we haven't reached out and got full participation. [We're] having a hard time with [...] how to motivate those people to participate.”

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



**Discussion Summary** Participants expressed their interest in strengthening relationships with external groups, including harbor officials and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). They highlighted the importance of trust building, and their willingness to invest time in building stronger relationships.

- Participants expressed their desire to help open lines of communication between the fishing community and external groups, specifically to help educate others about fishing activities to ensure discussions are well informed.
  - One participant shared there is room for improvement when working with fishing NGOs in the Monterey Bay area.
  - One participant emphasized the importance of meeting in-person with external groups, specifically environmental NGOs, that hold different perspectives about marine resource management. Another participant believed sharing ideas and experiences with outside groups will help to arrive at management decisions that are reflective of the needs of fishermen and environmental NGOs.
- One participant shared their experience with Santa Cruz harbor leadership, including harbormasters, directors, and office staff. They were hopeful that the new leadership within the harbor, who have been more engaged and interested in working with fishermen, will help address priority infrastructure needs.

**Participant Quotes**

“Perhaps it’s [a] lofty goal that I have. [...] There's a number of other [local external fishing] groups that we could be partnering with or working with, there's certainly those connections, but I think they could be strengthened. And, of course, that's a two way street. There needs to be willingness to work from both sides. But I think there's opportunity for improvement in that area as well.”

“The NGOs who are restricting us, they need to come down to our ports and meet us, face-to-face with them, not just text messaging. There is this disconnect, there needs to be a connection because if they do come down, a) they're going to have a beer with us, and b) after a couple of beers, they are going to start talking and understanding who we really are because

I've done it with them. [...] I've done it and it works. Maybe it won't work right away, but we just need to start that conversation. So that's why I said poor. [...] But there are very good external groups that are really helping us. And they got a fine line to walk too, which I understand."

"I mean, [Dungeness] crab, for example, just the push from the NGOs not understanding our livelihoods and the way the little bit of money that is so important to us to survive. [...] The lack of understanding from the other side is a huge issue. And we all need to come to the table and start seeing each other face-to-face and having real conversations with the other side to make them understand that we're not out there to pillage the ocean. We're out there to pay our bills and do this sustainably."

"We've had, like, issues in the past with people in leadership of our ports, like just the harbor masters, directors, people that worked in the office. And we've had this disconnect with them. And over the last couple of years, we've had a new harbourmaster [who is] a younger guy [and] more involved in the fisheries and asking questions. [...] [Commercial fishing is] part of the harbor and it's part of the business there. [...] I feel like they're willing to listen. I know they are. They're just uneducated in the fisheries. So I think if we [can] get them involved in some of our issues we're having, they'll help us."

## 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 expressed interest in receiving a more comprehensive socioeconomic analysis of the contributions of California's commercial fishery to the state's economy. They suggested looking beyond ex-vessel value when evaluating the economic contributions of commercial fishing.

