

Long-term Marine Protected Area Socioeconomic Monitoring Program for Commercial and Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessel Fisheries in the State of California

Perspectives on the Health and Well-being of California's Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessel Fishing Communities in Relation to the MPA Network

Members of North Coast Area's Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessel Community

The Marine Protected Area (MPA) Human Uses Project Team¹ anticipates hosting over 25 virtual focus group conversations with commercial fishermen and Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessel (CPFV) owner/operators throughout California from July 2020 through Spring 2021.² The information shared during these discussions is a core component of a study to gather and communicate information about the health and well-being of commercial and CPFV fishing communities in California, including impacts from MPAs. A key goal of this study is to convey commercial fishermen's and CPFV owner/operators' perspectives about the unique challenges and opportunities that fishing communities are facing to managers and decision-makers through a series of summaries and other products. The results of this study will be made available to inform discussions about MPA and fisheries management, including California's 10-year MPA network performance review.

For each focus group, a small number of CPFV owner/operators were brought together to:

- provide their perspectives on their fishing community's health and well-being, including environmental conditions, income, allocation of resources, and social and political relationships, including impacts from MPAs; and
- share feedback about their focus group experience to help improve the process for future focus groups.

The focus groups included quantitative questions where commercial fishermen and CPFV owner/operators were asked to score their port on various topics, and an open-ended qualitative discussion followed each question. This document summarizes both quantitative and qualitative findings from the focus group. More details about the methods used for each focus group discussion, including questions asked to participants and the approach to recruiting focus group participants, is available on the Project Team's website, <https://mpahumanuses.com/>. The website also hosts focus group conversation summaries and an interactive data explorer, which will be components of the final products developed upon completion of this project in 2021. For questions about this project, including focus group engagement and the content of this document, please contact us at hello@mpahumanuses.com.

Regional CPFV Port Group: North Coast Area Ports (Point Arena to Crescent City)

Date: Monday, February 8, 2021

Participants: four anonymous participants

¹ Consisting of Humboldt State University researchers, Ecotrust, and Strategic Earth Consulting

² Previous versions of the summaries from other ports suggest there would be 30 focus groups through February 2021. The project has since evolved based on the needs of the fishing community and is reflected in all summaries moving forward.

Overview

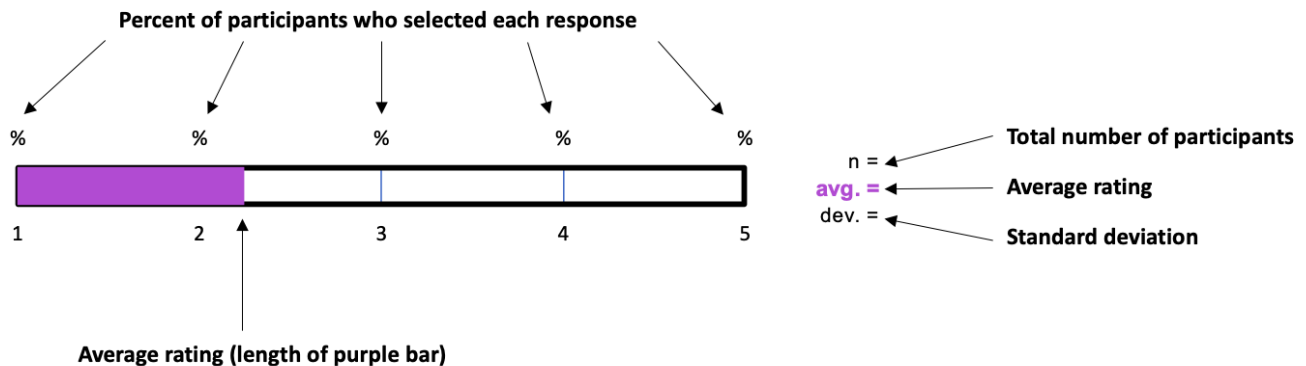
On February 8, 2021, four CPFV owner/operators out of the North Coast area (between Point Arena and Crescent City) participated in the nineteenth focus group conversation overall/third CPFV focus group conversation. A detailed summary of the conversation is captured below, including:

- 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.

Perspectives from one North Coast CPFV owner/operator who provided their input in a separate focus group is included in the narrative, but not in the scoring.

Guidance for Interpreting Figures

There are 14 figures displaying participant responses for questions that had a numerical/quantitative component. In those figures, the percentages located directly above the bar (between 1 (low) and 5 (high)) represent the percent of participants in the focus group who selected that response. The total number of focus group participants is labeled 'n' to the right of each figure. The length of the purple bar indicates the average rating for each question, also labeled 'avg.' to the right, and 'dev.' refers to standard deviation, or the extent to which scores deviated from one another. See below for an example figure. There are also two figures on pages 13 and 21 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:

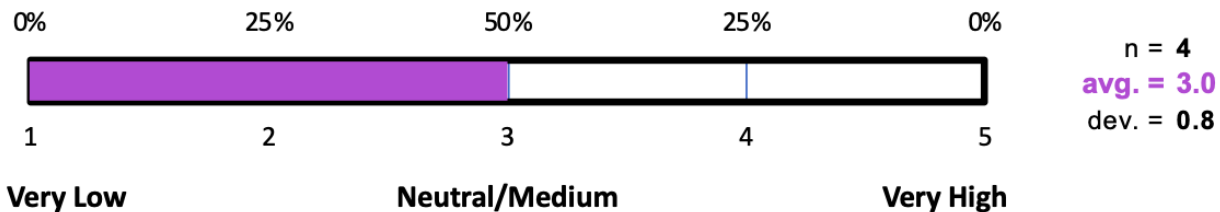
- [California Fisheries Data Explorer](#): This interactive site allows users to visualize commercial landings data (i.e., number of fishermen, pounds of fish landed, and revenue from fish landed) and CPFV logbook data (i.e., number of anglers, vessels, trips, and fish caught from specific fisheries and ports).
- Details about the [MPA Baseline Monitoring Program: North Coast](#), including a [Summary of Findings from Baseline Monitoring of Marine Protected Areas, 2013–2017, North Coast](#) and the [Marine Protected Area Monitoring Program, 2019–2021](#)
- An article about Governor Newsom's [Executive Order related to protected areas and the 30x30 initiative](#)

Our Project Team would like to express our appreciation to the four anonymous North Coast area CPFV owner/operators for their time and contributions to the focus group conversation.

Perceptions of Fishing Community Well-being

Well-Being, Environmental

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



Discussion Summary Participants stated that while the salmon fishery is in poor health, other California fisheries are in good condition.

- A few participants stated that many California fisheries are healthy with the exception of salmon. While salmon fishing was their primary target when they started their businesses, the decline in salmon stocks in recent years has caused them to change their business models to target alternative species including tuna, halibut, and rockfish.
 - A participant explained that salmon hatcheries have not benefited stocks north of Point Arena since the 1980s because the fish are not travelling north.
 - A couple participants agreed that the salmon fishery has been poor in recent years, but stated stocks are often cyclical in nature.
- They stated that the rockfish conservation areas (RCAs) and other fishing restrictions have led to the rebuilding of rockfish stocks.

