



The Mid North Coast study area includes the main fishing ports of Coffs Harbour, Nambucca, South West Rocks, Port Macquarie (Hastings) and Laurieton. The area supports a diverse range of fisheries targeting a variety of species including ocean prawn trawl, ocean trap and line, lobster, ocean haul, a seasonal longline tuna fishery and an active estuary general fishery. The Valuing Coastal Fisheries project investigated the role of professional fishing on Mid North Coast communities according to seven 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.

A resilient local economy The wild-catch industry in the Mid North Coast generate more than \$38.5 million in revenue and over 360 full time local jobs. This includes \$19m, and 153 jobs, from the industry and the businesses that service it and a similar amount from the secondary processing, wholesale and retail sector.

Eating out is the most popular activity undertaken by domestic visitors to the Mid North Coast area and the fishing industry provides an important and valued product to local tourism and hospitality markets. Our project indicated that the vast majority (89%) of NSW residents expect to eat locally caught seafood when on holidays.

Residents of the Mid North Coast recognise the economic importance of the wild-catch industry to their region – 89% think it provides important employment opportunities, 94% believe it is an important industry for NSW. 89% of people believe that professional fishing plays an important part in tourism in their region through, for example, the supply of local seafood.

Community health and safety Consumers on the Mid North Coast have a strong preference for local product (43% prefer seafood sourced from their own town or region). This is reflected in consumption patterns with consumers in this area significantly more likely than consumers in other parts of the state to ‘always’ (24%) purchase local seafood. Most (70%) purchase seafood once a fortnight or more, with a preference for fish followed by prawns. 79% of people from this region prefer local product as they believe it is better for their health.

The fishers we interviewed indicated they regularly participated in search and rescue operations, including towing broken-down vessels.



Education and knowledge generation The annual ‘loaves and fisher’ Mullet BBQ held in South West Rocks every Easter is an opportunity for the fishing industry to inform the general public about fishing, the species they target and the history of the industry.



I've got a library of old photos and old fishing stuff now that I collected... so we had displays of photos of old fishing and also explaining the research and... where the fish go... I did notice, especially after the first one, that people were a lot friendlier to us on the beach. There were people actually telling me what we did instead of me having to tell them.

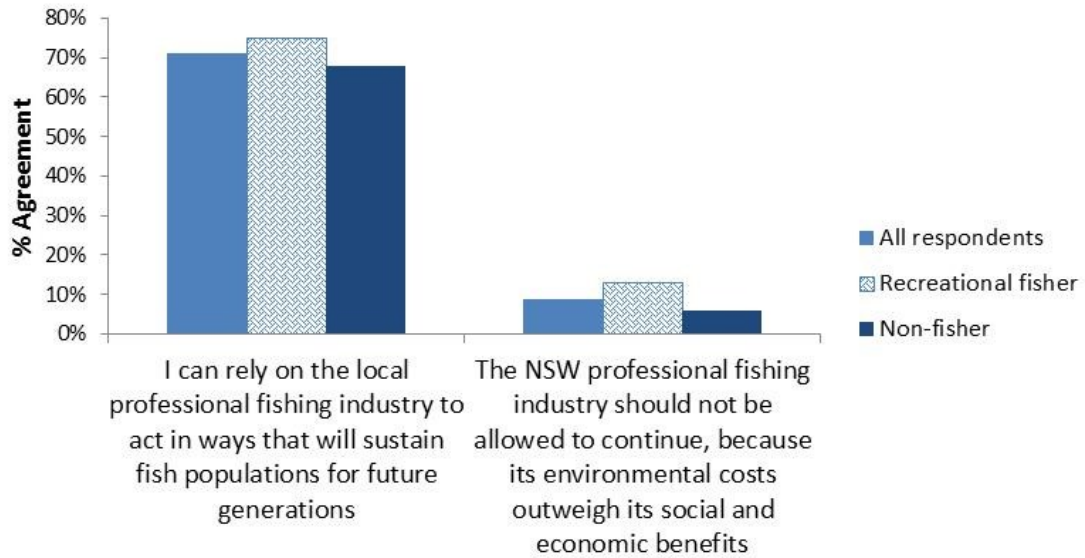
Fisher (041114_3) Mid North Coast

VALUING COASTAL FISHERIES

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

A healthy environment

The wild-catch professional fishing industry on the Mid North Coast operates under a range of regulatory and voluntary controls aimed at minimising its environmental impact. The majority of the Mid North Coast community support the continuation of their local industry and believe the industry can be relied on to act in a sustainable manner.



