

## 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 Point Arena'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: Point Arena**

**Date: Monday, February 1, 2021**

**Participants: Bill Arana, Peter Bogdan, Bill Houston, Joey Rose**

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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.

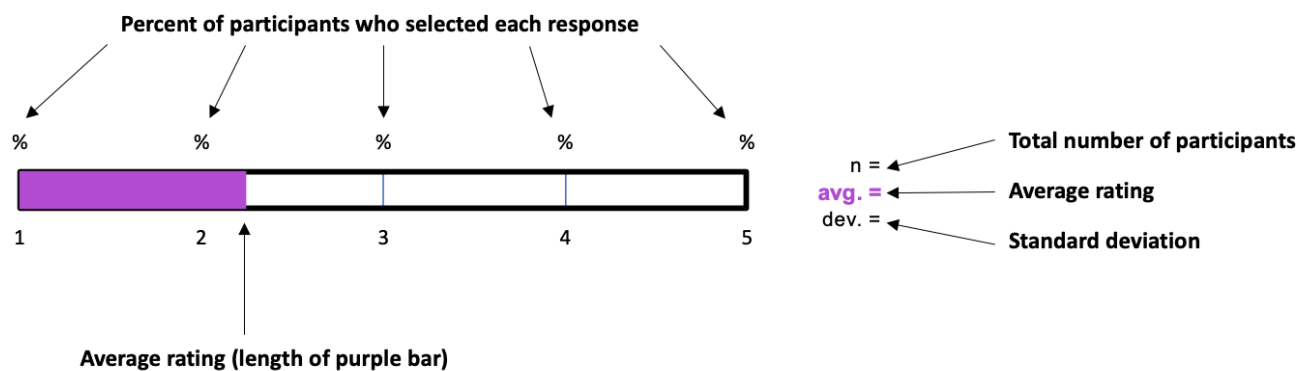
## Overview

On February 1, 2021, four commercial fishermen operating out of Point Arena participated in the sixteenth focus group conversation. A detailed summary of the conversation is captured below, including:

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

## Guidance for Interpreting Figures

There are 17 figures displaying participant responses for questions that had a numerical/quantitative component. In those figures, the percentages located directly above the bar (between 1 (low) and 5 (high)) represent the percent of participants in the focus group who selected that response. The total number of focus group participants is labeled 'n' to the right of each figure. The length of the purple bar indicates the average rating for each question, also labeled 'avg.' to the right, and 'dev.' refers to standard deviation, or the extent to which scores deviated from one another. See below for an example figure. There are also two figures on pages 15 and 24 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:

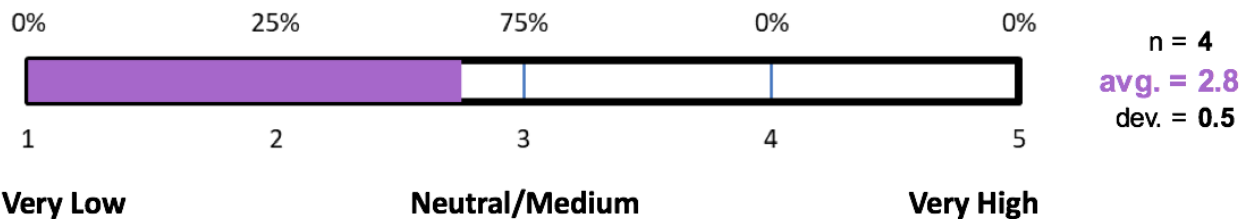
- [California Fisheries Data Explorer](#): This interactive site allows users to visualize commercial landings data (i.e., number of fishermen, pounds of fish landed, and revenue from fish landed) and CPFV logbook data (i.e., number of anglers, vessels, trips, and fish caught from specific fisheries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

Our Project Team would like to express our appreciation to the four Point Arena fishermen—Bill Arana, Peter Bogdan, Bill Houston, and Joey Rose—for their time and contributions to the focus group conversation.

## Perceptions of Fishing Community Well-being

### Well-Being, Environmental

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



**Discussion Summary** Participants reported the current health and sustainability of marine resources varies across species and that while some species have benefited from management, others, particularly salmon, may require better management to help improve species health.

- Several fishermen believed rockfish are doing well and attributed good species abundance to low fishing pressure in the Point Arena area.
- Several participants expressed concern about low salmon abundance and stated that more needs to be done to help improve the overall health of the species.
  - One participant perceived human impacts upstream, including logging and water diversions, to have had a negative impact on the species.
  - Another participant shared the belief that the salmon hatchery system should implement different methods to ensure juvenile salmon are able to travel downstream with less risk of predation.
- One participant considered sea urchin abundance to be very low and noted how the fishery is not viable for divers to target the species. They stated that observed kelp increases may help to improve sea urchin abundance.
- One fisherman indicated that their 'Neutral/Medium' response had more to do with habitat and water quality than species diversity or abundance.
- One participant explained that each generation has different expectations of marine resource health due to the phenomenon of 'shifting baselines.' A younger fisherman may consider current conditions to be abundant whereas an older fisherman may have a different point of reference as to what they would consider abundant.

### Participant Quotes

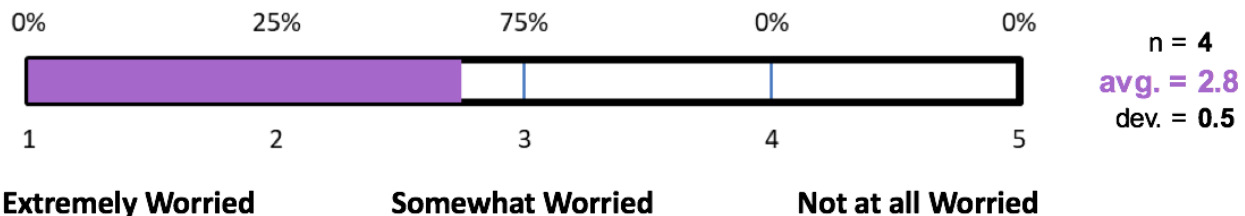
"I could say it's really terrible, but we are out there and we're catching some fairly good catches once in a while. The live fish fishery has been managed pretty well. Rockfish are supposed to have reached rebuilt status."

"For salmon, you can't expect something that was wild [to be how it] was back then when we've done so much today with the canals and the logging and everything. I mean, look at the rivers now. Look at where all the water goes in Sacramento. So I think that there needs to be a lot more done on helping those fish. And I feel like the problem's pretty simple. And I see they're doing more recently and we've noticed more fish. So I think if they could step it up a little bit

more, that would be better for the ocean. Everything might not be 100 percent wild, but once the fish gets back into the ocean, it's as wild as it gets.”

“No one could say that the sea urchins are in good shape right now. Sea urchins, at least in the Point Arena area, are so low that sea urchin divers are not even going after them. But we have been seeing some kelp come back and maybe the sea urchins are on the way back? I'm not sure.”

**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** When asked about the long-term health of marine resources, participants expressed some worry about management and future ocean changes.

- One participant mentioned that commercial dragging for rockfish has reopened at certain depths and shared a concern that this may have an impact on the reefs where rockfish breed.
- Several participants expressed concerns related to changes in weather, climate, and ocean conditions.
  - A couple of participants emphasized that warmer water temperatures and ocean acidification may decrease the availability of bait fish. With fewer bait fish, salmon are less likely to travel to where fishermen can catch them.
  - One participant highlighted how the presence of domoic acid has delayed and shortened Dungeness crab seasons and this continues to be a worry into the future. They added how the starfish die off is indicative of the fragility of marine life and questioned whether a similar mass die off event could occur with crab.

**Participant Quotes**

“The main thing is outlawing dragging, which unfortunately they just reopened. So all the [rockfish] breed out on the deep reefs and now they're all dragging them again, which is [a worry] for the future.”

