

## 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 Trinidad'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: Trinidad**

**Date: Tuesday, October 27, 2020**

**Participants: Zach Rotwein, two anonymous participants**

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<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.

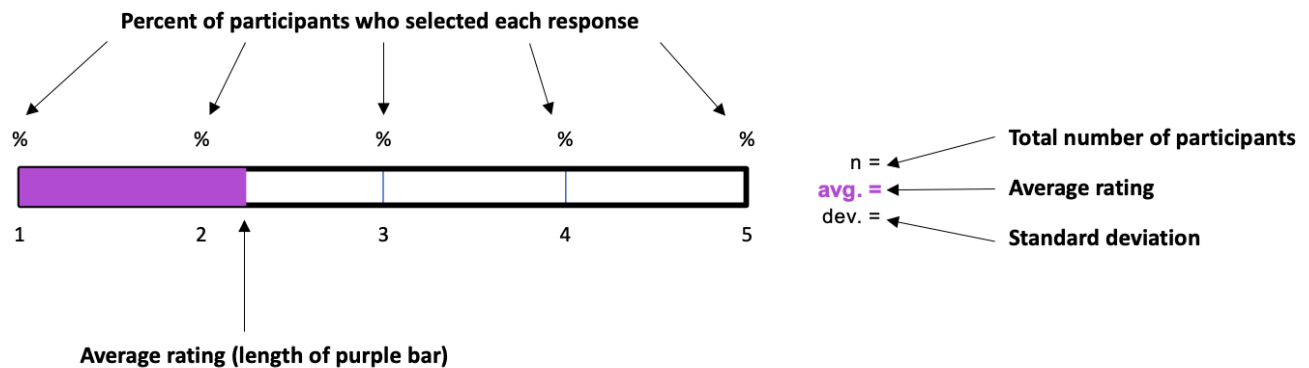
## Overview

On October 27, 2020, three commercial fishermen operating out of Trinidad participated in the tenth 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.<sup>3</sup>

## 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 23 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:

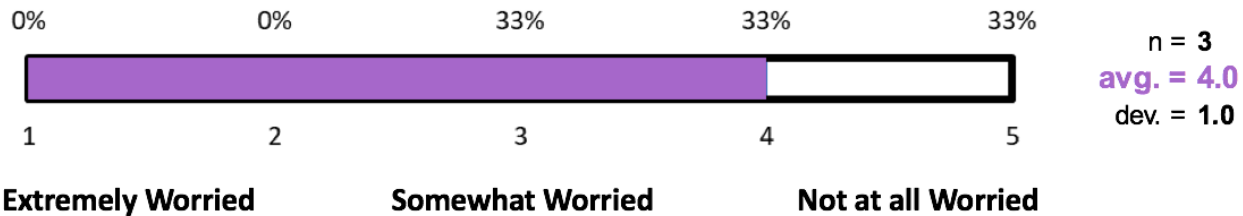
- [California Fisheries Data Explorer](#): This interactive site allows users to visualize commercial landings data (i.e., number of fishermen, pounds of fish landed, and revenue from fish landed) and CPFV logbook data (i.e., number of anglers, vessels, trips, and fish caught from specific fisheries and ports).
- [MPA Baseline Monitoring Program: North Coast](#)
  - [Summary of Findings from Baseline Monitoring of Marine Protected Areas, 2013–2017, North Coast](#)
- [Information about the square mileage of MPAs in California coastal state waters](#), including regional and statewide MPA statistics
- [Statewide MPA map](#)

<sup>3</sup> The quotes throughout the document came from various participants including those who wish to remain anonymous.



salmon runs the last few years [. . .] there's no fish coming up the river hardly, and they're just getting small, tiny."

**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 expressed concerns regarding the effectiveness of fisheries management in supporting both the long-term health of marine resources and economic well-being of fishermen who depend on those resources. They did not specify concerns related to future ocean changes or marine resources themselves.

- One participant shared a sentiment of deep distrust in management stemming from the loss of access to marine resources as a result of management actions through the years. These losses have hindered their ability to support themselves and their family through commercial fishing. As a result, they do not trust that future management decisions will contribute to the long-term health and sustainability of marine resources that fishermen rely on.
- Another participant recalled a time when salmon abundance was high and believed this was the result of salmon hatcheries. They stated that since management objectives have begun to focus on the resurgence of wild salmon and because salmon hatcheries have closed, salmon populations have dropped, leaving them worried about the impacts of management on future salmon health.

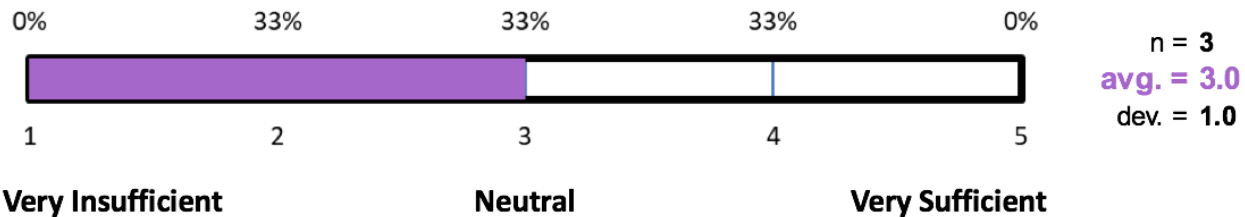
**Participant Quotes**

"I don't trust the management. Every time somebody meddles in our business, we wind up with less fishing area, less grounds, less opportunity - I got a family [to support]. Now it's whale [entanglements] [. . .] it just keeps coming at us. I think if the [fisheries managers] do their job, we would be rocking and rolling just fine."

"My only concern with the salmon is the mismanagement of it. [. . .] Somebody came up with this faulty decision that we had to have wild salmon - which I don't think they can scientifically justify because I don't think there's any such thing as wild salmon - but we used to have hatcheries everywhere. We used to have healthy populations. But since the management got involved, with the change in the way they manage fish, there's not been the [volume of] fish that we used to have for salmon, and I don't think we ever will, so I'm extremely concerned about salmon. I don't call that a resource issue, I call that a mismanagement issue."

## 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 identified several factors that either contribute to or limit access to marine resources for fishermen out of Trinidad. They believed resources are abundant and there are not any physical barriers that hinder fishermen’s access to harvestable resources. However, they reported costs associated with fishing operations as well as fisheries management inhibit access.

- One participant stated local fishermen are able to fish in inclement weather because they do not have to cross a coastal bar that is often a hazard in other ports.
- Regarding resource abundance, one participant reported there is plenty of Dungeness crab for both local and out-of-town fishermen to harvest. They explained the volume of catch depends on the amount of effort they put into fishing.
- Several participants highlighted the financial barriers to purchase fishing permits, gear, a boat, and boat insurance that hinder fishermen from entering or persisting in the fishery.
- One participant identified fisheries management as a barrier to access. For example, when the Dungeness crab season opener is delayed or when the season is closed due to marine life entanglement issues, fishermen cannot work because Dungeness crab is the main fishery in Trinidad.

