

## 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 Shelter Cove'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: Shelter Cove**

**Date: Monday, October 19, 2020**

**Participants: Teresa Davey, Jake Mitchell, Jared Morris, Sam Stebnicki**

---

<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.

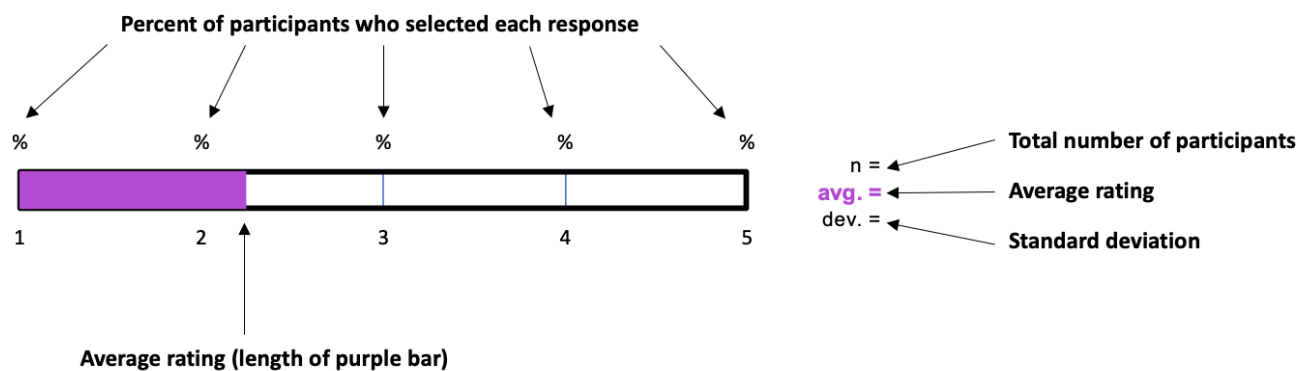
## Overview

On October 19, 2020, four fishermen operating out of Shelter Cove, including three who fish commercially and two who are CPFV operators, participated in the eighth focus group conversation. A detailed summary of the conversation is captured below, including:

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

## Guidance for Interpreting Figures

There are 17 figures displaying participant responses for questions that had a numerical/quantitative component. In those figures, the percentages located directly above the bar (between 1 (low) and 5 (high)) represent the percent of participants in the focus group who selected that response. The total number of focus group participants is labeled 'n' to the right of each figure. The length of the purple bar indicates the average rating for each question, also labeled 'avg.' to the right, and 'dev.' refers to standard deviation, or the extent to which scores deviated from one another. See below for an example figure. There are also two figures on pages 15 and 21 that display all of the average responses for each question in the well-being and MPA sections, respectively, from highest to lowest.



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

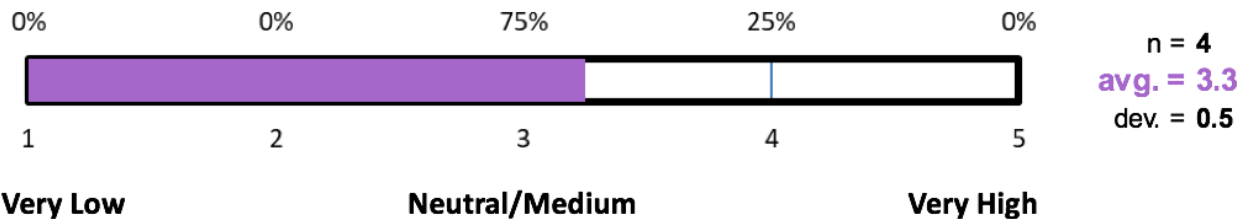
- [California Fisheries Data Explorer](#): This interactive site allows users to visualize commercial landings data (i.e., number of fishermen, pounds of fish landed, and revenue from fish landed) and CPFV logbook data (i.e., number of anglers, vessels, trips, and fish caught from specific fisheries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

Our Project Team would like to express our appreciation to the four Shelter Cove fishermen—Teresa Davey, Jake Mitchell, Jared Morris, and Sam Stebnicki—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** In terms of the current health and sustainability of marine resources, fishermen from Shelter Cove reported that some species are healthier than others and offered suggestions that they believe could help improve overall marine resource health.

- Several participants reported that rock cod health is doing well. One participant suggested that more areas, including deeper waters, be accessible to fishermen to reduce current fishing pressure on rock cod and other species.
- Participants shared several factors they believe have affected salmon conditions, including water diversions and climate change.
  - One fisherman described how salmon are unable to travel downstream to the ocean because of less rain in the Humboldt area.
  - Another fisherman suggested the fishing season for salmon does not coincide with salmon runs, making it difficult for fishermen to catch salmon when the season is open due to low abundance.
  - One participant suggested that programs like hatcheries be developed to help increase salmon abundance in Northern California waters.

### Participant Quotes

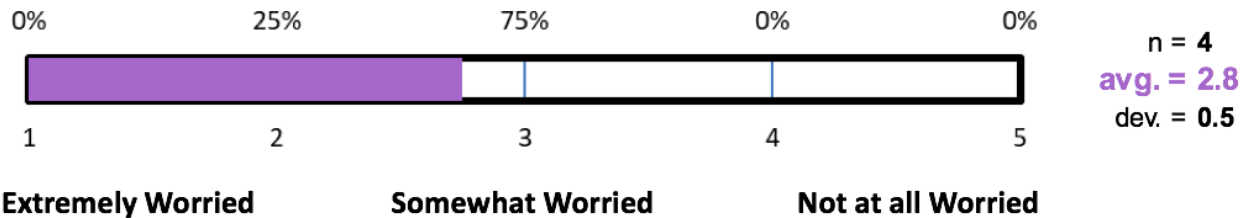
“We're having a good rock cod season, but salmon was kind of bleak with only really a month open for us. But if they [California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)/Pacific Fisheries Management Council (PFMC)] opened up a little bit more areas for us to fish [that] would be nice. Give us more places to catch them, maybe deeper.”

“I think [for] the past four or five years, we've had some crazy rains during the year. But [name redacted] and I were just talking the other day looking for salmon and they're starting to pile up in the river, but they can't go anywhere. So it's like [in] Humboldt, we were used to [there] being this rain, rain, rain and now it seems like [rain events are] getting later and later.”

“They're doing other programs, like the trucking program and the net pens, down in Monterey Bay for the salmon, and you look at their salmon seasons [and they are] what seemed like, historically, our salmon seasons [in the Shelter Cove area] were [. . .] and now they're the ones that pretty much have all the fish in the last few years. And I think that if Northern California in

some way could get on board with some similar programs, it could help because the rivers and the water - they're not coming back anytime soon."

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



**Discussion Summary** Participants communicated some concern about the long-term health of marine resources and highlighted their uncertainty and questions regarding ocean conditions into the future.

- One fisherman shared the concern that increased pyrosome (translucent, tube-like 'sea pickle') abundance may affect the long-term health of rockfish and yellowtail.
- Another fisherman questioned whether the recent changes in ocean conditions, like water temperature changes, are part of a cycle that has been experienced in the past or if we are entering a novel cycle of environmental change.
- One participant was optimistic about the future of the CPFV/charter industry and believed people will continue to want to recreationally fish.

