

## 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 Los Angeles/Long Beach Area's Commercial Fishing Community*

The Marine Protected Area (MPA) Human Uses Project Team<sup>1</sup> is hosting over 30 virtual focus group conversations with fishermen throughout California from July 2020 to February 2021. 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 Group: Los Angeles/Long Beach Area Ports**

**Date: Friday, September 4, 2020**

**Participants: Josh Fisher, Terry Herzik, Craig Jacobs, Jonathan Niksic, Kenny Swanson, one anonymous participant**

#### **Overview**

On September 4, 2020, six commercial fishermen operating out of the Los Angeles/Long Beach area participated in the fourth focus group conversation. A high-level summary of the conversation is captured below, including:

- the numerical final scores (via Zoom polls) for questions asked within each theme;

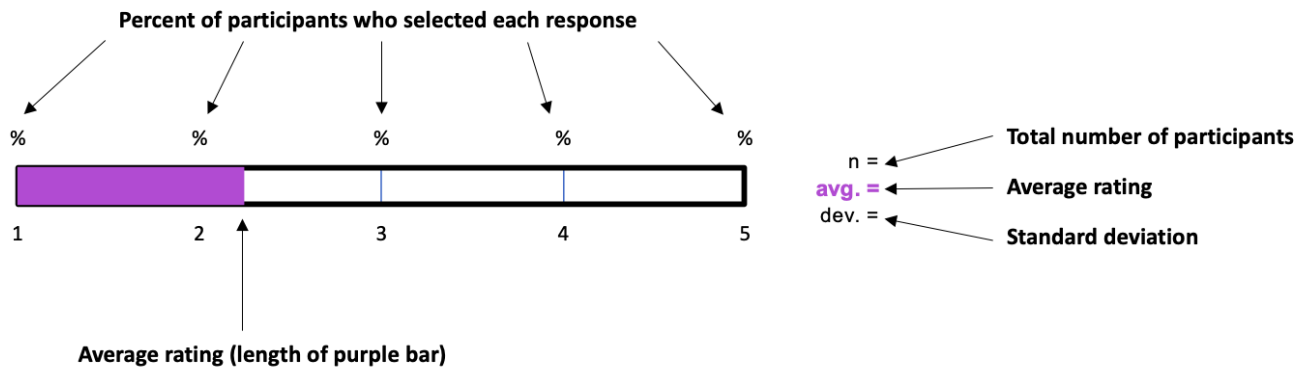
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<sup>1</sup> Consisting of Humboldt State University researchers, Ecotrust, and Strategic Earth Consulting

- a summary of participant’s 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 16 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 18 that display all of the average responses for each question in the well-being and MPA sections, respectively, from highest to lowest.



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

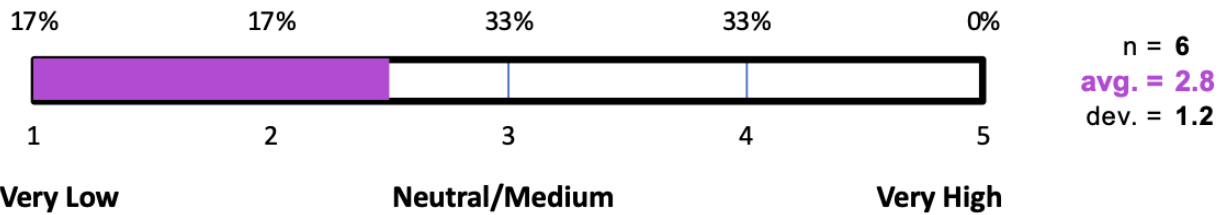
- [California Fisheries Data Explorer](#): This interactive site allows users to visualize commercial landings data (i.e., number of fishermen, pounds of fish landed, and revenue from fish landed) and CPFV logbook data (i.e., number of anglers, vessels, trips, and fish caught from specific fisheries and ports).
- [MPA Baseline Monitoring Program: South Coast](#)
  - [Summary of Findings from Baseline Monitoring of Marine Protected Areas, 2011-2015, South Coast](#)

Our Project Team would like to express our appreciation to the six Los Angeles/Long Beach area fishermen—Josh Fisher, Terry Herzik, Craig Jacobs, Jonathan Niksic, Kenny Swanson, and one anonymous participant—for their time and contributions to the focus group conversation.

## Perceptions of Fishing Community Well-being

### Well-Being, Environmental

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



**Discussion Summary** In terms of the current health and sustainability of marine resources, fishermen from the Los Angeles/Long Beach area reported that some species are doing well, while others are not.

- One fisherman believed marine resources are and will remain healthy. They explained how the abundance of lobsters naturally fluctuates from year to year, and described how California sheephead abundance is very high.
- One participant described how kelp growth and biomass cycles through time, and that kelp continuously regrows after periods when there is none, such as during El Niño events.
- Several participants expressed concern about sea urchin populations, especially around San Clemente, Santa Barbara, and Catalina Islands and off the coast of Los Angeles.
  - One participant attributed low sea urchin population numbers to effects from climate change.
  - Another participant cited more sea urchin fishermen diving in smaller areas due to compaction from area closures elsewhere as an additional factor. They added that fishermen are diving deeper and harvesting larger sea urchins.
- One fisherman described concerns that the sea cucumber fishery is close to collapsing.

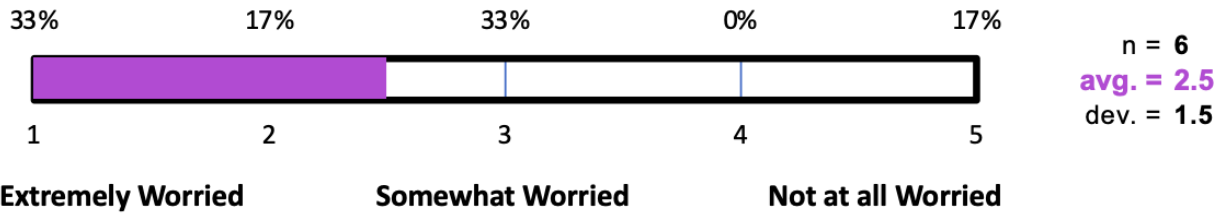
**Participant Quotes**

“With lobster, every year is different. You can have a couple pretty bad years and then have one that they keep coming and you go out the next day saying ‘there's no way I'm going to catch today’ and it's even better. You know, so I'm not worried. I've been doing this a long time and I'm not worried.”