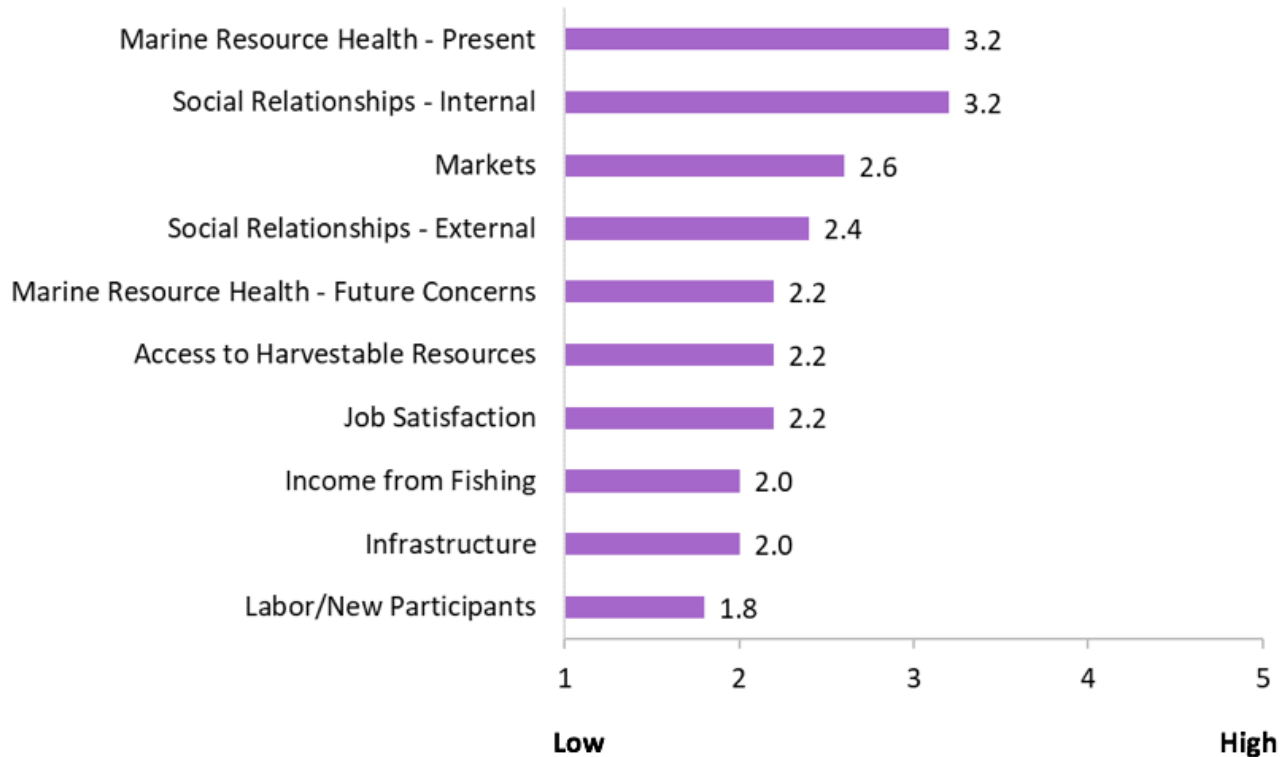
## Participant Quotes

"Well this has to do with more on how [the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration or the National Marine Fisheries Service] reports the socioeconomic impact of the commercial fishery. They never enumerate the total financial impact of commercial fishery [beyond the ex-vessel value]. And I don't know if the state's going to look at that. I've talked to a couple of people about it and they kind of give you the deer in the headlights [...] 'what the heck are you talking about?' But you very seldom see what the full economic impact of the increase or decrease of the commercial fishery has to the state of California. They need to do a full economic impact [report] on what commercial fisheries mean to the state."



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

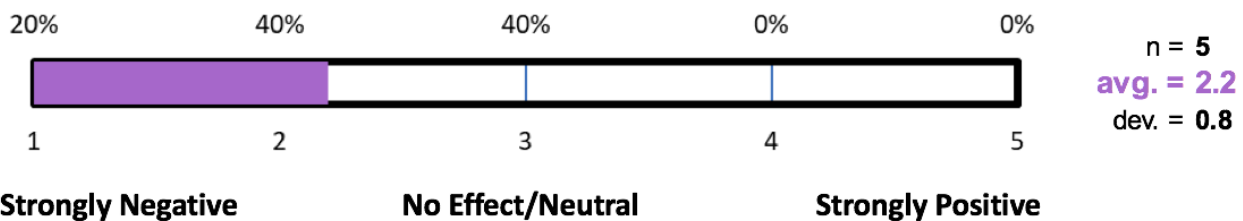
(Note: The following figure does not include the average rating for question 7. *COVID-19 Impacts*.)



## 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 from the MPA network, participants reported MPAs have had negative or neutral effects on the health of marine resources. They stated that while some local stocks have been rebuilt, it is difficult to determine if this is due to MPAs.

- Several participants highlighted that increased fishing pressure in open areas has depleted local reefs and suggested rotating MPA closures to help avoid depleting the resources in areas that remain open.

- One participant expressed concerns about fishing pressure on local reefs from the charter boat fleet, specifically with the take of juvenile fish.
- Several participants highlighted MPAs have redirected and concentrated fishing pressure along MPA boundary lines (i.e., walls of gear), which creates risks for marine life entanglements.
  - One participant said MPAs inhibit access to fishing grounds for Dungeness crab, which they did not understand since crab fishing takes place on sandy bottom rather than rocky reef habitat.
- One participant expressed frustration that some local MPAs are very small. They were interested in understanding the science that demonstrates these closures are effective in managing resources.