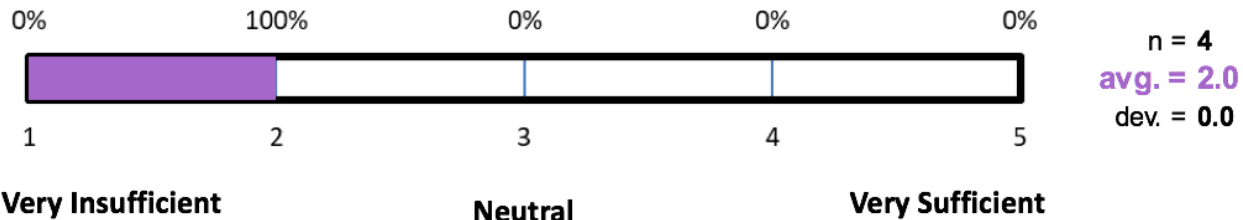
**Participant Quotes**

"Over the last few years, we've had an explosion in the local pyrosomes, which [are] sort of like a little jellyfish-looking creature. But the rockfish have exploded with it in the last couple of years. But [. . .] because the pyrosomes eat smaller things, could that cause a long-term issue with our rockfishing and our yellowtail and all of that? So they're eating and gorging on them now, but what's going to happen in the future is a question."

"I think about it [ocean conditions or environmental change] a lot and I think almost undoubtedly it probably has something to do - and will do - [with the future health of marine resources]. But then there's also a part of me that says I'm sure the ocean goes through cycles, and I don't think I've been alive long enough to see those cycles. And so there's part of me that says, 'yeah, it's changing a lot, but who's to say that it hasn't done similar changes in the past?'"

## 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?



Very Insufficient

Neutral

Very Sufficient

**Discussion Summary** Participants expressed concerns related to the level of access to commercial fish resources for fishermen from Shelter Cove.

- Several participants shared that depth restrictions inhibit access to some species which increases fishing pressure on other species in shallower areas. One participant mentioned that compared to charter fishermen, commercial fishermen have greater access to deeper waters.
- One participant explained how open access fishermen fish in deeper waters so they can catch what they need but that, in doing so, they incidentally take deeper nearshore fish that they cannot keep without a permit.
  - Another participant added that while a deeper nearshore permit is very expensive and difficult to obtain, it provides access to more species compared to open access fisheries.
- One fisherman shared that during a good crab season, larger boats often outnumber smaller boats, put more gear in the water, and fish longer hours, making it difficult for smaller boats to access crab.

#### Participant Quotes

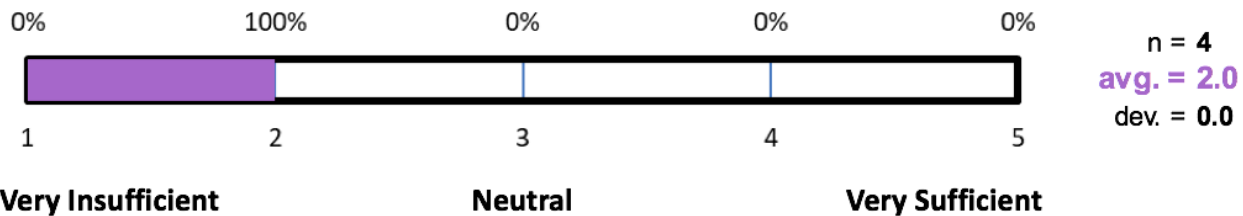
“With the depth limitations in place - let's say, for instance, we have a rock pile that's probably ten square miles area - just throwing out figures - but through the depth limitations, we're really only allowed to fish I would say probably 50 percent of that. And so I would say that's the biggest limiting factor, and then it kind of puts pressure on other nearshore fish, such as black rockfish and cabazon rockfish. [ . . . ] I think it'd be a lot more beneficial and help out everyone if [we were allowed to] spread the effort out throughout that rock pile [beyond current depth limitations].”

“The deeper nearshore [permit] has actually saved us, made it easier to go out fishing for the blacks and the blues, which the open access guys can't catch. So it's made a big difference for us. But that permit was very expensive and [we] had to know somebody, like we met this guy in Fort Bragg [and] waited five years for him to finally say he was going to give up the deeper nearshore [permit]. Without knowing him, we would have never gotten it. But we stood back and we waited five years. We called him twice a year to let him know we really wanted it. We finally got it. But I mean, there's only so many of those [permits] out there and [ . . . ] if you don't sell it, it will die with the fishermen.”

“If we're having a good crab season, we have to kind of be quiet because if anybody gets a word out there, the next day, you've got 30 big boats and they're dropping their gear all over your

gear and they're fishing 24 hours a day. And half the time you'll go and you'll pull your pot up and one's full and you go to the next pot and it's empty. So they're pulling your gear and we can't stay out all night. So that's the hard part for us. And just to get around these other buoys, I know it was like two years ago where every time we pulled a buoy, we had somebody else's buoy tied around ours. And it was just crazy how many big boats came in and kind of wiped us out. [. . .] I think it was because of domoic acid, when ports were shut down, so everybody flocked to where we were [in Shelter Cove]."

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



**Very Insufficient**

**Neutral**

**Very Sufficient**

**Discussion Summary** Participants indicated that income earned from commercial fishing alone is often not enough to support a livelihood.

- One fisherman stated that they require a second source of income to supplement what they earn from fishing.
- One participant emphasized that fishermen are willing to do what it takes, including fish in inclement weather, to earn enough income from fishing to support their families; more so among younger fishermen than older fishermen. They explained how older fishermen from their port do not earn much income from fishing but that they choose to stay in the industry rather than sell their business.
- Another participant identified a connection between income earned from fishing and available infrastructure. Since Shelter Cove does not have a processing facility and fishermen cannot sell filleted fish off their boat, potential sales are lost because many customers want to purchase filleted fish.
- One participant shared that CPFV/charter fishermen operating out of Shelter Cove earn sufficient income.

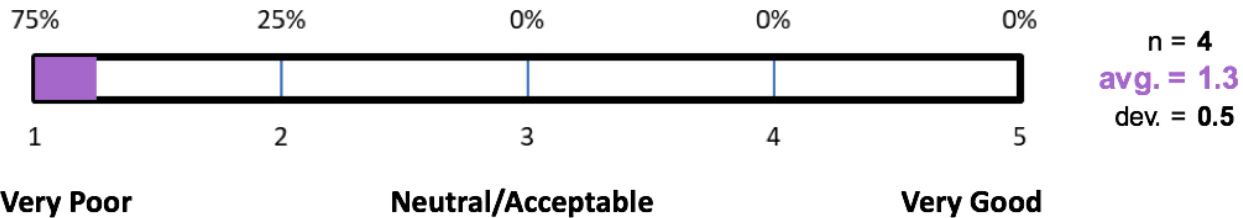
**Participant Quotes**

"I'm actually doing fairly well with it [commercial fishing] at this point, but it's a lot of work and there is a lot of pedaling. You're taking fish around to people - you're definitely doing some work. It would be a lot easier if there was a legal place to fillet fish because I have people come to the boat daily that want fish and you go to try to sell it to them and they want it filleted and technically you're not supposed to fillet it for them without a processing facility. So you're always battling [that]. You end up losing a lot of customers that don't want a whole fish."

