

Coastal Fishing Communities Project

Update on Efforts Related to Staff Recommendation #7

November 4, 2020

Recommendation: Explore filling data needs through collaborative research and data collection.

Overview: Coastal fishing community members have raised a concern that adaptive responses and new management strategies have not been pursued due to lack of data. Many fishermen have offered to support collaborative data gathering. The Commission could work with the Department on identifying data gaps and possible scientific information that could be gathered through collaborative research or experimental fishing between partner entities and fishermen. Such efforts might be coordinated through an app or a website. However, great care must be taken to create citizen science data collection systems that provide credible data. The Commission would have to rely on partners for labor costs.

Progress by Focal Area

Commission and Department Initiatives

- *Purple sea urchin:* In February 2020, the Commission adopted emergency regulations to authorize unlimited removal of purple sea urchin at Caspar Cove, Mendocino, by recreational divers. The Department is cooperating with divers and monitoring the cove to examine the impact of sea urchin removal on the ecosystem. The Commission is considering proposed regulations to continue the project for three years, and to add an additional project at Tanker Reef, Monterey. This provides an excellent model of research collaboration between recreational divers and the Department.
- *Experimental fisheries permit (EFP) program:* The EFP program currently being developed (see SR 3) will require participants to provide a research component for their experimental permits and collaborate with the Department to provide data.
- *Red abalone:* A fishery management plan for the recreational red abalone fishery is under development. At its July 2020 meeting, the MRC recommended, and the Commission subsequently adopted, a biological fishery option and a harvest control rule that includes a stakeholder data collection effort; This effort will simultaneously support fishery participation and provide fishery-dependent data on abalone populations. Interests in a similar program have been expressed by former commercial abalone divers in southern California.
- *Master plan for fisheries:* Chapter 11 of the [2018 master plan for fisheries](#) contemplates using stakeholder data in managing fisheries affected by climate change. Given that the Department is the Commission's main collaborator, continuing to pursue projects such as the three outlined above in concert would be appropriate and necessary.

Relevant External Actions and Models

- *Groundfish:* Within California, one well-established cooperative research effort is the California Collaborative Fisheries Research Program, which gathers hook-and-line data on federally-managed groundfish species in California's marine protected areas (MPAs). This program has received strong support and buy-in from the commercial passenger fishing vessel and recreational hook-and-line communities and could serve as a model for collaborative data-gathering.
- *Guidance:* A [2017 report](#) guidance document from the California Ocean Science Trust provided a high-level overview of climate change impacts on state-managed fisheries, with recommended management approaches on preparing for climate change impacts. Management recommendations include increasing collaboration within agencies and with fishermen.
- *Private/academic sector:* Humboldt State University researchers, Ecotrust, and Strategic Earth Consulting are currently [conducting a study](#) to assess port community well-being and socioeconomic conditions, which will contribute to long-term monitoring efforts to evaluate California's MPA performance. The study will include collecting qualitative data from fishing community leaders.

Education and Outreach

- *Workshop:* A [stakeholder workshop](#) on the proposed EFP program, co-lead by staff from the Commission, the Department, and The Nature Conservancy, was held on January 14, 2020. The workshop solicited thoughts from stakeholders concerning program design and their priorities for the program. This workshop is relevant as EFPs will require a collaborative research component.

Potential Next Steps

Commission staff could consult with the Department regarding outreach to key stakeholders for projects where data needs are not being met.

Linkages to Other Staff Recommendations

This recommendation is tied to SR 3, as the current approach to approving small-scale test projects (upon Commission approval of the EFP program) requires a research component.