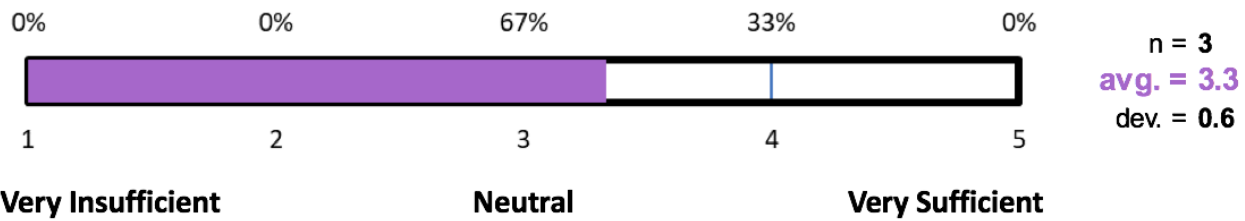
### Participant Quotes

“Fishing out of Trinidad, it allows us to fish in weather that [we otherwise wouldn’t be able to if we had] to cross a bar... it’s got its ups and downs.”

“I think there’s plenty of crab out there, and the people that aren’t making a living crabbing in our port, it’s not the crab’s fault. [ . . . ] If you’re trying hard, you catch your share of crab. If you don’t try hard, somebody from out of the area catches those crabs. They’re not our crab, they’re everybody’s crab here. I think that if everybody worked together, there’d be enough for everybody, but everybody’s got a different business plan. The opportunity’s there, whether they take advantage of that opportunity or not for crab. Any other resource, that’s another subject.”

“You could buy a house for the amount of money that it costs you to go buy a boat and a permit, [and] you can’t get insurance on your gear, your crab pots and all that stuff. You can get some insurance on the boat, but it doesn’t really cover you... Or to have a season and be able to actually go to work - that’s all I ask for, is to let me go to work and let me provide for my family, and that’s it.”

**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 indicated that income from fishing supports some people and their families better than others. They explained fishermen who do not earn enough money commercial fishing in Trinidad supplement their income elsewhere within the fishing industry (e.g., operating charter boats, commercial fishing for salmon in the Bay Area).

- One participant stated they earn sufficient income from fishing to support themselves and their children. They added that Trinidad fishermen earn more income catching Dungeness crab compared to salmon which does not yield sufficient income.
  - Another participant recounted that when salmon fishing was prominent in Trinidad, there were two to three times more fishermen than there are today who were able to make a comfortable, middle-class living from fishing.

**Participant Quotes**

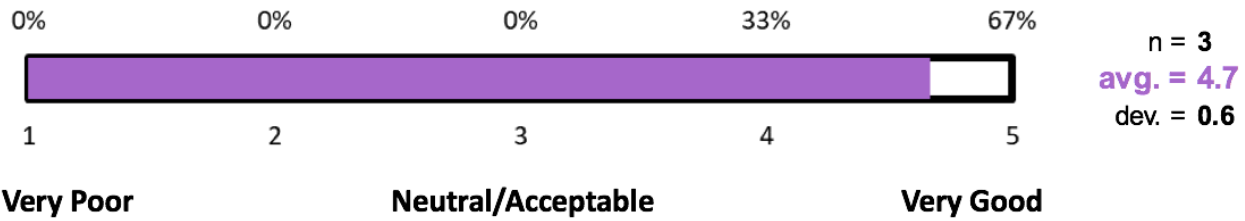
“I picked ‘Neutral’ because some people are doing better than others. Everybody's got a different story. It seems like there's people that are very successful [. . .] and then there's people that are just barely hanging on. So it's a mixture of everything to me.”

“[Some people] charter in the summertime, which probably is what keeps them afloat; they've only been [in Trinidad] for a couple of years. Another boat, he fishes salmon and he has to go down to San Francisco and make his money down there.”

“I've done an amazing job with supporting my family [with income from fishing]. I have four daughters, [and fishing's] what keeps our family going.”

“It wasn't very many years ago when there were 40 or 50 or 60 boats in Trinidad making livings, supporting families - I mean, people making decent money. We just don't have that [anymore]. We got 17 boats now or 18 boats or something. It's not like the good old days [during] the salmon boom when there were [more than] 50, 60 boats tied up there. It used to be that a lot more middle class families were making a living on the fishing industry and having nice - not extravagant - but nice lifestyles on fishing income, and I don't see that anymore.”

**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 the belief that the Trinidad market for Dungeness crab is among the best in California because fishermen always have a buyer for their product even though they compete with bigger boats that fish in waters near Trinidad.

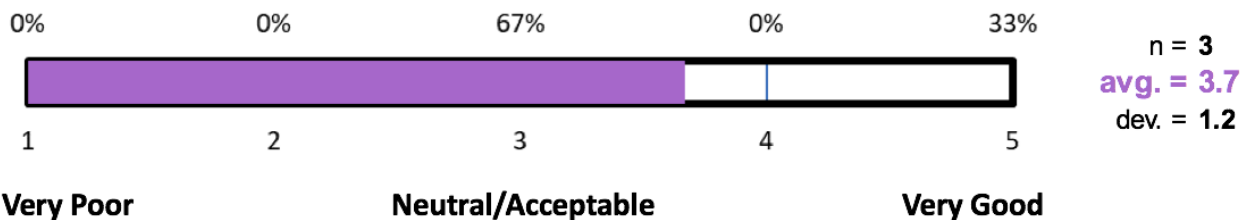
- One participant shared how fishermen used to have to sell their product locally through direct sales but because they currently have consistent buyers, they do not have to worry about how they are going to sell their crab. They attributed this market stability to the high desirability of Dungeness crab across the West Coast.

**Participant Quotes**

“I think we have the best marketing situation in all of California for Dungeness crab in Trinidad. You couldn't ask for a better situation.”

“I can remember my boss that I bought the boat from telling me that he would have to take his own crab in a box and go sell them on the street. And as long as I've ever fished in Trinidad, we've always had a buyer. Every time I've gone to sell my crab, we've never not had a buyer. Our crabs are desired on the West Coast for all the buyers. And [ . . . ] there's a lot of big players that come to fish right outside of Trinidad - big boats from all over the place come fish right there.”

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



**Discussion Summary** Participants reported Trinidad lacks important infrastructure and services (i.e., ice, a dock, fuel), but fishermen make do with what is available. They believed this lack of infrastructure helps groom fishermen out of Trinidad to be more successful.

- Several participants explained Trinidad used to have a fuel station, but it was removed because it had fallen into disrepair and caused water quality issues. One participant stated fishermen have adapted by bringing fuel in barrels to their boats, but added it would be nice to have a fuel dock.
- Participants noted that although the pier was recently rebuilt, it is still too narrow to allow more than one vehicle at a time because when it was rebuilt, the pier was not allowed to be any wider than the old one was.

- Several participants indicated that while Trinidad has its advantages (e.g., not having to cross a coastal bar like Eureka fishermen) and disadvantages (e.g., not having a fuel dock), improved infrastructure would increase competition within the port. They believed it would be difficult for Trinidad fishermen to earn a living from fishing if they had to compete with more people.
  - Another participant stated that having some hardship in terms of infrastructure makes Trinidad fishermen tougher and more competitive with out-of-town fishermen.