Participant Quotes

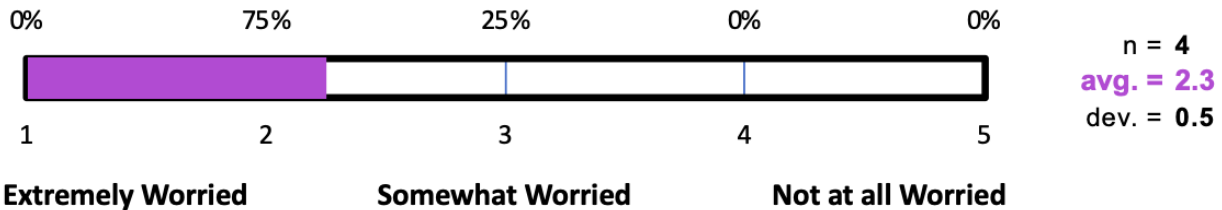
"[...] when I bought my boat, I thought it would be a salmon boat. And now my boat is a rockfish, halibut, tuna boat, because Eureka used to be one of the top salmon ports in the western [United States]. And now it's pretty bleak. [...] I think the other fisheries are healthy, but I'm not catching the species that I thought I would be catching."

"Fort Bragg [is] basically in the same boot/shoe as up north. [Over the] last three years, salmon here has been just... yeah, [in] one day the boats down south of Point Arena probably caught more fish than Fort Bragg caught the whole season, if you added all the boats out of San Francisco. The return here was just not great. [...] Years ago when I first started out, 90 percent of my business was salmon fishing. Now it's probably 15 percent."

"It seems like the majority of the fish in the hatchery programs never make it past Point Arena anymore. We've all said for a number of years here that we have a lot of availability and resources [because of] hatchery fish. I go back to the 1980s when we had the same type of thing: [...] really depleted [wild] salmon population, [and] hatcheries came on strong. You'd have 30, 40 boats - charter boats out the gate - in the [San Francisco area] and everybody returning with a nice 10 to 12 pound hatchery fish limit at 10:00 in the morning, day in, day out. [...] We've proven that we can put fish back in the ocean and it helps the economy up and

down, inside the valley, and on the coast. [...] I think we're not seeing proper management of what we could to [benefit] the fisheries.”

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



Discussion Summary Participants were generally very worried about the long-term sustainability of marine resource populations because they felt they are not being properly managed and are experiencing pressure from commercial trawl operations. There is concern about the general health of fisheries, especially salmon, over the next five to ten years.

- Various participants expressed concerns that managers are not properly managing salmon because managers are allowing so much catch that the populations are not restocking.
- A couple of participants stated that trawling has been an important contributor to collapsing fish stocks (e.g., lingcod).
 - Even though rockfish stocks are currently healthy, as managers allow access for commercial trawl vessels, participants believed rockfish are headed down the same road as salmon since there will be too much pressure on the rockfish stocks. Additionally, participants expressed the belief that the volume caught in a trawl, and by commercial fishing more broadly, puts more pressure on fish stocks than recreational fishing.
 - A participant estimated that commercial trawl operations can catch in two days what the CPFV fleet catches in an entire season from Fort Bragg to Crescent City, which can cause large-scale negative impacts on stocks. They stated the sport fishery has a much smaller footprint than commercial fisheries.
 - Conversely, one participant stated that trawl vessels have been excluded from RCAs for many years and stocks have rebuilt enough to support trawling again.
- One participant was optimistic about the future of the resources the CPFV/charter industry relies on and believed people will continue to want to recreationally fish.

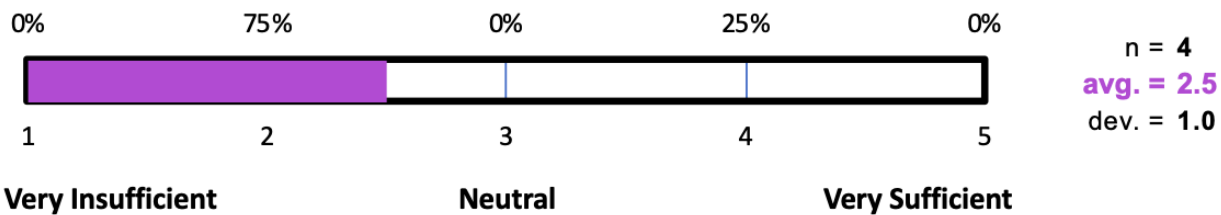
Participant Quotes

“Rockfish is probably more indicative of what's going on in the ocean. [...] Rockfish was good, but not great. And with the restrictions that they've had over the years [like RCAs], it's actually gotten pretty good. But now that the stocks are rebuilding on canaries and stuff, they're starting to lift some restrictions where trawl boats are getting access to waters they haven't had access to for a long time. And I'm not saying anything negative about them because they waited a long time for this. But now we're kind of going back just a little bit as far as [there being more] pressure on some of the resources. So I would say right now it's really good. But... [the California Department of] Fish and Wildlife has been pretty good about closing the door after the horse got out, so I'm concerned a little bit about where we're going to end up maybe in five or ten years from now.”

“It's a strong coincidence that the first year that those nets were let out the gate, our lingcod fisheries plummeted, especially up here on the North Coast. We have weather events that are so severe that the fish get pushed off the rocks out into the deeper water. And at that time, with those high wave events, it pushes all of the fish out of our MPAs into the open water. They go out in the open water and get scooped up by nets. [...] We figured that one [trawl] boat in two days would catch more fish than the entire sport fishery from Fort Bragg to Crescent City, if they were catching them at the rates that were rumored. [...] It's like you can cut the sport fleet loose anywhere, in any depth, And they wouldn't be doing the amount of damage that those guys [commercial fishermen] are doing. So I think that the charter fleet is providing small communities with the highest dollar value per pound for the rockfish that are being harvested off by reefs. So if you're looking at the community scale, I really want to echo what [name redacted] said about we need to make sure that we close the gate before the horse gets out of the barn because those drag guys have done damage in the past, and I don't want to see history repeat itself to where I have to wait the rest of my career before I can catch a decent lingcod again.”

Well-Being, Economic

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



Discussion Summary Participants generally believed income for CPFV operations is insufficient because many CPFV owners, operators, and captains have to supplement their income with other jobs.

- A participant explained that unlike experiences in Southern California, depth restrictions and poor weather along the North Coast in the winter and summer make it difficult to earn money during times that are ideal for customers. They believed longer fishing seasons are needed to support larger operations, the ability to do multiple trips per day, and to ensure folks can make a viable living.
- Two participants explained that the population is smaller along the North Coast and there are few prospective customers who will drive up from population centers like San Francisco to fish out of North Coast ports, resulting in limited demand for CPFV trips out of North Coast ports.
- A participant stated that the income from fishing is sufficient if their vessel doesn't break down, there are no fishery closures (e.g., early halibut closures in 2020), no COVID-19 impacts, etc. However, in recent years, all of these things have been issues that have greatly affected CPFV owner/operators' ability to make a sufficient living.
- Two participants shared that the cost of fuel in Fort Bragg has increased exponentially. They explained their understanding that the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)

implemented new regulations that required a company out of Eureka to remain on standby as fuel was trucked into Fort Bragg which resulted in an increase of \$0.70/gallon of diesel.

- One participant shared that CPFV/charter fishermen operating out of Shelter Cove earn sufficient income.

