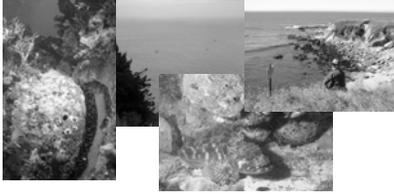




Marine Life Protection Act



Commercial Fisheries in the North Central Coast Study Region: Perspectives from Fishermen

Presentation to the North Central Coast Regional Stakeholder Group
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Information from Commercial Fishermen

Background: Fishermen on MLPA North Central Coast Regional Stakeholder Group volunteered to inform the RSG of relevant fisheries and how they operate.

Information requested by CDFG from commercial fishery & harbor interests on the RSG:

1. Description of fishing fleet by port
2. Highlight important fisheries in NCCSR
3. Importance/relevance of fisheries to ports and harbors
4. Gear operations and habitat interactions
5. Spatial importance: Identify important fishing grounds, seasonal shifts



Fishermen Providing Information

Information provided by several fishermen including:

1. Ed Tavasieff (San Francisco)
2. John Mellor (San Francisco)
3. Josh Churchman (Bollinas/Bodega Bay)
4. Tom Estes (Fort Bragg/Point Arena) (with input from Fort Bragg and Bodega fishermen)
5. Dirk Ammerman (Point Arena)



Six Key Fisheries in NCCSR State Waters

1. Salmon
2. Dungeness Crab
3. Rockfish and nearshore finfish (rockfish, lingcod, cabezon)
4. California halibut
5. Sea Urchin
6. Pacific herring roe fishery (Tomales Bay)



Salmon Troll Fishery

Depth and Habitat Fished

- Deeper than 15 fathom (90 feet) to 50 fathom (300 feet), sometimes shallower (to 10 fathom) in late season
- No bottom contact with gear although bycatch of midwater rockfish may occur

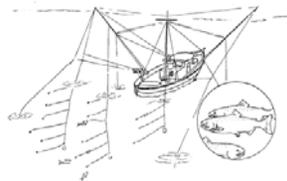




Salmon Troll Fishery

Gear Type

- Trolling - method of fishing using boat engine to pull lines and hooks through water column



Operation

- Out-riggers (long wooden or metal poles) on each side of the vessel, with 1-3 separated lines off each
- Each line 4-12 leaders per line (less in shallow water)

Salmon Troll Fishery

Key Issues

- Salmon season different each year; recent seasons severely cut back
- Klamath River salmon abundance level current driving factor in season length
- Out-of-area fishermen (Fort Bragg, northern California, out-of-state) travel south to participate in more liberal season
- Entire study region used for salmon except very shallow water
- Access to fishing grounds below Point Arena identified as very important
- Many fishermen heavily depend on salmon income. Many also fish Dungeness crab.




Dungeness Crab Trap Fishery

Depth and Habitat Fished

- Inside 50 fm (300 ft) on sandy, muddy, or gravelly bottoms
- Widespread fishing grounds throughout study region
- Crab abundance and location can change from year to year
- Bottom contact between gear involves trap placement on and retrieval from soft bottom habitat




Dungeness Crab Trap Fishery

Gear Type

- Crab pots or traps (36" to 42" diameter)
- Set on the bottom, in a string (straight line) consisting of 30 to 150+ traps (no limit)
- Traps selective for larger individuals, with destruct device if gear lost

Operation

- Baited pot gear soaked for hours or days depending on weather conditions and crab abundance (3 days max legal soak time)





Dungeness Crab Trap Fishery

Key Fishery Issues

- Crab season opens Nov 15, earlier than in areas north
- Recent effort shift to crab due to reduction in other fishery options
- Many vessels come from Eureka, Crescent City, Oregon and Alaska to fish in early season
- Small and big boat issues
- Access to fishing grounds below Point Arena identified as extremely important to ports, from Fort Bragg to Bodega Bay
- Crab is significant source of income for local fishermen





