

California Fish and Game Commission Coastal Fishing Communities Project

Revised Draft Coastal Fishing Communities Policy

November 22, 2022

This document has been prepared by California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) staff to support a public policy drafting workshop on December 1, 2022. An [outline of this revised draft](#) was discussed with the Commission Marine Resources Committee (MRC) at its November 17, 2022 meeting. The workshop is intended to contribute to a policy recommendation at the March 2023 MRC meeting.

I. Introduction

Coastal fishing communities have social, cultural and economic value, and are interdependent with healthy marine species and ecosystems; members of these communities are often California's eyes on the water and the first to notice environmental changes.

- Coastal fishing communities are dynamic systems composed of many parts, each influencing the others.
- Coastal fishing communities are facing unprecedented and dynamic challenges that strain and disrupt their social and economic fabric; such challenges include inadequate port infrastructure, climate change-driven disruptions such as shifting stocks, "greying" of the fleet, harmful algal blooms, whale entanglement risk and uncertain season lengths, increased competition for shoreside uses and ocean space, and more.
- The challenges coastal fishing communities face pose a significant threat to their sustained existence. Actions that impact one aspect of a community may be felt community-wide. There is a need to better understand the interdependent relationships and linkages within communities, and to proactively identify actions, programs and/or responses that will help make California's coastal fishing communities more resilient to challenges; this policy is one effort to help address that need.

II. Definition

For purposes of this policy, a coastal fishing community is defined as *a social, cultural, economic, and/or place-based group whose members:*

- are dependent upon, engaged in, or benefit from wild-capture commercial, recreational, or subsistence fishery harvest or processing to meet the social or economic needs of the community;
- include, but are not limited to, businesses and organizations that share a dependency on, or support, fishing or aquaculture production by providing goods and services, including infrastructure to that community or those communities; and
- may be a subset or member of larger or associated coastal communities which are dependent on and/or have strong ties to coastal-dependent uses.

III. Policy Setting

- The California Marine Life Management Act (MLMA) establishes specific objectives for recognizing coastal fishing community interests and impacts when pursuing the

primary fishery management system goal of sustainability for marine fisheries under the state’s jurisdiction (California Fish and Game Code Section 7056).

- The California Coastal Act (Public Resources Code sections 30234, 32034.5 and 30703) recognizes and calls for protecting the economic, commercial, and recreational importance of fishing activities and facilities.
- The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, National Standard 8, considers the significance of fishery resources and sustained fishery participation to fishing communities and aims to minimize adverse economic impacts on these communities, which may be complementary to State policies and objectives.
- The Commission’s Restricted Access Commercial Fisheries Policy was adopted by the Commission in 1999 as a framework to limit access or entry to a fishery to promote sustainable fisheries, provide for orderly fisheries, promote conservation among fishery participants, and maintain the long-term economic viability of fisheries.
- The Commission’s Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy was adopted by the Commission in 2022 to recognize environmental justice as essential to addressing historic and current inequities, and to create equitable access to environmental benefits.
- In pursuing the goals set out in these laws and policies, particularly in an increasingly dynamic ocean landscape, there is a need for a clearer policy that incorporates coastal fishing community-level interests, challenges, and impacts in addition to fisheries-specific considerations. Holistic management must account for fisheries as dynamic social-ecological systems with interdependencies between communities and fisheries (as well as within and among fisheries). Implications for place-based communities need to be explicitly integrated into the management context.

IV. Policy Statement

It is the policy and practice of the California Fish and Game Commission to support the long-term needs and social and economic health of coastal fishing communities in fisheries management and Commission decision-making. The Commission will pursue this policy holistically through strategies for meaningful coastal fishing community engagement, ensuring coastal fishing community interests are reflected in Commission decision-making, and supporting efforts to increase the adaptive capacity and resilience of coastal fishing communities.

V. Policy Strategies

A. Understand issues and identify solutions through meaningful coastal fishing community engagement.

It is the intent of the Commission to contribute to the sustainability of coastal fishing communities through pursuing proactive community engagement that is inclusive and reflective of community diversity, knowledge and priorities to understand interests, challenges, and potential impacts for various fishing communities. The Commission will:

- Identify opportunities for outreach and promote direct and consistent engagement with coastal fishing communities;
- Facilitate collaboration with coastal fishing communities on problem-solving while engaging local and traditional ecological knowledge;
- Consider a mechanism for regular, ongoing engagement and follow-up/follow-through.

B. Ensure Commission decision-making reflects coastal fishing community interests and needs

Coastal fishing communities face numerous hardships; the Commission is committed to supporting management that best allows them to adapt and withstand these challenges without compromising sustainability of fishery resources. The Commission will:

- Advance collaborative approaches identified with coastal fishing communities through decision-making and regulatory processes as appropriate;
- Support management options and plans, including co-management, that sustain social and economic stability of, and minimize adverse impacts to, coastal fishing communities while maintaining the sustainability of fisheries;
- Seek to develop a system(s) to anticipate and respond quickly to emerging needs or disruptive changes;
- Ensure that when policies and regulations are updated or created, they are reviewed with a lens of supporting coastal fishing communities' adaptation.

C. Increase adaptive capacity and resilience of coastal fishing communities via external efforts

The Commission seeks to engage partners and leverage efforts external to the Commission to help bolster sustainability and adaptation, improving governance coordination, supporting collaboration, and identifying pathways to strengthen infrastructure to support coastal fishing communities. The Commission will:

- Pursue coordination of efforts among agencies and partners aimed at supporting coastal fishing communities;
- Support organizational and operational capacities of coastal fishing communities;
- Uplift coastal fishing community interests in the face of emerging issues or threats;
- Support efforts to foster a new generation of fishermen;
- Help build and leverage partnerships to identify and collect essential information;
- Support efforts that can inform decision-making and be a resource to stakeholders.