Participant Quotes

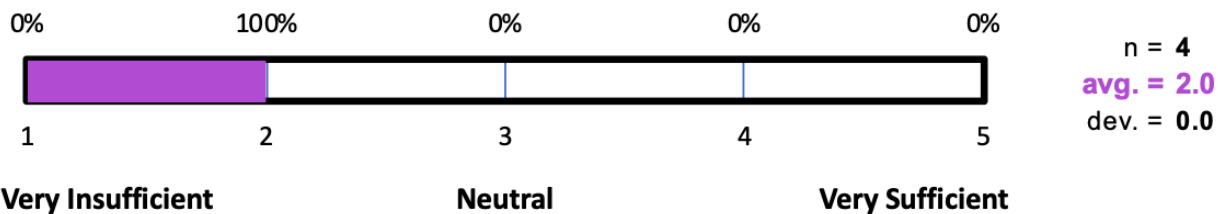
“I selected insufficient because [of the] need to take [on] other jobs, and I have four jobs. And the other charter captains that I know also have multiple incomes. It's hard to make a living solely on charter fishing when we are shut down in the winter. Unlike other regions of the state, we have the least amount of people [on the North Coast].”

“I put insufficient just because if you're trying to raise a family or something, I don't think you could really make it just on one income. I know most of the guys here either have multiple jobs, like [redacted name] said, or their wives have good jobs [...] And if you're raising a family, I think that's what it takes because you don't get any benefits [like] health care being a charter captain. And you're just one major breakdown away from, you know, not having a good year. [...] There's a lot of risk for what the reward is.”

“The thing I see for the larger capacity boats is it's not just a short drive [to North Coast ports,] and for losing January, February, March, April - a significant part of the year - you can do a whale watch, but it [would] sure be nice for the larger boats to be able to do, or any of the boats, to have a rockfish trip in the morning and then do a nice afternoon whale watch and have the deckhands make money - obviously, the operator makes money - but everybody now has to budget and plan for that. We're well aware of it each year. [...] But there needs to be a longer season on the rockfish and the ability to keep somebody working at it full-time through the year in order to make a living.”

“The biggest thing for Fort Bragg in the recent two weeks is Fort Bragg does not have a fuel dock, so it's all trucked. The Department of Fish and Wildlife did all these things and we, all of a sudden, got a 70 cents per gallon increase because of what the Department of Fish and Wildlife are making the fuel company operate. So that is a huge one for Fort Bragg as far as expenses [...]. Supposedly they have to hire a company to be on standby out of Eureka for a minimum of four hours at \$150 an hour every time they deliver fuel to Noyo harbor.”

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



Discussion Summary Due to increasing competition between recreational fishing and commercial fishing, coupled with limited and shortened fishing seasons, participants generally believed allocation of resources is insufficient.

- A participant explained that over the last few years, there has been greater competition due to increases in the numbers of recreational fishermen, fishing charters, and commercial fishermen. Additionally, in Fort Bragg, there is a small area that is fishable, which further increases competition. A couple participants clarified that Dungeness crab fishermen who have experienced hardship over the last few years due to shortened seasons, fisheries disasters, and lower catches have been transitioning to rockfish to supplement their income, which hinders CPFV operations.
- One participant stated that they have seen a decrease in lingcod catch in recent years. They questioned whether it was the result of increased fishing pressure in open areas or because lingcod have moved away from fishing grounds.
- One participant reported the amount of CPFV and six-pack fishing operations increased exponentially in the Fort Bragg area this last year, resulting in capacity constraints within the harbor where there were no parking spaces for cars.

Participant Quotes

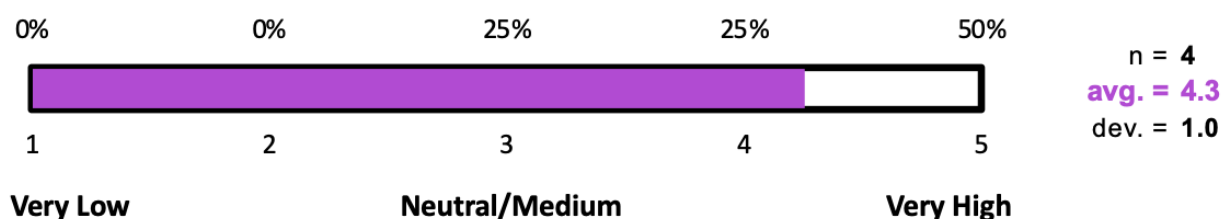
“I see just [in] the last couple of years, there's a little more competition, maybe, on the fishing grounds than we've had in the past and it's everybody, competition-wise: there's more guys with sport boats out. There's more charters now. There's commercial fishermen that have had a couple of bad years, so they're looking for new places for revenue, you know, new fisheries to explore and stuff. So we're seeing more of them in more places than we've seen in the past.”

“There is open access fishing itself allowed for four months out of the year and nothing on the sport side, which, as charter fishermen, we are sport fishermen because that's where the classification is. So that was my only point: allocating as much time on the water [for sport fishermen] as people [who are] allowed to open access rockfish [have]. There should be a sport season for it also.”

“I'm looking at the crab season as it's going right now, and there could be a lot more open access fishermen coming out of that disaster, too. So these boats have to make a living somehow. And I feel like the fallback is often rockfish. So we'll see what it looks like in the near future.”

“The amount of fishermen this year is crazy here with the amount of boats that were launched out of the harbor, especially when the tuna were here. There are probably 150 boats here. You couldn't find a parking spot alongside the road over in South Harbor [in Fort Bragg] where they launch the boats. Definitely a lot of impact.”

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



Discussion Summary While COVID-19 had mixed impacts on participants' businesses, participants generally agreed that COVID-19 was very disruptive and caused a lot of changes in the way they operate.

- A participant explained that the tight COVID-19 restrictions on travel had a large impact since customers from inland areas who had booked a trip cancelled shortly before their reservation. Additionally, CPFV operators were unable to travel to their nearest shopping centers upwards of 50 miles away to gather supplies.
- Various participants shared the challenges of getting approval from the local government to resume fishing trips after the initial COVID-19 shutdowns.
 - One participant explained that their local authorities let them carry passengers throughout the pandemic as long as they followed safety protocols (i.e., stay out of the cabin, maintain a six foot distance, perform regular sanitizing, etc.). They stated that in years past, many of their passengers had been tourists, but this year many were locals and the operators were selective on who they would let onboard based on how far they travelled to get to the boat.
- A few participants explained there were many more cancellations this year than in years past. Some participants stated that they were able to fill the cancellations with local customers. Others lost a lot of business due to the loss of tourists and a lack of a local network to rely on.
 - A couple participants highlighted the changes they made in their operations to accommodate the instability of COVID-19 protocols including targeting local customers, targeting customers they had existing relationships with, and changing their booking process so folks could reserve the entire boat rather than reserve individual fishing trips with passengers outside their bubble or 'pod.'
- One participant mentioned that CPFV/charter fishing operations were delayed due to COVID-19 protocols.

