



VALUING COASTAL FISHERIES

Social and Economic Evaluation of NSW Coastal Professional Wild-Catch Fisheries



Recreational and professional fishing: friend or foe?

Recreational and professional fishers are often thought to be in conflict with each other. Resource management debates, especially in estuarine areas, often involve an assumption that removing professional fishing from an area will resolve this conflict. The Valuing Coastal Fisheries project investigated the role of professional fishing in NSW coastal communities through interviews, an economic survey and a random phone survey of the general public, 35% of whom were recreational fishers. This investigation found that the two sectors are highly interdependent and in fact both offer complementary economic and social benefits, across six out of seven key 'dimensions of community wellbeing'.

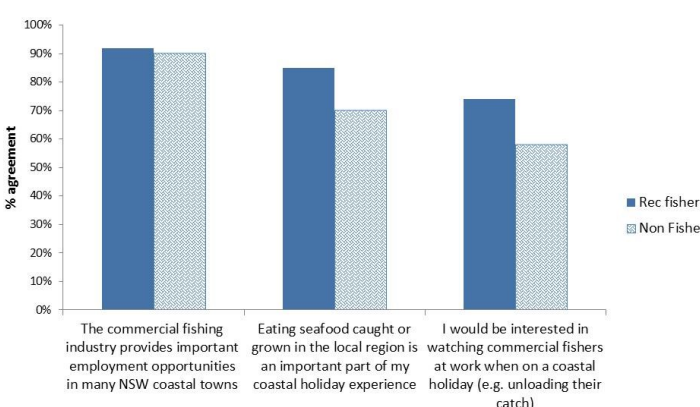
Dimensions of wellbeing

Seven 'dimensions of wellbeing' were identified through the Valuing Coastal Fisheries project as being relevant to the professional wild-catch industry. These are all elements of overall community wellbeing that the industry contributes to in a number of ways. The project explored the nature of these contributions through interviews, an economic questionnaire of fishers and three social questionnaires. These included a random phone survey of the general public (35% of whom identified as recreational fishers), a phone survey of fish retailers and wholesalers (including co-ops) and an internet questionnaire of tourism and hospitality businesses. Six of these seven dimensions were considered relevant to the relationship between recreational and professional fishing.

A resilient local economy

A 2013 survey of recreational fishing in NSW estimated saltwater fishers spend \$39 million/year on bait and burley. This project estimates that the NSW wild-catch professional fishing industry supplies up to a quarter of this bait and burley to recreational fishers.

Recreational fishers are engaged and interested in fishing-related issues, for some that translates as opposition towards the professional wild-catch industry, but most support the industry and believe it makes an important contribution to local economies. The potential of professional fishing as a tourism experience is greatest amongst recreational fishers who are significantly more likely than non-fishers to be interested in eating local seafood and watching professionals fishers at work whilst on holidays.



Community health and safety



Recreational fishers are significantly more interested in knowing the provenance of their seafood purchases than non-fishers, and have strong preferences for fish from their local region/town (39%) or Australia (46%). They were also significantly more likely than non-fishers (47% /36%) to purchase fish from their local co-op.

Our interviews with professional fishers indicated they are regularly involved in rescuing or towing stricken vessels, and it is frequently recreational fishers who are the beneficiaries of these services.

Education and knowledge generation

Our interviews indicated recreational and professional fishers regularly exchange information and advice on fishing locations, techniques and fish habits.

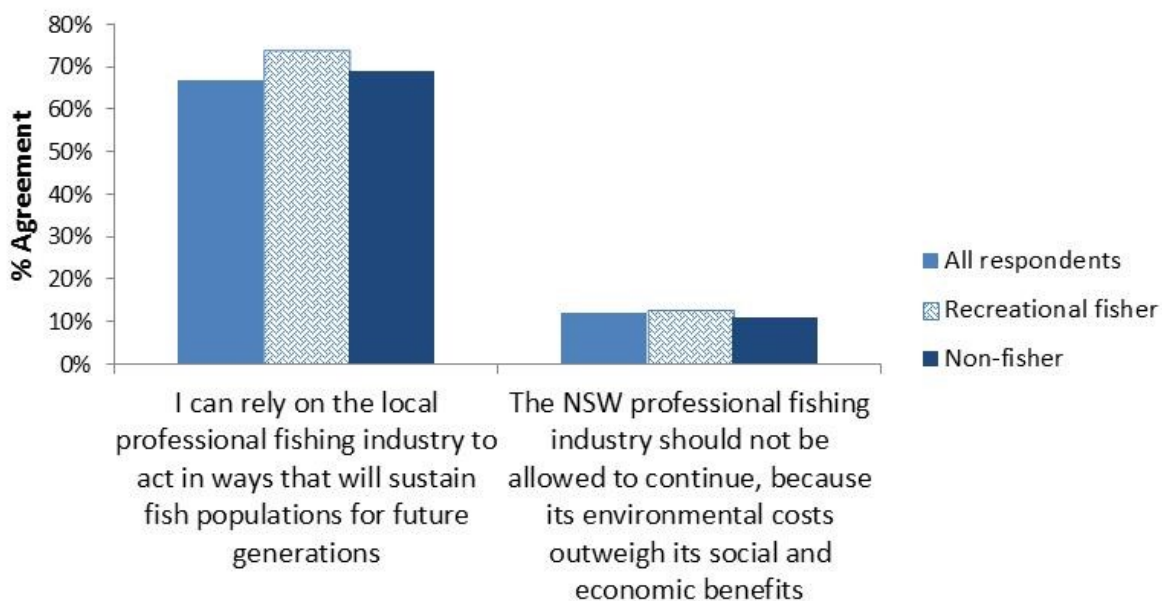
I know a lot of professional fishermen and they'll say, 'Oh, well, I'll give you a little bit of information.' You know? (For example) if you're Mackerel fishing, they'll tell you 'The water's cold, or the water's hot' or 'the bait's somewhere' - then you can get the bait early and you're fishing rather than spending half a day catching live bait.
Interview with recreational fisher - Mid North Coast NSW

VALUING COASTAL FISHERIES

Social and Economic Evaluation of NSW Coastal Professional Wild-Catch Fisheries

A healthy environment

The general public questionnaire asked members of the public whether they felt that professional fishers could be trusted to act sustainably, and whether they supported the continuation of the industry. There were no significant differences between recreational fishers and non-fishers from the wider public in terms of their responses to these questions. In some towns on the coast recreational and professional fishers are working together to address common areas of environmental concern, such as habitat loss.



Cultural heritage and community identity

The general public questionnaire asked members of the public whether they would be concerned about a loss of character or identity in NSW coastal communities if further declines in the professional fishing industry were to occur - 79% of recreational fishers surveyed indicated this would be a concern to them (compared with 74% of non-fishers). Similarly 81% of recreational fishers were concerned about loss of professional fishing as a way of life if the industry was further restricted - compared with 78% of non-fishers.



Leisure and recreation

The recreational fishers surveyed indicated a strong preference for locally caught bait. Recreational fishers are also regular users of infrastructure managed or provided by the professional industry including wharves, jetties, moorings and slipways.

