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Fish and Game Commission



Wildlife Heritage and Conservation
Since 1870

Fishing Communities Discussion

North Coast – Smith River

June 21, 2017 Meeting Summary

The following is a summary of the meeting as prepared by staff.

Meeting Goals

- Opportunity for California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) staff to learn from coastal communities about their perspectives on observed changes in ocean ecosystems, marine resources and related harvest opportunities
- Discuss ideas for building stronger, more resilient coastal communities in the face of change
- Identify process for next steps, if any

1. Welcome, Background, and Goals

Commission Executive Director Valerie Termini convened the meeting at Howonquet Hall in Smith River at 3:00 p.m. Commission staff provided a welcome, reviewed meeting groundrules, and introduced Commissioner Hostler-Carmesin and Commissioner Williams, Commission and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) staff, and introductions were made around the room. A brief background on the coastal fishing communities discussions was presented, and the meeting goals and structure were identified.

2. In-depth Discussion and Dialogue

(A) Current Concerns - Local Status Updates

- I. What are the changes in your coastal fishing community that have affected community productivity?
 - Discrepancy between sport fishing reporting and actual take from Cape Mendocino-north (extrapolation model is insufficient)
 - No credit for closures of yelloweye rockfish (constrains all other groundfish catch)
 - Marine protected areas (i.e., lack of access)
 - Aging and disappearing infrastructure

- Access to markets and buyers; buyers dictating markets
- Public health issues (harmful algal blooms, etc.) impacting marketability of products
- No young people in fisheries
- Worry about permit holders who aren't active who may start fishing again if their permits become transferable and lower the available quota per fisherman
- Competition with Oregon for processing capabilities, as well as market, mostly because of Oregon's Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification

II. What localized efforts have happened to promote your fishing community, if any? How can these efforts be supported by the Commission, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and other agencies?

- Fishing community sustainability plans (referred to as "CSPs") happening in other fishing communities (Monterey, Eureka, Shelter Cove, etc.) could provide a model for other areas
- The port exists to serve fishermen, but is operating in the red; there is not enough processing infrastructure so product is trucked elsewhere
- MSC certification → when Oregon fisheries are certified but California fisheries are not, California is less competitive
 - Shrinking fleet means less money for the port (especially shrinking recreational fleet)
 - Consolidation problems
- How can the Commission support?
 - Institutional change → adopt a fisheries policy supporting fishing communities
 - Should access Pacific Fishery Management Council observer data to better manage fisheries
 - Manage a fishery by managing fishermen
 - Even small amounts of allowable bycatch can be very helpful/profitable

(B) Future Vision for Ports and Fisheries

I. What is your vision for what your port should look like in the next 5-10 years? What is in the way of accomplishing that vision?

- Community co-ops → state subsidized?
 - Fishers agree to sell all landed catch to one place, fishers are investors, profits get split amongst fishers who participate in the co-op
 - Commission sets boundaries but fishermen manage the resource as a community → case study of the lobster fishery out of Santa Barbara
- More regionally-focused permit structures

- More engagement with federal fisheries managers
 - Experimental fisheries permits (e.g., squid)
 - Improved buyer participation
 - Rebuilding waterfront infrastructure to support fishing activities
 - Need to pique the interest of the public in preserving the working waterfronts (need to be able to engage with them if they are going to care about the future of waterfronts)
 - As permits retire, take them under state control and re-allocate to young fishermen
 - Economic studies that account for impacts beyond the resources and include impacts to entire communities
 - More open access and less limited entry
- II. What aspects of management influence your ability to be adaptable or flexible in your fisheries?
- Need to streamline the permitting structure/procedure
 - Re-distributing “retired” permits to young fishers/new entrants
 - Managing access and entrants → set standards for entrants?
 - Difficult to diversify in fisheries
 - Physical access (beaches, etc.)
 - Addressing local governments takes too long; need to educate authorities of their duty to protect fishermen
 - Waterfronts that are being gentrified

(C) Actions Moving Forward

- I. How can your fishing community directly move forward to promote opportunities for development?
- Diversify fisheries
 - Develop community permits (co-ops)
 - Fishermen participation in tagging/collecting data, sampling
 - Need guidance on interacting and working with county fish and game commissions
- II. How can the Commission support these efforts?
- Marine protected areas (MPAs) should be examined for effectiveness and if they’re not working they should be removed
 - Develop a fishing community sustainability plan at state level
 - Adopt a fishing community policy
 - Permit transferability (in deeper nearshore)
 - Ability to pass licenses on to other fishers, family members, and apprentices
 - Make permits more easily transferrable within an apprenticeship program (e.g., no fees, lower fees)

- Create incentives for participation (in lieu of enforcement)
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife could identify next generation and incentivize participation
- Want ability to pass permits on to children
- Driver license-type test for fishermen for merit-based system
- Streamline/standardize permitting processes/structures
- Include fishermen in MPA collaboratives
- Look at regional science when setting restrictions (e.g., bycatch)
- Resource-based take instead of license-based take formulas
- Future projections should take into account geography/topography (e.g., conditions in the north versus the south)
- Regional fisheries committees
- Reward successful/responsible fishers
- Respect/support fishermen/women
- Support community economics
- Stock assessments for all fished species
- Re-examine historical policies and their impacts on coastal fishing communities

3. Next Steps and Wrap-up

Commission staff provided a brief recap of what was learned from the meeting and explained that these meetings will be continued up and down the coast in order to learn more about the regional challenges faced by fishing communities. Staff thanked meeting attendees for participating and explained that a meeting summary will be posted to the Commission website (www.fgc.ca.gov).