"[Name redacted] will go out and fish the rough shit because he has to if he wants to support his family whereas those older guys - they're over it."

"A lot of the old timers are still hanging on and they're not making money, but they refuse to quit. They have their boats, and they're not selling them and they're expensive."

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



**Discussion Summary** When discussing markets, participants noted the difficulties associated with selling catch that is landed in Shelter Cove.

- Participants shared that because Shelter Cove is a small, remote, rural fishing community, fishermen operating out of the area have limited market opportunities, requiring fishermen to seek alternative ways to sell their product.
  - Several participants identified one long-term buyer that fishermen from Shelter Cove sell their crab to. Fishermen must drive their catch about an hour away to meet the buyer which has its own set of challenges.
  - A couple fishermen explained they purchased a license to be able to sell their product themselves rather than compete with the limited number of local buyers, though some, particularly older, fishermen may not be willing or able to.
  - One participant stated they sell to local markets and that they also have a buyer in the Bay Area. They added that having multiple marketing opportunities allows them to sustain their business.
- One participant indicated the few market options that fishermen from Shelter Cove have are also uncertain and can be pulled away at any time. They gave the example of losing buyers because people did not quality control their catch before bringing it to market.

**Participant Quotes**

“As a commercial fisherman, as a commercial crabber and doing it for a long time, the hardest thing is finding a place for it [crab] to be sold. We're in the most remote place in the most remote port in Northern California. I mean, to get here is impossible. So to have somebody come pick our crab up, the 18 wheelers, they don't want to do that. Why would they want to come out for our ten thousand pounds when they can just go somewhere else?”

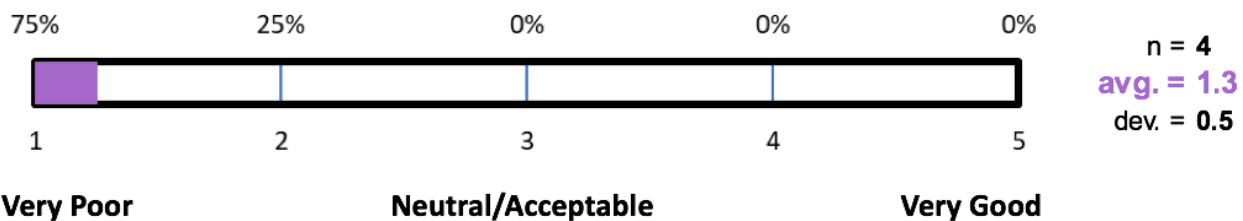
“We have a buyer that has been committed to Shelter Cove for a long time and he brings the truck up and we have to drive over the hill after off-loading our crab onto our trucks and trailers and haul them a half hour, 40 minutes to town to meet a truck that most likely [isn't] on time. It's usually nine [am] to one [pm] when we're meeting this truck and then we have to drive back home on these roads. So it's something we have to commit to because we haven't found somebody to drive out there [to Shelter Cove] and pick our crabs up yet.”

“I just think it's really hard for anybody to keep going and not step on toes because we're all friends out there. If there's eight of us out there in a small little community [ . . . ], we're all going to go to the same place and try to sell our fish. So here we are - two, five, six, seven fishermen - all going out and trying to catch open access fish and all trying to fight for that same market. So

[. . .] you're buying these licenses and trying to go somewhere else, but only so many commercial fishermen are going to do that. The old timers that have been fishing for 40 years commercially for cod, salmon, crab, they're not going to go buy that eight hundred dollar license and go peddle fish on the streets. Even though it's lucrative, they're just not going to do that."

"We're dry crabbers and it only takes one person from the Cove to bring in dead crab and ruin it for everybody else. And it wasn't once or twice. It was three times. And the rest of us lose out because they're not [doing] quality control. Without them [crab] being in water, you got to be very careful. You can't be letting them sit in the garbage cans for hours or dumping your whole barrels in without handpicking the crab out. Those are just things that we've lost buyers [because of]. We're grateful to have the one buyer. But it just takes one person to mess it up for everybody else, which is kind of crazy."

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



**Discussion Summary** Related to the port's infrastructure, participants discussed the lack of important and reliable infrastructure in Shelter Cove.

- Several participants identified how the lack of a processing facility makes it difficult for fishermen to sell directly to the public. One participant noted that if fishermen had a place to cook crab, they could increase local sales.
- Several participants highlighted the lack of ice and storage within the port.
  - One fisherman has access to ice in Shelter Cove from their buyer, and another fisherman shared how they use an ice machine located at a family member's house in Shelter Cove.
  - Several participants explained how most fishermen use their homes for boat and gear storage and other infrastructure needs.
- A couple participants noted that while the tractor boat launch is reliable, the times it is operating can be challenging for fishermen's schedules because it only runs during business hours.
- One participant shared how a local leader helped initiate the drafting of a plan for the future of the port, including infrastructure growth, but that the marina property is privately owned which makes development activities difficult although they are currently in discussion with the owner on the topic.

**Participant Quotes**

"There's no infrastructure to support any of [the fishermen]. I have people coming up to me asking to buy fish fairly often when I'm cleaning fish and whatnot, but it's hard to sell to the general public because [. . .] you can't fillet their fish legally. But if there was a processing facility where people could fillet their fish and [if] they had a place to sell it, that would help."

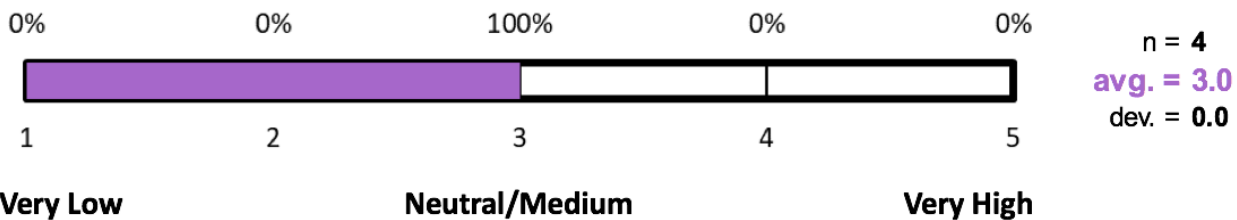


“My mother-in-law lives right there in the Cove, and that's where our crab pots are and our boats are parked there and we have a small ice machine [there].”

“I think [the tractor launch is] probably the most reliable it's ever been. But still, as a commercial fisherman, anyone that's running a business can be an inconvenience because [. . .] even though it's open seven days a week, that might not fit your schedule [. . .] when you're crabbing and it's a flat day and you got 200 pots to pull, you want to be out there probably 12 hours a day.”

“We've created a blueprint for the marina on how we want it to look in the future, but it's privately owned and trying to get the owner on board with any of that is proving to be a challenge. And we can't do much until we have any kind of ownership or long-term lease on the property which is what our non-profit is working on in the next year or two - just working on getting a lease or a stronghold to [. . .] where we could be able to get grants to improve infrastructure.”

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



**Discussion Summary** Participants indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic did not have much of an effect on fishermen from Shelter Cove, though some saw an increase in local demand for seafood.