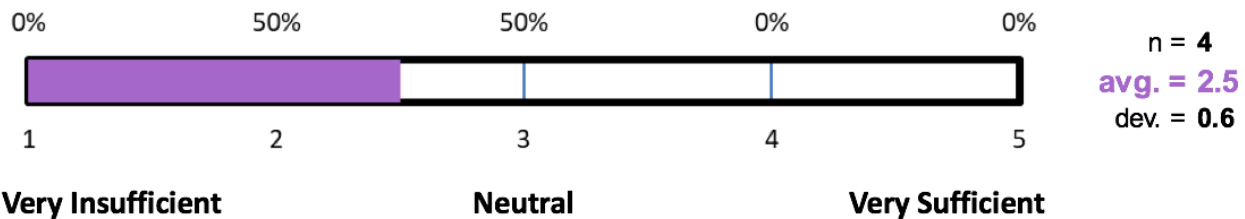
“I think that global warming is probably having an effect here, but I don't know what the long term effects are going to be. But it seems to be getting worse instead of better. So that makes me a little concerned about the future, because the warmer temperature does make it more difficult for the bait to come in. And if the bait doesn't come in, well, then the salmon don't come out, but the salmon are somewhere. So I think they're still living. They're still eating. And they just may not come in to where we can catch them.”

“Ocean conditions are the main thing that are causing our worry because domoic acid's caused delays in our crab season for years and quality keeps the crabs too light to start and our seasons get shorter every year, so that's a main worry. And then we all saw the starfish die off, so how

fragile is life in this ocean? Could the crabs be next? We don't know, so you'd be a fool not to be worried, being a fisherman."

## 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 restrictions that inhibit access to commercial fish resources for fishermen from Point Arena with the most concerning being MPAs, especially related to the loss of local salmon trolling grounds. For a more detailed discussion related to MPAs and how they have significantly affected fishermen's access to marine resources, please see the **Discussion Summary** on pages 17 and 18.

- Several participants indicated that while there are permits available, they can be very expensive which makes it difficult for fishermen to participate in multiple fisheries. One participant suggested having a diverse permit profile is important because it provides the opportunity to make a living in the case when a fishery is closed or a season opener is delayed.
- One participant stated that inclement weather inhibits access for Point Arena fishermen who are unable to fish in dangerous conditions.

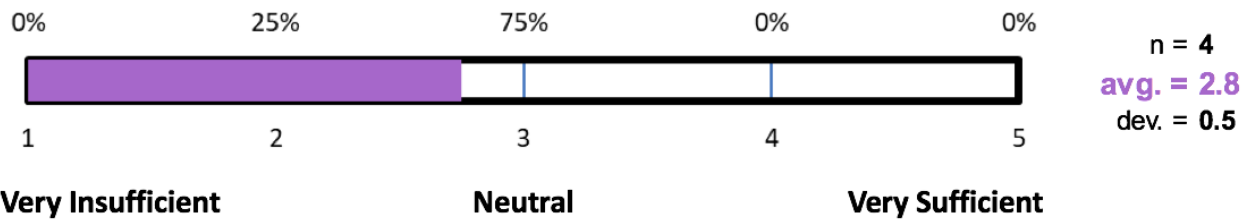
### Participant Quotes

"I think we have plenty of access to permits and the ability to go offshore to catch a black cod or buy a permit to fish live fish. We have all the access at our fingertips. It's just the salmon fishery where we traditionally trolled and they put a marine protected area there. We can't go where we used to catch a lot; a high percentage of the fish we caught were right in that marine protected area."

"It's extremely hard [to participate in multiple fisheries]. I would say if you are a person that just wanted to get off and start fishing, that would be near to possible. [Well] not near to impossible, it's just a lot of money. Live fish permits are a lot of money, everything's a lot of money. So just to go for it and then not be successful [is a risk]. Crab didn't open for four months because of the domoic acid [and] we went four years ago in May, so if that's someone's only fishery, you're kind of screwed."

"Our port here in Point Arena is already hard enough with the weather and everything to get out of. Most ports will be working and we're stuck in because it's an eleven foot sea."

**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 reported that income from fishing ranges between insufficient and neutral, which is informed greatly by how long someone has been fishing and their related business expenses.

- Participants stated some fishermen need a second job or multiple permits to support their livelihoods, however others, particularly those who are older, may not need additional sources of income because they may have fewer expenses.
  - One participant indicated that whether a fisherman can support themselves with money earned from fishing depends on where they are in life and whether they have children to support or other expenses like house payments.
- One participant shared that they had to take on a second job to support their fishing business because they were losing money fishing.
- One fisherman felt they earn sufficient income from fishing only because of the number of permits they have. If they had any less, they did not think they would be able to support their family with only their fishing income.

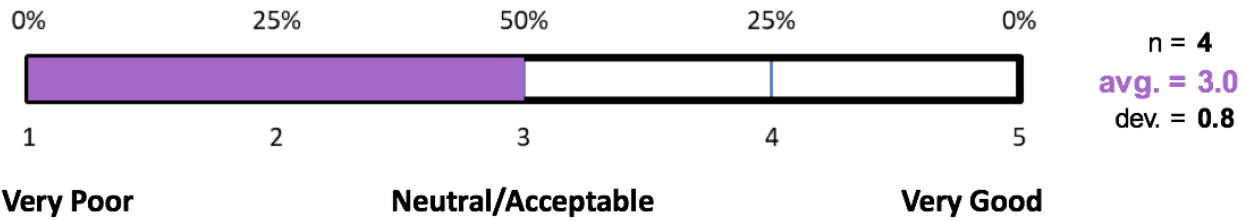
**Participant Quotes**

“It just depends what kind of a situation you have. Some of us are retired and our children are out of the house and maybe the house is paid off. But [name redacted] has two little girls and is yet to buy a house. And so I'd say somewhere between sufficient and insufficient.”

“My joke that I've worn out over the years is that I had to pretend to be a professor for 37 years to support my fishing habits. I have an addiction to fishing. I would be fishing no matter how much money I was losing. My income tax would show that I've been losing money most years.”

“On making money, I feel like I'm fortunate because I have so many permits. If I were just to have salmon and crab, I probably wouldn't make it with two kids. But because I have four [permits], I'm able to [make it]. The live fish permit helps a lot. So if you want to be a fisherman these days and that's your living, you've really got to have many options to do it anymore. There's not just one [permit] that's going to cut it.”

**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 noted that the quality of the markets to which fishermen sell their catch ranges from poor to good depending on the fishery they are involved in.

- Several participants stated that while fishermen in Point Arena have buyers that come from the Bay Area, the access to and reliability of these out-of-area markets is challenging.
  - Due to the lengthy travel time between the Bay Area and Point Arena, one participant explained that fishermen must meet their buyers in the early afternoon, which limits their fishing window for the day. Another participant added this is particularly frustrating when fishermen are already limited on the number of days they are allowed to fish.
  - One participant stated that the alternative is also difficult because fishermen must drive their catch to markets far distances from Point Arena.
- One participant communicated how Point Arena fishermen catch more crab than they can sell locally. While this used to be the case for salmon, there is currently not enough volume to sell salmon both through direct markets and to buyers.

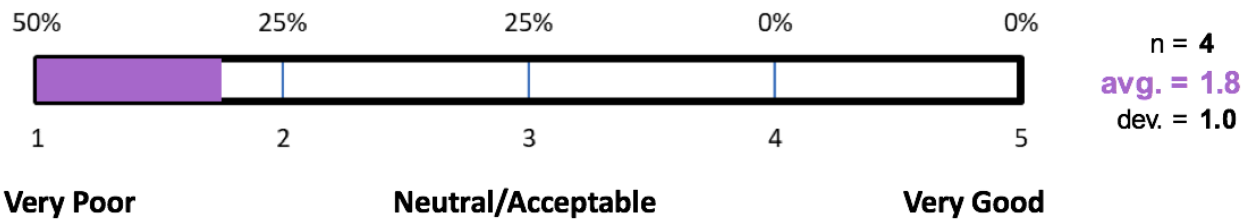
**Participant Quotes**

“Regarding the markets, I can see there's quite a bit of disparity [in responses], but we do have to remember that within just the four of us [in this focus group], we range all the way from one fishery to four fisheries. I'm one of the ones that fish only king salmon. And so it's not not quite so surprising that we have such a wide range of responses here.”