Nearshore Rockfish and Finfish

Depth and habitat fished

- From 0 to 20 fm (120 ft)
- Nearshore rocky habitat, kelp beds
- Contact with bottom habitat occurs with some gear types





Nearshore Rockfish and Finfish

Gear Types

- Rod and reel
- Trap gear
- "Stick gear" (vertical longline)
- Longline

Operation

- Rod and reel - several baited hooks. Bottom contact avoided.
- Longline gear - lines set out and later retrieved. Anchor set on hard bottom, baited lines laid out to soak.
- Traps - set on sea floor and retrieved; allows release of bycatch.
- Valuable live fish fishery





Nearshore Rockfish and Finfish

Key Fishery Issues

- Restricted access fishery: Shallow nearshore and deeper nearshore
- Only 60% of permits actively fished in NCCSR in 2005-2006 (strict quotas, spatial closures (RCAs), Not everyone qualified for permits)
- Small quotas + high price/lb = good income serves as stop-gap between other primary fisheries (e.g., crab, groundfish, salmon)
- Spatial availability is concern – residential rockfish, potential for localized depletion





California Halibut

Depth and Habitat Fished

- Usually less than 30 fm to shore
- Sandy, muddy, or gravel areas
- Little bottom contact with fishing gear





California Halibut

Gear Type

- *Hook & line "Wire Lining"* – Rod and reel with stainless steel wire line (trolling or drifting)
- Gear fished just above the bottom

Operation

- Trolling just above the bottom. Pole and reel are held to maintain constant attention to changing bottom and current strength.
- Current conditions affect method:
 - Strong current: requires bait with plastic squid-like *hoochies*
 - Weaker currents: Drifting with live bait and only 1 hook.



Wire lining also used for Pacific halibut (shown above)



California Halibut

Key Fishery Issues

- Hook-and-line (H&L)-caught CA halibut is significant fishery in NCCSR
- Market for H&L halibut increased (fish quality)
- Nearly all H&L halibut in California are caught in NCCSR

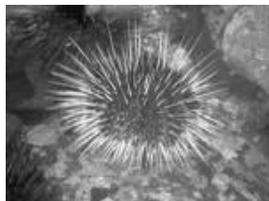




Red Sea Urchin

Depth and Habitat Fished

- Shallow subtidal
- Kelp forests and rocky habitat

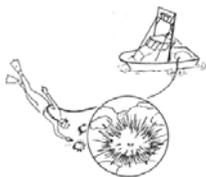




Red Sea Urchin

Gear Type

- Diving on compressed air systems ("hooka")



Operation

- Divers hand-pick urchins
- Tool ranges from small metal hook to bionic arm





Red Sea Urchin

Key Fishery Issues

- Fishery activity depends on market demand and presence of a processor in the area.
- Good fishing habitat off Bodega Bay with no active fishery
- Active fishery reemerging in Point Arena



Pacific Herring – Tomales Bay

Depth and Habitat Fished

- Shallow subtidal water inside the bay near spawning grounds
- Eel grass beds (where herring spawn) outer edges; most fishing has been south of Hog Island in recent years

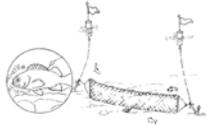




Pacific Herring – Tomales Bay

Gear Type

- Set gill net



Operation

- Gill nets anchored with floats on ends. Fish swim into net when moving toward shallow spawning grounds.
- Fish are harvested and roe are extracted from females.
- Gear contacts seafloor along weighted line and anchored ends.



Pacific Herring – Tomales Bay

Key Fishery Issues

- Spatial access to waters adjacent to eel grass beds vital for herring fishing.
- Herring spawning location changes each year and herring fishing locations with it.





Summary of Key Themes

- Commercial fisheries are not the same - Gear operations are different in each fishery
- Flexibility is key (spatial, temporal, regulatory shifts)
- It takes more than one fishery to make a fisherperson
- Consider each port's character/needs separately not just region-wide