- Several participants reported that they experienced an increase in sales directly to the public.
  - One participant shared they were able to sell crab for a higher price than they otherwise would have since most restaurants were closed. They added that more people wanted to purchase seafood directly from the fishermen rather than going to the grocery store.
- One participant stated that they had an increase in sales to their Bay Area buyer.
- One participant explained that the marina development plans had slowed due to COVID-19, but that there are upcoming meetings scheduled to discuss plans for the future of the port.
- One participant mentioned that CPFV/charter fishing operations were delayed due to COVID-19 protocols.

**Participant Quotes**

“I actually had more people that were personally looking for fish and along with that, I have one buyer that goes down to the Bay Area and I guess the Asian markets really exploded during this time, so they wanted a lot more fish than typically goes down there and we got to sell a bunch during the period of COVID.”

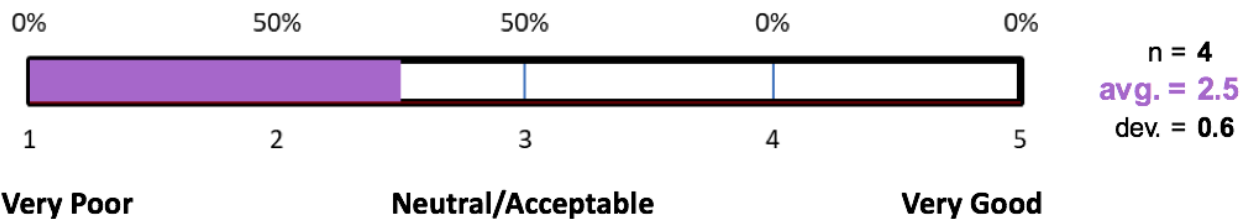
“As the crab season went, we saw a huge hit in the price of crab because of the restaurants closing. Normally when you sell your crab, it goes up 50 cents or 25 cents and [COVID-19] kind of put a stop to the rise in the price. [. . .] We could take live crab here in the Cove and sell them

for ten dollars a crab, which made a big difference with the retailer's license. Then when rock cod season opened up - the people love the rock cod here too - people weren't going into town and going to grocery stores; they wanted to stay home. So all I had to do was text a few people and we would have our orders before we even went fishing so we knew how much to catch.”

“The whole COVID thing put a damper on [marina development] talks [ . . . ] but [the property owner has] recently hired some new guy to run stuff during COVID, so we have a meeting with him next month to discuss what their plans are. There's a lot going on - the Harbor District's lease is up in March - so there's a lot of other moving and changing parts happening.”

## Well-Being, Social/Political

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



**Discussion Summary** When discussing labor, participants indicated that recruitment and retention of participants in the commercial fishing industry was slightly poor, though the presence of younger fishermen in Shelter Cove indicates a hopeful future for the local fishing community.

- One participant shared how although older fishermen want to continue fishing, they may no longer be able to for various reasons, including not being able to make enough money and not being physically able to fish anymore.
- Another participant expressed a concern with regard to fishermen not wanting to stay in the industry because it is difficult to support a livelihood with income earned from fishing alone.
- Several participants mentioned that they are seeing more fishermen leaving the industry than entering, though there is currently a younger generation of fishermen in Shelter Cove that are working to support the longevity of the fishing community.
- One fisherman explained that it is difficult to find crew.
- One participant explained that it is expensive to enter the commercial fishing industry and to maintain a living due to upfront costs and continuing fees and taxes.

### Participant Quotes

“All those old time people that have been doing it for so long are not going to be able to do it anymore because they can't make the money. They can't go out on the seasons that they [CDFW] give us. Sometimes their bodies can't handle it. They want to fish, but they can't or the fish aren't there. So they're spending money but not making money.”

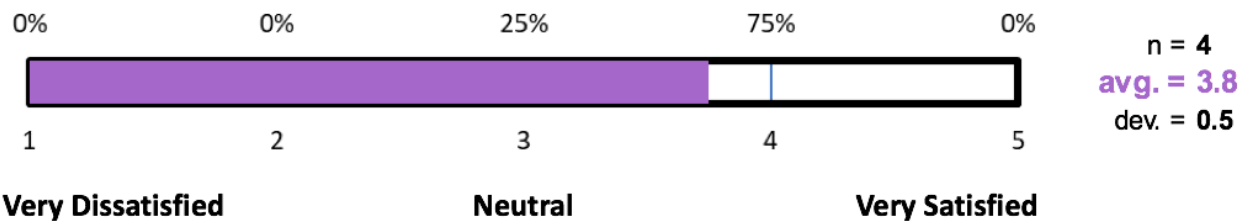
“It could definitely be difficult to find new people. Typically for the help I've needed, I have other friends that are other commercial fishermen that I've been able to call on. So it hasn't been bad for me. But yes, it can be very hard to get someone new and reliable that wants to

fish and get involved. Because if you talk to a lot of the older people, they're pretty dissatisfied - it is hard for them to keep going.”

“You got to really want to do the fishing because it's not as lucrative - stuff goes wrong, boats break down, gear breaks and gear is expensive. So for most people, it's easier to get a job pounding nails or doing other things than buying a boat and buying the licenses and paying the freaking commercial fees and then paying the taxes on everything. And by the end of it all, you're already digging a hole, [ . . . ] you're not looking as good for next year. You're just hoping in one hand and you-know-what in the other and hoping one fills up. It's hard to find even deckhands; people want to do it, but they don't want to do it all every day, all the time. They want to do other things as well.”

“I feel like we're fortunate where we still have a pretty [ . . . ] young corps [ . . . ] So I think the future is here. There's enough young people involved where it'll be going for a long time. [ . . . ] We are the younger generation and I think that we're going to be sticking and staying and hopefully encouraging our kin to take over after us.”

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



**Discussion Summary** Participants indicated that fishermen from Shelter Cove are overall satisfied with their jobs.

- Several fishermen highlighted that they love to fish, though some older fishermen are less satisfied in the industry because they are unable to fish as much as they would like.
- One fisherman said their job has given them a sense of normalcy among the COVID-19 pandemic.

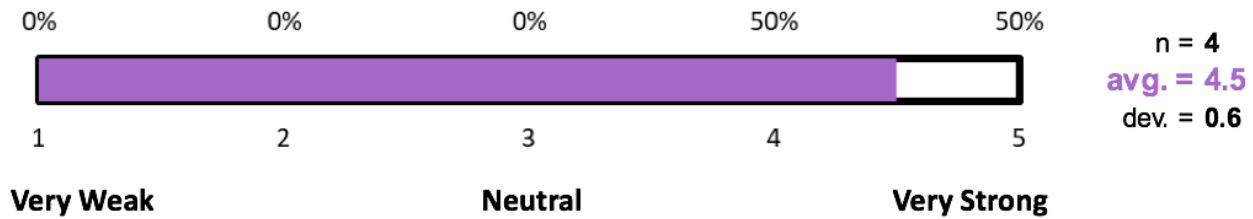
**Participant Quotes**

“Who doesn't like fishing? I fish all summer so I can fish all winter so I can fish all summer again.”