“The urchin stock, especially the little on the Los Angeles coast area, has been hit really hard for reasons of closed areas; they took away part of our fishing areas and then other possible [areas] that have caused other boats to migrate south from Santa Barbara and up - coming down and work in our areas and decimating some of the areas that I don't think will come back. So that's a big worry and concern.”

“Regarding the sea cucumber fishery, I made concerns known to the Department of Fish and Wildlife in 2008 when we had a big spike in price with the China Olympics coming on. I could see right away we were going to get into trouble. And I suggested a moratorium on transferability but they said they would review it in 2010 and I went back to them in 2012 and nothing happened. And now the sea cucumber fishery is going the same way as every sea cucumber fishery globally.”

**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 reflecting on the future or long-term health of marine resources, participants expressed worry about certain species, and also expressed concerns about the management of the resources.

- One fisherman explained how they are more worried about the lack of management than they are about the resources themselves.
- Several participants highlighted that with no recruitment or reintroduction of sea urchins, the fishery will be gone in the Los Angeles/Long Beach area.

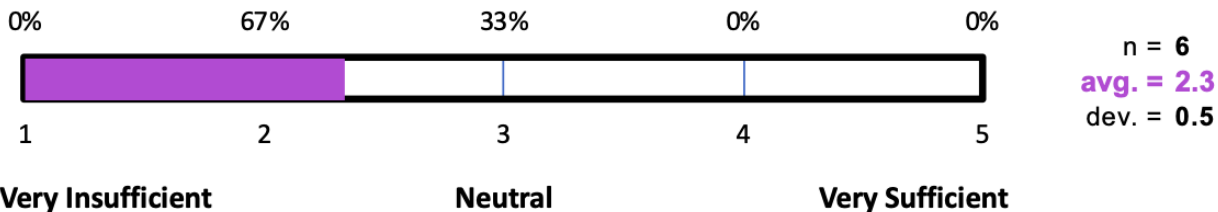
**Participant Quotes**

“I had the ‘somewhat worried’ and it's basically from the management standpoint - we don't believe that the management is even there.”

“Where there's not enough urchins to replenish, that's my concern, because once it's gone, it's hard to reintroduce urchins to kelp beds, and the big fight for us, even if we wanted to do that - to create urchin farms and grow them - the state and everybody else, they're happy the urchins are gone, they want to protect the kelp beds. So that's a concern there. There's not much hope that I can see for any major improvement in the industry.”

**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 expressed that fishermen in their area have a poor level of access to commercial fish resources.

- One participant emphasized how fishermen generally cannot access marine resources as a result of restrictions, even though the targeted species are abundant.
  - Several fishermen discussed the difficulty associated with accessing both lobster and rock crab because they are not allowed to combine multiple fisheries in a single trip.
  - One participant highlighted the lack of access to rock crab, especially for newer fishermen, due to the limited availability of permits.

- One fisherman explained how they are unable to obtain a permit for the experimental box crab fishery because of the limited number of permits available.
- One fisherman communicated their frustration with the permitting system, specifically that in some fisheries, like sea urchin, fishermen are unable to transfer, sell, or purchase permits.
- One fisherman recounted how their live fish permit was revoked because they did not make landings during the time period they were supposed to, and now they can no longer access the fishery to supplement their landings.

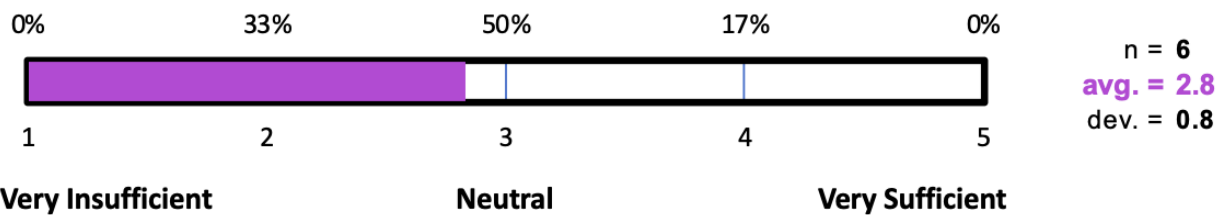
**Participant Quotes**

“I believe the pounds are there but you don't have access to fisheries to catch those pounds so it's kind of a double-edged sword.”

“[I have] difficulty with multiple fisheries because they don't let you combine. I fish offshore and I can't combine crab and lobster anymore because of the trap tags needed. You're only allowed 300 traps. So some people were like 'well, I'm just going to put a bunch of crab gear out there and fish lobster with it. It kind of sucks, especially if you fish offshore because you got to run a long ways. And we used to combine one trip into two fisheries.”

“I had a live fish permit, but I always kept it in my back pocket because I knew I wouldn't be that productive diving when I'm 80 years old and that's five years away from now. But during the window that you were supposed to make landings, I did not have a landing and so they [. . .] took the permit away from me. And now, perhaps I could be doing that too for whatever period that the fishery's open.”

**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** When discussing income from fishing, participants communicated the need for fishermen from their area to have multiple sources of income to support their livelihoods.

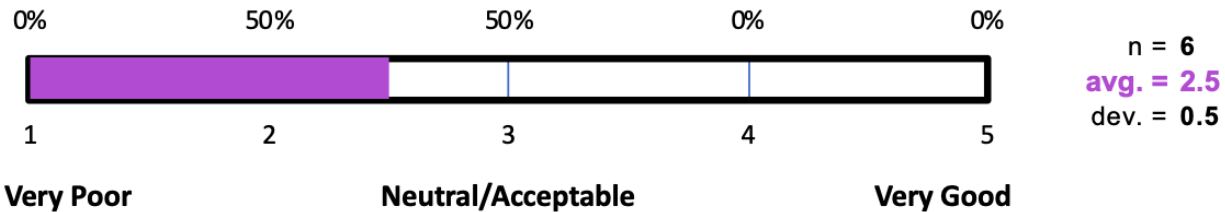
- Several fishermen explained how they have other jobs in addition to fishing. One participant's spouse helps to supplement their family's income.
- One participant mentioned if they did not have a second income, they would not be able to afford the permits they need.
- One fisherman related the inability of sea urchin divers to earn sufficient income from diving alone to the poor state of the fishery.