**Participant Quotes**

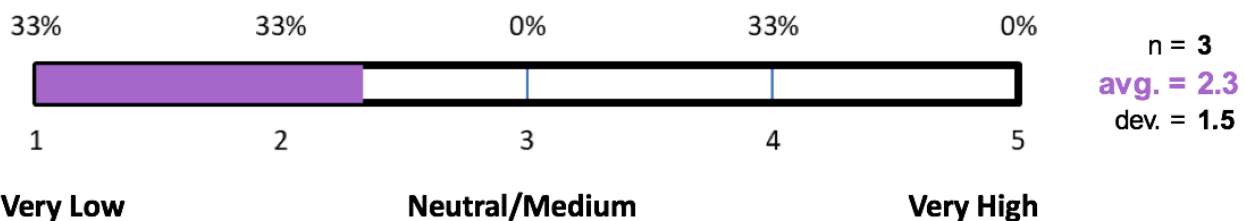
“Depending on what you're fishing for, the port may lack some things, like there's no ice there and stuff like that. But for me and crab fishing, Trinidad has treated me very well. I mean, it might be easier to go out of other places [where you're] tying your boat up to a dock - that's pretty nice if you got something to work on.”

“It's against the law to have a fuel station here, [but] we've adapted. It would be nice [to have one] - we can whine about wanting fuel here, but good luck trying to get that. We used to have fuel here until a bunch of environmentalists moved into our town and told us we couldn't.”

“When they built that brand new pier, the state of California said you can't make it any wider than it originally was. So, yeah, they built a brand new pier, but they couldn't make it any bigger than the original one.”

“If we made [the port] any nicer, more people would come and it would be harder to make a living. [. . .] If you try to make it perfect, then you might be screwing yourself. [. . .] If you added more infrastructure to the area, you'd be bringing some of those [out-of-towners] up here. So to ensure success, [you] have to have a little bit of hardship because that makes it just that [much] more viable for the people that are willing to put up with it.”

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



**Discussion Summary** Participants indicated COVID-19 impacts were variable because while Trinidad fishermen were able to continue fishing for Dungeness crab - although at a lower price per pound - and with less competition from other ports, they also experienced a loss of crew members who decided to leave fishing and collect unemployment.

- Several participants reported the price per pound for Dungeness crab dropped to about half of the typical pre-pandemic spring price. Given the marketing situation in Trinidad detailed in the **Discussion Summary** on page 7, participants stated local Trinidad fishermen were able to continue fishing because they consistently had a buyer who was willing to purchase their crab throughout the pandemic.
  - Participants noted this situation differed for larger boats who decided to stop crabbing because it was not worth it for them to fish for lower prices even though they had



buyers out of Eureka and Crescent City. One participant highlighted how this created more opportunities for local, Trinidad fishermen to continue fishing because there was less competition on local fishing grounds.

- Participants shared how unemployment benefits deterred crew from working in the fishing industry. One participant stated their crew member left because it was easier for them to collect unemployment than to continue fishing during COVID-19. Another participant added that while fishermen were able to continue selling their product, they still needed crew to support their operations.

**Participant Quotes**

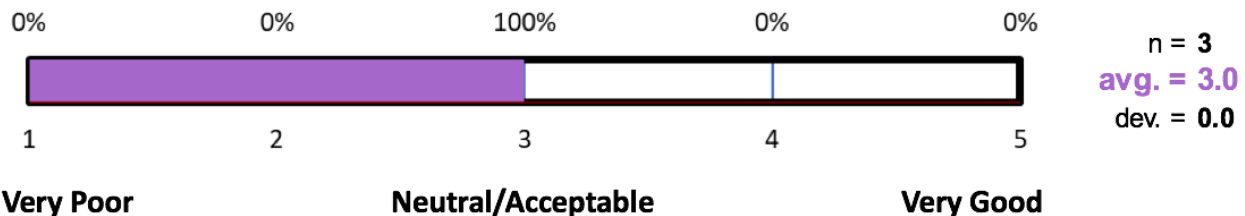
“Last spring, in the heart of COVID-19, we saw a reduced price. [But while] other ports didn't have a market, we had a market. So there wasn't as much competition on our grounds due to the fact that other ports didn't have a market. I think it was a wash [. . .] because, yes, we got a lower price, but we also had less competition due to our incredible marketing situation we have here. So what we saw in less price, I think we picked up not having to share our resources with so many people.”

“When we were supposed to be getting a raise [in Dungeness crab prices], we got deducted [. . .] we were expecting another dollar a pound, dollar fifty a pound. It went down to what we started [negotiating] at, so our little raise that we were getting all of a sudden went down to three bucks. Most boats quit right then, right on the spot. They could have sold their crab still - there were buyers in Eureka and Crescent City. But the fact that the price dropped to three dollars a pound - it wasn't worth those boats fishing. We had a buyer consistently in Trinidad, which we're lucky we [did]. We can make it work with lower prices, but bigger boats - you drop them to three dollars a pound, they're done.”

“As soon as that six hundred dollars a week unemployment showed up, there were people quitting boats. And that happened to me [. . .] I lost a crewman as a result.”

**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** Participants stated their assessment of labor and new entrants in the fishing industry varies depending on whether they are discussing captains/boat owners or crew. Several participants highlighted that their response to this question would fall around ‘Poor’ for captains, particularly younger fishermen who are just starting their fishing business, and ‘Good’ for crew members, which is why they selected ‘Neutral/Acceptable’ as an overall score.

- Participants reported several new boat owners have entered into the commercial fishing industry in Trinidad over the last several years. One participant identified one fisherman that was new to the port who had previous commercial fishing experience. Another participant shared how they started as a crew member, worked their way up, and were able to buy their own boat in their twenties.
- Participants explained that while they have seen new entrants to the fishing industry in recent years, there are several Trinidad fishermen who will retire soon. When asked whether this creates opportunities for new, younger fishermen to join the local fleet, participants stated the most significant barrier to entry is the risk and uncertainty of whether fishermen are able to make enough money to support themselves and their family as a result of fishing seasons, particularly for Dungeness crab, that may be delayed or closed. This is especially challenging for new boat owners who need a steady income to cover the initial, upfront costs of entering the fishing industry.
- One participant explained how there used to be steady employment for crew throughout the year with enough time off to fish or hunt recreationally in and around Trinidad. Now, crew members must find employment across several boats that engage in different fisheries throughout the year in order to have steady work (e.g., Dungeness crab in winter and spring, salmon in summer and fall).
- Participants expressed different views with regard to longevity and ease of finding crew.
  - One participant stated Trinidad fishermen are in need of crew since deckhands come and go frequently. They gave the example of how they employ two people for six months of the year and another person for two months, which can create challenges finding and retaining crew members who are willing to work around this schedule.
  - Another participant reported having had an easy time recruiting new crew members, and their crew has been consistent and steady for almost ten years. They believed people are drawn to fishing and working out of the port of Trinidad, especially if they live in the area. They added that although they are able to recruit crew, it is difficult to know whether crew members are good at the job until they start working.