“I have definitely talked to a few gentlemen who might not feel that way [satisfied with their jobs] - some older men who are not fishing quite as much as they would like to. But it seems like among the guys that are fishing regularly, that's kind of the consensus [that they are satisfied with their jobs in the fishing industry].”

“When COVID-19 hit, when I went on the ocean, that's when I felt normal - everything was normal. Then you get off the boat and everybody's in masks and it's just, it was a crazy world. But every time I go out there [fishing], I feel like I'm in the right spot.”

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



**Discussion Summary** Overall, participants reported that they felt social relationships within the Shelter Cove fishing community were strong, but they also identified areas where these relationships could be strengthened.

- One participant characterized the fishing community as tight-knit where everyone knows each other, but as a small community, there can be some tensions between fishermen. For example, with only one buyer in the area, there is increased competition.
  - Another participant suggested that there could be better communication among fishermen. However, participants stated that fishermen in Shelter Cove will help and support each other because they are like family.
- One participant mentioned how the Shelter Cove Fishing Preservation, Inc., (SFCPI) is working to help engage the local fishing community. They shared how the SCFPI emerged, in part, as a result of a local leader’s vision for the future of Shelter Cove. The SFCPI now has people that help with the tractor boat launch. Members also produced a plan for how they would like the port to look in the future.

**Participant Quotes**

“Our Cove - we're all so small. It's a tight-knit community. Everybody knows everybody. So in that way it's very strong. But [ . . . ] we kind of fall into this [situation where there is] one buyer who one or two people have been selling to for 40 years [ . . . ] I don't want to step on toes, but as a fishery, I catch more crab than they do now. [ . . . ] So there's always a little bit of tension.”

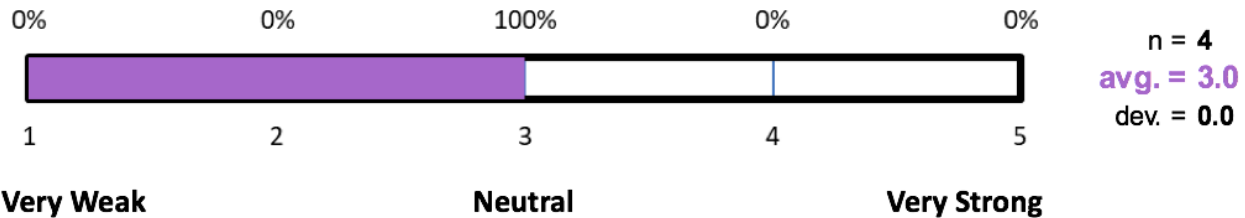
“We're still brothers with each other. And if somebody needs help with their boat, you're going to go to help them. That takes precedence over you making money for that day or whatever you were going to do.”

“[The marina restoration plan] encompasses every aspect, from the tractor service to a fish processing plant to this new composter that helps handle fish waste. And so this is our vision that we put together with [name redacted] and his son to hand to the property owner and the Harbor District and other governmental agencies that are involved in the property. And it's kind of to say, ‘hey, this is our future and that when improvements are made, let's try to make them along these lines and how we can move forward.’”

“Hopefully [the SCFPI] can be more community-minded. That's the whole purpose behind that organization, is to get some infrastructure built and some stuff built for the fishing community. [ . . . ] This (holds up binder) is the restoration project. We've got a couple of pictures in here of buildings and some drawings we did, like renditions of the old fish market with the processing facility in it. And so that's sort of the future vision and it encompasses every aspect, from the

tractor service to a fish processing plant with this new composter that helps handle fish waste and stuff. We put [the plan] together with [name redacted] and his son to hand to the property owner and the Harbor District and other governmental agencies that are involved in the property to say, 'hey, this is our future and that when improvements are made, let's try to make them along these lines.'"

**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 indicated that relationships with groups external to the Shelter Cove fishing community could be improved.

- One participant suggested that the fishing community's relationship with the Harbor District is relatively strong among SCFPI members, but there is still a need for fishermen outside the SCFPI to be more involved.
- Another participant suggested that most fishermen are not engaged in policy processes because they are worried that what they say will lead to more restrictions. However, they also recognized that the fishing community could benefit from increased fishermen involvement in policy and management discussions.
- One participant referenced the marine mammal entanglement issues faced by commercial Dungeness crab fishermen and said they would like to see more people concerned about the plight of the fishermen and stand up for the industry when they are being unfairly targeted.
- One participant said that the fishermen in the port should identify a representative who is their proxy with external groups and who attends meetings on the fishermen's behalf. Another participant added that most meetings happen in places far from Shelter Cove.

**Participant Quotes**

"I think I have a different point of view than the others [on relationships with external groups] just because I'm the president of the non-profit [SCFPI] and I have to talk to them [the Harbor District]. Before that, I never really talked to them at all, except for when they came to our meetings. And I would imagine that [. . .] the relationship is pretty poor for everyone else. But I feel like now from my perspective engaging with them, [the relationship] is pretty good. I think that it started off kind of rocky, but now we're becoming a lot more transparent and forthcoming, whether it's good or bad. So at least we're getting honest answers out of them."

"There's a lot of people [that are] wary about talking with anyone that has anything to do with fishing, and rightfully so because they're worried about more restrictions. But I know from some people that are involved, that do go to those [Dungeness Crab] Task Force meetings, we do need more people [involved] and it's frustrating because everyone wants to complain when the rules come in place, but no one's there when the process is taking place."

“I think that if we just had a representative [who] could chime in [for us during fisheries-related meetings, that] would be helpful for sure. There's a [. . .] group and they go to all the salmon meetings, they go to all that stuff, and they call me every year when they're going to the salmon meetings [and say,] ‘hey, here are the options, what do you guys want?’ So they call and get our input even though we're not really on their board. And I think those crab groups, if they had a name and a number to call and [if we had] a person to say, ‘hey, I'll show up to a meeting’ or something every now and again, someone has to step up and say I'll be that person.”

## Well-Being, Overall/Additional Comments

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

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

**Discussion Summary** Participants shared several suggestions that they would like managers to consider in relation to the Shelter Cove fishing community.

- One participant recommended that fisheries managers do more on-the-ground monitoring using the fishermen as a resource before making decisions that affect the fishing industry.
- Another participant suggested that managers recognize the Shelter Cove fishing community and other smaller ports and vessels are greatly affected by heavy restrictions compared to larger ports and vessels.
- One participant asked that managers listen to the fishermen and consider their perspectives in the decision-making process, which would help to better support the Shelter Cove fishing community.
- One participant communicated that increased access to deeper waters would decrease the pressure that is currently on nearshore species like rockfish.
- Another participant suggested that fishermen be allowed to keep yelloweye rockfish because they catch them more often than other rockfish species.