**Participant Quotes**

“I have a second source of income. So for me, honestly, if I didn't have that job, I probably wouldn't have been able to get into the fishery because permits are too expensive.”

“The urchin business I think [is] beyond return. The income is obviously not going to be sufficient for any of us to survive unless you're one of those 30 year old guys that are diving at 140 feet which, you know, we're all too old to do that, too smart to do that.”

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



**Discussion Summary** When discussing markets, participants noted areas for improvement in local and direct marketing and the challenges associated with international markets.

- Several participants explained how some fishermen have had success with direct marketing and selling to local markets, while others have not. Several fishermen mentioned how direct marketing can be time consuming.
- One participant discussed how the sea urchin fishery will likely need to turn to direct marketing because there is not enough abundance to supply processors. One fisherman added if they do not bring in large loads, they are unable to deliver to standard processors.
  - Another participant recounted how they used to sell sea urchins locally at the fish market, then they tried to sell off their boat, but now they do not have many marketing opportunities.
- One participant reported that because of U.S. tariffs on domestic products, the price fishermen receive from international markets for California spiny lobster, for example, is lower than what fishermen from Mexico are paid for the same product.

**Participant Quotes**

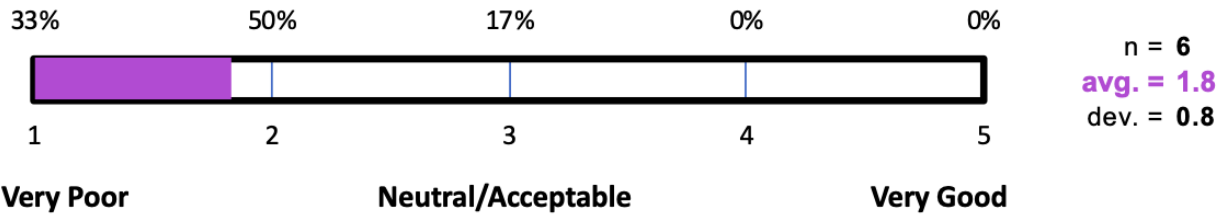
“I kind of jumped on the bandwagon [with] direct marketing last year and I had some success with it. I know some fishermen that have tried it in the past and haven't had success with it. And then some fishermen sell to local markets and they have a good relationship and things work out well for them. So, but I think it could always be better.”

“I went with poor because I'm not a big fan of, although I'm good at it, direct marketing. I'd rather fish and it takes away a lot of fishing time.”

“Talking with my processors, one of them said he doesn't have much hope for the sea urchin fishery five or ten years down the line. The level of decline is very steep. Eventually, they're going to drop out and the guys that direct market will be able to probably sustain a living because they work on quality and not on volume.”

“We take a huge hit overseas. I mean, we're tariffed 52% where Mexico is nothing [. . .] so the tariffs kill us [. . .] they get an astronomical price for their lobsters where we get, you know, nothing compared to what we used to get.”

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



**Discussion Summary** Related to infrastructure, participants discussed the lack of available infrastructure and services to support fishing needs.

- Several participants described the difficulty associated with obtaining ice, and attributed this to new fish companies buying most of the infrastructure in the Los Angeles harbor.
- Several participants explained how most services to support fishing are not available at Fish Harbor. One fisherman noted how this is indicative of the lack of local investment in the commercial fishing industry.

**Participant Quotes**

“I've been able to make things happen in LA harbor, but it's not like it's that easy. For a while, we had ice available from one fish company and we had to purchase it, but since then that's gone away. And a lot of the fish companies reorganized or sold [or got] new owners. I established personal relationships with other fish companies and they've been able to supply me for ice, but it's a process where I can't just go up any time of day or night and get it.”

“Well, I'll speak in terms of Fish Harbor. Those of us that tie up there, we choose to tie up there. So the amount of money we pay is reflective of the amount of services we're given. But we don't have other options like Santa Barbara, for example, has hoists, they have ice [ . . . ] but I don't see that anywhere else in LA, Redondo doesn't have that, Long Beach doesn't have that, I mean, nobody does. So in terms of LA, and I'll speak to Orange County as well, people don't view [the fishing industry] as positive and I think a lot of that has to do with the state [of California]. The state is not looking to enhance the commercial fisheries, they're looking to make the fisheries die a slow death.”

**COVID-19 Impacts**

**Discussion Summary** Participants recounted the effect the COVID-19 pandemic has had on fishermen in the Los Angeles/Long Beach area.

- One participant explained how fishermen started to experience effects from the pandemic in January when lobster prices dropped.
  - Another fisherman commented on the uncertainty of the upcoming lobster season and wondered whether people will want to buy their product.
- Another participant shared how there was almost no demand for sea urchins when restaurants began to close in March due to COVID-19.
- One fisherman explained how COVID-19 has affected their fishing operations, as they fish on overnight trips, and are reluctant to be in close contact with crew in a small space for too long due to risks associated with COVID-19.

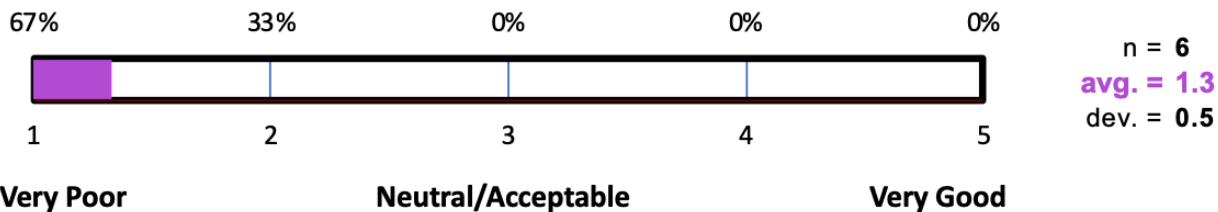
### Participant Quotes

“At the end of February, things dropped dramatically. My processor suggested I do something else, otherwise we were just going to roll the dice for the auction market in Tokyo. The domestic markets just completely collapsed with no restaurants serving the fresh urchin.”