### Participant Quotes

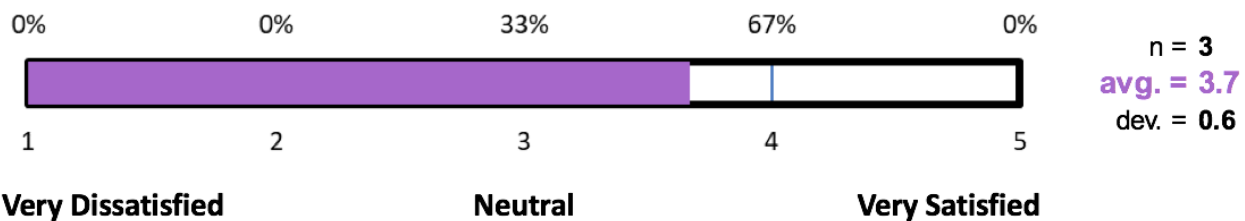
“We've got a couple new boats that have come in the last couple of years, actually some guys that are like my age [when] I bought my boat, and I feel like I was really young [when] I got into [the fishing industry] and I made it happen; I was stacking pots for Captain [name redacted] when I was like 13 years old. They're all pretty young guys that are [. . .] making it work.”

“There's three or four boats that are going to retire this year because of old age. They're done doing it [. . .]. To be honest, you got to be almost crazy to get into this industry right now. It's financially irresponsible. I mean, I've made good money, and really, this is all I can do. This is what I do. And so when [the season] gets shut[down early], [it's] devastating to my family, devastating... I can't even explain to you. So for somebody to get into this industry right now, you would have to be crazy or [at least] know what the possibilities are. You can make good money, but there's a possibility that you're going to be spending a lot of money and not making nothing and be left high and dry without anything. You're gambling, big time.”

“There was a time, not long ago, where a crewman had year-round employment, where it wasn't just seasonal [ . . . ] Basically, the traditional deal was that as crewmen on a boat, you'd work all year and you'd have the time off that you wanted to go deer hunting or elk hunting or steelhead fishing on the [Klamath] River or do whatever you wanted. [ . . . ] That was the old deal, and it's just not that way anymore. The problem these days is that most of the crew, if they want to be full-time employed, they got to get on two or three different boats because boats have their specialties like we do in Trinidad - we specialize in crabbing, and very few boats go salmon fishing consistently. Logistically, there's some technicalities to making it all come together if you want to stay employed full-time as a crewman on a fishing boat these days.”

“I've had deckhands for like, ten years straight and I've got another one - this will be his sixth year, so it seems like recruiting new folks is not a challenging thing. There's people that want to come fish in Trinidad. We catch crab and we get to come home to our families. But finding good help, that's hit or miss; you never know until you get them with you and see what they're all about.”

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



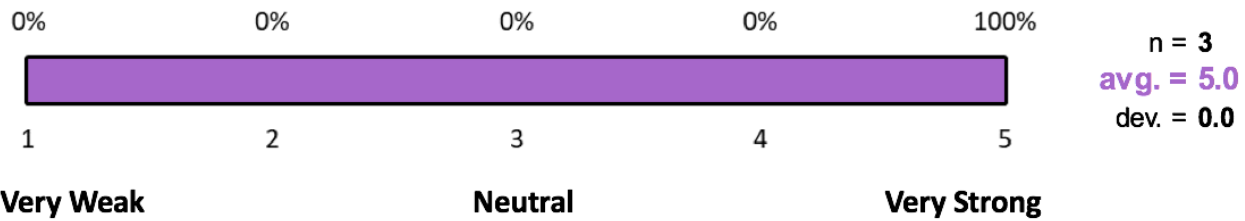
**Discussion Summary** One participant indicated their job in the fishing industry provides them with a sense of fulfillment because they are able to support their family with the income they earn from fishing. They also highlighted a sense of home and belonging in Trinidad for fishermen who live in the area and are able to return to their families after work rather than having to sleep on their boat like out-of-town fishermen do.

**Participant Quotes**

“I feel like we're blessed to be able to fish out of Trinidad [ . . . ] I love crab fishing out of Trinidad. [ . . . ] For me, there's no better feeling in the world than being [ . . . ] there for my family. I can support my kids [with my fishing income]. I can't even explain [how that makes me feel], there's no words for that.”

“I think a lot of people like fishing out of Trinidad, especially people who have families and kids because we get to go home and spend the nights with our family, and I think a lot of people value that.”

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



**Discussion Summary** Participants believed social relationships among fishermen in Trinidad are among the strongest compared to other ports.

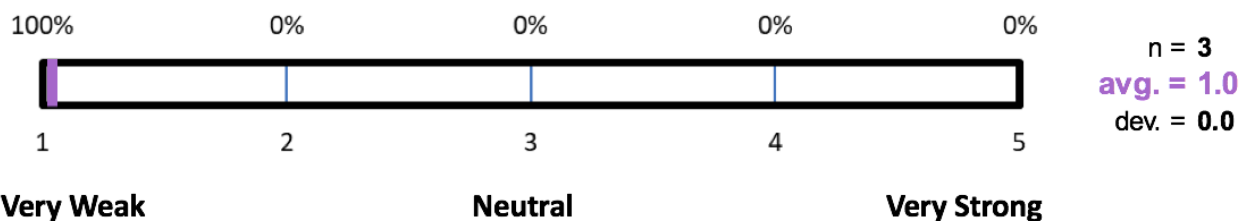
- One participant indicated that ensuring the safety and well-being of local fishermen takes precedence over day-to-day activities (i.e, fishing). They recounted an experience when a Trinidad fisherman needed help while out on the water, and all the other fishermen dropped what they were doing and came to help.

**Participant Quotes**

“If you can show me a stronger port [than Trinidad], I'd like to see it, because we're as tight as they get.”

“I remember one time when [name redacted] hit a log that was sunk underwater - and I was a deckhand on a boat [at the time] - and my captain just screamed... I thought we were sinking. He was freaking out so bad, and we just hightailed it there as fast as we could. And every single boat from Trinidad was enroute, man. [Name redacted] got on his wetsuit, went in there, and saved that boat, dude. Those guys - I would do anything I could [for them]. When it comes to catching crab, that gets put on the back burner, don't matter how many crabs you're catching: if somebody needs your help, you come running.”

**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 reported relationships with government agencies, like the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are extremely weak.

- Several participants shared the belief that the goal of fisheries management agencies like CDFW is to shut down the fishing industry as is evidenced by the current management restrictions on commercial Dungeness crab. One participant stated the agencies were established to support fishermen; instead, they believed the agencies are hurting and undermining fishermen by limiting fishing opportunities.

- Regarding relationships with other ports, participants believed Trinidad fishermen are open and willing to work with fishermen across California to meet shared goals, like donating money to the California Coast Crab Association (CCCA) to support the Dungeness crab fishery. One participant added that while fishermen may not always agree on things like price, they are aligned when it comes to the big picture of ensuring the longevity of the commercial fishing fleet.

