

Long-term Marine Protected Areas Socioeconomic Monitoring Program for California's Commercial and Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessel Fisheries

Informing Final Project Reporting Products Key Communicators Webinar #1 Key Takeaways Summary

The Marine Protected Area (MPA) Human Uses project team hosted the first of three webinars on May 27, 2021, to gain guidance and feedback from commercial fishermen and Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessel (CPFV) owners/operators*, researchers, and managers on the project's final reporting products.

The goal of the first webinar was to gather a small group of leaders, or Key Communicators (KCs), across these primary audiences and:

- Gain guidance from webinar participants on the design, utility, and accessibility of draft final reporting products, including a public-facing website.
- Provide the opportunity for webinar participants to help ensure that fishermen's port community well-being perspectives and available spatial information is effectively communicated and available to help evaluate the performance of California's marine protected area (MPA) network.

The following provides a high-level summary of the guidance and perspectives shared between webinar participants and members of the project team. A [feedback table](#) has been developed to capture feedback offered during webinar #1 on the draft reporting products. This is a living document that will be updated over the coming months to reflect input shared during future webinars, including tracking how the project team has considered input from participants in the iterations of product development.

Materials and other resources reviewed during this webinar, and linked throughout this document, include:

- [Webinar #1 Agenda](#)
- [Webinar #1 Slide Deck](#)
- [Draft user stories and draft inspiration concepts](#)
- [Draft annotated site map](#)
- [Project website](#), specifically the Data Viewer tab/page

For more information about the webinar or the MPA Human Uses project, please visit <https://mpahumanuses.com>. If you would like to participate in future webinar discussions or have questions about this project, please contact hello@strategicearth.com.

Key Takeaways

KCs were invited to provide feedback on the draft user stories, inspiration concepts, and an annotated site map. Highlights of this feedback and related discussions are included below. In some places, the project team has included additional context that was shared during the webinar in response to questions asked by participants. [This additional information is highlighted in blue text.](#)

*Unfortunately, there was no representation from the CPFV industry who were available to attend the webinar. The project team made the commitment to follow up with CPFV KCs to gain their insights and guidance on the draft reporting products.

Project Scope

At the start of the webinar, several KCs expressed an interest to learn more about how the MPA Human Uses project relates to other [statewide MPA monitoring work](#) that is currently underway. Participants were curious how the information gathered by this project specifically would be used to inform the adaptive management of California's MPA network.

- Fishermen and fishing industry representatives expressed their concerns about the negative impacts commercial fishermen have faced due to MPAs since implementation. They questioned how the information made available from this project would be used by decision-makers, including modifying MPA boundaries or adjusting permitted activities inside MPAs (e.g., allowing fishing of pelagic species). Another participant asked how fishermen's input will be considered as part of the scientific guidance used to evaluate the MPA network.
 - The goal of the MPA Human Uses project is to collect information about commercial fishermen's perspectives on their fishing community's socioeconomic health and well-being.
 - Information gathered during the focus group discussions, along with landings/logbook data and spatial data from 1992-2020, will inform California's 10 year MPA network performance review. Findings from this study, including trends in pounds landed, ex-vessel value, and participation in each fishery conducted in state waters over time will be shared publicly via our project website.
 - California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and the California Ocean Protection Council (OPC), in partnership with the Fish and Game Commission (FGC), are starting to plan the [MPA Decadal Management Review](#). Key findings from the statewide monitoring projects, including the MPA Human Uses project, will help inform this 10-year review. Final reports for statewide monitoring projects will be submitted to California Sea Grant by November 30, 2021.
 - Based on an original list of [MPA performance evaluation questions](#), an expert working group has [released a report](#) that provides further guidance on MPA metrics of success. There were no fishermen on the expert panel, however, fishermen's concerns were included in the evaluation questions.
 - During the FGC's December 2022 meeting, CDFW will provide an update on the MPA network's performance based on available information. It is not anticipated there will be any management decisions made during this meeting. However, the statewide monitoring key findings may inform adaptive management decisions beyond 2022.
- Several participants expressed concerns about the connections between the Decadal Management Review and the [Governor's Executive Order](#) to conserve at least 30 percent of California's land and coastal waters by 2030.
 - An agency participant shared the focus of 30x30 is biodiversity conservation that is compatible with sustainable use. A fishing participant expressed that, from their perspective, the fishing industry is not open to expanding the MPA network through the 30x30 mandate. However, they would be open to a discussion if there was a science-based, fine-scaled approach to adjusting MPA boundaries to further habitat conservation.
- Several participants questioned the level of participation of each focus group, highlighting the involvement of a limited number of focus group participants is not representative of the entire port/port area's perspectives. One participant acknowledged that it is difficult to balance the accurate representation of fishing communities when different sectors have different concerns.
 - The focus groups were purposely designed to involve a small group (4-10 people) and involved fishing leadership who were able to participate productively, engage through the necessary technology, and consider the state of their fishing community beyond their individual experience. See [Appendix C, Participant recruitment and selection process](#) on page 22 of our project's assessment tool for more details.