“At the beginning of this [year’s lobster] season, I don't know how that's going to [happen]. A lot of people haven't worked this whole summer now, so are those same people that I sold to at the end of last season, [when] the economics hadn't hit them yet, [are they] going to be there [to buy our lobster]? I don't know, and I won't know until our season starts.”

### Well-Being, Social/Political

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



**Discussion Summary** When discussing labor, participants indicated recruitment and retention of participants in the commercial fishing industry was poor.

- Several participants described how there are few fishermen entering the industry, and those who do enter choose not to stay for very long. They explained one reason for this being the lack of available and affordable permits.
- One fisherman mentioned how some entrants do not have prior fishing experience, and that those individuals tend to not stay in the industry.

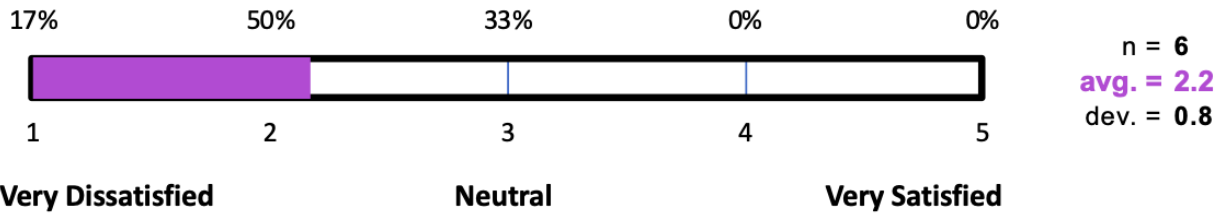
### Participant Quotes

“I don't feel like there's anybody really behind us ready to take these fisheries over. There [aren't] young adults that are in the fisheries that work their way up to eventually own their own business and continue the cycle. It's cost prohibitive [. . .] but it's also access - there isn't a lot of fisheries to get into.”

“There aren't that many people that have a certain amount of integrity when they get out there and they're inexperienced coming into your area. That was an issue, a big issue in the past. Most of those guys don't last long in the business.”



**8. 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 explained how fishermen are more dissatisfied with the regulations and management that come with being a fisherman than with fishing itself.

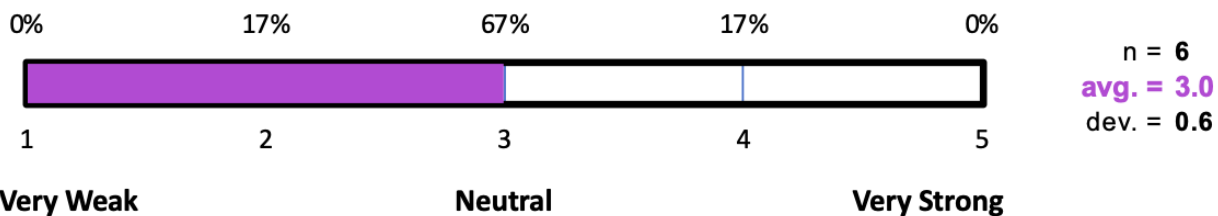
- Several participants highlighted how being a fisherman used to be exciting, and while they still enjoy it, the negatives tend to outweigh the positives.

**Participant Quotes**

“On the job satisfaction, I have to say there's a huge range. When fisheries were newer many years ago [they were] exciting. And I don't want to say that I don't have a lot of gratitude. I do have a lot of gratitude for the life I've lived on the ocean. It's been terrific, but I would not like to be a kid now trying to make a living here unless [there was] some kind of transferability thing where my grandfather or my father could supply me with multiple permits or something in the family, that kind of thing, because one permit, two permits don't make it anymore.”

“I would say everybody's probably dissatisfied. It's not from the actual fishing or the job itself, but more from just the pressures, the outside pressures, other than fishing, whether it be management [or] the environmental groups that are constantly chopping away at us with their crazy ideas and just things like that. When I started, the biggest [concern] you had was ‘is the weather going to be bad today’ or ‘how's fishing going to be.’ Now we have to worry about thieves because of changes in management. It's just not the same anymore. I mean, the fishing part of it I still enjoy. But all the other crap involved with it has just taken all that away from it.”

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



**Discussion Summary** Overall, participants reported they felt social relationships among fishermen within the Los Angeles/Long Beach area were neither strong nor weak but that, overall, fishermen tend to get along with each other.

- Several participants explained how they tend to communicate more and have stronger relationships with fishermen they know, and that they don't often communicate or socialize with fishermen outside their immediate social circles.

- One participant added how fishermen generally look out for each other, but that the sense of camaraderie is not as strong as it once was.
- One participant noted how they know there are fishermen they can count on when needed.

**Participant Quotes**

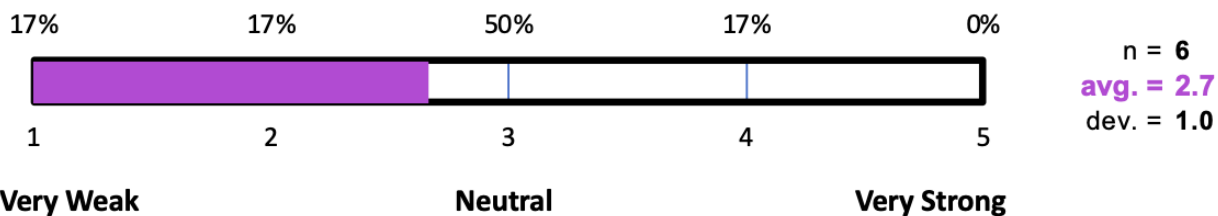
“I trust the guys [in this focus group], but there's some that I don't. And there's [some we] will pull up and shoot the crap every once in a while and laugh and that kind of thing, but it's just a select few.”

“For me, it would be neutral because some guys get along, some guys don't. So it's kind of an in the middle thing.”

“I feel things have changed in Fish Harbor over the last few years where we've lost a lot of boats. They've moved to different ports or they've retired or some of them have died and we're just gone. So the new guys that come in from the North, I've known some of them. I've known some of their fathers even and we have respect for each other, but I don't socialize with anybody down there at the harbor. But in terms of just getting together, things have changed. We used to raft up in harbors at various islands and have a drink together in the evening or have coffee and talk over the latest whatever all the time, but that kind of relationship has just drifted away.”