“At first I was going to go with ‘Good’ because there's a couple of fish buyers that we have that come from the Bay Area. That is great. But then when I [considered] ease of use, I changed my selection to ‘Poor.’ While we have a couple of great buyers, the whole process is just overwhelming. I mean, the idea that you have to be back by four o'clock to pull the boat out and, also, the guy that works [at the dock] wants to go home by four o'clock - he doesn't really want to stay late - it just narrows down that fishing window for the day to six, seven, eight hours at the most.”

“Some markets are good, otherwise we got to use the pier and come in at a certain time to get help. Otherwise we have to hand load all of our product into our trucks and drive it either to Fort Bragg or Bodega Bay, which is forty five minutes one way or an hour and a half the other way. [. . .] And the thought of just having to come in at four o'clock when you got one day in a month in the middle of winter to go make your money - it's pretty sad.”

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



**Discussion Summary** Related to the port’s infrastructure, participants discussed the poor availability, reliability, maintenance, and support of key infrastructure.

- When discussing the availability of key infrastructure, one participant mentioned that Point Arena has never had an ice machine.
- Several participants reported the infrastructure that is available is not well maintained, which leads to reliability challenges when running their fishing operations. One participant noted the presence of rust throughout the pier.
  - One participant suggested the local infrastructure has been better maintained in the past than it currently is.
- Several participants indicated that there is little financial support for infrastructure in Point Arena.
  - One participant shared that they are willing to personally pay for an electric winch for the skiff hoist that is currently manually operated. They are hoping for support from the city manager on this as it would improve their use of available infrastructure.

**Participant Quotes**

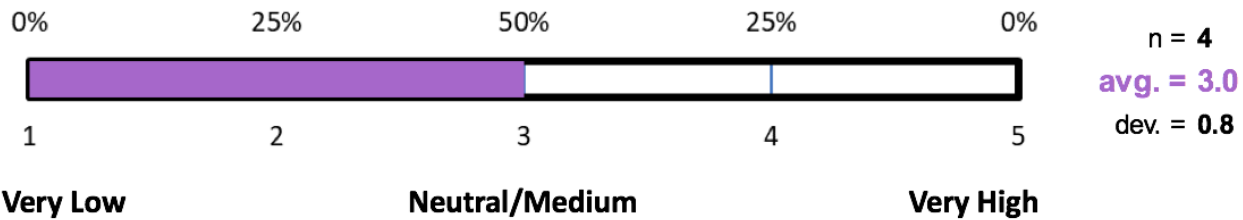
“I was actually working at the port there for almost 25 years, and so I got a pretty good grip on what the state of the infrastructure is and also the services. And that's why I went with ‘Very Poor.’ There's a lot of maintenance that they're behind on and that creates reliability issues. There's no financial support for the infrastructure. The availability of key infrastructure, well, we've never had an ice machine, for instance.”

“The pier, I'd say, is very bad. [It's] just not very well taken care of.”

“I use the big winch to launch my boat three or four times per summer. I used the skiff hoist for bringing my skiff in and out and bringing my fish in and out. So I do that manually right now. And [. . .] a really big issue for me since I lost my deckhand is that I would like to get an electric winch for the skiff hoist. I've offered to pay for it and [name redacted has] offered to put it in for me. And so hopefully we will get the acquiescence of the city manager's office to eventually make that happen. If that were to happen, that would improve the facilities significantly for me.”



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



**Discussion Summary** Participants indicated that impacts from COVID-19 were experienced differently across fisheries, especially with regard to markets, but that fishermen overall were moderately affected by pandemic protocols.

- Participants shared different perspectives on the effects of COVID-19 on public demand for fish.
  - One participant reported that less demand made it difficult for fishermen to sell directly to consumers.
  - Another participant stated that demand for salmon increased with more people leaving higher populated areas (e.g., the Bay Area) and spending more time in and around Point Arena. As a result, they were able to sell at a higher price per fish.
- One participant recalled how the price for live fish dropped when restaurants closed because it is often bought and eaten in restaurants.
- With regard to Dungeness crab, one participant stated that prices dropped at the start of the pandemic but then markets picked up again. Even so, prices continue to be less than they were a few years ago. They also noted that fishermen have only been crabbing once this season due to a combination of poor weather and a delay in the season opener.
- One participant commented on the difficulty of following social distancing measures while working with a deckhand who is not necessarily part of their bubble or 'pod.'
- One fisherman indicated that commercial fishermen were prioritized as essential businesses/workers during the shut down and credited the harbormaster and city manager for allowing commercial fishermen to access the pier even though it was closed to the general public.

**Participant Quotes**

"With the COVID thing, I think 'Very High' because it's really disrupted our ability to sell fish to the general public. It just made it that much more difficult. There were a lot less people that wanted to buy it. And it's also been hard to negotiate the whole thing with your deckhand on the boat, without having the social distancing all the time and the impact of that with your family [and being able to] work that all out, it's just made it a lot more difficult."

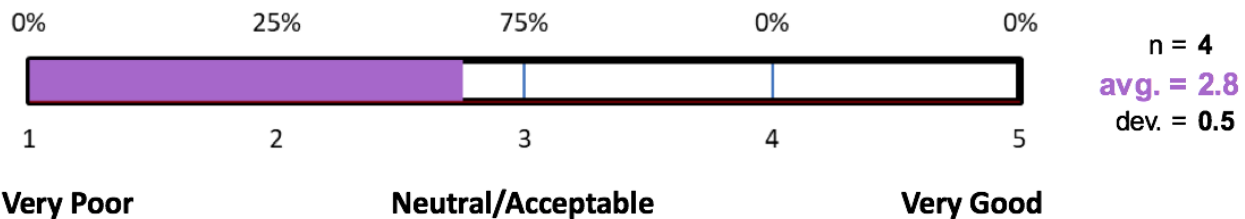
"In my particular case, what I found last summer with COVID around was that the demand for the salmon increased, not decreased. And I even had people say, 'oh my gosh, we've got more people here now than we've ever had before; they're trying to get out of the Bay Area. You should be charging more for your salmon and not less.' And so I didn't see any particular problem with COVID and found that the markets were pretty good for the way that I sell the fish. I usually catch less and try to sell them to individuals as much as possible to get more per fish."

“The markets were definitely better on the salmon than they'd ever been. Sold them for a higher price than we ever had, just local. And the crab price has been down a little bit, it went down quite a bit right in the beginning of the COVID thing. But then [when] the buyers got ready to sell, the markets picked back up after a while, but we haven't been getting the prices that we got a couple of years ago. [They've been] a couple dollars less. [. . .] The price dropped to \$2.50 a pound for a couple of weeks and then gradually came back up to \$5 in the springtime. [. . .] That's good enough but, yeah, could be better.”

“I would certainly give the credit to the current harbormaster and to the city manager that we commercial fishermen were given full rights and kind of first dibs on space and [we were] given a preference even over sport fishermen in most cases. And so it was a little inconvenient to have to go around and take down the traffic control and the fences and gates across to come in and out [from the pier]. But other than that, we did alright during the COVID shutdown [. . .] At least they tried to make it work so that we could still go out and fish.”

**Well-Being, Social/Political**

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



**Discussion Summary** When discussing labor, participants shared that, within the commercial fishing industry, it is more difficult to recruit and retain crew than it is for captains.