Participant Quotes

"We had a fair amount of cancellations from out of the area, and we filled in a lot of it with local business. And after that, [...] we pretty much mostly took regulars or people we know - we didn't take people from LA or San Diego if they wanted to come up and fish, but we did take people from Redding and Anderson and Chico and stuff if we knew a little bit of their health history. At the end of it all, other than having a bad salmon year, the business was average for us, it wasn't bad and it wasn't good, so it really didn't hurt us too bad last year. And the bookings are lined up this year, too. So I think we're going to be OK as long as they let us continue to operate like we were."

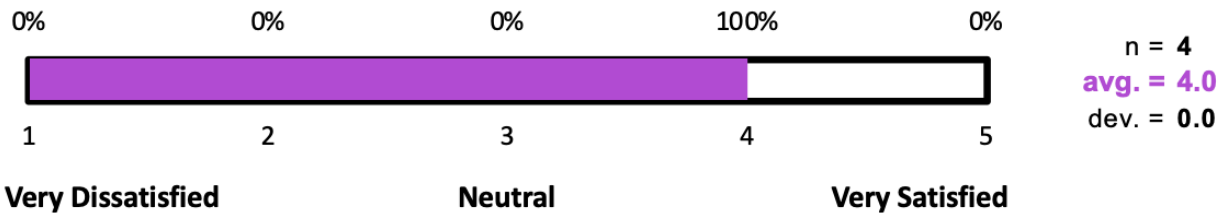
"[...] I just don't have a large clientele base. [...] A lot of my clientele flies from the Midwest to Northern California to fish with me. And I lost probably a third of my client base for hunting and fishing trips. [...] My hunting and charter businesses took a pretty heavy hit from [the loss of] my out-of-state clientele base."

"Since I have a small six-pack, I set up boat pricing and made clientele build trips to fill the boat. The boat had a price and [it was the customer's] job to find family or friends or whoever [they're] willing to share COVID with. And that actually made my booking process much easier because I wasn't trying to take individuals from around the world and pair them together. So

that was another piece of it that was a perk that I might even carry on after COVID because it made my life a lot easier, planning-wise.”

Well-Being, Social/Political

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



Discussion Summary Although the CPFV industry is challenging, participants were satisfied with their job and agreed that it was generally fulfilling.

- Several participants explained that they enjoy interacting with people and providing memorable experiences for their customers.
- All participants highlighted the joys they experience watching customers catch the biggest fish of their lives or spotting a whale.
- A couple participants discussed the challenges of the job, including how difficult it can be to support a living, and expressed concerns about the longevity of their job security. Another participant stated that because they run a small business with no employees, it can be difficult to answer the phones, book the trips, run the boat, and pay the bills.

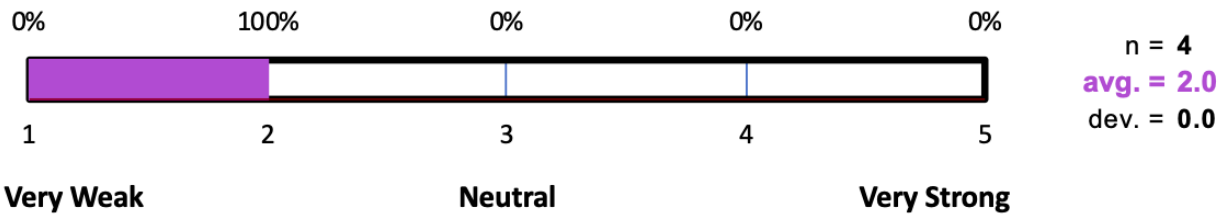
Participant Quotes

“[...] I feel like most charter captains are ‘people’ people and are happy to see new faces come across their desk every day and have contacts across the state and/or nation. So that's what I like about it.”

“[...] When you have kids on or somebody catches the biggest fish of their lifetime or they see a whale up close and they've never seen one - there's just so many great aspects to it. And I think that you don't see anybody dropping out of the business. You know, I see more and more [coming in] all the time, but I don't see too many people going away. [...] You're not going to get rich doing it, but you're going to have an enriched life doing it, I think is what it is.”

“Well, I put that I'm really satisfied with my business. [When I] started my business 22 years ago, they had a pool saying that I wouldn't last a year. So I took my business and I ran with it and I'm still running with it. It's to make people have a great day, get kids out there - five and six years old - and see them catch their first fish. There's nothing better. The downside for mine is I'm a one-man show. I answer the phone, I book the trip, I run the boat, I pay the bills and it's overwhelming. But at the end of the day, my office window is always nice.”

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



Discussion Summary Participants reported social relationships among CPFV owner/operators in North Coast ports are very poor, primarily because CPFV operators are not used to working with other CPFV operators.

- A participant explained that similar to commercial fishing, CPFV operators are their own bosses who are not used to working in a collaborative, cooperative environment. Although some operators have seen the value of working together from other ports and communities, there have traditionally been challenges in the North Coast area.
- A participant stated that the demographics of CPFV operators in Fort Bragg have shifted toward younger individuals who have different views on sharing business (i.e., advice, clients, etc.) and collaboration.
- A couple participants highlighted that they have built friendships with other operators, but many do not “play as well with others.”

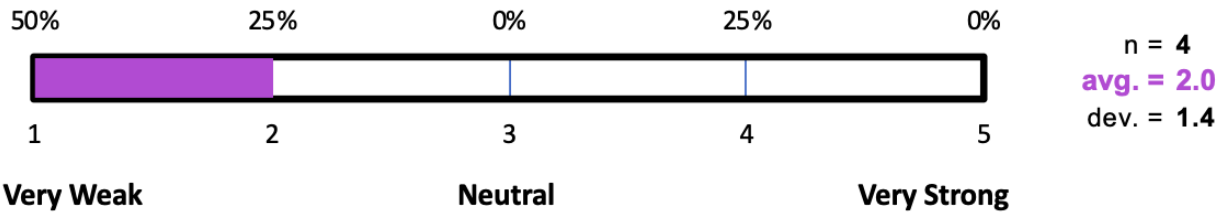
Participant Quotes

“It's a great job, but it tends to attract a lot of egos. And a problem with egos is it makes people [not] want to work together with other people quite so well. And a lot of guys understand that you have to work together, you know, to some extent and stuff. But it's a little bit like commercial fishing in the aspect that you're your own boss out there, you're doing your own thing, and you don't want anybody else telling you what to do and stuff. That's one of the reasons you're doing it.”

“It works out a lot better in the long-run when everybody kind of works with the same program to some extent and stuff. But I think there's personality reasons why that doesn't always work out that way.”

“Well, I'd have to say that I've been out of the Fort Bragg Harbor all my life and over the years it's definitely changed. Other than me and [name redacted], most of the charter boat captains are in their 30s. Definitely a different mindset in the industry. But communication in this harbor, I'd have to say it's one of the worst ones I've seen on the whole West Coast. Communication, gettin' along, nah. Doesn't happen here. Unfortunately, I mean, there's a lot of clientele that could be happy if [they] couldn't get on one boat to get on another boat, but to share business here... it's not there. And it's sad.”

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



Discussion Summary Participants believed the strength of relationships between CPFV operators and external groups is weak due to lack of engagement in policy discussions among operators.