“[Name redacted] is one of the few people I respect but I hardly ever see him maybe once every five years, we'll connect somehow or chat. And I would trust him implicitly. When you're out at Catalina or San Clemente island and you lost your anchor and you're adrift and the engine stalls [name redacted] is going to be there to drop it and come over and get you. That's what I miss. I miss that a great deal.”

**10. Social Relationships - External Overall, how would you rate the strength of the port's relationship with external groups who could help support community needs?**



**Discussion Summary** Participants indicated that few fishermen are involved in policy processes and have relationships with government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and that they feel there is little community support for the fishing industry.

- Several participants identified one fisherman who has fostered relationships with groups outside the fishing community over time and to whom they go to for information.
- One fisherman explained how they are involved in policy processes to stay informed. They think fishermen are starting to be heard in management decisions, but that this has not been the case for a while.
- Another participant compared the community support they perceive East Coast fisheries to receive with the lack of community support for California fisheries.

## Participant Quotes

“For me, [external relationships are] very strong because I have the ability to reach people in different facets, especially as it pertains to the state or management and so on. Also with the NGOs, I have those relationships because of the MPA process years ago and I've maintained them, good or bad, but [others] don't have the same relationships with all the folks.”

“I also am involved with environmental groups and I've always felt like it's to my benefit to participate when I'm asked. And with management, for instance, in the sea cucumber fishery [. . .] I'm starting to see something where the fishermen's input is respected and listened to and before they said ‘yes, we hear you’ but then ignored everything in terms of what kind of management techniques they decided to impose on us. So that part has been discouraging, but I see hope in the sea cucumber fishery, but too little too late.”

“I get the perspective from traveling to Boston a few years back and seeing the East Coast and how the fisheries are treated there and the facilities they have for the fisheries, it's a whole other world. I mean, you come back here and you just feel like nobody cares. You know, we're bottom of the barrel.”

## Well-Being, Overall/Additional Comments

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

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

**Discussion Summary** Participants shared the following comments and suggestions they would like state managers to know about their fishing community:

- Participants said they believed the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) does not effectively manage fisheries, and could do more to support fishing communities.
  - Participants described how CDFW's opposition to permit transferability, especially for the sea urchin fishery, demonstrates poor management. One participant suggested that CDFW allow two-for-one permits in the sea urchin fishery, similar to the nearshore fishery. Another participant explained how the inconsistency across fisheries in the ability to transfer permits makes it difficult for fishermen to plan for the future.
  - One participant emphasized how fishermen are often shut down when they make suggestions they believe would help to improve fisheries management.
  - Participants communicated the belief that their participation in this and other studies will not change fisheries management. They stated they would like to see CDFW take action based on their suggestions, and described the continuous cycle of discussing the same things every couple of years without seeing any results.
    - Participants shared that they feel managers are simply ‘checking a box’ each time they ask fishermen to participate in studies.

- One participant expressed frustration associated with agency staff turnover, and said this requires fishermen to repeat the same conversations each time new agency staff members approach them.
- One participant explained how timing restrictions on the sea urchin fishery create unsafe incentives which force divers to fish even when the weather is bad because they do not want to miss a whole week when the fishery is open.
- One participant mentioned how they believe the Fish and Game Commission (FGC) does not follow through on tasks in a timely manner.

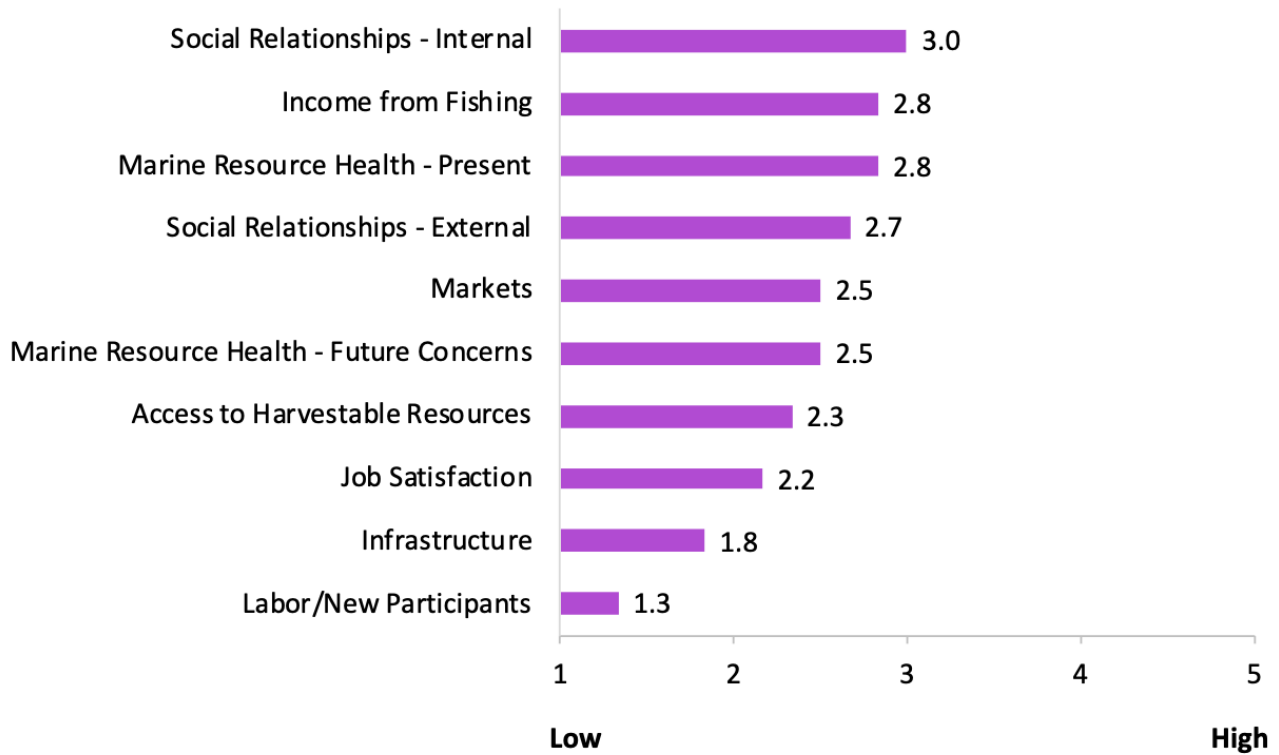
### **Participant Quotes**

“At the state level, in CDFW, there’s great disdain for transferability. It’s really sad that some of those decision makers at the top absolutely [limit] our ability to transfer our permits, and the dollar amount we get for said permits is based upon markets, [. . .] and all the fisheries are managed differently in terms of transferability. Some have a clause to retain their permit for two years, they’re all different, [but] it all goes back to the same thing - poor management, lack of management, lack of support.”