## Participant Quotes

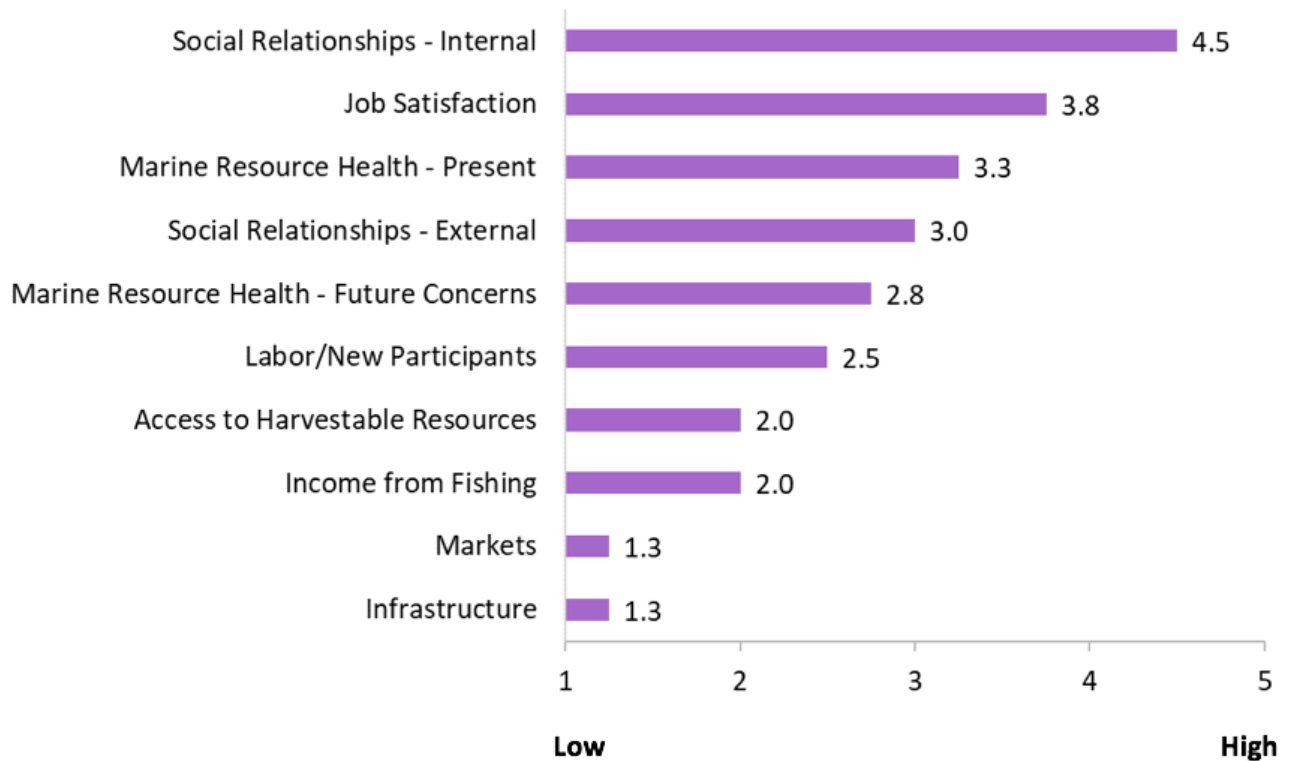
“The people who are making the rules, [I think they should] get out on the water and put a line in the water and see what's there, and I know they do it sometimes, but I think they need to do it more. Maybe with renting charter [boats] [. . .] But I think they could benefit from being on the water.”

“When people think of commercial fishing [they think of] this big industry and when you actually look at our community, the biggest boat that we all fish on is a 26-foot. [. . .] So we're not this big commercial industry with big commercial status. We're small-time, but we work our butts off and we love the industry. [And] even though it's small, [. . .] it's very restricted. [. . .] Even if you gave these guys unlimited access, we're not going to be doing a lot of damage.”

“I think there needs to be more people like us [fishermen] that they [managers] need to listen to. But at the same time, it's hard because a lot of us don't really want to lose what we already have because for us to get back anything is pretty much slim to none. Once they take something, it never really comes back. [. . .] I think [listening] to us would benefit our fisheries and it would benefit our communities.”

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

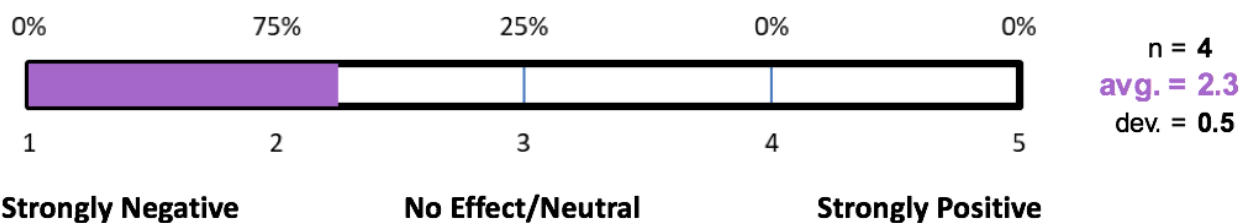
(Note: The following figure does not include the average rating for question 7. COVID-19 Impacts.)



## Perceptions of MPAs

### MPAs, Outcomes/Effects

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



**Discussion Summary** Participants reported that it is difficult to comment on the effect that the MPAs have had on marine resource health because fishermen are not allowed to fish in the MPAs and cannot compare conditions inside versus outside the closures.

- Several participants questioned whether increased marine resource health identified in MPA monitoring reports can be attributed to the MPAs or whether it is a result of natural ocean cycles.
- One fisherman shared how they have helped with MPA monitoring efforts tagging fish inside the MPAs and stated that they did not see much of a difference between conditions in the MPAs compared to where they are allowed to fish outside the MPAs.
- One fisherman noted that the MPAs, along with other fishing regulations (e.g., depth restrictions), decrease available fishing grounds and increase fishing pressure in areas that fishermen are allowed to access.

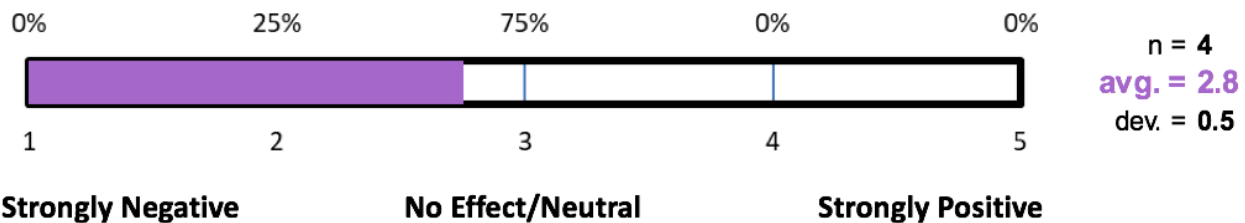
**Participant Quotes**

“I read some recent study that suggested that it [the MPA network] was working. And I don't know how you would go about saying that that's working. As a fisherman, I can't see any good effects of it. Maybe if I was able to fish in the MPA, I could tell you that there were some better effects.”

“Three or four years ago, I took out taggers. I think I did five or six tagging trips. We were able to fish in the MPAs at that time. I could not tell you that it was better fishing than where we are able to fish because we were able to fish in deeper water. We were able to go into the [MPAs] that were chosen [for the study]. [ . . . ] It's hard to tell if they're [the MPAs] doing better or not because we've tagged thousands of fish. And I've yet to catch a tagged fish [ . . . ] within a couple miles from where I took them fishing. I didn't see a crazy fish migration of tagged fish anywhere, but I bet you if we were to fish that same area, we probably would have caught some fish with the tags.”