- Some participants have engaged and sat on boards and advisory committees, and noted the lack of engagement by the CPFV community more broadly.
 - A participant noted that CPFV operators and fishermen don't generally have a voice in the management of the fishery and believed they could better inform management and industry decisions if they were more organized.
 - A couple participants supported establishing organized groups of CPFV operators because there is power in numbers and because they are great opportunities to network and work with outside groups in ways that could have large benefits to the community.
- One participant stated that being part of an association improved advertising opportunities for their business.
- One participant explained that while sitting on the board of a large charter boat fishing association, they encouraged their peers to join which not only helped grow the association but also ensured they have funding available to support members during years of hardship. However, they stated many operators have not identified participation in such an association as a priority.

Participant Quotes

"I'm in a lot of different organizations through one of my other jobs working for the [redacted]. And I'm active in that job in a lot of those scenes, and I see no other charter captains in those scenes with NGOs and other groups, including even the local Fish and Game Commission - I'm a Fish and Game Commission appointee by my Board of Supervisors members. I've never seen another charter person there for ocean fishing. [...] I just don't see the presence of the charter community in outside groups, whether it be the Coastal Commission meetings, whether it be Fish and Game Commission meetings, local or state. I just don't see them. We're a 'non-group' is what I would call us."

"I'm on the board for a large charter boat fishing association, and I've tried to encourage some of the other guys on my dock to join because there are some benefits from joining. And this association has helped sometimes when there's been some money available if you had a bad year, we've had some salmon disaster money and crab disaster money in the past. And these guys have worked hard through that organization to get the money. And pretty much everybody just blows it off. So I think I may be the only [CPFV] member [of the fishing association] on the North Coast right now, but I see the benefit of everybody kind of working together and both belonging to an association and stuff where you have a little more strength that way and maybe a little bit of pull. But that goes back to the 'everybody's an individual' and stuff. And that's one

of the reasons you're doing this thing, is to be an individual. Being part of a group is not for everybody, and I understand that, but it can be a benefit at times too.”

Well-Being, Overall/Additional Comments

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

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

Discussion Summary Participants shared their experiences and concerns with the management of the recreational fisheries sector, marine spatial planning, and natural resources more broadly.

- A participant shared the belief that recreational fishing has a minimal impact on fish stocks.
 - One participant shared that despite recreational fishermen having minimal impact on fish populations, restrictions are not being lifted for the recreational sector in the same way they are for commercial fishermen. They specifically referenced the lifting of trawling restrictions in RCAs, while not opening any new areas for recreational fishermen. Two participants said they would like more RCAs to open to allow recreational fishing.
- A couple participants highlighted the value of artificial reefs in mitigating loss of fishing grounds by creating fishing opportunities closer to the ports. These reefs could also be used when there are poor fishing conditions due to weather. They would also allow underserved populations who don't have boats that can travel 30+ miles to fish closer to port. Participants explained that artificial reefs were once a tool being considered by state managers and are now not being pursued.
- Multiple participants expressed concern about the negative impacts of wind energy and more MPAs on the fishing industry more broadly.
 - A participant stated they are optimistic about CPFV fishing in the near-term but are concerned about what it will look like in ten years if there are wind farms, more MPAs, and RCAs that allow trawling but no recreational fishing.
- A participant requested fisheries managers consider extending the rock cod season in ports like Fort Bragg where they are limited to two species - rock cod and salmon - since local habitats generally do not support other species.
- 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.

Participant Quotes

“I don't feel as though [sport fishermen] have an egregious impact on the fish population, at least in Eureka, because we gotta drive so dang far to get to them. And I see depth restrictions increase for open access, I see netting restrictions decrease for guys dragging nets, and then I don't see anything shift at the same time for the recreational guys. [...] I don't see that fishing community [recreational fishermen] making a huge impact.”

“I would suggest revisiting the conversation around what can we do to create artificial reefs with all of this material that we have as humans, aka concrete [...]. Potentially building artificial reefs closer [to port] rather than closing off more natural reefs, I think that's the only thing that's been resonating for me in the back of my mind [throughout] this whole conversation.”

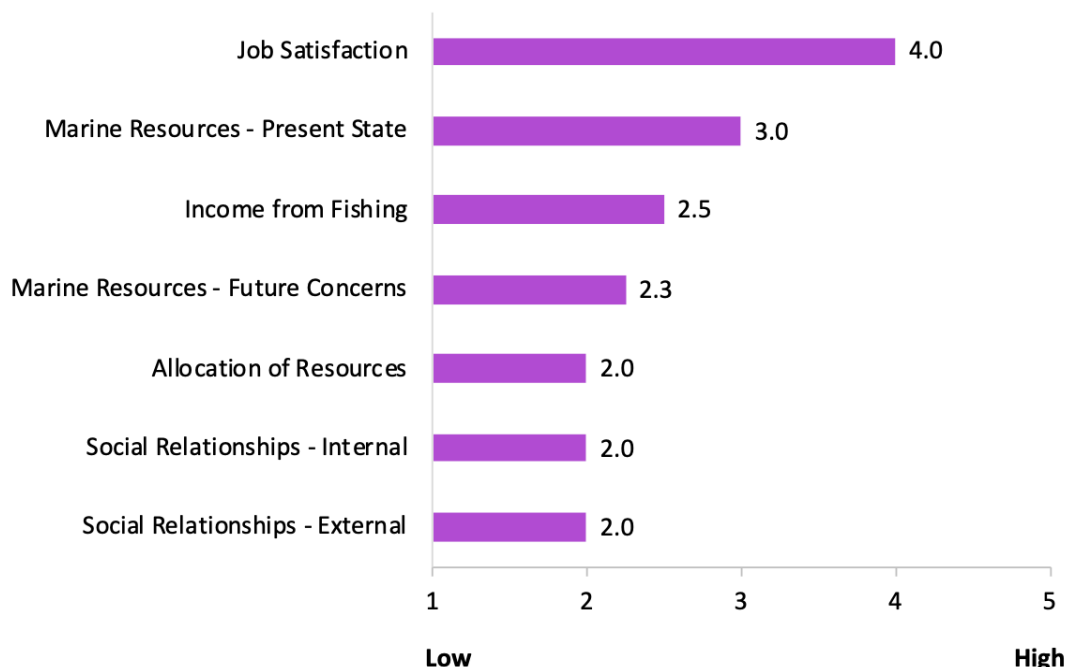
“[The California Department of Fish and Wildlife] are not very pro-artificial reefs. [...] Then we got wind energy and stuff where maybe we're going to lose some more territory and maybe that can be made up with some other artificial reef for that type of thing. You know, if we end up losing fishing grounds to wind energy, who knows where we're going. I'm pessimistic for ten years from now, but I think the next few years look pretty good to me, I think we're headed in the right direction... for now.”

“Fort Bragg has two fisheries that we rely on: salmon and rock cod. We don't have halibut here. Charter boats tried it... waste of time because there's no abundance or a good place close enough for the charter boats to do halibut trips. So, yeah, a longer rock cod season would definitely be the big bonus for our area because of the limited fisheries that we have.”

“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.”