- This methodology was designed to gain a snapshot of the conditions and perceptions of fishermen in the ports across California while also trying to reduce the burden and time commitment from fishermen. We sought to include participants that represented the diversity of fisheries, age groups, and types of fishermen. Attempts were made to involve fishermen who had been engaged in their fishery prior to MPA implementation together with new entrants to gain broad perspectives on port community well-being. There were some ports where only three participants were willing or able to participate and two port/port groupings where we did not gain participation at all. These cases will be highlighted and discussed in our final reporting.
- One participant highlighted their interest in better understanding the relationship between ocean conditions (upwelling, water temperature) and general production/effort and asked if this type of information would be provided through the other statewide monitoring projects.
 - An integrative analysis across all of the statewide monitoring projects will be conducted by the National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis (NCEAS) early next year. This work is intended to address the types of questions raised by webinar participants.
 - The spatial data compiled in this project will provide information on how patterns of fishing pressure have changed over time. Integrating the data gathered in this project with ecological data is beyond the scope of our current project.
 - However, this integration is a priority for the state so we will be providing the data gathered in this project to inform the integrative analyses led by NCEAS. This will bring together the human and biological researchers to explore what is possible.
 - In our experience, a major hurdle is the mismatch in scale of data gathered. Ecological/biological data tends to be gathered at a much finer scale and fishing pressure data is often gathered at a much larger scale. This has been highlighted in the most recent MPA science recommendations as a key data gap to fill.
 - The project team, together with CDFW and OPC staff, acknowledged there is a growing need for improving communications with fishermen and others about the MPA monitoring work that has been conducted to date.

User Stories

The project team invited participants who could speak to our primary target audiences (commercial fishermen and CPFV owners/operators, researchers, and managers) to provide feedback on [draft user stories](#), a tool to better understand the website audiences and their needs, ~~we had developed as a starting place for discussions.~~

- *Commercial fishermen are interested in:* learning where MPAs are having a positive impact on the fishing industry; better comparisons of data inside and outside MPAs to address questions regarding spillover, MPA location (i.e., habitat coverage), fish behavior, etc.; seeing data translated visually to show changes in landings data by port over time; hearing fishermen's perspectives on how MPAs are performing from their own voices (quotes, audio clips); changes in fleet dynamics and considering MPA impacts on different sized fishing operations; use available economic information to inform local city/county investment and funding eligibility.
- *CPFV owner/operators are interested in:* a non-CPFV participants shared they believed CPFV owner/operators are interested in understanding how ecological monitoring data complements socioeconomic data, including MPA contributions to rockfish recruitment/reproduction.
- *Researchers are interested in:* large-scale evaluation of MPA implementation to help make connections to other work/projects happening parallel to MPA monitoring; catalyzing or enhancing communications amongst researchers (e.g., social scientists working on human dimension projects with coastal communities); improve coordination amongst researchers to help reduce burden on fishermen's time and energy when volunteering to participate in multiple projects; ensure research boundaries and appropriate use of information is clear to avoid having data be used out of context.

- *Resource managers are interested in:* determining if there has been evidence of habitat changes due to the MPAs, specifically if there have been any improvements in habitat degradation; effectively communicating data and trends over time in a compelling and understandable way to target audiences.

Draft Annotated Site Map

Participants provided initial input on the [annotated site map](#), which outlines the envisioned structure and related components of the updated project website that will serve as our primary final reporting product.

California Fisheries Data Explorer

Participants provided feedback on the [California Fisheries Data Explorer](#), which is publicly accessible in its draft form. Specifically, participants shared the types of data querying and review that would be of interest to their peers and colleagues.