- One participant highlighted that while there are currently enough fishermen operating out of Point Arena to the point where the port could not accommodate any more, there is an overall need for deckhands. They stated that fishermen do not earn enough money from fishing to pay deckhands a living wage even if the crewmember is good at the job.
  - One participant commented that when they are unable to pay their deckhand, they offer them alternative means to compensate them for their work, like free fish or car maintenance.
- Several participants reported that due to the difficulty of recruiting and retaining new entrants into the industry, particularly crew, they will often ask family members to serve as deckhands.

**Participant Quotes**

“It's one thing for a fisherman who owns the boat, the captain, to come in and bring the boat in and get a mooring and that sort of thing. It's another thing to get a deckhand. So although we perhaps have almost as many fishermen as the port can handle reasonably, we sure don't have enough deckhands. But that relates back to what we were talking about earlier, about being able to have enough income to make a living. If there's not enough income for us to make a

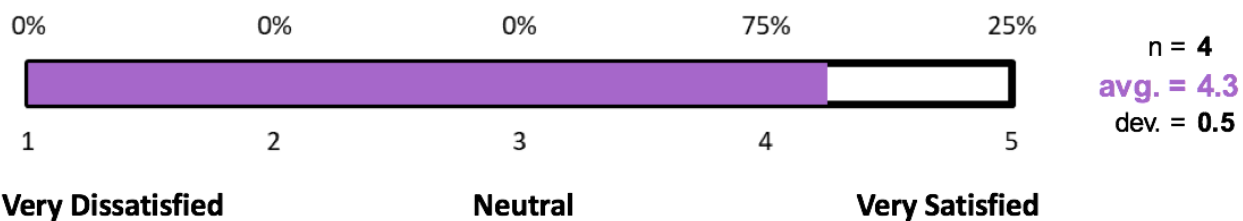
living, then there's also typically, very often - at least for salmon fishing - not enough income for a deckhand. And so it's not the same for a deckhand as it is for someone owning a boat.”

“Sometimes you get your kids to work for you. I had my daughter fish with me. So right now, I've got a guy that I'm basically giving him free crab and I take him tuna fishing and anything else, maybe work on his car or whatever he needs. You do what you have to do to keep somebody on board.”

“As far as recruitment for finding crew around here, it's difficult to say the least. I have a real good crew right now, but he's only around for another month and then he ships out to Alaska [. . .] I have two sons that I manually recruit when needed.”

“Luckily I only need a deckhand for one of my fisheries, and that's my father. We work together, and so we do pretty good. I would probably be having a rough time finding the deckhand if I needed one.”

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



**Discussion Summary** Related to job satisfaction, participants indicated that the positives of being a fisherman outweigh the negatives.

- Several participants described their love for fishing and being on the water. They stated that they continue to fish despite having to navigate the California regulatory context, which can be challenging.
- One participant shared how support from other fishermen enhances their job satisfaction.

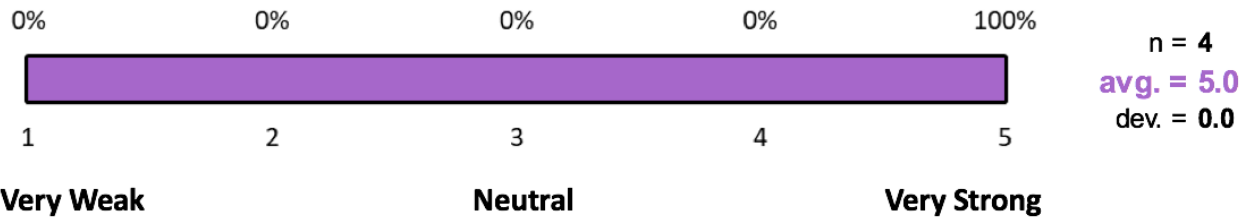
**Participant Quotes**

“I absolutely love the job. Every day I go [fishing], it's different, and it's always a good day.”

“I love being out there. [Name redacted] once told a story when we were talking about how they [fisheries managers] were changing regulations and cutting us back on fishing. And he said, ‘well, if they cut it back to where we have to go out there and fish in a rowboat, you and I would be out there anyhow because we're addicted.’”

“When I got my salmon permit, I was kind of worried about how much fish I was going to catch and how I was going to pay off the boat and whatnot. And [name redacted] said, ‘we'll just go out there and have fun together.’ And that was really great.”

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



**Discussion Summary** Participants felt internal social relationships were very strong in Point Arena compared to other ports because of the established trust, leadership, and ability to work together.

- One participant shared how there is camaraderie and healthy competition among Point Arena fishermen.
  - Another participant suggested that this is likely due to Point Arena being such a small and rural port where fishermen, who are like family, must rely on each other.
  - One participant stated that fishermen will turn to each other for assistance while out on the water before calling others (e.g., U.S. Coast Guard) for help.

**Participant Quotes**

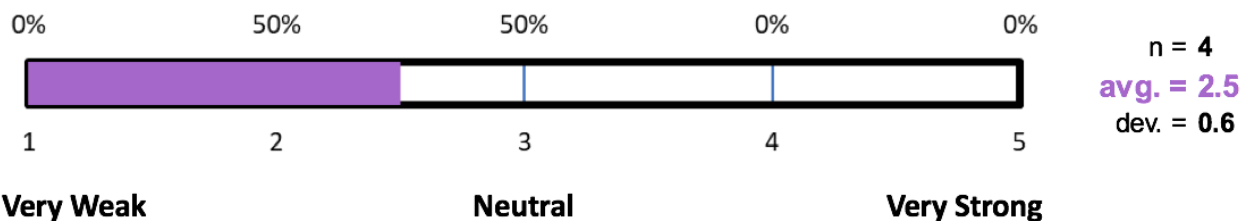
“Even though we perhaps engage in a little bit of friendly, unspoken competition from time to time, the fact is that the rapport amongst the fishermen, by and large, seems to me that it is really great and better than anything I’ve heard about in other ports and other areas.”

“As a fishing community, we [. . .] rely on each other, especially salmon. We’re basically all we have out there when it comes to being so far away from anything.”

“There’s only ten of us down there [who fish out of Point Arena]. We’ve known each other most of our lives, I’ve known [name redacted] since he was born, known his dad for 30 years before that [. . .] We’re all one family.”

“We do help each other out, help each other to catch fish. And if we have a breakdown, [name redacted] said ‘don’t call the Coast Guard, nothing ever good comes of calling the Coast Guard. Just call us. We’ll pull you in.’ And so we tow each other in and try to watch out for each other. [. . .] We’re a long way from the Coast Guard anyway.”

**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** When discussing relationships with external groups, participants reported community support for the fishing community varies and that there is some engagement within the port in policy processes.

- Participants believed the general public supports the fishermen by buying their product at local grocery stores and through direct sales.
- One participant stated Point Arena fishermen have not been able to get grants for infrastructure improvements.
  - Another participant explained they are not getting the help that they need from the broader community in order to make these improvements.
- One participant reported that Point Arena fishermen have been involved in fishermen's organizations and that, most recently, some have joined the California Coast Crab Association (CCCA) following the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) lawsuit regarding whale entanglements and the Dungeness crab fishery.

### Participant Quotes

"We get a lot of help from the public buying our product, [ . . . ] the local grocery stores as well. I chose 'Neutral' just because we don't get much help from outside, but we do get help from the general public selling fish at local markets."

"We have not been able to secure any kind of grants at all, whether it be for infrastructure or any kind of services or improvements."

"We market a lot of fish around here. A lot of people eat a lot of fish from our few boats. And I know it's going to take a community someday to help us with this pier because we can't support the infrastructure with just six or seven boats working over it. But the tax base that the city has tried to grab a hold of - people are not willing to put 15 dollars per parcel up for a vote. So that's where we stand. I don't know where the infrastructure's going to come from, but it's in dire need."