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

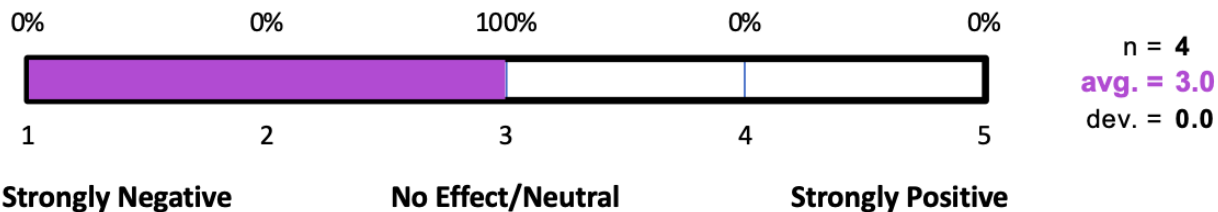
(Note: The following figure does not include the average rating for question 5. COVID-19 Impacts.)



Perceptions of MPAs

MPAs, Outcomes/Effects

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



Strongly Negative

No Effect/Neutral

Strongly Positive

Discussion Summary Participants scored the effect of the California MPA network on local marine resources as 'No Effect/Neutral' because they either didn't have information to inform their score or they haven't seen a noticeable change in catch on the edges of the MPAs.

- One participant shared they felt they were too new to the port to answer this question adequately, and so scored this question as 'No Effect/Neutral.'
- Many participants have not observed positive increases in catch as a result of MPAs. The only impacts they are experiencing are limitations on where they can fish.
- One participant explained that MPAs do not have as much of an impact on fish populations as good fisheries management. For example, if the fish stocks were poor before MPA implementation, MPAs may help to improve resource health; however, if the stock was healthy, MPAs will likely have little effect. A couple participants were uncertain of the impacts MPAs have had on fish stocks.
- One participant highlighted that rockfish stocks are indicative of the performance of MPAs.
- A participant stated that they are not seeing spillover from the MPAs when they fish the edges and often can get the same catch at an area several miles from an MPA.
- Various participants explained that they have not seen scientific data to inform their decision. One participant has seen a monitoring vessel in their area from time to time, but have not seen the results of that research and, therefore, is unsure whether the MPAs are having an effect on marine resources.

Participant Quotes

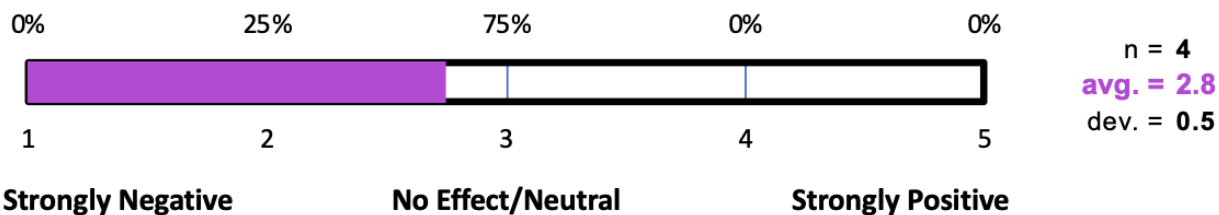
"I don't know enough about the population dynamics to know, [like] feed populations versus source populations, because I'm not a marine biologist. The only things the MPAs [are] doing, as somebody with my ignorance level, [are limiting] the number of rocks you can go to. And in some days, the fish are on some rocks and some days they're on different rocks and you never know which days it's going to be, so you just kind of take your boat out and bounce from rock to rock until you find fish that want to bite. And sometimes [there's] a rock covered with fish and the fish don't want to bite and you go back and they all want to bite. So I see it as limiting the number of locations that we can potentially take clients to on our boats. Beyond that, I'm just too ignorant to be able to shed light on the differences, the changes or population dynamics or any of this stuff. I'm not the right guy [to ask]."

“Since I've been fishing there for a long time and stuff near the MPAs, we kind of knew going in with the whole MLPA [Marine Life Protection Act] that in well-managed fisheries, MPAs are not as strong as they are in areas with poor management - they don't have as much effect. And that's kind of what we're seeing really: that the fisheries management has had more effect on our fisheries than the MPAs. We fish fairly near one MPA, but we don't really see [...] that the fishing is any different along the edge of the MPA as it is, you know, several miles away from it - it's actually fairly similar. So I would say that there hasn't been a noticeable effect either way.”

“I think there is a vessel that does some of the research in some of the areas up here, but again, I don't know what days [that vessel is on the water] and what the impact of those studies show, but I guess it would be interesting.”

“I'd like to see more data.”

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



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

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

Discussion Summary While MPAs have had little effect on the participants, they explained that MPA impacts vary from port to port based on the fisheries available to that port and the distance needed to travel to get to fishing spots. For example, a port like Fort Bragg with limited options for fishing would be more affected than a port like Crescent City that has closer access to more desirable fisheries (e.g., lingcod, rockfish, salmon, black cod).

- One participant shared they felt they were too new to the port to answer this question adequately, and so scored this question as 'No Effect/Neutral.'
- Multiple participants shared that MPAs along the North Coast were generally placed in areas where there is less fishing, which has reduced the negative impacts on North Coast CPFVs in ports like Eureka and Crescent City. However, MPA impacts are great in some ports; Fort Bragg has fewer fishing opportunities and Shelter Cove has an inability to travel longer distances due to the small size of the vessels in the port.
 - In addition to MPA impacts, all participants expressed concern that the 30x30 initiative would have strong negative effects on the fleet and could force North Coast operators out of business.
- Multiple participants stated that while they have witnessed younger individuals joining the charter boat industry, they have not seen folks leave the business as a result of MPAs.

Participant Quotes

"[...] Each port up here [is different] from one from another. Eureka has a long way to go for rockfish fishing. Trinidad has very close rockfish fishing, but maybe not usually as good as salmon fishing. Fort Bragg has, I think, a little more fishing pressure than like [Eureka's] rockfish. [...] Crescent City is pretty heavy rockfish stuff up there, and it's pretty good rockfish fishing there. They have more variety and definitely more lingcod than Trinidad does, so they did have a little more flexibility with the lower black rockfish limits and stuff. And they have very close rock fishing as opposed to Eureka, which has a long ways to run. So yeah, they're all different."

"[...] One of the things we tried to do [in] the first go around on the MLPA initiative was to put MPAs in places where boats still had close fishing [available], where they didn't have to go through a bunch of MPAs to get to the fishing grounds that would be farther away and more difficult to get to in bad weather. And so I think that has actually paid off pretty strongly that we're still able to fish a lot of the areas that we may have been unable to fish if some of our close fishing grounds were MPAs. And so the MPAs I think were put in logical places to where they achieve their goals as well as not affect us too much. But I think that that was because of the limited areas that the MPAs took, and I think that, you know, if they're talking about the [30x30] expansion and stuff, that if you doubled the areas, that we would lose that advantage. And I think that would be a totally different program at that point."

"Nobody has left here [as a result of MPAs], as far as I know, one guy might have retired... no effects of the MPAs."

MPAs, Discussion of Specific MPAs

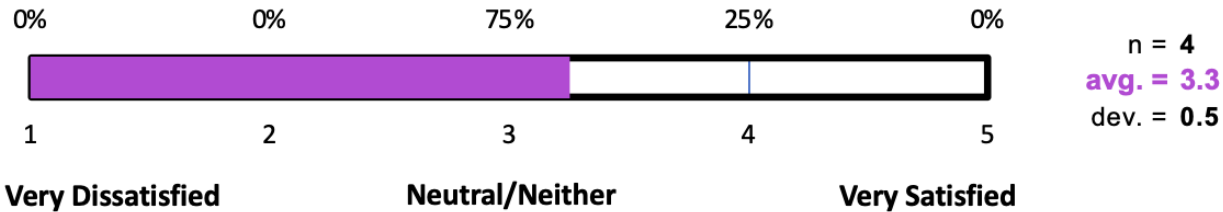
12. MPA Effects - MPA Specific Which MPAs have had the most impact on CPFV owner/operators from your region and why?