**Participant Quotes**

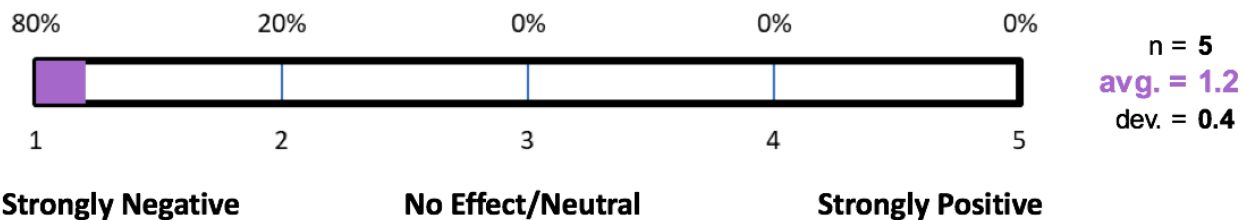
“I said neutral because of that gray area there. I feel like it's positive because our stocks are rebuilt and maybe [the MPAs have] something to do with that, but I really don't feel like it does. MPAs in our area make you target other areas. When I was younger and [MPAs] got put into place, we used to fish those areas a lot, so the pressure was spread out and you weren't just hovering over the same rock every time. And as soon as [...] MPAs were put into place, [myself and other small boat, open access fishermen] would go try to take everything we could in the open areas within our quota. And then our friends would come in the next day and do that after. So I believe that the MPAs are more negative than positive, so I went neutral.”

“I think we're at the pivot point where there most definitely has to start being rotating blocks on MPAs because [...] I've seen over the years how depleted [some] reefs have gotten. I mean, Point of Monterey used to be great, and now it's been devastated because of the charter boat fleet. And I think it needs to be regulated, in between, for commercial fishermen.”

“I mean, I'm guilty of it, too. [...] When the crab bite gets to be more of a scratch, people put their gear really close to the MPAs. I mean, call it a more profitable area. You're hoping to suck crab out of those areas, which does make a massive entanglement risk for whales, which is something that probably we should be looking at a little bit more in the future.”

“There needs to be some way to control the access to these MPAs now that they've done their job and access should be given. But it needs to be governed. And we, in this group, [don't] have all the data, but we can use our experiences to help guide that process if it comes to be.”

**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* on page 19 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 indicated MPA impacts on fishermen range from negative to strongly negative, including increased operational costs, safety concerns due to traveling further distances, and decreased opportunity to earn a living locally.

- Several participants shared increased costs to run boats (i.e., fuel, labor costs) to travel farther distances outweigh the potential profit from the harvested catch. They discussed the need to travel further to access their quotas and to fish in deeper water, which can pose challenges when navigating inclement weather conditions.
  - One participant emphasized the importance of having access to local areas to fish in order to make a viable living. They said smaller boats specifically face safety concerns when traveling longer distances.
- Several participants said MPAs negatively affect the local fleet's landings and income. One participant shared they had to move into different fisheries that were less affected by MPAs in order to make a living.
  - One participant expressed concerns that there are likely additional, unquantified impacts on fishermen's landings and income due to increased fishing pressure affecting open areas.
- One participant shared they left the fishing industry due to MPA implementation because of reduced opportunities to earn a living, though they ultimately re-entered the industry.

**Participant Quotes**

"I'm not even partaking in the groundfish industry right now because the opportunity is so limited, it's not worth going and turning the key to the boat on because there's not enough access to make it worth it. I could go out and fish two or three days to try to get my quota and I'd burn as much fuel as I'll make in money."

"It's just ridiculous that we need to travel so far from our ports and we go around these weather points and current points that put us in critical conditions where we're going to die, especially a small boat guy trying to go get his open access. It's putting your life in danger and we don't have any [life] insurance. So to make us drive 40 miles each direction into bad weather to hope to get a couple of hundred pounds to come back, to maybe [cover] your fuel cost and give you \$200 to \$300 in your pocket at the end of the day, I don't think there's any profession in the United States right now that's regulated that would say this is okay. It's less than minimum wage, and you're going to die. We don't have a union, we don't have any support. [...] And because our hearts are into it, we're going to do it. And then ultimately we're going to die, or we are going to have to go and do something else. It sucks. It's scary. It's reality."