"There are some fishermen's associations that we have been part of in the past. And there's one association that some of us bought into that raises money to fight a lawsuit from the Center for Biological Diversity. But other than that, we really don't belong to any kind of groups or have any support or interaction with other government entities."

### 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 offered several instances where they believe managers could better take into account the needs of the Point Arena fishing community with regard to current fishery regulations and fishermen's need for financial support.

- One participant described the challenges of Point Arena being located right at the line between the Northern and Central Management Areas, which are used as a management tool for the Dungeness crab fishery. Under certain management restrictions, such as delayed openers and/or area closures due to elevated levels of domoic acid or poor quality or whale entanglement issues, Point Arena fishermen are forced to land their catch in other ports (e.g., Fort Bragg). This causes safety issues and additional costs that managers do not consider when management decisions are being made.
- Several participants reiterated the need for greater investment in the port's infrastructure, particularly among local and state government.
  - One participant mentioned that Point Arena fishermen have not received financial support from the state, given that two state MPAs border both the north and south edges of the port. These MPAs require fishermen to travel longer distances to access fishing grounds; they have never received gas tax money from the Department of Boating and Waterways to help compensate for this.
  - Another participant indicated that securing grant money will be critical to support the servicing and maintenance of the pier in the long-term.

### Participant Quotes

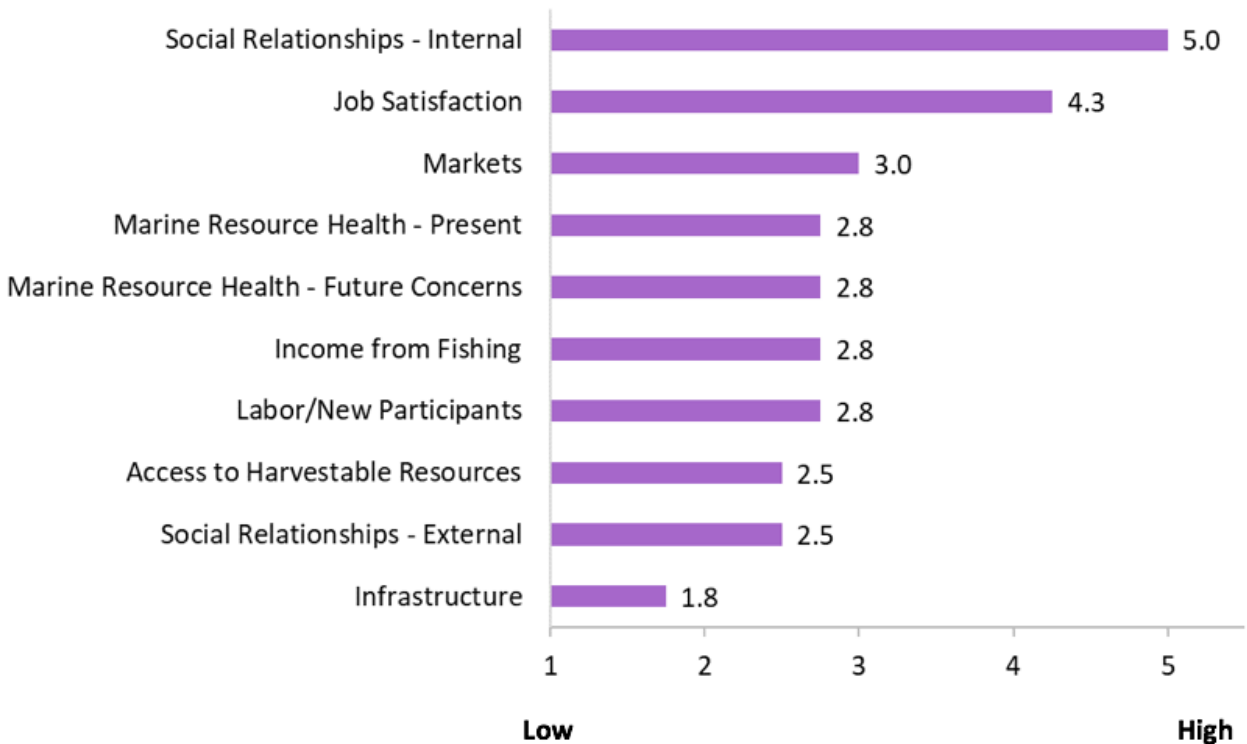
"I don't want to get off on a tangent here, but it seems like there's never a more appropriate time than this to complain about the lack of respect and consideration that we Point Arena fishermen get. We are essentially right on the line and when the [Dungeness crab] season is closed [. . .] north of the Point, frequently they sometimes close it south of the point, [well] we fishermen in Point Arena have somewhat smaller boats. We're not running with 35 to 45 to 50 foot boats. We usually use Farallones, and although those are rather seaworthy boats and are quite capable of going to Fort Bragg in rough weather, you sure wouldn't want to run up to Fort Bragg, and you certainly wouldn't run up to Fort Bragg for just a few things. And so it is very irritating that they have the audacity to tell us that if we catch our fish north of Point Arena, we need to land them north of Point Arena, which only means Fort Bragg. [. . .] That shows that they give zero consideration to the fact that we are located right here on the line."

"I would like to see the state invest a little bit in our infrastructure here, since they've got such a big investment with the two marine reserves on either side of our port. And, you know, we've never even gotten any of the gas tax money from the Department of Boating and Waterways or any of that. We just don't get any kind of help down there at all."

"[It] would be amazing to get more grants to help service the pier and just keep up on the maintenance, because it doesn't seem like it's going to be around much longer if it keeps going the way it's going."

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

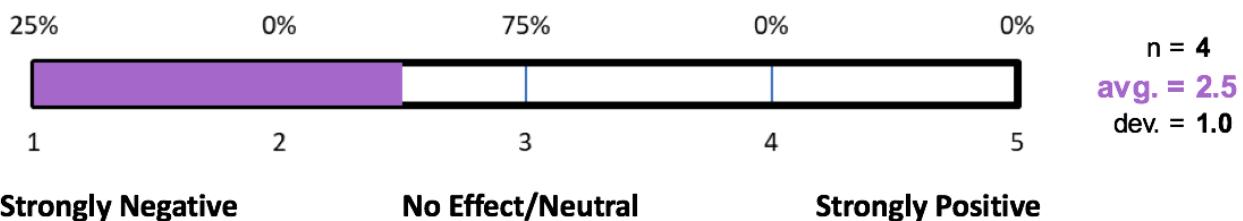
(Note: The following figure does not include the average rating for question 7. *COVID-19 Impacts*.)



## Perceptions of MPAs

### MPAs, Outcomes/Effects

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



**Discussion Summary** Participants, some who have fished the Point Arena area for decades, indicated that the MPAs have had no effect on marine resource health inside or outside the closures.

- One fisherman perceived no noticeable change in rockfish size. Another fisherman questioned why MPAs would be used to protect mobile species like rockfish but added there is the potential for MPAs to help protect sedentary species like abalone and urchin.

- One participant reported the MPAs have led to an increase in fishing pressure in areas that are open to fishing. They believed that overall marine resource health would improve if there were more fishable areas.
- One participant emphasized that although the MPAs have not had an effect on the species fishermen are allowed to target outside of the closures, the MPAs themselves have led to a decrease in fishermen’s overall catch because they can no longer fish those areas.
- One participant cautioned against attributing an increase in offshore quotas to the MPAs, stating that the MPAs likely have nothing to do with increased quotas because the closures are located within state waters.