“Well a good thing would be to actually see action on some of the stuff that we discuss. That’s kind of the rub - we see discussions and we don’t see any action. And then we discuss the same thing three or four years later [. . .] Nothing ever gets done. Honestly, by the time I’m done fishing, there probably won’t be a fishery the way I see things trending, and not because of the [fish] stocks or anything. We’re gonna get regulated out.”

“I’m not satisfied with what the managers have been charged with doing. Some of the points that were very important to me in my [sea urchin] fishery were dismissed or just sloughed off.”

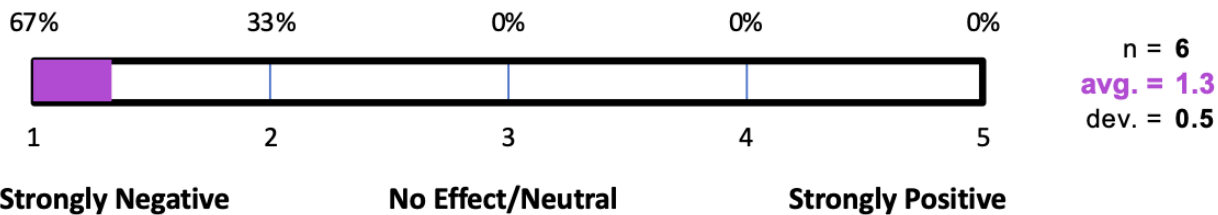
## Perceptions of Fishing Community Well-being, Average Responses for Questions 1-10



## Perceptions of MPAs

### MPAs, Outcomes/Effects

**12. 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** When asked about ecological outcomes from the MPA network, participants reported how the MPAs have had more negative than positive impacts on the health of marine resources.

- Several fishermen described seeing more kelp further away from MPA boundaries than inside the MPAs. They attributed this to the restrictions on sea urchin harvesting in the MPAs.
- One fisherman believed there has been no spillover of sea urchins from the MPAs, and that the MPAs have put more fishing pressure on sea urchins outside the MPAs.

- One participant suggested that California sheephead have benefited from the MPAs, but have had negative impacts on other resources because they prey on sea urchins, which reduces their spawning potential, and lobsters.
- Several participants emphasized they cannot be certain on what is happening inside versus outside MPAs without research to provide this information.

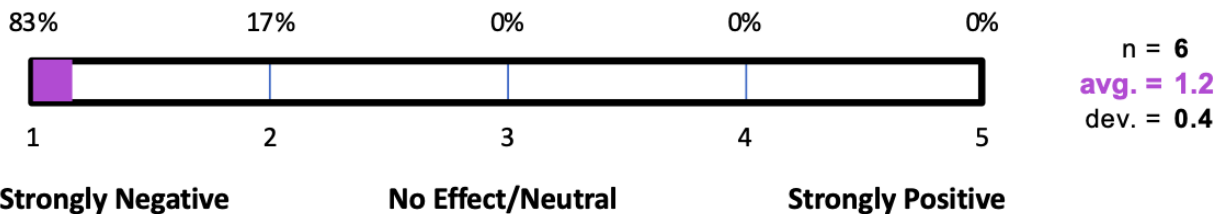
**Participant Quotes**

“I remember back to [before the MPAs were implemented] all the kelp that was there. It was so thick you could hardly even drive through [ . . . ] That was the last year I've seen it that thick in there. Over time, it's never grown back in there and even on our northern MPA line the kelp is not like it used to be.”

“I don't see a spillover effect in the urchin fishery - they move, but they move slow, they're not going to, like, crawl out [of the MPAs].”

“I answered neutral because I don't know what the MPAs are doing or what they've done. I really don't. There's no study on them. We have no idea what's going on inside of them.”

**13a. MPA Livelihood Outcomes** Overall, how would you rate the effect that the MPA network has had on the ability for fishermen from your port to earn a living/gain income from fishing?



**Discussion Summary** Please see the **Discussion Summary** following question 13b. *MPA Effects - Overall* which summarizes the conversations related to questions 13a and 13b.

**13b. MPA Effects - Overall** What other types of effects or impacts have fishermen from your port experienced from MPA implementation?

**Discussion Summary** Participants detailed the negative effects MPAs have had on fishermen in the Los Angeles/Long Beach area.

- One participant explained how fishermen have been displaced from their traditional fishing grounds, resulting in compaction outside MPAs, especially for the lobster fishery.
- Several participants described how the MPAs took away safe fishing areas for sea urchin divers, who are now forced to dive in more dangerous areas.
- One participant described an economic impact of MPAs on fishermen where fishermen must now use more fuel to drive around MPAs and fish in areas where their catches are reduced compared to their former fishing grounds.
- One participant commented that fishermen need to fish further and dive deeper due to the MPAs, but that they have adapted to these circumstances.
- One fisherman recounted how the MPA implementation process encouraged fishermen to engage politically and attend more meetings than they would otherwise.

### Participant Quotes

"It's hard to explain, outside of the MPA, what it's done. I don't even know how to word it, it's crazy, there's so much compaction. It's nuts, but yet we still catch lobsters, you know, I don't think there's any threat to the lobster industry at all. But the MPA has not helped it, a lot more compaction - people fishing where they didn't fish before, including myself, stepping on other people's toes. It's like 'hey, sorry, man. I got shut down. I got to fish here now.'"

"Oftentimes, the MPAs are on the leesides of islands and so where you had a backup plan [before] - [now] you're going out and something blows up and it's gnarly, you can't just say 'oh, well, we'll just go eek out some product over here today, and then maybe it'll be better around the other side tomorrow.' It's not like that. That's permanently closed, we'll never see them open again."