Discussion Summary Participants shared very limited responses in regards to their experiences with the MPAs, but shared that North Coast MPAs were generally placed in areas that were less impactful compared to other regions; impacts also vary by port.

- *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.

MPAs, Management

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

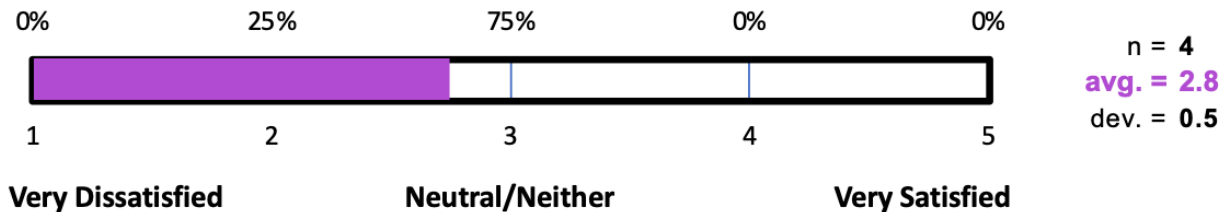


Discussion Summary Due to the lack of information they have received on the management of MPAs, participants scored this question as ‘Neutral/Neither’ since they didn’t feel they had enough information to properly answer the question. One participant shared they felt they were too new to the port to answer this question adequately, and so scored this question as ‘Neutral/Neither.’

Participant Quotes

“[...] I don't even know how [the MPAs are] being managed to know how to answer the question about management, because I've been provided with no information.”

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



Discussion Summary As a result of not seeing MPA monitoring data/results, and concerns about the lack of opportunities for utilizing fishing vessels in the monitoring process, participants were somewhat dissatisfied with the monitoring of the MPA network.

- A couple participants stated that they have not yet seen any monitoring results and scientific reporting on the MPAs. One participant explained that while it can be difficult to reach the CPFV fishing community, there are venues and channels through local fishing associations in which monitoring information could have been shared over the years.
- Many participants expressed disappointment with the lack of opportunities for charters to participate in monitoring activities. They stated that since monitoring is conducted with state funds, it should go out to bid rather than just relying consistently on a single operation, which is currently the case.
 - One participant stated that they participated in monitoring at one point but because the researchers requested them to do survey trips on profitable days with nice weather, the participant had to decline those survey trips for a period of time and was never asked to support the monitoring again despite being available and interested.

- Participants were unclear on monitoring data and protocols and asked questions about the methods used for sampling inside and outside MPAs, tagging, the ability to retain sampled fish, and whether they would be allowed to access the data for their own purposes.
- One participant shared they felt they were too new to the port to answer this question adequately, and so scored this question as 'Neutral/Neither.'

Participant Quotes

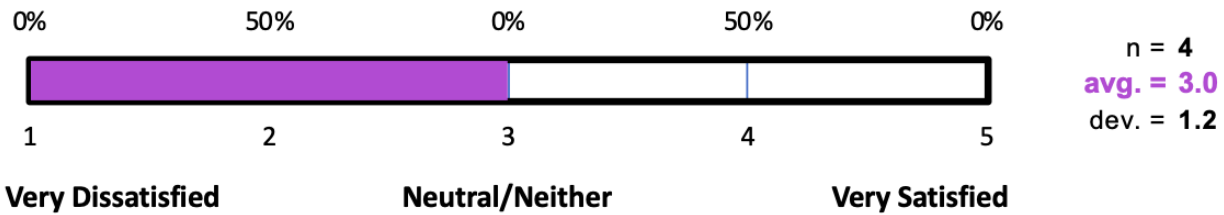
"The CPFV operators are not well organized on the North Coast. So it becomes a very difficult target for the researcher to be able to extend the information to those people [...] So I understand from their perspective the challenge of reaching us, but I have never once, ever, ever seen any information about the data [that] is being collected on MPAs. And the one thing I will say, Humboldt County in particular, the sportsmen are well organized with the Humboldt County Tuna Club. And to not have that information go out through that venue seems relatively egregious to me because that would also reach all of the charter captains. So I have a hard time with coming up with an excuse for the researchers for not extending the data and information that they've collected."

"One thing that's always kind of bothered me a little bit is the [use of] CPFVs for the monitoring. It started out where it was fairly open, where guys would have an opportunity to maybe bid on it to do it. But it's turned into like a one boat show now [...] I don't want to take anything away from the one boat that's doing it because he needs the money. But [...] generally things are put out to bid where other guys like [name redacted] was having a slow time - maybe he could have used a couple of those monitoring trips to go down and make a little bit of extra money and stuff. I haven't seen any opportunity in the last year or so for anybody else to get in and maybe get involved with the monitoring stuff."

"So I was originally asked to give an estimate, and I think it was Humboldt State [University that] was deeply involved in the monitoring and I can't remember if [California] Sea Grant was as well. And so I gave them a price and I did the first few trips, but then it got to the point where I usually was busy. They only wanted to go on nice days and I was already busy. So then another boat started doing it. And I guess what bothered me was at that point, it was just like they were locked into one boat. And I always felt people would have more buy-in for the whole process if they spread a little bit of that love around rather than just having one person do it. [...] I know in almost all government contracting, there's value contracting where it doesn't always have to be the best price. You know, if you have a boat that couldn't accommodate what they're trying to do, then obviously you wouldn't be able to do it. But, you know, everybody should be able to have the opportunity to be involved in [MPA monitoring]. And I haven't seen that the last couple of years."

"So who owns that data that's coming from [MPA monitoring efforts] - the weights, the lengths, everything else? Who owns it and who can gain access to it? Because like for myself, for example, I would love to run some of my own statistics on it to see what it looks like and then maybe even do some little nerdy side projects weighing and measuring fish on my boat, you know, to compare to what they're doing. As just kind of a nerdy scientist on a sports trip for putting fish in the fridge for my wife and I."

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



Discussion Summary Most participants struggled to answer this question because they have seen very little on-the-water enforcement of MPAs.

- A participant indicated that they have seen one MPA near Fort Bragg regularly enforced, while another one is heavily fished. Despite repeated calls to CDFW of illegal activities, enforcement still does not occur at that MPA.
- One participant explained that MPA boundaries can be hard to decipher since many of the landmarks that were used to establish/define MPA boundaries are now gone. However, fishermen can get GPS coordinates on chart plotters.
- Another participant stated many MPA violations are often done unintentionally when a CPFV does not realize they have crossed an MPA boundary.
- One participant explained that they would score this question differently if they were scoring for themselves rather than the entire North Coast CPFV community. While they are personally dissatisfied with the number of MPA violators and the lack of enforcement, they also know that some individuals do not care that they are fishing in an MPA because they have happy customers and a lot of fish. In other words, the rewards outweigh the risk of MPA enforcement.
- One participant shared they felt they were too new to the port to answer this question adequately, and so scored this question as 'Neutral/Neither.'