### Participant Quotes

“I put ‘Very Weak’ and I wish there was one [option] even lower than that, because I think [CDFW] talk the talk but, ultimately, I believe their goal is the demise of the [fishing] industry. And so I think ‘Very Weak’ doesn't even state what the real situation is: it's hostile.”

“The agencies wouldn't blink an eye to shut our whole entire industry down. It's sad to feel like that, but I feel like that's the intention of some groups.”

“When it comes to the long run, I feel like we're down to work with other ports. I think all of us put money into the CCCA so we could try and accomplish something to keep us crabbing [. . .] We might not see eye to eye on [some things], but when the big picture comes down to it [. . .] we all work together to make this industry work.”

### 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 highlighted several instances where managers could better support their fishing community, especially with regard to access and opportunity for the Dungeness crab fishery amid marine life entanglement issues.

- One participant stated fishermen need as much opportunity as possible to access marine resources in order to support their families and their businesses and to feed the people who depend on their seafood catch. They reiterated that CDFW, and the rules and regulations they implement (e.g., MPAs, the Risk Assessment and Mitigation Program), do more to harm than help fishermen.
  - Another participant shared that since they started fishing in the 1970s, they have not seen support for the fishing industry among agency staff.
- Several participants shared the belief that fisheries management in California is driven by politics rather than science, especially with regard to marine life entanglements in Dungeness crab gear. One participant recounted an instance during the October 2020 Dungeness Crab Task Force (DCTF) meeting when they heard a representative from CDFW indicate that crabbing restrictions will not be lifted even if whales are delisted from the California list of endangered or

threatened species. With responses like this coming from CDFW, participants believed there is not much hope for the future of the commercial Dungeness crab industry in California.

- One participant perceived CDFW's response to the marine life entanglement issue as an act of betrayal toward fishermen. They believed the department's message to fishermen changes from meeting to meeting. They had a deeply emotional response at this point during the focus group because they stated CDFW's decisions affect whether they have enough fishing opportunity to provide a home and food for their children.
- One participant recalled CDFW staff assuring fishermen that they were going to rely on the California Dungeness Crab Fishing Gear Working Group's (the Working Group) recommendations regarding marine life entanglements, but that this has not happened. They added that participation in the Working Group is a waste of members' time if CDFW is not going to consider what they have to say. Additionally, another participant added that agency staff continue to earn an income even as they make decisions that affect whether fishermen are able to make a living.
- One participant believed CDFW does not want fishermen on the ocean, and questioned whether this is a result of CDFW's support for offshore wind energy development.

### Participant Quotes

"As a community and as a fishery, the whole bunch of us, we need all the opportunity we can get to go fishing. We need access to the ocean. We don't need more MPAs. We don't need any of that. We don't need more restrictions. We need access and opportunity to feed our families."

"[Management] hasn't done anything to support us since I started in 1979, and that was the start of all this garbage. I only heard about the golden years from the oldtimers."

"[CDFW said] they will not allow whale entanglements [despite whale protection status]. We're being ruled by politics, and that's not going to work, that never does work. What's science when it doesn't benefit your agenda? And that's what's going on."

"I feel like we were betrayed, like how come they never filed for that take permit five years ago when they wanted to? [CDFW staff] come to our meetings in Trinidad and tell us something and then it changes every time there's a new meeting... my heart's pounding. My gut's turning. This is why I worry about my family because they don't care. They completely shut us down [and are] not going to care about my kids not having a home and food. Nobody wants to see a whale get hurt. Nobody. I don't. My kids don't. I never have, personally, in my whole entire career. So when I hear about it, it's like I'm reading it out of a book."

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

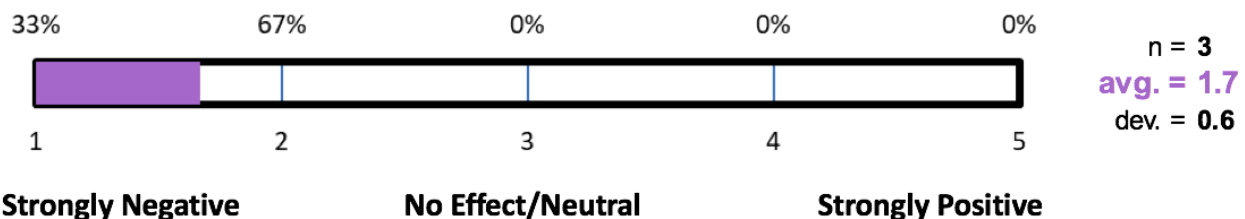
(Note: The following figure does not include the average rating for question 7. COVID-19 Impacts.)



## 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** Responses regarding the effect that the MPA network has had on marine resource health in the Trinidad area landed between negative and strongly negative, although one participant stated it is difficult to say how MPAs have affected marine resources since fishermen are not allowed inside the closures.

- One participant stated they have not noticed a difference in Dungeness crab fishing as a result of the MPAs, particularly along MPA boundaries. They explained the MPAs have only restricted



areas available for fishing, which has resulted in concentrated lines of gear directly outside the MPAs. Another participant added they have not witnessed a spillover effect in which abundance inside MPAs moves outside the MPAs.

- One participant believed the MPAs have resulted in a decrease in resource abundance. They explained that harvesting the resource encourages reproduction, contributing to resource abundance overall, but because MPAs restrict fishermen’s ability to access and harvest the resource, the MPAs encourage resources within the closures to grow old without stimulating new growth.
  - Another participant indicated that restricting fishing activity leads to an imbalance in marine ecosystems because humans are part of the marine environment and have been for hundreds, even thousands, of years, especially Native Nations.

**Participant Quotes**

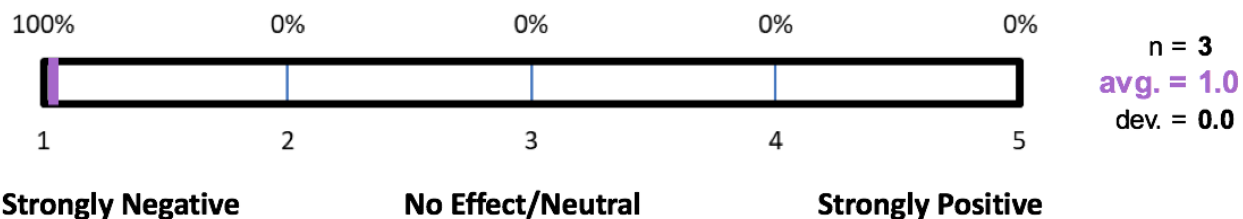
“You ask us what's going on in the MPAs... we can't fish in MPAs. How are we supposed to really give you a straight up answer?”

“Crabbing, I don't think is any different. I think [MPAs are] just restricting our area of fishing. It's not like it's ‘oh, so much better right at the line.’ I don't think that at all. That's just as far as you can go. So there's a line of crab pots there, but in my eyes, [crab is] not so abundant that it's moved outside the MPA lines.”