"I think a lot of us have become engaged only because we have to, I mean, obviously we became fishermen for a reason. You know, we don't necessarily like going to meetings and doing this kind of crap, but that's what our life has morphed into and it takes away from what we initially got into fishing for - to go fishing and it's like I said before, you know, it's constant regulation, it's constant this, it's constant that."

### MPAs, Discussion of Specific MPAs

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

**Discussion Summary** Participants emphasized that all of the MPAs have had a negative effect on fishermen who operate out of the Los Angeles/Long Beach area, and explained that it is impossible to say which MPAs are worse than others. Several participants added that the MPAs closest to where fishermen used to fish have resulted in the most negative effects, and that the MPAs have cascading effects on fishing areas further away.

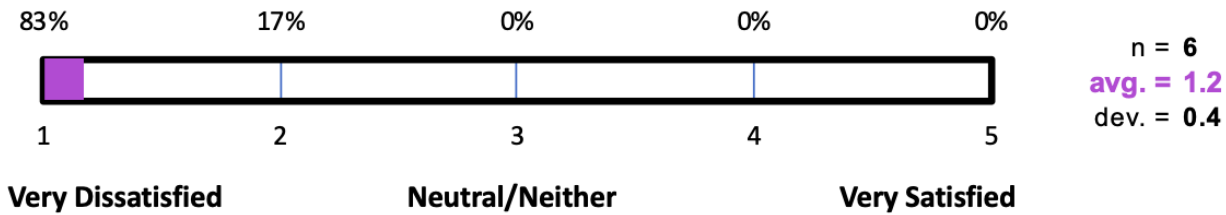
### Participant Quotes

"I think it relates to everybody in the same way. The most important one that affects you is the first one closest to you. And then it's just every one after that down the line and it all affects in the same way. It's all bad."

"They're all tremendously negative on every level. And you can't cite one as being worse than the other because displacement from one puts effort in another location. There is no 'Laguna [Beach State Marine Reserve (SMR)] is worse than Point Vicente [State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA)] or Farnsworth [Offshore SMCA]' - it doesn't matter."

### MPAs, Management

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



**Discussion Summary** Participants expressed anger and frustration with the MPA implementation process and current MPA management.

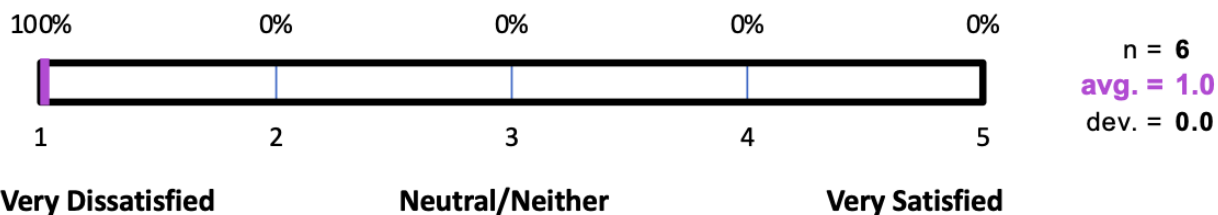
- One participant shared that although local fishermen participated in the MPA implementation process, they were not able to negotiate or communicate their perspectives.
- Another participant expressed frustration about the lack of MPA management, and shared that fishermen were told one thing with regard to the purpose and goals of the MPAs, but have yet to see these goals achieved.

**Participant Quotes**

“There was no ability to negotiate with people [during MPA implementation] because they wanted to close the entire coastline of Laguna Beach to take and [make it] an SMR. And they got almost the entire coastline of the sea at Laguna Beach. They are completely disingenuous in terms of wanting to work with the various fishing communities, and that’s where we’re left right now. I mean, obviously you can tell I’m a little bit heightened by this whole thing. It’s bullshit. It’s complete bullshit, and the fact that we’re talking about it right now and in the conversations that we’ve all had amongst ourselves, that I’ve had with with NGOs, it’s for naught - it truly is.”

“That was the rub about why, you know, a lot of the groups that push this stuff in the MPAs [said] ‘oh yeah, we want to observe and see what’s going on’ and nobody’s doing anything. So it’s like everything else. You know, we were told one thing and another thing happens.”

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



**Discussion Summary** When discussing MPA monitoring, participants described their overall dissatisfaction with past and current monitoring efforts.

- One participant questioned the timing of the baseline monitoring, and noted that monitoring did not start until after MPA implementation in some regions.
- One participant was involved in MPA monitoring, but the majority of participants were not aware of studies or results related to MPA monitoring. Several participants said they would appreciate better communication about monitoring updates and results through email.



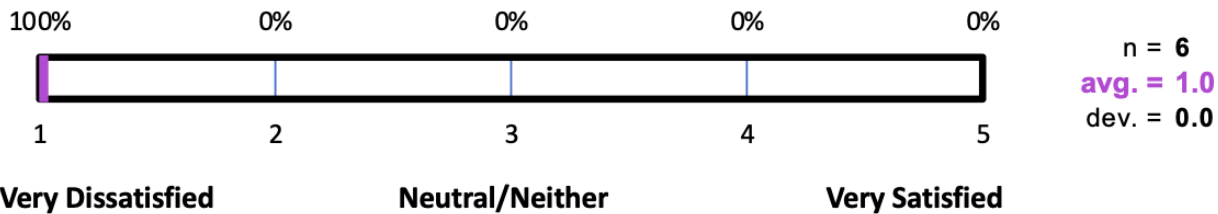
- One participant shared their impression that it seems like MPA managers and state agencies do not care what is happening inside versus outside MPAs.

**Participant Quotes**

“It would have been so easy, if they have done any monitoring or anything, to just send an email and say ‘here’s a link to what we’ve been doing’ to all the fishermen that are licensed that might have been impacted [by the MPAs]. So I am not happy with that.”

“And it’s not sour grapes that we had areas shut down. We don’t know what’s going on in [the MPAs].”

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



**Very Dissatisfied**

**Neutral/Neither**

**Very Satisfied**

**Discussion Summary** Participants expressed beliefs that MPA enforcement is inconsistent, unfair, and ineffective.

- Participants identified inconsistencies in enforcement efforts targeted at commercial and sport fishermen. Several participants explained how they often see sport fishermen fishing in local MPAs, while commercial fishermen are penalized even if their gear accidentally crosses an MPA boundary.
- One participant mentioned an incident when they notified the FGC that they were going to help with a news story about MPAs, and how the FGC was adamant about issuing a citation if the fishermen or their gear were found in an MPA, even if they were not fishing in the MPA.