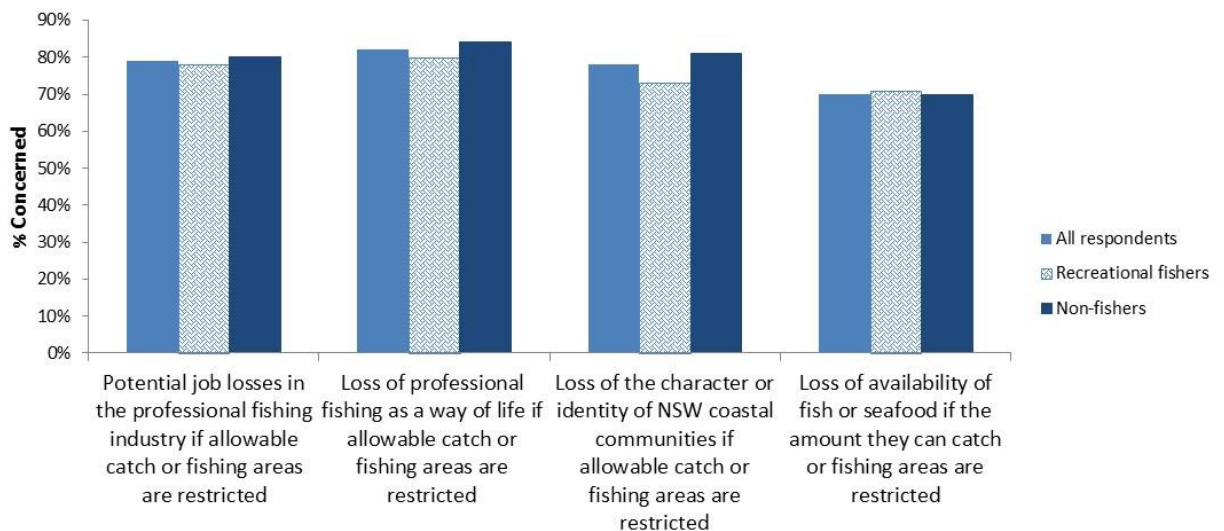
Integrated, culturally diverse and vibrant communities

The fishing industry plays an active role in the Mid North Coast region. The Jerseyville (South West Rocks), Coffs Harbour, Hastings and Laurieton co-ops and other fish merchant businesses in the area provide sponsorship and donations – especially ice – to local sporting and community groups. The co-op also provides important support services for fishers and their families.

Seafood forms an important component of cultural celebrations in the Mid North Coast, especially over the summer period – 77% of residents purchased seafood the preceding Christmas, and 76% during the summer holiday period (excluding Christmas/New Year). Other celebrations and cultural events also involved seafood consumption, including Easter (75%) and New Years Eve (54%).

Cultural heritage and community identity

The fishing industry is an important part of the history of the region. The port areas of Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie and Laurieton have strong ties to the industry as working harbours from which fishing operations were conducted. Residents expressed high levels of concerns over the loss of community identity (78% concerned) and the loss of a ‘way of life’ for fishers (82% concerned) if fishing were to be further restricted.



Leisure and recreation

Nearly a half (45%) of residents surveyed on the Mid North Coast were recreational fishers. They indicated a strong preference for locally sourced bait – 79% preferred local bait even if it was more expensive. The reason for these preferences included a belief that it was better for the community (91%), 79% thought it was better for the local environment and 62% believed it was more effective in catching fish. In addition commercial wharves in the area are popular recreational fishing spots as well as tourist attractions.