“[Resources are] probably less abundant now because, my experience is when you harvest nature, it encourages nature to reproduce. When you leave it alone, it just encourages stuff to grow old, and so there is probably less than there is more. [Like when] somebody doesn't cut their grass, it just kind of grows tall and stops growing. You cut your grass, you get a healthy lawn. Harvesting helps nature. You don't overharvest, I'm not in any way arguing that, but you have to harvest. We are part of the system of nature. When you take the human element out of it, it's not natural anymore.”

“There's stories of the Yurok People [taking canoes out to] Reading Rock to fish and to harvest sea life [. . .] So that place has been fished for hundreds and hundreds and thousands of years... until just recently.”

**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** Participants shared MPAs are just one of many factors that have affected Trinidad fishermen's ability to earn an income from fishing. They reported Dungeness crab is the primary fishery in Trinidad because other fisheries are not viable as a result of management actions that restrict access to marine resources, like MPAs and the Klamath Management Zone (KMZ). However, due to issues with marine life entanglement in Dungeness crab gear, coupled with MPAs, participants fear crabbing may also become infeasible. Participants reported fishermen have experienced additional impacts from MPA implementation, including a loss in their ability to access fishing grounds which also leads to difficulty engaging in a diversity of fisheries.

- Participants believed MPAs are designed to put fishermen, especially those who primarily target Dungeness crab, out of business. They explained fishermen are not allowed to access historically important fishing grounds, resulting in a buildup of gear outside the MPAs in a smaller area, which increases the risk of marine life entanglements. They stated increases in entanglements could result in more restrictions on Dungeness crab fishermen, potentially shutting them down completely.
- One participant recounted how they used to possess several fishing permits and fished throughout California, but when the MPAs were implemented, they had to sell their permits because they could no longer fish in their historical fishing grounds or make up for this loss of fishing area elsewhere due to MPA presence throughout California. They added that this loss almost bankrupted them. Another participant stated other fishermen have experienced similar financial disasters.
- Several participants reported increased crowding and competition in the Trinidad area between local fishermen and fishermen from other areas who have been displaced from their historical fishing grounds as a result of MPAs in other areas.
- One participant shared a time when they were able to remain profitable when decreasing their live fish catch from upwards of 1,000 pounds daily down to about 100 pounds a day when the market was doing well and prices were very high. However, after the MPAs were implemented, it was more difficult to catch the 100 pounds per day that were needed to support their livelihood because they could not access fishing areas that made these circumstances possible.
- One participant indicated MPAs, among other factors, have made participation in the fishing industry more difficult, particularly for crew members for whom captains/boat owners cannot provide steady work or pay because of their inability to engage in a diversity of fisheries throughout the year as a result of management restrictions like MPAs.

**Participant Quotes**

"They [CDFW] yanked the rug from under us on the other species. We have nothing. We have nothing left that we can fish for viably, other than crab, because of the MPAs... and other things. It's not just the MPAs, [it's also] the KMZ. Now that they've got everything out, it's crab's turn - that's the only viable thing, and now guess what? Crab is going to go away. Now, [MPAs are] having negative impacts on crabbing. If you don't think that they've got it in for us, you're not reading your crystal ball."

“I would argue that the MPAs, in the long run, are going to help shut us down quicker because here's the deal: we can't put crab pots in there anymore - I think there's probably room to put 5,000 crab pots in that [MPA]. And now that you can't put 5,000 crab pots in that area, they're getting bunched up in another area. And so if you're worried about whales getting tangled up, the MPA is creating more of a chance of a whale getting tangled up because you can't [spread gear by fishing in the MPA]. So gear is becoming thicker in another area... it's designed as another arrow in their quiver to put us out of business.”

“When the MPAs became invented, I had [. . .] rockfish catching permits and I would fish in the Channel Islands and in San Diego and here [in Trinidad] and all over the place. And then the MPAs came about... to make a long story short, I ended up having to sell my permits because all that MPA encroachment was right where I was fishing. I couldn't go elsewhere.”

“[MPAs] reduce the amount of fishing grounds that we have - they push our competition down from the north, down on top of us and limit us to a smaller piece of ocean.”

“This is why we only have employees for a couple of months of the year because the other fisheries have been shut down to us. If we could make money doing [other fisheries], we might be able to keep employees on for longer.”

## 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 identified several MPAs where fishermen historically fished or used for anchorage but are no longer allowed to access; most of these MPAs were closest to the port of Trinidad, near Reading Rock. While viewing a map of the MPA network, one participant noted several areas across the California coast where they have fished throughout their career as a fisherman, most of which have since been designated as MPAs. They emphasized that Trinidad fishermen fish the full extent of the California coast and are likely to be affected by MPAs throughout the state, not just MPAs that are close to their port. Another participant expressed concerns regarding California's 30x30 initiative to preserve 30 percent of the state's oceans. They explained that, if approved, it would have significantly negative effects on fishermen given the impacts they have already experienced from the MPA network.

- **Reading Rock State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA) and Reading Rock State Marine Reserve (SMR):** Several participants stated these areas were among the best fishing spots for Trinidad fishermen before they were designated as MPAs.
  - One participant reported the waters around Reading Rock housed the healthiest and most abundant resources near Trinidad, adding that fishermen would often meet their catch limits fishing this area alone.
  - Another participant stated fishermen can no longer harvest Dungeness crab or lingcod in the Reading Rock SMR; they used to troll for lingcod here around the time the salmon season closed, before transitioning to crab.
- **Samoa SMCA:** One participant noted how fishermen are still allowed - and love - to fish for

Dungeness crab here. They added that if fishermen were ever restricted from crabbing in this MPA, it would be detrimental to their businesses.

- *South Cape Mendocino SMR*: One participant stated this MPA covers what were once important rock cod fishing grounds.
- *Stewarts Point SMR*: One participant commented that salmon fishermen used to anchor here in bad weather, but they are not allowed to anymore.

### Participant Quotes

“[Reading Rock SMCA and SMR] were where the abundance of bottomfish was, and people would go there and just slay huge lingcods and [the biggest] fish you’d never seen [. . .] Before it was an MPA, it was the hottest fishing, the best fishing. It was so healthy and abundant and vibrant [. . .] now it reduces our territory to crab fish.”

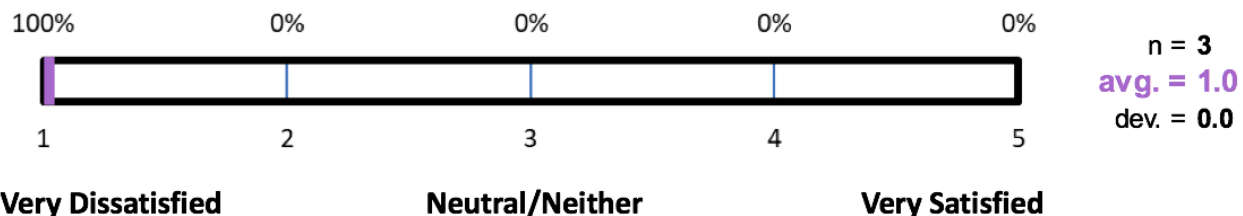
“We used to go up to Reading Rock and troll for lingcod every September. You would get those big monsters [. . .] that was a nice little way to finish out the season before you got ready for crab. First, you’d go up there and catch salmon and then go up there and catch lingcod... that's gone. That's why all we got left is crab.”