“[The MPAs are] taking away fishing areas, which is going to transfer pressure to other fishing areas like groundfish areas, and then you're narrowing the focus with the depth and then more with the MPAs. And so you're just narrowing down pressure on other areas.”

**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 17 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** Regarding MPA effects on fishermen’s livelihoods, participants communicated that fishermen from Shelter Cove did not experience immediate changes in their ability to earn a living from fishing following the implementation of the MPA network but explained how the MPA network could affect them in the future.

- Several participants shared that MPA implementation did not have too much of an effect on fishermen from Shelter Cove because most of their primary fishing grounds were not designated as MPAs. One participant noted that this was likely the result of people who fish out of Shelter Cove, including those who do not live in the area, being engaged in the MPA implementation process. Another participant added that while fishermen could no longer access some areas they historically fished, they adjusted where they fished.
- One participant stated that they know of fishermen who are concerned about their gear accidentally drifting across an MPA boundary when they are fishing, resulting in violations.
- Another participant indicated that the MPAs could lead to crowding outside MPAs. They also suspected that MPAs south of Shelter Cove have led to boats traveling more to other ports, resulting in increased competition in the area.

**Participant Quotes**

“We lucked out enough to where they [MPAs] were put far enough away [. . .] from the Cove. [The MPAs] didn't have a huge impact as far as deterring people away [from fishing].”

“Even though a lot of us locals weren't involved [in the MPA implementation process], there were people from Eureka that were pretty involved in that whole process that did a good job of getting them placed in areas that were further away because in the original proposals, they looked a lot worse than what ended up being implemented.”

“Sure, those MPAs didn't affect [Shelter Cove] guys’ crabbing but maybe they did affect other guys’ crabbing like, for instance, Fort Bragg - maybe they're not able to crab [which] might force them to come higher up [north] in our territory.”

**MPAs, Discussion of Specific MPAs**

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

**Discussion Summary** Participants shared several negative effects that they have seen or experienced as a result of specific MPAs. One participant noted that while the MPAs may not look very big on a map, they often cover valuable fishing grounds and the area outside the MPAs is often sandy bottom that does not include habitats of target fisheries. One participant commented that the MPAs did not affect where they fish for crab.

- *Big Flat State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA)*: One participant mentioned that CPFV/charter boats can no longer target rockfish or halibut as a result of this MPA. Another participant stated that there were productive lingcod spots here.

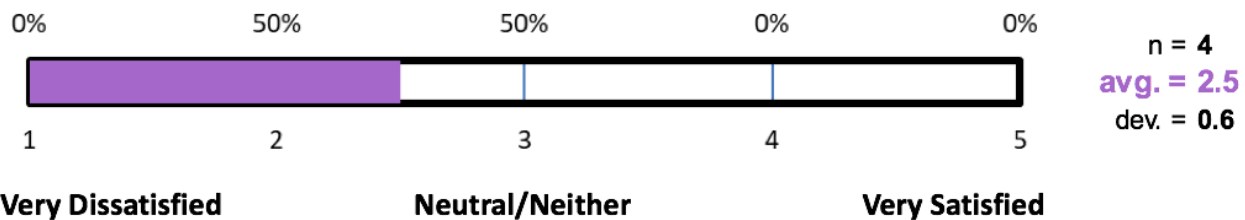
- *Sea Lion Gulch State Marine Reserve (SMR)*: Several participants reported that this MPA restricts access to one of the largest rock piles near Shelter Cove and that fishermen are only able to continue fishing one rock pile just south of the closure. One participant stated that this was another area that had good spots for lingcod fishing. Another participant noted that they have seen a build-up of gear along the boundary of this MPA.
- *Mattole Canyon SMR*: One participant has noticed an increase of fishing gear up to the boundary of this MPA in recent years.
- *Ten Mile SMR*: One participant shared that many salmon fishermen fish right along the MPA boundary.

**Participant Quotes**

“Between the Big Flat [SMCA] and almost all the way to the Sea Lion Gulch [SMR] - probably a mile south of Sea Lion Gulch - is just all sand. So that's not really fishable grounds unless you're fishing for sole. So from the outside [perspective, you look] at a map [and say], ‘oh, well, they didn't take away much’ but they took away a lot of the rock [piles]. [. . .] Reynolds Rock [near Sea Lion Gulch] - that's the only rock coddling grounds you have from Shelter Cove to that closed zone [. . .] that are within depth restriction limits. So if we wanted to fish that area, we're targeting one rock pile. [. . .] So there's a lot of ground that they took.”

**MPAs, Management**

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

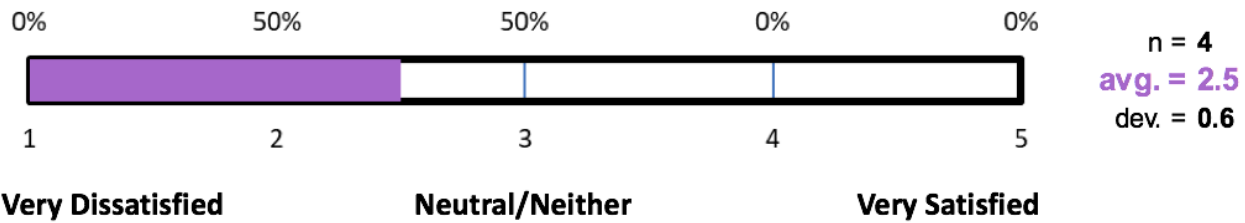


**Discussion Summary** One participant explained that it seemed like the waters near Shelter Cove were unfairly targeted during the MPA implementation process.

**Participant Quotes**

“I feel like they picked on us in a way because we're so small here [and said,] ‘let's preserve this place that's untouched.’ [. . .] Why don't they do that right outside San Francisco and close 20 miles or go shut down all their [fishing grounds]?”

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



**Discussion Summary** Participants shared their experience with MPA monitoring and ways in which MPA monitoring efforts and communication of study results can be improved.

- One participant described how they have been involved in MPA monitoring efforts in the past but that they would like to see increased funding to support and expand the studies.
- Several participants suggested that better communication of results from the studies could help keep fishermen informed of MPA monitoring efforts.
- One participant stated that results from studies done in one MPA may not reflect what is happening in other MPAs and that monitoring should be done in each MPA.

**Participant Quotes**

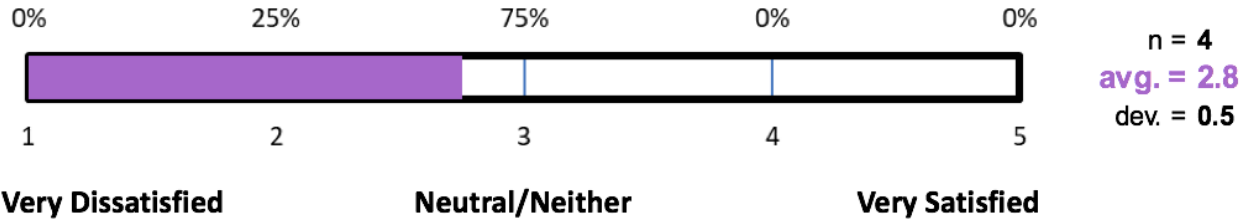
“The only time I've dealt with it [MPA monitoring] was when I was doing the testing [during tagging studies]. I did it for two years in a row and I think I took them [researchers] out four to five times a year. And the last year they came, they were pumped doing all this research. And then they said that they basically defunded the project and they didn't have the money to [continue]. And so I [thought,] ‘if we can't find the researchers to come research it then [how would we know] what's there?’ [ . . . ] I'd like to see [more investment in monitoring].”