"[MPAs affect] landings. It even affects our crabbing. It affects our salmon. [...] Anything you can catch with open access, or guys with permits, they lost out fishing by having MPAs there. It might have cost us more than whoever was involved with the MPAs even knows, because now we've overfished a lot of reefs that we've had locally just to make up income lost through those MPAs."

“I had to move on to other fisheries since [MPA implementation] because of that lack of opportunity to fish there. [...] A guy starting out should have that opportunity to go to these places and fish and be able to pay his bills.”

## 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 discussed the positive and negative effects of local MPAs, in addition to effects from two MPAs located in Northern California. Several participants expressed concerns about increased fishing pressure on areas adjacent to MPAs. Several participants suggested opening a number of MPAs on a rotating basis to reduce compaction and relieve fishing pressure on nearby fishing grounds.

- *Soquel Canyon State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA)*: One participant expressed concerns that the Soquel Canyon SMCA creates risks for whale entanglements due to its placement along the canyon ledge, where upwelling conditions create rich feeding grounds for marine life. They stated the compaction of fixed gear along the MPA boundaries can result in “walls of gear” which increases risks of entanglement.
  - One participant thought opening Soquel Canyon SMCA would help sustain the financial viability of Santa Cruz’s small boat fishing operations due to its proximity to port.
- *Portuguese Ledge SMCA*: Several participants thought opening Portuguese Ledge SMCA would help sustain the financial viability of and increase safety for Santa Cruz’s small boat fishing operations due to its proximity to port. One participant expressed support for this MPA, and agreed with others that there would be a benefit to rotating this MPA with others located to the south.
- *Carmel Bay SMCA*: One participant thought the Carmel Bay SMCA was important habitat to protect. They suggested revisiting the boundaries in the area to help reduce overfishing.
- *Point Lobos SMCA and Point Lobos State Marine Reserve (SMR)*: One participant expressed support for the Point Lobos SMCA and SMR to help protect juvenile fish in Carmel Bay and reduce commercial and sport fishing pressure.
- *Point Sur SMCA and Point Sur SMR*: One participant said they had witnessed depletion of rockfish populations along the boundaries of MPAs at Big Sur reefs. Another participant expressed interest in learning more about research that has been conducted in and around these MPAs.
- *Big Creek SMCA and Big Creek SMR*: One participant shared that Big Creek SMCA and SMR was a productive area and was successful in replenishing fish populations in deep water habitats. They expressed concerns about compaction along these MPA boundaries and recommended these MPAs be opened to fishermen to help fill their available quotas without compromising safety when traveling further distances.
- *Año Nuevo SMR*: Before MPA implementation, one participant fished the Año Nuevo area for lingcod and rockfish. They shared it was unnecessary to close these fishing grounds since bycatch was negligible due to the shallow habitat, which allowed for non-targeted species to be released without harm (i.e., using descending devices). One participant expressed frustration because this and the Greyhound Rock SMCA encompass fishing grounds that are relatively close

to Santa Cruz harbor. They explained local small-boat fishermen must travel into San Mateo County to fish north of Santa Cruz, which adds safety risks.

- One participant mentioned this MPA negatively affects crab fishermen. Another participant shared that the deepwater shelf habitat near Año Nuevo SMR was important fishing grounds for chili pepper, canary, and vermillion rockfish quotas that local fishermen are allocated but lack access to (i.e., water deeper than 40 fathoms).
- *Greyhound Rock SMCA*: One participant said Greyhound Rock SMCA was good halibut fishing grounds prior to its closure. As noted above for the Año Nuevo SMR, one participant shared their concerns that this MPA includes good fishing grounds close to Santa Cruz harbor.
- *Bodega Head SMCA, Bodega Head SMR, and Stewarts Point SMR*: Participants expressed that these MPAs negatively affect the surrounding areas that are open to commercial fishing due to compaction and increased fishing pressure.