**Participant Quotes**

“There’s times [when I’ll] see a [sport fishing] boat in there for 8 to 10 hours in the day - you pass them in the morning, you see in the afternoon and they haven’t moved. Nobody cares. I mean it’s just like we all said at the beginning - this wasn’t about anything other than a land grab and they got it and now they don’t care. They walked away from it. But enforcement wants us [commercial fishermen] because the fines are much greater. It’s all about money. They know it all has to do with trying to generate money.”

“There’s no teeth to enforcement.”

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

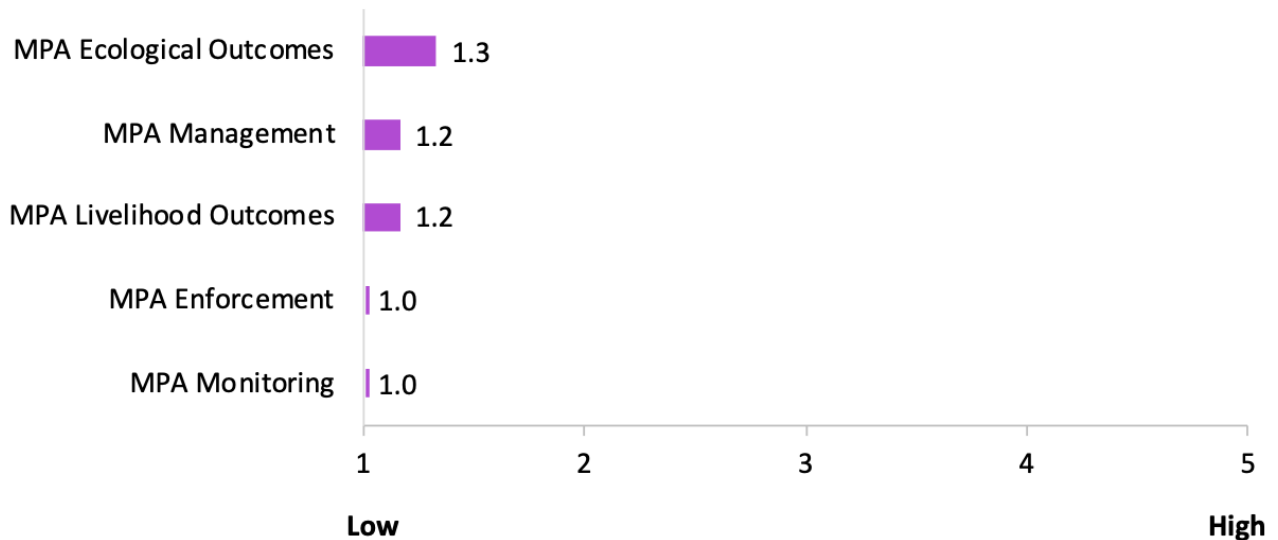
**Discussion Summary** One participant shared that they believe managers are disingenuous with regard to MPA and fisheries management. Another participant indicated that fishermen are

constantly being asked to participate in studies such as this one, yet nothing seems to change based on what they say.

**Participant Quotes**

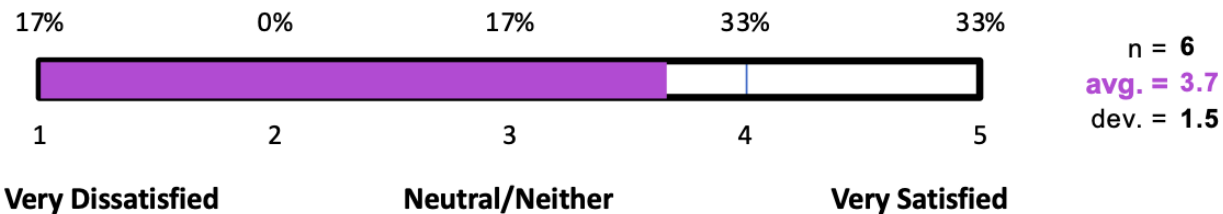
“I’ll just say that I’m super excited that nothing’s going to change [with MPA management] and just curious when we’ll be doing this [participating in an MPA-related project] again.”

**Perceptions of MPAs, Average Responses for Questions 12-13a, 15-17**



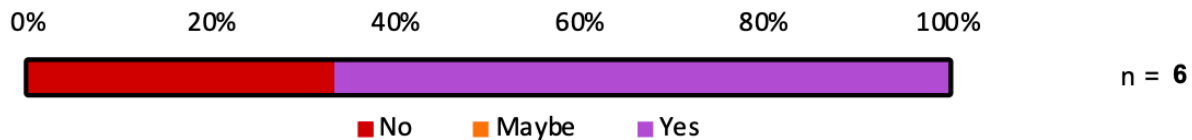
**Feedback on Virtual Process**

*19a. Satisfaction with the Virtual Process Overall, how satisfied were you with your experience participating in this virtual focus group?*



**19b. 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 red bar indicates the percent of participants who responded 'No' to question 19b. The purple bar indicates the remaining percent of participants who responded 'Yes.' If participants responded 'Maybe,' an orange bar would appear.)



**19c. Process Open-ended** *Can you share any additional comments about your experience in this virtual focus group? What do you think are some of the pros and cons of having a conversation like this online rather than in-person?*

**Discussion Summary** Participants said they were generally satisfied with the virtual focus group experience, but would prefer meeting face-to-face.

- One participant appreciated hearing other fishermen's perspectives and having the chance to communicate with them.
- One participant stated they would rather participate in person without the need for technology like Zoom.
- Another participant shared how virtual meetings are not their first choice of communication, but that they have gotten used to it.

**Participant Quotes**

"It's been good talking with everybody [and hearing] what's going on with everything."

"I like [it when] everybody sits around a table, and this isn't a venue where we're going to disagree necessarily. Right? I mean, we're all like-minded for the most part as it relates to commercial fisheries. I just prefer to do it in person. That's it. I'm not a fan of technology, regardless of what I'm doing right now but I'd rather we sat as a group together."