

Coastal Fishing Communities Project

Update on Efforts Related to Staff Recommendation #2

November 4, 2020

Recommendation: Review the Commission's Policy on Restricted Access Commercial Fisheries.

Overview: Restricted access programs and the Commission's Policy on Restricted Access Commercial Fisheries (Restricted Access Policy) were cited by many community members as contributing barriers to entry and adapting fishing strategies and targets as local changes arise, including those associated with climate dynamics. Other community members defended current restricted access programs as effective management that has improved the resources, the economic viability of fishing, or both. This complex policy includes 21 individual sub-policies across 9 unique topic areas. The Commission could conduct a review of the conditions that led to the policy being developed, how the policy has or hasn't been applied to specific fisheries since it was adopted in 1999, how the policy has performed at meeting fishery objectives and whether any objectives have changed, any unintended consequences that have affected fishing communities, and whether current conditions warrant possible adjustments to the policy.

Progress by Focal Area

Collaborations and Partner Efforts

- *Evaluating scope:* Partner non-governmental organizations, in consultation with Commission and Department staff, conducted an initial evaluation of what a review of the Restricted Access Policy might entail related to scope, approach, and process. Commission staff is prepared to compile a staff scoping report based on the initial evaluation.
- *Information-gathering:* In consultation with Commission and Department staff, initial background information related to select commercial fisheries with existing restricted access permit structures is being compiled. The background information could be used to evaluate fishery performance, in consultation with fishery participants, relative to the goals each restricted access program was intended to achieve.

Relevant External Actions and Models

- *Sea Grant:* The [California Sea Grant Strategic Plan 2018-21](#) includes provisions for evaluating impacts of current fisheries and potential new policies on fishing communities and marine species. Commission staff has previously worked with Sea Grant Extension staff on fisheries analysis and may wish to pursue this collaboration further for restricted access fisheries.
- *Federal, Alaska region:* The NOAA Fisheries [Restricted Access Management \(RAM\)](#) Program is specifically for administering the logistics of federal limited-entry fisheries in

the Alaska region. While such a program for California is outside of current resource capacity, it serves as a different model for how restricted access can be managed and monitored.

- *Alaska fisheries:* The Alaska [Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission](#) was highlighted in public meetings as another model for limiting permit issuance that may be informative.

Education and Outreach

- *Stakeholders:* Primary outreach to date related to the Restricted Access Policy occurred during public review of the staff synthesis report; comment letters received from stakeholders included specific comments on the policy and should be considered in any review.

Potential Next Steps

Develop and present to MRC a staff report analyzing the potential breadth of and process for a policy review, referencing the initial evaluation developed by partner non-governmental organizations.

Linkages to Other Staff Recommendations

Restricted access fisheries were cited as an issue because they can create limitations to access and lack of flexibility. Access and flexibility could be addressed by the experimental fisheries program, see SR 3, though the extent of this program does not address the full breadth of the Restricted Access Policy. SR 6, related to community-owned quota programs, would likely require adjustments to the policy.