- Participants appreciated the number of fisheries included and that the data could be queried at a fine scale. One participant requested the data explorer be updated to also have the ability to aggregate all nearshore fisheries so the information could be viewed as a collection (rather than only individually like it currently is). Another participant suggested including seasonal vs. annual landings, which could be informative for some fisheries that are managed on a seasonal basis.
 - One participant asked how recreational fishing data would be included in the data explorer. The project team confirmed that California Recreational Fishery Survey (CRFS) sampler data will not be integrated into the data explorer.
- One participant suggested adding how the number of fishermen in a given fishery are calculated and making it clear that deckhands are not included.
 - [Currently, the data explorer has a module that pops up that provides definitions and the project team can clarify what we mean by number of fishermen there.](#)
- One participant highlighted issues with the San Diego fisheries, which currently do not show landings per port by species by a specific fishing method (e.g., harpoon, diving).
- One participant requested the project team consider offering users a way to embed the data explorer in external websites.

CDFW Landings/Logbook and Spatial Data

Participants asked questions about the specifics of the available commercial landings and CPFV logbook data from CDFW. This included understanding how landings data will be considered and whether connections will be made between focus group data and CDFW fisheries data.

- [The CDFW commercial landings data we analyze is summarized by who has made landings in a given port in a given year. If a permit holder didn't make landings, they would not show up in our analyses of, for example, the number of active fishermen in a given port in a given year.](#)
- [To the extent possible, we will integrate qualitative focus group data and quantitative landings/logbook data to tell a more holistic story for each port community. Our hope is the various data sets will corroborate / support each other to communicate in both qualitative and quantitative data the change observed in the port communities across California.](#)
- [During the webinar, it was clarified that the pre-MPA / post-MPA data is a modeled data set and not a survey of actual fishing effort. With this in mind, there is some ability to look at shifts over time and how MPAs displaced effort. Modeled data sets like this would become irrelevant if there was CPFV and commercial data on displaced effort.](#)

Port Profiles

The group discussed the profiles envisioned for each port that will include a summary informed by each focus group discussion, focus group participant quotes and audio clips, fishermen typology (i.e., a summary of age,

revenue, vessel length, etc. of fishermen in each port, and how these characteristics have changed over time), and graphs, maps, and other snapshots of focus group and landings/logbook data.

- One participant expressed the importance of having fine-scale fisheries data available in the port profiles, and other reporting for this project, to help guide a more tailored and precise approach to informed decision-making to balance conservation and human uses and economic resilience.
- One participant shared their concerns about summarizing information that was shared during the focus groups discussion. Specifically, they suggested the project team use caution when recapping to ensure there is not an overinflation of the perspectives shared or suggestion that the focus group participants represent the full port's viewpoints.
- One participant highlighted the connections and similarities of developing port profiles across a number of different state-funded projects, including a socioeconomic project currently underway to support the implementation of the [Marine Life Management Act \(MLMA\) 2018 Master Plan for Fisheries](#). Several participants emphasized the importance of establishing clearing communications channels between social scientists and agencies (e.g., CDFW). This could improve integration across fisheries social science efforts in California and help find synergies, leverage shared resources, reduce the burden on stakeholders who are invited to participate in multiple projects, and bolster how social science is integrated into better understanding and managing the human dimensions of marine resources.
 - A recommendation was made to include on the website a summary of funded research projects with sufficient detail to support interactions between the researchers and others involved.

Key Findings

Participants considered the most effective way to convey the project's key findings so this information could be useful to fishermen, researchers, and decision-makers.

- One participant suggested the key findings include the effects of COVID-19 on fishing communities, including its relationship to changes in port demographics. For example, are there greater impacts to ports located in less populated areas with fewer options for direct sales to consumers?
 - [The project team has begun a preliminary analysis of the results from the responses to questions related to the impacts from COVID-19. We hope to do follow-up analyses to explore how perceptions of COVID-19 impacts in California may be linked to demographic and geographic factors.](#)
- Several participants suggested the importance of the key findings to focus on port infrastructure needs, which could be used by fishermen and others to help advocate for funding.
 - One participant expressed concerns that there is a disproportionate allocation of public funds available to research with limited dollars directed to funding port infrastructure projects. One participant highlighted that [AB 125](#), which relates to funding for secure, resilient, sustainable, and equitable food and farming systems, is essential for the economic and social well-being of the people of California. A participant highlighted this as a possible resource for infrastructure funding/resources.
 - An OPC staff person shared their appreciation for this type of feedback and direction from stakeholders. They mentioned in [OPC's recent 2020-25 strategic plan](#), there is a section on the 'blue economy'. The Fish and Game Commission's [Coastal Fishing Communities Project \(2016-18\)](#) also sought out to learn of fishing community needs related to changing ocean conditions, access to fishing, overall fishery management changes, increased global marketplace competition, aging infrastructure, and changing species diversity.