“I think [communicating results] might bring more awareness to what's happening in the [MPAs]. Letting the public know what's happening, letting people who are fishing that area know what's happening. When it's just taken from you, you feel like you're told you can't fish in a certain way, in a certain place. You're afraid of drifting over that line and possibly getting ticketed. It just seems like a negative. So if you get some positives with that, it can be helpful for you to know what's happening.”

“To me, it seems like there is no monitoring, at least not on those ones [Big Flat SMCA and Mattole Canyon SMR] just because those are the ones that are close to us. And I have seen other things on social media where they were doing some projects down off Ten Mile [SMR] where they were catching rock cod. So I don't know if it's just the inaccessibility of those ones or they just decided they're so far away and hard to get to that they're not going to do it. [It] doesn't seem like they've done much with the ones between Shelter Cove and the Mattole Canyon [SMR], but it would be very cool to see results, at least, if they were doing it.”

“Maybe they are doing some research, which I've heard that they are in Monterey, but I don't think you can take the research from one MPA and assume that all the rest are doing the same. So they need to monitor each and every one of them and see how they compare to see how they're all doing across the board.”

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



**Discussion Summary** Participants shared that local fishermen from Shelter Cove are often more aware of MPA boundaries, and traveling boats who are not familiar with the area are targeted by enforcement.

**Participant Quotes**

“There’s a lot of people, especially out-of-towners, that don’t know where they are [in relation to MPA boundaries] and I have seen Fish and Game up there actually monitoring them and asking them what they were doing and they said they were there on reports of people having crab gear or fishing in those closed areas. So they do monitor and they are watching.”

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

**Discussion Summary** Participants shared suggestions and concerns related to the MPAs.

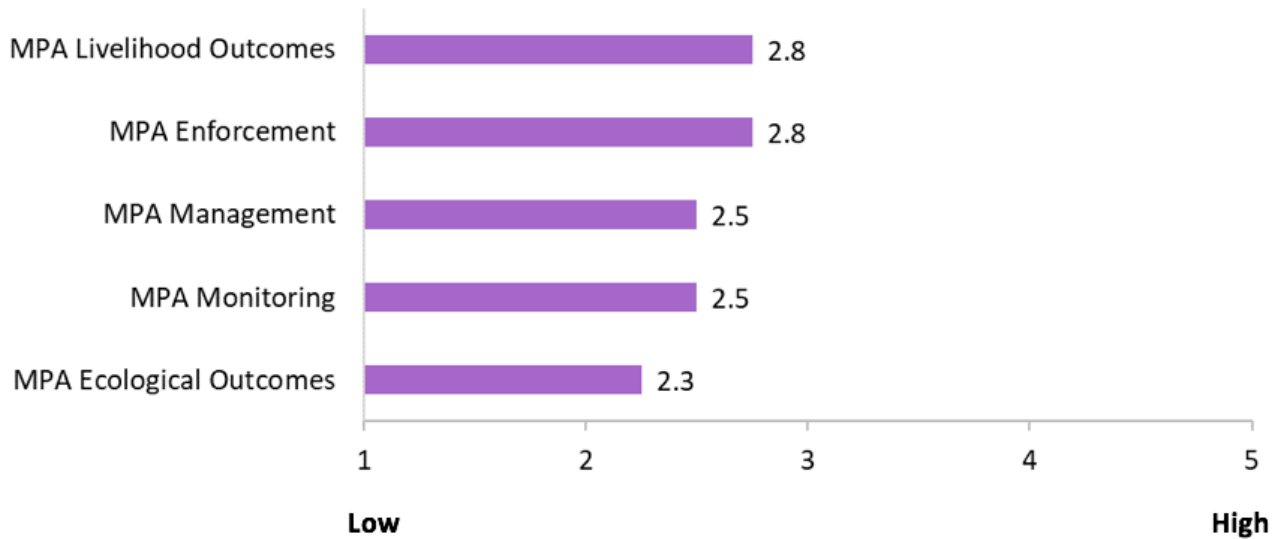
- One participant recommended that managers communicate how MPAs are helping fishermen and whether they are improving marine resource health. Another participant suggested there be more MPA monitoring and increased fishermen involvement in that monitoring.
- Several participants emphasized the importance of allowing fishermen to access more areas as a way to relieve current fishing pressure in other areas.
- One participant wondered whether the MPAs are permanent or if fishermen will be allowed to fish in them in the future.

**Participant Quotes**

“Show us what they’re doing for our fisheries and how they’re helping us as fishermen or [how] they’re helping the fish. [. . .] Why not bring back those taggers or the [researchers] and hire people like [fishermen to] take them into those [MPAs] again? What’s better than the word of mouth of fishermen? [. . .] I think that’s one way to keep fishermen informed. [. . .] I felt like [being involved in MPA monitoring] was good, like they’re actually doing something. They weren’t just closing it down and saying, ‘hey, you can’t fish here.’”

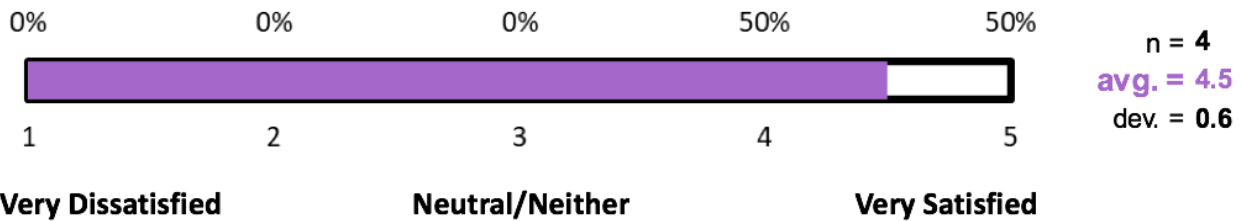
“I just think spread it out - depth and MPAs - just spread it out, let us access all those species [. . .] and let everybody fish all the way along the coast. I feel like we would have a [better] outcome that way.”

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



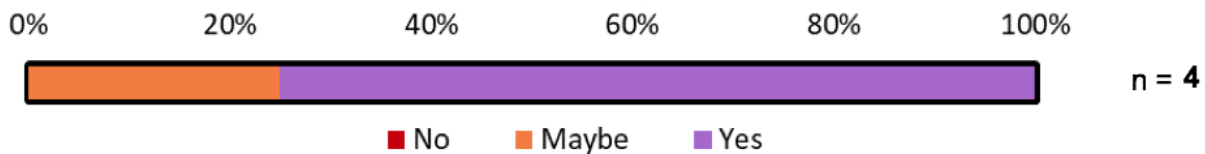
**Feedback on Virtual Process**

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



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

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



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

**Discussion Summary** Participants shared how they appreciated the opportunity to participate in the Shelter Cove focus group.

**Participant Quotes**

“Everything went well. Thank you for inviting us.”