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Valerie Termini, Executive Director
1416 Ninth Street, Room 1320
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 653-4899
www.fgc.ca.gov

Fish and Game Commission



Wildlife Heritage and Conservation
Since 1870

COASTAL FISHING COMMUNITIES DISCUSSION

NOVEMBER 8, 2017 MEETING SUMMARY

Central Coast – Monterey

The following is a summary of the meeting as prepared by staff. Participant responses to questions posed in the agenda are captured in bulleted format below each question.

Meeting Goals

- Identify priorities for your fishing community
- Discuss challenges and opportunities facing fishing communities
- Discuss how the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) can contribute to more resilient fishing communities

1. Welcome, Background, and Goals

Susan Ashcraft convened the meeting at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies in Monterey at 6:00 p.m. Commission staff provided a welcome, reviewed meeting ground rules, and introduced Commission and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) staff. Introductions were made around the room, where approximately 27 members of the public were in attendance. A brief background on the coastal fishing communities discussion was presented, and the meeting goals and structure were identified.

2. In-depth Discussion and Dialogue

(A) What are the biggest challenges to a successful fishing/ocean dependent industry in your area? (e.g., infrastructure, limited seasons/catch, complexity of regulations, etc.)

- Dramatic declines in number of fishing vessels, processors and fishery diversity in local ports resulting from Federal programs (trawl buy-back, loss of trawl individual quota shares) and limited entry programs; loss of Monterey commercial fishing heritage and culture

- Restricted fishing access
 - Federal trawl fishing closures in Monterey Bay waters
 - Most productive fishing grounds and areas of easy access were closed
 - Federal over-regulation of groundfish (e.g., rockfish conservation areas)
 - No restored access to areas where species have recovered
 - Limiting access minimizes the market and the economic value
 - Demand for buying local, yet fishermen have limited access to catch and land locally
 - Access to permits: either unavailable or economically infeasible to purchase
- Prohibition on leasing permits limits flexibility
- Limited career trajectory for young fisherman
- Post-harvest regulations are a barrier to entry for new fishermen
- Cultural knowledge lost with the retirement of older fishermen
- New definition of bycatch in Marine Life Management Act (MLMA) is threatening to fisheries
- Need discussion of food system management and natural resources management

(B) Fisheries and port conditions have changed over the past 20 years. What do you want your port to look like 20 years from now?

- Elements of infrastructure (e.g., buyers, ice, dock, areas to fish) that lead to more interest in fisheries
- Flexibility in management

(C) What policies or new regulations would you like to see the Commission develop to help you meet future goals?

- Reopen closures
 - Reopen trawl fishing areas
 - Reopen closures closer to the harbors
 - Part-time openings in state parks
- Implement adaptive management in the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA)
- Consider Alaska's limited entry commission as a model for new restricted access programs
- Make permit leasing more accessible
- Adopt FGC principle of not supporting imported seafood
- Implement experimental fisheries to expand long-term fishing opportunities
- Streamline post-harvest regulations

- Apprenticeship program for new entrants
 - Opportunity for experience for young fishermen
 - Regulatory power for fishermen with more certifications/experience

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).

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.