**Participant Quotes**

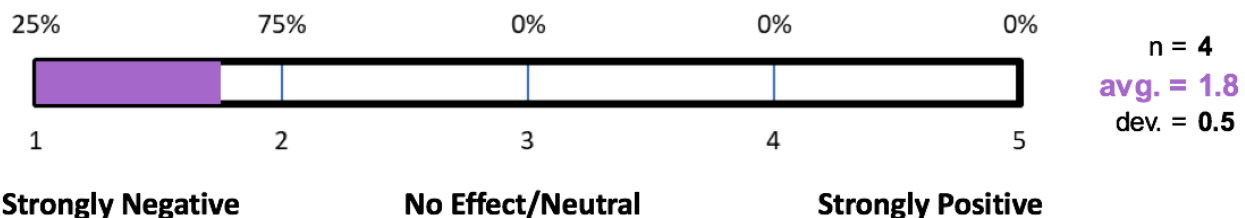
“When we're trolling for salmon, we have a pretty good idea what the rockfish are doing. And over the years with the MPA implemented, I haven't seen any change for bigger fish or more fish. It's been the same. Twenty years ago, there were a lot more rockfish. But since the MPA has been put in there, I've seen no change, no change at all.”

“I could see [how the MPAs could] protect the abalone and the urchins, the things that don't have fins, the things that don't swim out of there, [but] I don't see how such a small area is going to protect much of the rockfish. They seem to swim a lot further than the two and a half mile marine protected area.”

“I'm putting more pressure on the areas I have open as opposed to spreading it out. And I haven't noticed the fishing getting any better since the marine closures went in. It's kind of stayed about the same. I just feel like fishing would get better if [the MPAs] were open because I'd be more spread out as opposed to being forced to fish so close to home.”

“[We’ve] got this rockfish explosion offshore, [and] as far as the quotas are being allowed, it looks like we have seven hundred pounds of lingcod a month for open access, a bunch of canaries, like up to fifteen hundred pounds, four thousand pounds of black cod, all sorts of other rockfish, deeper nearshore, and nearshore live fish, they're up to two thousand pounds for every two months for all year - I don't think that the Point Arena marine reserve was responsible for that. I just don't see a difference. [ . . . ] I don't think that the offshore quotas have really anything to do with the inshore marine reserves right now.”

**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?



**Strongly Negative**                      **No Effect/Neutral**                      **Strongly Positive**

**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** When asked about MPA impacts on fishermen, participants shared several ways in which MPAs have negatively affected fishermen's livelihoods. For a more detailed discussion on effects from specific MPAs, please see the **Discussion Summary** on pages 17 and 18.

- One participant stated that day-to-day participation in the local fishing industry has decreased because fishermen need to travel longer distances to fishing grounds, which increases costs. They added that MPAs are just one of the many fishing restrictions in both state and federal waters that decrease the area available for fishing.
- Another participant detailed the emotional toll of MPAs on fishermen who have to navigate less fishing area. They indicated that MPAs have led to increased crowding in certain areas.
- One participant reported that MPAs closed to salmon trolling have led to a decrease in their total salmon catch because there is less area available for salmon fishing.

**Participant Quotes**

"The MPAs had a really big impact on the amount of users at the pier. I think a lot of the local fishermen, even sports fishermen, think twice now if they want to go fishing. They have to go a lot further. It costs a lot more money. There's other restrictions that overlap the MPAs. You can't really go to the deeper water and catch the fish there."

"When we're fishing north of the Cove, there's a reef directly in front of the Cove, and so we have to go above the reef where we set our lines and we troll up to the MPA line, which is a real short trek, it's maybe two miles before we hit the line and we have to turn around and have to troll back toward the reef. But then you have to turn before you hit the reef. So you're constantly turning, turning, turning, all day long. And if we're doing this for six fish and we're doing 25 turns for six fish, you begin to want to see a psychiatrist at the end of the day, you lose your mind. [. . .] You get up to the line, you've got three guys coming up behind you and you have to turn, you got a fish biting in the middle of the turn, you got to turn too sharp because you got a guy on the outside and inside, you lose the fish, you're ready to throw the guy over there standing next to you. It's horrible. It's absolutely horrible."

"A good bit of the area is cut out [due to MPAs] and unavailable for salmon fishing and, therefore, that cuts down on the total number of fish caught per year."

**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 near Point Arena that have had a negative impact on fishermen from the port. Participants emphasized that between the Point Arena State Marine Reserve (SMR) and the Saunders Reef State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA), Point Arena fishermen were left with very few viable fishing grounds.

- *Point Arena SMR*: Participants stated this MPA is a significant issue for fishermen out of Point

Arena. Since it extends from the Point Arena Lighthouse to Wash Rock to Sea Lion Island, it affects most fishing activity near the port and is one of the restrictions that most inhibits access.

- Participants shared how this MPA is especially impactful because fishermen from Point Arena rarely choose to travel to fishing grounds that are more than 15 miles from the port. Because fishermen choose to stay close to the port, traveling to fishing grounds north of the closure is not a viable option to make up for the area lost to this MPA due to additional costs and safety concerns under poor weather conditions.
  - One participant reiterated that because Point Arena fishermen do not travel far from the port, there were other areas where this MPA could have been placed, like near Sea Ranch, where it would not have led to such negative impacts on fishermen's livelihoods. They believed that this particular area was chosen for an MPA because it is convenient for MPA researchers to access out of Point Arena.
- One participant discussed how there have always been seasonal variations in fishermen's catches, but this MPA continues to lower their annual catch because of the large area it covers. They added how this area was critical for salmon trolling throughout August and September and, as a result, the MPA has led to a significant loss of income.
- Several participants described how the waters near the Point Arena Lighthouse were particularly productive for fishermen from the port, especially for rock cod, sea urchin, and Dungeness crab.
  - One fisherman shared how this MPA covers what were among the best rock cod fishing areas and how it was a favorite place of theirs to fish with a live fish permit.
- Another participant explained how, during the MPA implementation process, this MPA was originally going to be a SMCA that would allow salmon fishing but that it was ultimately designated as an SMR. They did not know how or why this change occurred, but stated that fishermen would have been less affected if this was an SMCA.
  - They also mentioned that during the MPA design process, the proposed boundary line aligned with a road that would have been easily visible from boat or shore. However, this was changed during the process and now fishermen do not have a clear point of reference to identify the MPA boundary.
- *Saunders Reef SMCA*: Participants shared how this MPA closed areas that were productive for rockfishing and that provided protection against strong winds.
  - One participant stated that because this MPA does not allow rockfishing, there are overall less rockfish available for fishermen to access.
  - Another participant shared how fishermen used to rely on this area for weather protection. Now they must travel further to safe fishing grounds in rough weather, which leads to increased safety hazards.
  - One participant noted that this MPA has resulted in a loss of Dungeness crab catches for Point Arena fishermen because it restricts crabbing.
- *Del Mar Landing SMR*: One participant stated that this MPA does not allow rockfishing, but it is also unlikely Point Arena fishermen would travel as far south as this MPA unless the weather was really nice.

## Participant Quotes

“The northern closure [Point Arena SMR], that almost affects everything. That was our best rock cod grounds. I just recently bought my live fish permit, but I've been fishing with my dad since I was six years old. So he's had a live fish permit for almost 30 years. And so that was one of our favorite areas to go. The southern one [Saunders Reef SMCA] too, because that has the first spot where we can get out of a northwest wind when it's blowing hard, at Iverson Landing. And so now if that's blowing hard, we got to go another eight miles to fish rocks to get out of the wind. So that puts us more at risk. The lighthouse was a very special spot [for sea urchins]. It's a very special reef for everything. So sad to see it go.”