Participant Quotes

"I don't know about anybody else, but I have not seen any MPA enforcement, I have seen [the California Department of] Fish and Wildlife a couple of times down in the area where we do rock fishing and stuff. But I don't think I've ever seen them where they need to approach a boat or anything. [...] And personally, I like to see the enforcement. If you're going to have an [MPA], then you might as well make it the best it can be and enforce it and keep people out of there."

"Yeah, as far as Fort Bragg, there is only one area that's really monitored [enforced] and that's the Point Cabrillo [SMR]. Ninety percent of the time, the people that run the lighthouse will call [the California Department of Fish and Wildlife]. A lot of times there's a lot of boats fishing in there and they'll fish there all day and nothing will be done. But the Point Cabrillo [SMR] is the most monitored [enforced]. Other than that, I couldn't tell you about any of the other ones."

"I would prefer if [this question asked,] 'how do you feel about [MPA enforcement]?' Because I would feel very dissatisfied, very dissatisfied about the amount of sport boats and even other businesses that are on the wrong side of the line. But when I think about how I'm supposed to answer this question for the group of CPFV guys when one person makes a very good living on the wrong side of the line... so I guess we're neutral, somewhere in the middle."

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

Discussion Summary Participants reiterated some thoughts that were expressed during the meeting.

- One participant requested better communication of monitoring results and asked that they be shared broadly and prepared in a manner that is both readable and concise.
- Two participants expressed interest in learning more about the state's 30x30 initiative and its relationship to the MPA network.
 - One participant stated that while they believe the MPAs can be effective, there is not a need to add more at this time.
 - Multiple participants would like managers to look at MPAs and potential impacts from 30x30 from a holistic perspective that considers all fishing restrictions including other state and federal closures like RCAs.

Participant Quotes

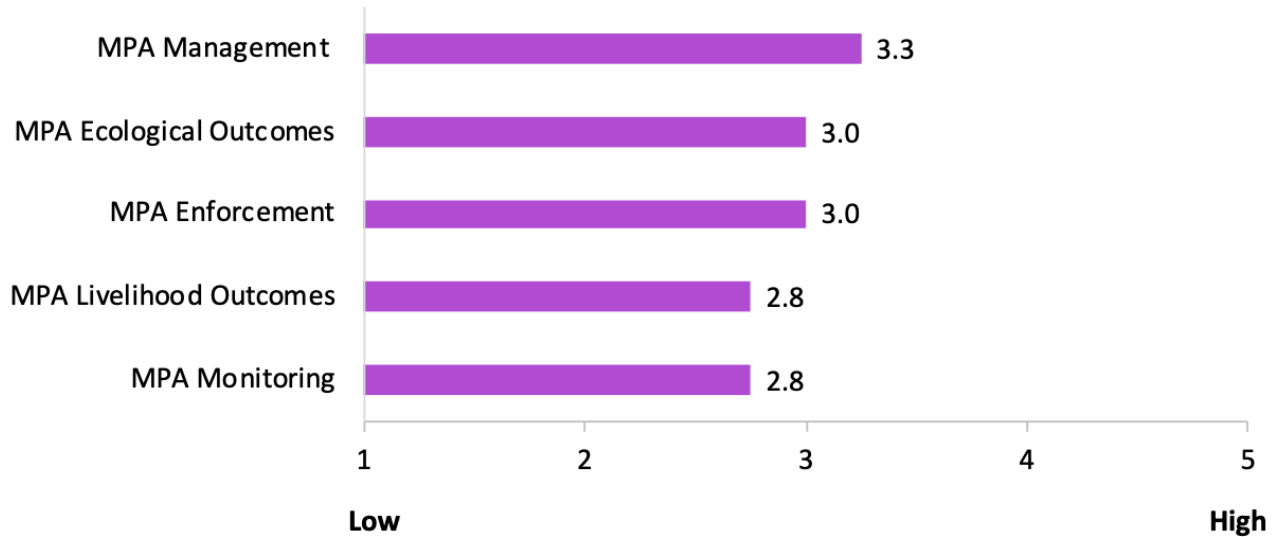
"I would like to see more, especially condensed, versions of the studies because sometimes we don't have time to sit there and pour through a long document, but [rather] just a little brief. I know they can break it down into something that's readable for somebody like me."

"I don't know anything about this 30x30, so I'd like to know more about that [and how it relates to the current MPA network]."

"From the CPFV lens, the current MPAs, in my opinion, are working well and I don't see a need for any more."

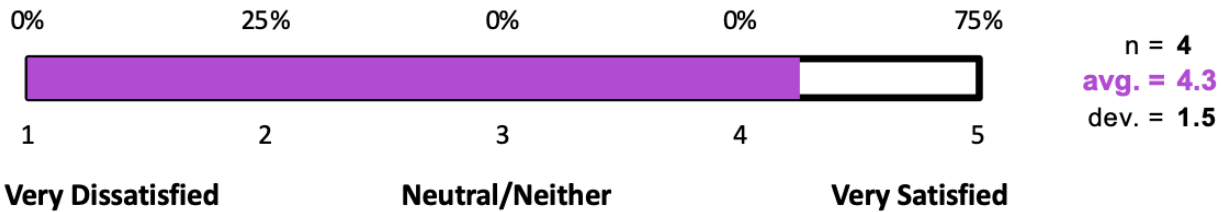
"We've had a [de facto] MPA from being restricted [beyond] 120 feet of water for 20 years. Anything outside of 120 feet of water is [essentially] an MPA. Yeah, we do get 180 [feet] this year. We've lobbied to have deeper water for over ten years. And the [question] for me is [why] restrict just to 120 feet over a golden eye rockfish and not consider the other fish that we've pretty much wiped out. So, yeah, the 120 line has been an MPA for 20 years in Fort Bragg."

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



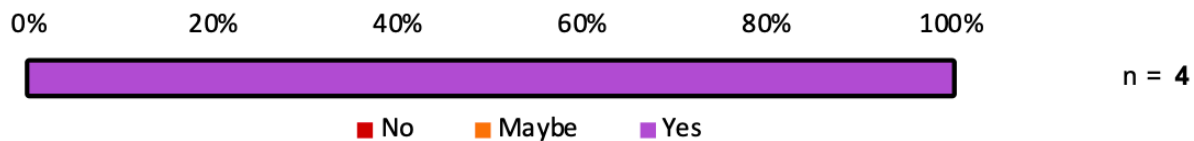
Feedback on Virtual Process

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



17b. Willingness to Participate in Virtual Process in Future Would you be open to participating in a virtual focus group or meeting like this in the future?

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



17c. Process Open-ended *Can you share any additional comments about your experience in this virtual focus group? What do you think are some of the pros and cons of having a conversation like this online rather than in-person?*

Discussion Summary Overall, participants were satisfied with the virtual focus group experience and appreciated the discussion with their peers. However, one participant stated that they are tired of virtual meetings and a four hour Zoom was not ideal.

Participant Quotes

“I'm just sick of Zooms. That's all there is to it. It's like, I don't want the state of California to think that I'm happy sitting in this chair for four hours straight from three to seven o'clock at night.”