



Response to CFC Review of Ecotrust's MLP AI Products

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We thank the consultants commissioned by the California Fisheries Coalition for their thorough reading and review of our report.

We appreciate their recognition that our approach and data products enhance the spatial information available to the MLPA Initiative Central Coast project, and engage fishermen in a meaningful way. As documented in our deliverables to the MLPA Initiative, we share their assessment that this study of the extent and relative importance of the fishing grounds is but a first step in providing the MLPA process with socioeconomic data and information. However, the data and analyses provided through our work are a large improvement in spatial resolution on the data available in state and federal data series and provide a useful foundation for future improvements.

We, and others, have made and continue to make suggestions to the MLP AI for additional data needs that could improve the data and analytic information available to decision-makers and stakeholders. We also look forward to incorporating their suggestions for improvement, along with others' comments, into a manuscript we are currently preparing for publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

With regard to specific comments by the CFC consultants about the perceived weaknesses of our study, we wish to make the following observations:

“Overall, the data produced by the Study are not applicable to comprehensive or systematic economic or social impact analyses of the MPA packages in a way that treats fisheries as human systems.”

And

“The interview questions used (specifically those in which fishermen were asked about the relative “importance” of economically critical areas “over their cumulative fishing experience”) are too vague to accurately elicit data on the ways in which an MPA would currently impact a fishery, fisherman, fishing port, or community.”

The original design and data collected as part of our study was not intended to be used in the context of a social or economic impact analysis, rather as a proxy for identifying pertinent or "high value or use" fishing grounds. These were to be used in the design of Marine Protected Areas by stakeholders, and provide first order estimates of the effects of particular MPA alternatives, and not in evaluation of resulting impacts. Impacts were assessed by another contractor to the MLP AI, Prof. Jim Wilen, using methods documented in his reports.

“The fisheries selected for the study do not reflect species groupings that are typically caught by fishermen in the CCR, and therefore cannot be used in their current form to analyze the specific impacts to fishery participants, fishing ports, and fishing communities.”

This is partially correct. We were directed by CDFG staff to collect data on selected fisheries to fill particular information needs. As we point out in our report, however, it is possible to analyze the resulting data in more ways than we were directed to in the central coast process, and in a variety of combinations. In particular, it is possible to analyze effects of particular MPAs on individual or groups of fishermen, or on particular ports.

“The Study population is not sufficiently defined (e.g., definition of a fisherman, total number of fishermen, and characteristics of fishery participants, ports and communities).”

It is correct that we did not provide a definition or detailed information about the ports and communities. That is because the purpose of this study was to characterize the fishing grounds, and not the fisheries or communities. Again, we did not claim nor intend for this study to be a comprehensive treatment, nor does it obviate the need for social and anthropological studies of the fisheries. The CFC consultants’ comment is a reflection of how our work is being interpreted by others, and points to an interesting perception issue. In terms of the defining the sample population, the report does identify the number of fishermen contacted, those who responded, and the total landings to the study region the respondents represent.

“It does not appear that the sample data were linked to CDFG landings data in order to generalize results to the population. Because insufficient information was given about the total population of fishermen, it is difficult to determine if the sample data could be reliably generalized.”

The population itself was specifically designed so that it could be generalized, using a replicable method for selecting fishermen based on relative fishing success and the CDFG landings data. This is described in detail in our report and summarized in Table 2.

“Few social data were collected, beyond basic demographic information, and these demographic data were not presented in the Study.”

As previously explained, social data were not the main focus of this study, and what was collected could be re-analyzed in a variety of ways. As previously explained, we did not harvest and analyze the collected data to the fullest extent possible, given our scope of work and time and resource limitations.