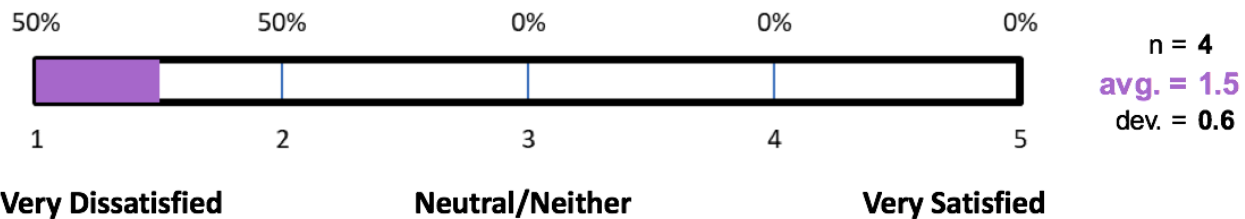
“The zone up around Wash Rock that comes down south almost to Sea Lion Island [the Point Arena SMR] has been one [that's had a negative impact]. At certain times of year, especially in August and September, close to Wash Rock has been the only area where we can catch fish or catch any significant amount of fish.”

“I feel that the northern MPA [Point Arena SMR], the one that goes to the point of Point Arena where the lighthouse is, I think that's the one that's restricting a lot of our access. I was the stakeholder representative there in the process 10 years ago and at first we had this whole area open to salmon fishing. So it was a conservation area [SMCA] that would allow only salmon fishing, there's no bottom contact or anything, and I don't know how it happened, but all of a sudden they changed the rules and they said, 'look, we got to have a reserve there, it can't be a conservation area.' And that's really regretful. [. . .] I also wish they would have stayed with the original boundary lines and those boundary lines were designed to be easy to see from either shore or a boat. And so there's actually a road there, and we decided that was a good boundary line and you could look straight up the road and then you would know that you are on the line. They changed that because that was an uneven number, it's just because somebody thought that that number should have a zero on the back. It doesn't matter to us [fishermen] whether we're reading fifty three and a half or fifty one. But when you're in the middle of fishing, what you're really looking for is something that you can see on shore. And that would have really helped a lot, too.”

“The one at Saunders Reef [the Saunders Reef SMCA], that doesn't allow for rock fishing and that used to be a very popular spot for a lot of sport fishermen. And so, if you're looking at three miles either way of the port, they're all bunched up against the southern border of the northern reserve [the Point Arena SMR] on this one spot. Everybody's fishing there, and so in a way that restricts access too because there's less pounds to go around for rockfish.”

## 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 were dissatisfied with MPA management because of the unfairness toward fishermen, lack of communication of information and decisions, and unclear MPA management goals.

- One participant thought there would be adaptive management following MPA implementation but stated that fishermen are not seeing any kind of management. There was a sentiment that the MPAs were put in place, not actively managed, and left for fishing communities to deal with.
  - Another participant hoped there would be opportunities to adjust MPA designations to better support the local fishing industry, like having the Point Arena SMR be a SMCA to allow for salmon trolling.
- Given that MPAs are located on either side of Point Arena, one participant thought there would be funds available to support infrastructure maintenance since the same facilities that are used for fishing would also be used to launch research vessels for MPA monitoring efforts. However, neither of these came to fruition.
  - One participant reiterated how they do not believe fishermen were considered during the MPA implementation process given that the Point Arena SMR is no longer available for fishing but is easily accessible for MPA monitoring efforts.
- Another participant explained how with a process like MPA implementation, it is difficult to evaluate the costs and benefits, though fishermen often bear the costs while researchers claim MPAs improve resource health.

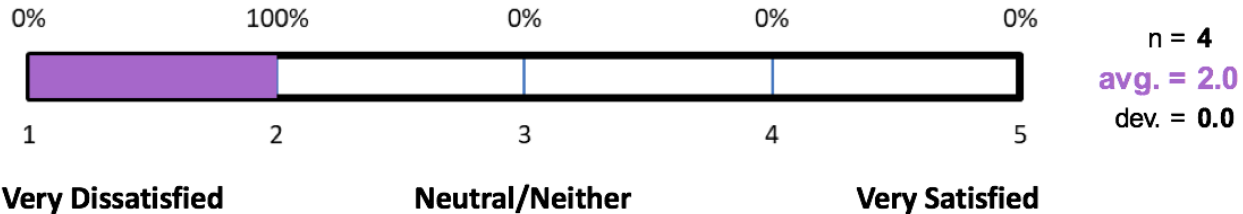
### Participant Quotes

“We were [. . .] naive enough to think that this might be a flexible situation, that there might actually be reactive management, but in fact, it's just like putting a gate in front of it and closing the door and nothing's really happened. [. . .] You think we would get updated on what it looks like in the closures around us. [. . .] They're [the MPAs] just somewhere we can't go. [. . .] I haven't heard anything about them, nothing at all.”

“In the back of my mind, I always thought that since we had two [MPAs] on either side of the port, there would somehow be money available to keep the facility updated and functional so that boats could be launched from Point Arena to study either side of the Cove [for MPA monitoring]. Well, that never really happened.”

“I don't feel good about the whole thing because I know that any time an endeavor like the MPAs is considered, it's sometimes difficult to evaluate or put a monetary value on the costs and the benefits because the costs arise and accrue to us fishermen.”

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



**Discussion Summary** Participants were dissatisfied with MPA monitoring because they believe it lacks inclusion of fishermen’s perspectives and that there is poor communication of results to fishermen, leading them to believe the MPA network is understudied.

- Several participants indicated there is very little collaboration between MPA researchers and fishermen. One participant believed MPA monitoring efforts would be improved if there were more opportunities for fishermen to be involved because of the data they have collected over the years by way of fishing and spending so much time on the water.
- One participant shared they would be in favor of the MPA network if studies show that MPAs are improving marine resource health, but because they believe MPAs are understudied, they cannot say whether the MPAs are working.
  - They reported seeing MPA monitoring in the past, but think these monitoring efforts should be increased. They gave an example of divers using GoPros with GPS to perform sea urchin counts in Oregon, and suggested something similar be incorporated into MPA monitoring in California that also encourages local fishermen to get involved.
- One participant was skeptical that researchers have been able to follow through on their research proposals related to MPA monitoring given that they have yet to see MPA study results.

**Participant Quotes**

“I just kind of feel like it's [MPA monitoring] non-existent. The interaction with the fishermen and the passing on of knowledge, I don't see [that included in] the monitoring. I don't think it's really a good process.”

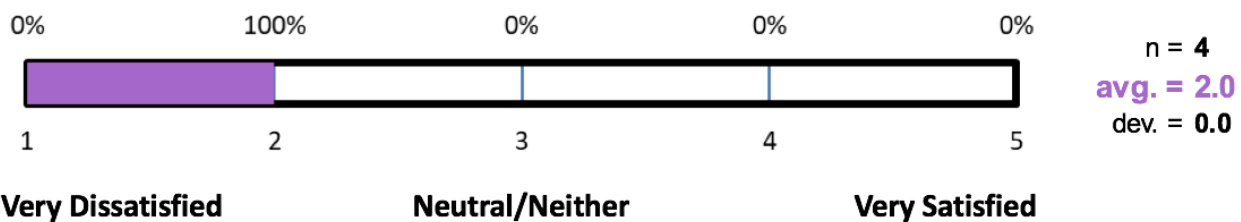
“I think it would be pretty easy for us to make a case that we fishermen have the best data on the efficacy of the MPAs and that we have years and years of data of catching fish in surrounding areas and the fact that we don't see any improvement in [resource health should be considered].”

“I wish I could see it [MPA monitoring results], I'm all for it [the MPA network] if it would work. I also feel that it's way understudied. I got to give Humboldt credit - they do get out there and check it out. There's Reef Check that, a lot of times, they arrive and the weather is not so good. The visibility is not so good [so they won't go out and do MPA monitoring]. I'd also like to see [methods] like in Port Orford up in Oregon, in the Port Orford Reef, they actually have the urchin

divers go in with GoPros and they're able to put a GPS signal on the GoPro and have them count species underwater live. So I'd like to see something like that that would involve some of the local folks, get them involved in the process.”