### Participant Quotes

“Soquel Canyon [SMCA], it's awesome to have something that you think protects something, but we have to really start looking at what we're endangering here, and we're having huge issues with these whale entanglements. You guys, we have an MPA in the middle of a feeding area for whales. It's literally along the ledge there. And [fishermen are] going to set crab pots there if there's any kind of crabs. And [...] from what I hear, right now it's the only place that has crabs. There's a lot of life, there's feed there. So that Soquel Canyon spot [...] is a huge red flag because if we set up walls [of gear] out there, we're just asking to destroy our whole crab industry. And right now, the entanglement risk is super high. [...] I would definitely say, this is my biggest red flag for our area because of the effects it can have on a completely different industry.”

“Portuguese Ledge [SMCA] is great that it's there, but it needs to be rotated with these [MPAs] down below: [Point Lobos SMR and SMCA, Point Sur SMCA and SMR, and Big Creek SMCA and SMR] because as you can see, [it is close to both the ports of] Santa Cruz and Moss Landing.”

“Point Lobos [SMCA and SMR] is great. There is so much pressure from the commercial fleet and the charter fleet around the whole Point of Monterey. All the way wrapped around is just all juvenile fish, even in Carmel Bay. So that real small one in Carmel Bay [Carmel Bay SMCA] should probably stay there because I know it's a habitat deal. They almost need to redraw some lines because everything's kind of been overfished in that area.”

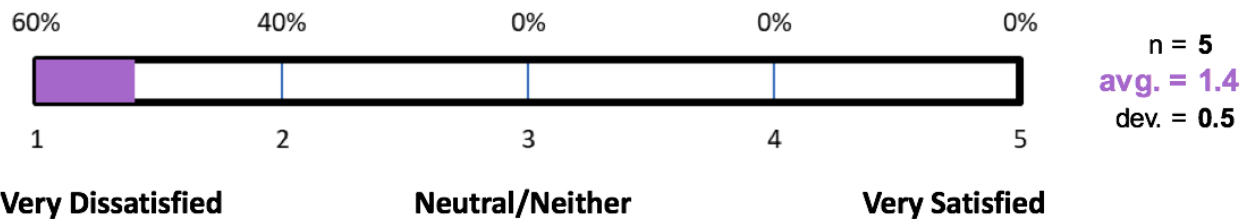
“Big Creek [SMCA and SMR] down there has been really good because stuff filters out down around Point Lopez and I believe goes back into the deep down there, from what I've seen and experienced. But these access points that are right around them are getting hit so heavily by the sport and by the other stuff. We need to be able to get inside there to get into some untouched areas for safety reasons [i.e., protection during inclement weather] and just to get the quota that we're allowed.”

“Año Nuevo and Greyhound Rock, it's a huge portion of our north coast that we go fish on a small boat [...] and other than that, we have to go all the way around to San Mateo. It's just the risk factor. How do we evaluate the risk of another species and the risk of a human? In

hook-and-line fishing, it shouldn't even be an issue. The weather and the environment dictates that you're not going to be fishing in certain places or certain zones. [...] Now, you have to actually drive over all these productive spots and go further and further. I just want to see the science there.”

## 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 expressed their dissatisfaction with the management of the MPA network, primarily due to poor communication from managers and decision-makers about MPA management goals.

- One participant said this focus group was the first communication they had received about MPAs since the implementation of the MPAs in the Monterey Bay area. They perceived this as unfair to fishermen, who, from their perspective, have not been actively engaged.
  - Many participants were not aware of management goals related to the MPA network and had not received communication about MPA management. One participant suggested managers use the existing communication networks of harbors, fishing associations, and local fishermen to communicate information about MPA management.
  - One participant said they and other local fishermen believed the MPA network was designed to be a 10-year experimental, temporary effort to rebuild stocks.
- One participant expressed their frustration about the inconsistencies across the MPA network that allow fishing in some MPAs but not others.
- One participant shared they were involved in an effort to advocate that the Pacific Fisheries Management Council rotate RCAs. They explained the premise for this was to help mitigate the negative effects caused by MPAs. They specified that only certain fishing methods (i.e., non-ground contact fishing) would be allowed.