“[The Samoa SMCA is] prime crabbing grounds. They let us crab there, but if they ever changed that... oh boy, would that be a big deal. All of us love to fish there. If they ever restricted that to crab [and said] ‘no crab gear’... if they want to hurry up and put us out of business, just tell us we can't fish there either.”

“Stewarts Point [SMR], that's a beautiful place to anchor as a salmon fisherman, but now you can't anchor there, even if the wind's blowing and the ocean's rough. [. . .] They would give you a ticket if your life was in danger.”

### 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 indicated communication of current MPA management decisions and involvement of fishermen in management is nonexistent. Several participants believed fishermen were manipulated during the MPA implementation process and suggested the extent to which fishermen were involved served only to check a box for stakeholder involvement on behalf of the agencies.

- One participant shared how they received many communications during the MPA implementation process asking fishermen to disclose areas where they fished, presumably so

that their fishing grounds would not be designated as MPAs. They reported MPAs ended up being placed in these areas even though fishermen were told this would not happen.

- Another participant remembered how they and other fishing industry representatives were given an all expenses paid trip to a several day MPA planning event, funded by an environmental NGO. They believed the NGO was willing to cover these expenses to show the extent to which stakeholders were involved in the MPA process. To the participant, it felt more like the NGO was going through the motions rather than genuinely involving fishermen and caring about their concerns related to the MPAs.

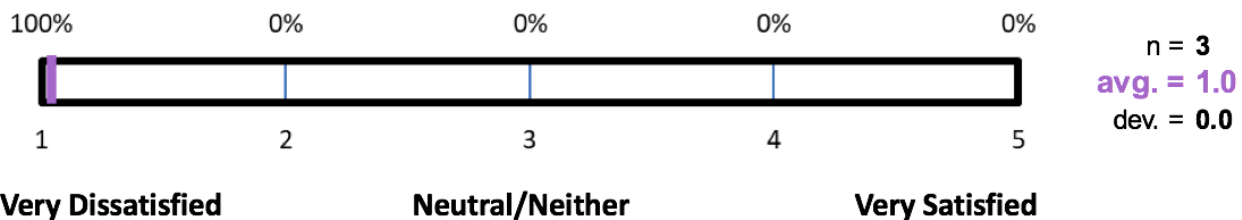
**Participant Quotes**

“I haven't heard of any [MPA] management measures.”

“I got endless notifications in the mail [where] they wanted to know where we fished so that they would not impact where we fished. And here's what they did for us: they made MPAs where we fished because we told them where we fished... they said that they were going to use that information to not impact us, and that's where the MPAs ended up. Isn't that awesome? Imagine trying to raise your family with that kind of situation going on.”

“Many years ago, when the MPAs were developing, this lady came into my business and said, ‘I'm from an environmental group and I want to pay for you and [name redacted] to go up to the Portland Hilton Hotel for a three day seminar [with] all the industry players to talk about the implementation of MPAs.’ So they paid our way up there, they put us into this really nice hotel, they paid for all our meals, they paid for room service, they paid for everything. And there were about three hundred of us. And I'm looking around like ‘oh my God, this costs a lot of money.’ [. . .] What we finally realized was part of the MPA rule said that they had to collaborate with industry stakeholders. So what they were doing is they were going to go to Congress [and say] ‘look at all this money we spent collaborating with them.’ They used us, and they made it look really good because they spent a lot of money doing it. Excuse me for being cynical, but that's my story. [. . .] They didn't just study resources, they studied psychology.”

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



**Discussion Summary** Participants reported they have not seen or heard of MPA monitoring being done near Trinidad. They emphasized that fishermen would know if studies were being conducted because Trinidad is a small, rural community where people are usually aware of activity that occurs around the port, like that related to MPA monitoring.

- One participant stated fishermen will occasionally see research vessels pass by but do not believe they are related to MPA monitoring. Another participant reported that when research vessels are in the area, they are often disrespectful to local fishermen. They recounted an

incident when a research vessel interfered with their crab gear, resulting in them having to purchase replacement CDFW-issued buoy tags. They believed the research vessel also harmed the species they were studying and stated that they heard of similar occurrences between researchers and fishermen in other ports.

- One participant mentioned they were open to being hired to contribute to MPA monitoring efforts.

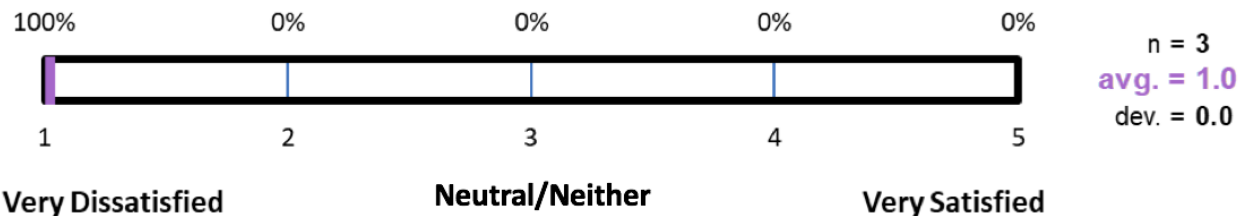
### Participant Quotes

“We live in a little neighborhood, that's our world. And if there's monitoring, we would know and we don't see it. I don't think they're sneaking out there on the roadways and doing some monitoring.”

“You'll see the HSU boat come through every once in a while, but I don't know what they're doing. [. . .] A couple years ago, we saw a giant research boat [from] NOAA come through [. . .] and it was dragging a big net studying larval crab, killing all our larval crab. [. . .] I called the Department of Fish and [Wildlife] and told them that I was losing crab gear because they were towing right through where I had crab gear. And as a result I had to get some replacement [CDFW-issued buoy] tags because they tore up my gear and ripped a lot of tags off. In other words, they're not very nice to us when they do come researching and monitoring... they're very destructive.”

“You're asking us if the fish is getting better or worse [because of the MPAs]... well, how are we supposed to know? There should be some kind of studies done on that. [. . .] Put me on that salary, I'll do this work for you.”

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



**Discussion Summary** Participants expressed dissatisfaction with MPA enforcement, stating that they will occasionally see CDFW or the US Coast Guard pass by, perhaps on their way to the Reading Rock SMR and SMCA, but it is hard to say for sure. They indicated communication of activities related to MPA enforcement is poor.

- One participant stated that even though MPA regulations restrict fishing activity in the closures, they still see people fishing in the MPAs. They believed this lack of enforcement is unfair to the fishermen who follow the rules.

### Participant Quotes

“[You] might see [the California Department of] Fish and Wildlife fly up there in a little dinghy once in a while. [When] they go by me, I might be crab fishing up off of Big Lagoon or

something, and I'll see a little grey boat go flying by. My guess is they're going to check on Reading Rock, but it's hard to say because I'm not intending to go [to that area].”

“They made a law that you can't be in [the MPAs], but they really don't enforce it. So the cheaters get to cheat the law while the law abiding guys don't. The whole thing's a joke.”