“In my side job as a professor, I had occasion to write [and review] a lot of research proposals, so I'm in a pretty good position to recognize a research boondoggle when I see one, and this sort of strikes me as that. Even though the researchers may well have had pretty good intentions to start with, I can't believe that they've really followed through on those very well.”

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



**Discussion Summary** Overall, participants were dissatisfied with the methods used for MPA enforcement.

- One participant reported there is little to no fishing activity occurring inside the MPAs. When needed, local enforcement is often self-imposed among fishermen. People know not to fish in the closures, and the boundary lines are shown on their GPS.
- Several participants believed when there is official enforcement by local wardens, warnings to not fish in the MPAs and clear MPA signage should be used in place of gear and catch confiscations, which they believe are counterproductive to MPA goals of protecting marine resources.

**Participant Quotes**

“Every once in a while, you'll see a stray crabber go through a closure and they'll get in trouble, but people mostly know to stay out of them because it's on our GPS and everything these days. People know, and so you don't see too much activity in them. I think enforcement has been mostly self-imposed. Every once in a while, someone thinks that they see a Fish and Wildlife person over on shore that might be looking to see whether or not they're across the line. But for the most part, it's pretty well self-regulated. In the beginning, we were disappointed about the lack of enforcement because the local game wardens basically told us that there wasn't going to be anything they'd do about it. So that was kind of a disappointment. It's mainly ourselves, we're not being controlled or anything here. There's no patrols.”

“There have been times when people [from out of town] come and string their crab pots and get into trouble [because] some of the local people turned them into the Department of Fish and [Wildlife]. [ . . . ] Instead of going immediately [to] the boat and telling them to move their gear out of there, [Fish and Wildlife] proceeded with an investigation and then full confiscation of gear, confiscation of all the crab on the boat, which is way above and beyond. They ended up taking all the crab out of the MPA anyway, which didn't help the local fleet. All the little boats here, we just fish along the edges and scratch out what comes crawling out of the MPA,

whereas a big boat can go in there in two weeks time and catch 10, 20 thousand pounds and march away before enforcement even comes because enforcement won't even come if the weather's blowing 20 knots, they only come when the weather's nice."

"I've seen enforcement going after sport guys in the MPA down off of Saunders Reef where guys are out diving, spearfishing type diving, and a Fish and [Wildlife] warden's hiding in the bushes trying to get a bust when he could just go down to the edge of the shore and tell them to stop diving and that they're in a marine protected area. And how about putting a sign up on the shore so that some poor fool doesn't go down and go diving? [ . . . ] If they really want to protect the resource, protect the MPA, you think you'd just go down immediately when you see them and tell them to move, call them on the radio - the guy would've moved his gear. [The warden] didn't have to go after him and try to put him out of business. I've seen them go down and confiscate all the sport guy's dive equipment and the [warden] could have walked down, yelled at them in the water and told him to get out of there."

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

**Discussion Summary** A couple of participants reported that they would like to see MPA restrictions changed, particularly the Point Arena SMR to an SMCA to allow salmon trolling as well as sea urchin harvesting to prevent urchin barrens.

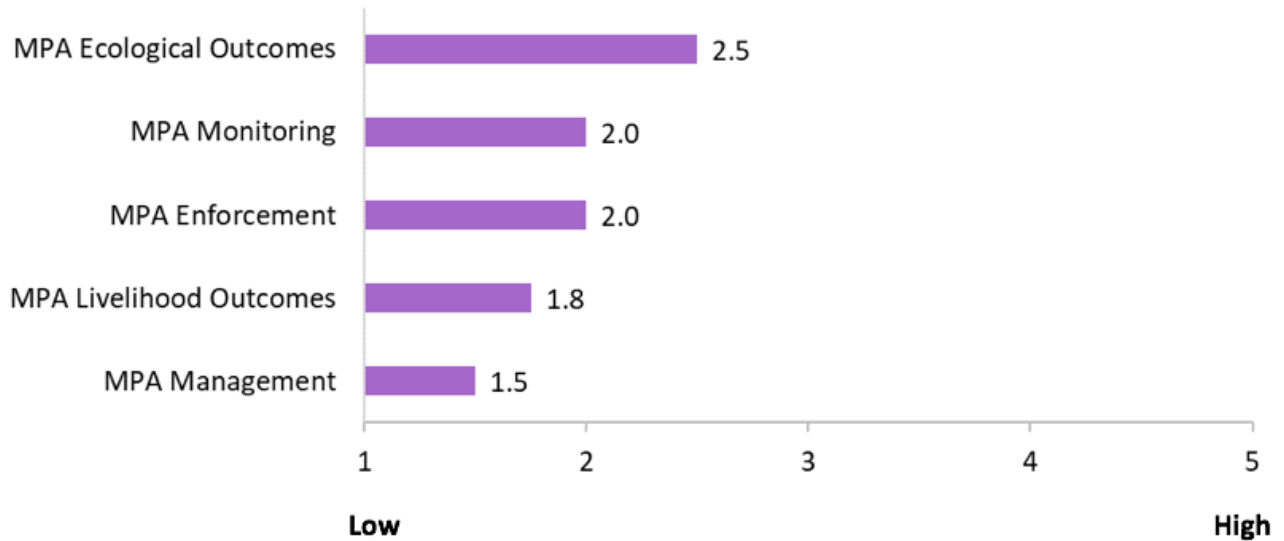
#### **Participant Quotes**

"I just hope for some change [ . . . ] and that we can actually fish them [MPAs] maybe or fish certain things in them [at some point]."

"I'm hoping that they can reassign the marine reserve [Point Arena SMR] to a marine conservation area [SMCA]. If the biologists think that it would be helpful to take a certain amount of urchins out of there so it wouldn't turn into an urchin barren, [an SMCA designation would] allow for more management."

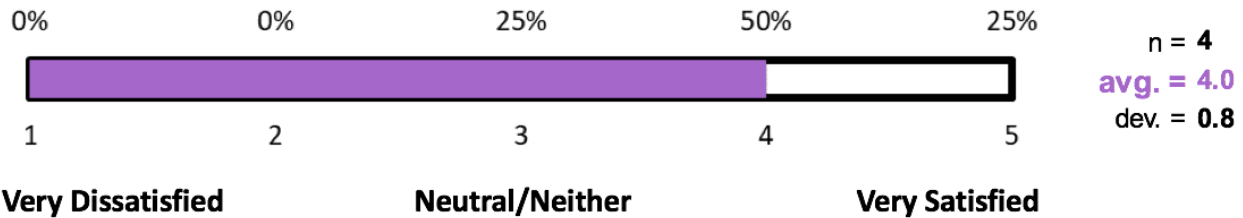


### Perceptions of MPAs, Average Responses for Questions 13-14a, 16-18



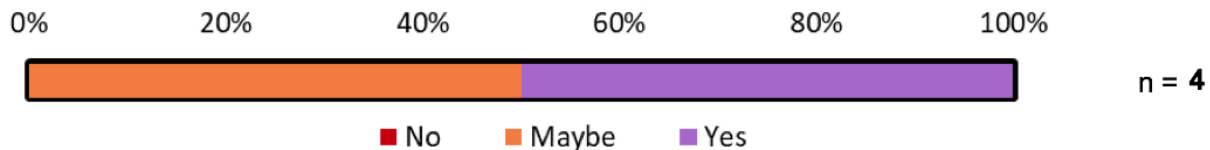
### Feedback on Virtual Process

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



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

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





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

**Discussion Summary** One participant appreciated the opportunity to comment on the MPAs several years after they were involved in the MPA implementation process. Another participant stated that they would be satisfied with their experience participating in the focus group if managers considered and applied what they shared to MPA decision making.

**Participant Quotes**

“I think it's really great that we have an opportunity to look at it [the MPA network] ten years later and are able to give our input.”

“The experience would be great if we can see something happen from it. It'd be worth it to do it every year, but I guess we'll have to wait and see.”