## Participant Quotes

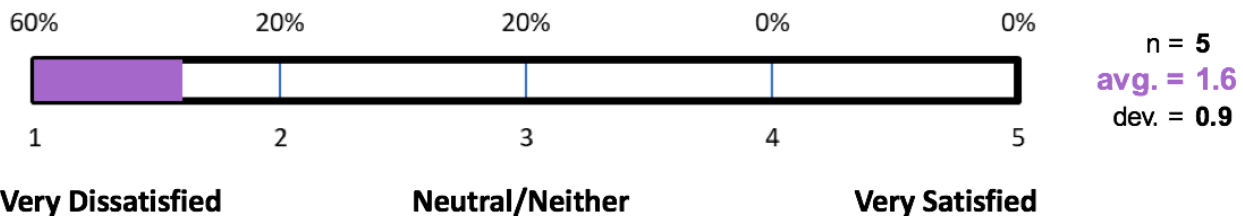
“This is the first talk I've had [about] MPAs since the day they told me an MPA was going in. So I would say that the information part of it, it's pretty horrible considering I've fished for like 23 years [...] The fairness of it goes into play with how much information you get [from managers] because you feel it's unfairly done when you have no idea what's going on. You know that it's a line that you have to abide by, a rule and regulation that is enforced by Fish and Wildlife when you're out there. [...] So opportunities for fishermen involvement, I would say zero, very dissatisfied. Effectiveness in achieving goals, I don't even know a goal they [managers] were going for. I don't think their goals were achieved. I think that the fishing was fine before and we've created problems in search of a solution.”

“I think [there has been a missed opportunity in] getting the information to the fishermen. We don't know what's going on with [MPA management]. So if the MPAs are going into our future—which we strongly believe is ineffective and unnecessary, especially with the way the stocks have been rebuilt—but if we can get that information to the harbors and the associations and the fishermen, at least [we would] know what's going on. Right now it feels like it was just a giant waste of time.”

“I thought that MPAs were actually going to be an experimental area for ten years to figure out if these stocks could be rebuilt and then once that [happened], they were going to be kind of moved around. [...] Most fishermen I know thought when this came in, it was going to be a 10-year temporary thing to try to rebuild our stocks. But now they're rebuilt, there is no plan of ever giving those places back.”

“We floated the idea of the revolving blocks to the [Pacific Fisheries Management Council] on opening the RCA [...] so that there would be access within a three hour run from all the ports to an open area. Then you could revolve those, and you're never allowing that area to be overfished. When you open up an area, we want fishing techniques or methods that are non-ground contact fisheries so that there's no harm done to the soft coral or whatever other little critters happen to be on the bottom that would be of concern with [external] groups. When the MPAs were developed, it was kind of a carte blanche, [all fishing in the MPAs] stops. And we know now that there are methods to harvest those resources without significantly impacting other parts of that area. So when we talk about opening the MPAs, we also need to consider what fishing techniques could be used that adequately make that a sustainable fishery.”

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



**Discussion Summary** Participants highlighted poor communication about MPA monitoring goals and specifics about monitoring studies, including which researchers were conducting monitoring work.

- One participant emphasized the importance of communicating the results with fishermen and desired that fishermen be actively involved in MPA research.

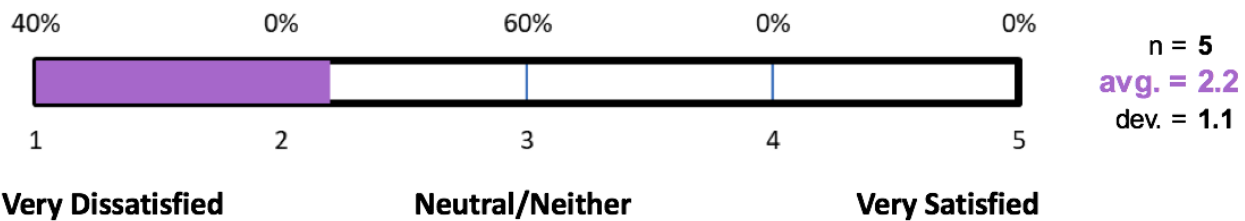
**Participant Quotes**

“I don't even understand the monitoring of it. They maybe do stock assessments on the fish. Communication of results, collaboration with fishermen, the inclusion of fishermen's perspectives, I don't feel like any of that was touched on. So I was very dissatisfied.”