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

**Discussion Summary** Participants communicated suggestions and concerns they would like managers to consider regarding MPAs, including using MPAs to house future ocean development and requesting management agencies attempt to understand the financial implications of MPAs for fishermen who rely on available and accessible ocean areas to support their livelihoods.

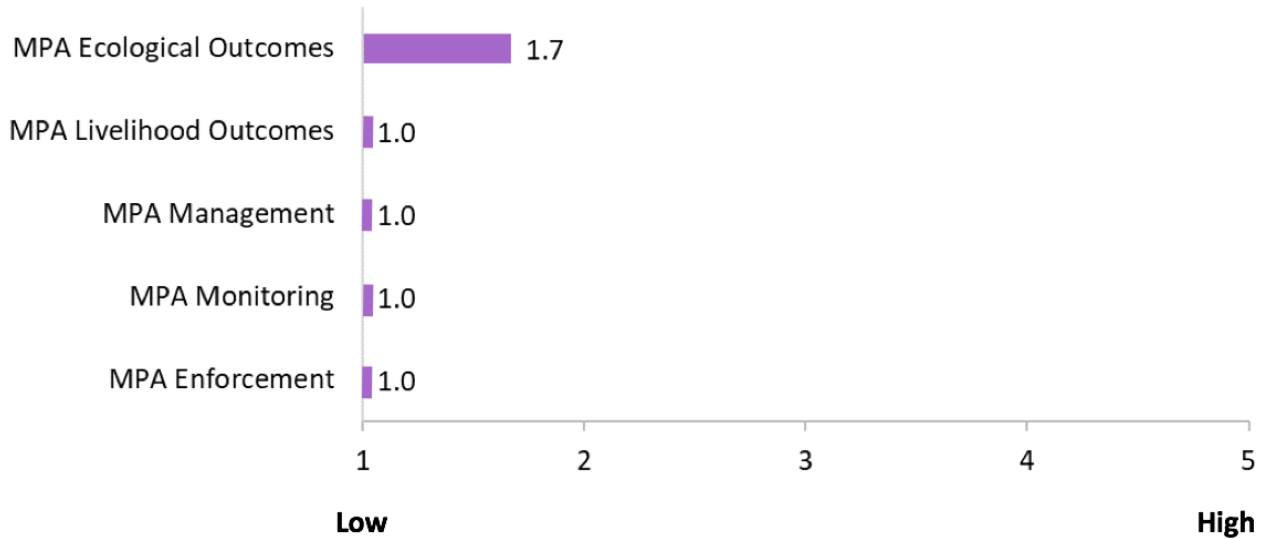
- Several participants suggested MPAs, particularly SMRs where all fishing activity is limited, be considered for projects like offshore wind and aquaculture. Rather than making more areas inaccessible to fishermen, they believed future ocean-based activities should be developed where fishermen are already not allowed to fish.
- One participant asked decision-makers to consider the financial toll MPAs have had on fishermen. They stated that unlike office workers, fishermen have overhead expenses that add up quickly, including costs associated with boats, gear, bait, and crew, all of which they must cover before they can go fishing and make an income. They indicated MPAs have led to an overall increase in fishermen’s operating costs.

**Participant Quotes**

“Put the wind farms in places we're not allowed anyway [like SMRs]... and the fish farms too. If they want to do something with the ocean, do it with what they’ve stolen [via MPAs].”

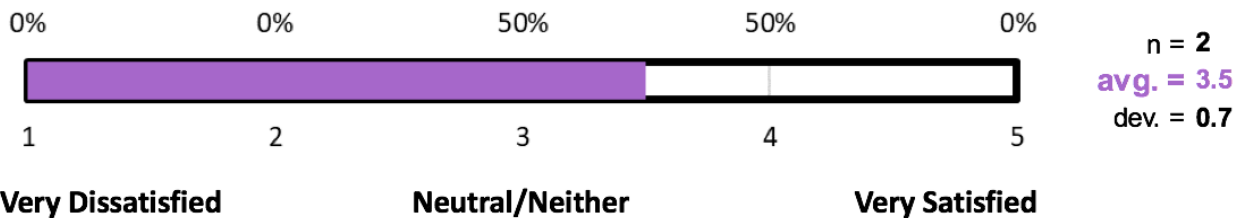
“You [have to] understand that we have to furnish everything: we have to furnish our boats, we have to furnish our own crab pots, we have to furnish bait, we have to furnish our own hired crew, we have to furnish our own leased out spots to put the crab gear, we have to furnish storage units for rope and line. We have to furnish all those expenses. That's before we furnish our trucks and our trailers and our semi-trucks that go up and down [the coast] because maybe we fish south or north, and then sometimes we got to fly boats and crew back and forth. That's before we get started fishing. That's before we've made any money. And so it's different than a politician or a lawyer - they might have to rent an office building and buy a ream of paper... we're not like that.”

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



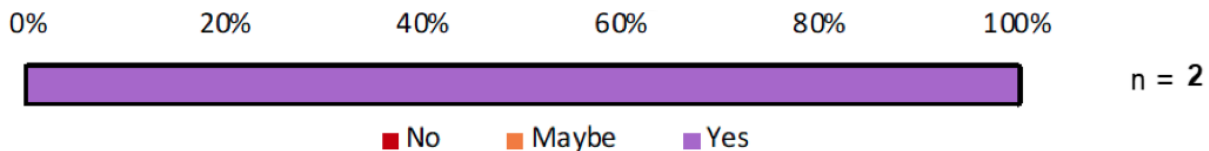
**Feedback on Virtual Process**

**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 purple bar indicates the percent of participants who responded 'Yes' to question 20b. If participants responded 'No' or 'Maybe,' a red or orange bar would appear, respectively.)



**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 expressed appreciation for the opportunity to participate in the focus group discussion and contribute their perspectives but were doubtful that managers would



consider or apply what they shared to future management decisions. They believed this project, being the only one related to socioeconomic monitoring of the MPA network, is another box-checking exercise for stakeholder engagement in MPA management.

- One participant did not believe much will come out of this focus group discussion since participants were not asked to vote on any initiatives like in other meetings they are a part of, like the DCTF. They shared their reason for joining this conversation was to make sure others did not misrepresent fishermen's experiences and concerns, though they felt focus group participants were representative of the Trinidad fishing community. They added that the compensation they received for their participation in the focus group helped make the discussion feel less burdensome.

### **Participant Quotes**

"I'm [here] because all you can do is hope at this point. I'll do whatever I can... what else can you do? So I appreciate your guys' effort and hopefully it's all for something good. So I just want to say thank you for all that [your Project Team does]."

"It always feels good to vent, but on the other hand, is this really going to do us any good? It was a pleasant experience talking to everybody tonight, but I've seen this [same thing] happen in my 40 plus years of experience. None of this ever comes to much. [. . .] I just can't ever see anything happening [because of what we shared]. [With] the DCTF, we actually do implement some stuff, but we're not going to be implementing anything here. [. . .] You took the sting out of it by paying us. [. . .] We're being railroaded by the powers that be... [they're putting] us through this dog and pony show to dot the I's and cross the T's."