“Who is it that actually goes out and samples the MPAs? Do they do studies on the MPAs to see what the rebuilding is? I mean, I know they do something, but I don't really hear much about it.”

“I've never heard of any kind of research that would want any of our information on those at all. We're left in the dark on this one. I have no idea if they're doing anything.”

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



**Discussion Summary** Participants reported a range of perspectives about MPA enforcement, from very dissatisfied to neutral. Some participants expressed concern that enforcement was unfair, misinformed, and inconsistent, while other participants expressed appreciation for the flexibility and consideration they received from CDFW Law Enforcement Division (LED).

- One participant said they did not feel comfortable reaching out to local wardens out of fear they would be perceived as breaking the rules. They suggested LED improve their relationships with fishermen to establish better trust and communication.
  - One participant shared their concerns with some of the shapes of certain MPAs, which can be difficult to navigate when on the water.
- Two participants discussed challenges with the GPS technology in their navigation systems as it relates to MPA boundaries.
  - One participant explained that a chip they purchased with digital files for their navigation system came with incorrect GPS coordinates for MPA boundary lines, which resulted in a situation where they unknowingly dropped fixed gear inside an MPA. They said the CDFW wardens worked with them and did not ticket them; however, the experience took up a great deal of their time.
  - Another participant described challenges entering the coordinates into their navigation system. They suggested CDFW provide computer chips with GPS coordinates of various closed areas.
- One participant recalled a story about a fisherman they knew who mistakenly fished inside an MPA and was fined \$25,000. They believed reasonable considerations should be made by LED when people make honest mistakes fishing in MPAs.
- One participant described inconsistencies in the enforcement of recreational fishermen versus commercial fishermen. They have observed recreational fishing inside MPAs located farther away from the harbor, which they perceived as going unenforced.
- One participant expressed frustration about turnover of local wardens who they believed were not familiar enough with marine regulations. They desired wardens who could better assist the fishing community with information requests.



## Participant Quotes

“Enforcement here is a big thing in California. We have the strictest enforcement in Monterey Bay, but I don't feel that our officers are willing to work with us on education. When you call or ask any Fish and Wildlife officer, you are instantly considered [to have done] something wrong. And it's like, no, I'm just asking you a question because there's so many questions that are unanswered. So where can I go to just ask a question without me being red flagged? And that's a massive issue up and down the West Coast, that we don't feel comfortable with our Fish and Wildlife officers because we can't ask them questions. [...] They go, well, didn't you see this online? I don't go online. An MPA shouldn't be a trapezoid, that's what I'm saying.”

“I know one guy that was fishing salmon up at Stewarts Point, and you're not supposed to fish anything at Stewarts Point. He was fined \$25,000 and he only crossed the line, turned around and got out. He didn't even go a quarter of a mile inside. And \$25,000 to the average salmon fisherman could be a whole year's worth of the profit. It's just absurd to have these kinds of penalties for minor conflicts with the MPA. Now, there's another story of a guy that was fishing the MPA at Stewarts Point for crab, and just was flagrantly abusing access to it. Yeah, they shoulda thrown him in jail. But, you know, there's got to be some reasonableness to people that stumble into the MPAs and get caught.”

“The frustration is that Fish and Wildlife rotates these officers. I know there's one officer that came through Santa Cruz not too long ago and he'd spent his entire career chasing deer hunters and then they threw him in the marine division. I have forgotten more about regs than he knew. So he would think that he would have something on you and he would spend an hour of your time looking it up in the reg. And so, the message back to the Department is: you need to have these people specialized so that they can manage the resource and make certain that people are following the rules, but they also need to be a resource to the community and not a detriment to it.”

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

**Discussion Summary** Participants shared additional comments and concerns about MPAs.

- One participant expressed concern that the MPA network is permanent and that new MPAs would be added. They believed it was unfair to inhibit fishermen's access to public natural resources.
- One participant reiterated their concerns that some local MPAs may be creating marine life entanglement risks. They said it is important to look at both positives and negatives from the MPA network, and believed the negatives, such as entanglement risk and economic impacts, outweigh the positives.
- Several participants expressed that the local small boat fleet is experiencing extreme challenges with the financial viability of their fishing operations. They stated opening access to several local MPAs would help sustain the fleet. They discussed the need for a year-round bridge fishery (i.e., year-round access to allocations and habitats for rockfish fishing), which would ensure that locally sourced seafood could be available for the community.

### Participant Quotes

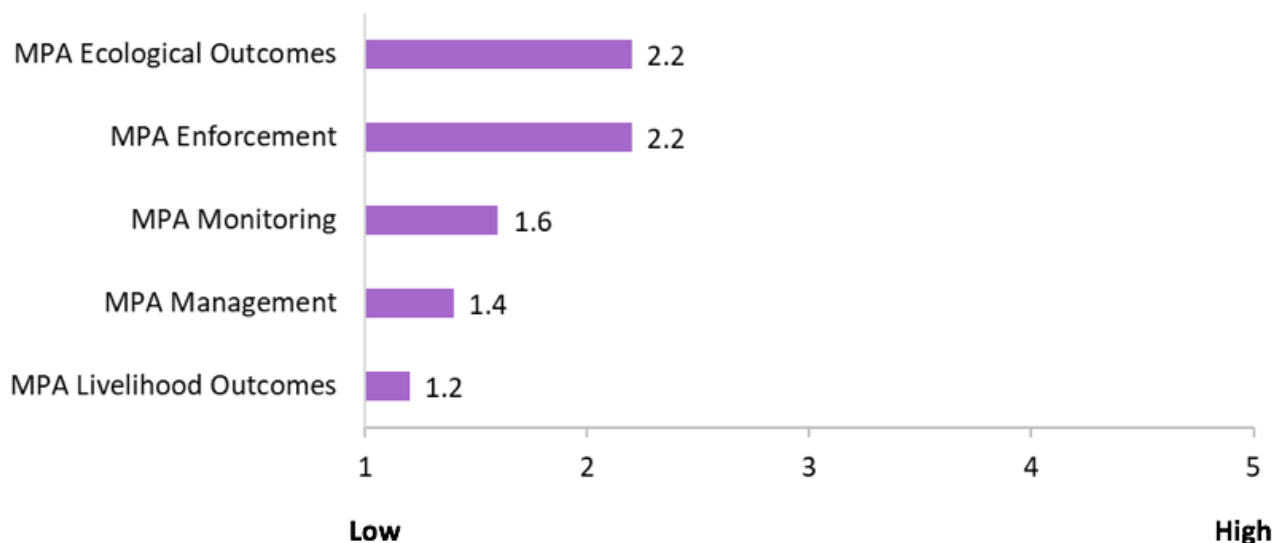
“My concern on the MPAs is that they are permanent, that we'll never fish these zones ever. And they're going to implement even more? What's the benefit from this public resource, what are we getting back from it? There has to be give and take, you just can't take. This wasn't theirs to take from us. We need to know why it was taken. And what's the future to it?”

“I would say don't create lines where you don't need to. You're creating an issue. We're creating [a situation] that can harm our environment and put people in harm's way, with what they have to do in order to reach and access these fish, as well as our wildlife, our whales, our turtles, everything. We're creating lines in other industries now because we're trying to avoid these areas. So I think you got to look at the big picture, the benefits of this [MPA network] and the downside. And there's really not much benefit, with a huge downside full of economic impact.”

“The small boat fleet is in dire straits. It can't wait two or three years to have someone say at the state level ‘well, maybe we'll open up the Portuguese Ledge or Soquel Hole.’ We need some action today. And I know that's difficult in the world of COVID-19. But that's what needs to be done and something needs to be done, and quickly.”

“I think having a bridge fishery for commercial fishermen that helps supplement making a whole year-round income [would be helpful]. [...] It is such a sustainable resource, especially when it's done with the hook-and-line fisheries. It is so important to produce local food to individuals. And I think a lot of people that consume seafood maybe don't really realize what's going on. [...] We import so much other fish from different areas, people have become very disconnected with what commercial fishermen do and don't necessarily have the ability to do, in order to bring those type of products to our local areas. [...] It's really challenging for somebody to go out there and actually make a little bit of money doing it while also being able to provide that fish for someone to eat locally, which I think is a really cool thing to do.”

### 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?

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

**Discussion Summary** (Due to time constraints during the focus group, participants were not asked these questions, and so did not provide ratings or discuss their responses.)