



VALUING COASTAL FISHERIES
 Social and Economic Evaluation of NSW
 Coastal Professional Wild-Catch Fisheries
South Coast



The main fishing ports in the South Coast study area include Batemans Bay, Narooma, Bermagui and Eden. The area supports a diverse range of fisheries targeting a variety of species including 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 in South Coast communities according to seven dimensions of community wellbeing.

<p>Dimensions of wellbeing</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>A resilient local economy</p>	<p>The wild-catch industry on the South Coast generates more than \$28 million in revenue and over 350 full-time local jobs. This includes \$14m, and 150 jobs, from the industry and the businesses that service it, and a similar amount from the secondary processing, wholesale and retail sector.</p> <p>Eating out is one of the most popular activities undertaken by domestic visitors to the South Coast 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. In addition the working harbours of Bermagui and Eden provide an important tourism attraction, with Snug Cove in Eden considered one of the most significant tourism assets in the region by the Bega Valley Shire Council.</p> <p>Residents of the South Coast recognise the economic importance of the wild-catch industry to their region – 90% think it provides important employment opportunities, 86% believe it is an important industry for NSW. 88% of people believe that professional fishing plays an important part in tourism in their region through, for example, the supply of local seafood.</p>
<p>Community health and safety</p>	<p>Consumers on the South Coast have a strong preference for local product (46% prefer seafood sourced from their own town or region, 42% prefer Australian sourced seafood). Consumers from this area are some of the most likely in the state to often (51%) purchase local seafood. Most (62%) purchase seafood once a fortnight or more, with a preference for fish followed by prawns. 85% of people from this region indicated they would prefer local product as they believe it is better for their health. Fishermen from the area have also had an active role in community safety, including participating in daring rescues of sailors in the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race.</p>



<p>Education and knowledge generation</p>	<p>The Sapphire Coast Marine Discovery Centre in Eden was established as a way of bringing together fishers and scientists following a significant decline in the industry after the closure of the local cannery, coupled with industry restructures in the 1980s and 90s. It was designed to tap into the knowledge held by local fishermen and women in the Eden area.</p>
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The Sapphire Coast Marine Discovery Centre... was born out of the imminent closure of the Heinz Greenseas cannery and the impact that was going to have socially and economically on the town... So, for that specific project, overwhelmingly the message was coming to us through consultation with the community and with the fishing community, that there is a pool of knowledge within the fishing community, over several generations, that was really, really valuable data, but it wasn't rigorously supported in the science community. So our idea was to match science with fishermen, and that's still building.

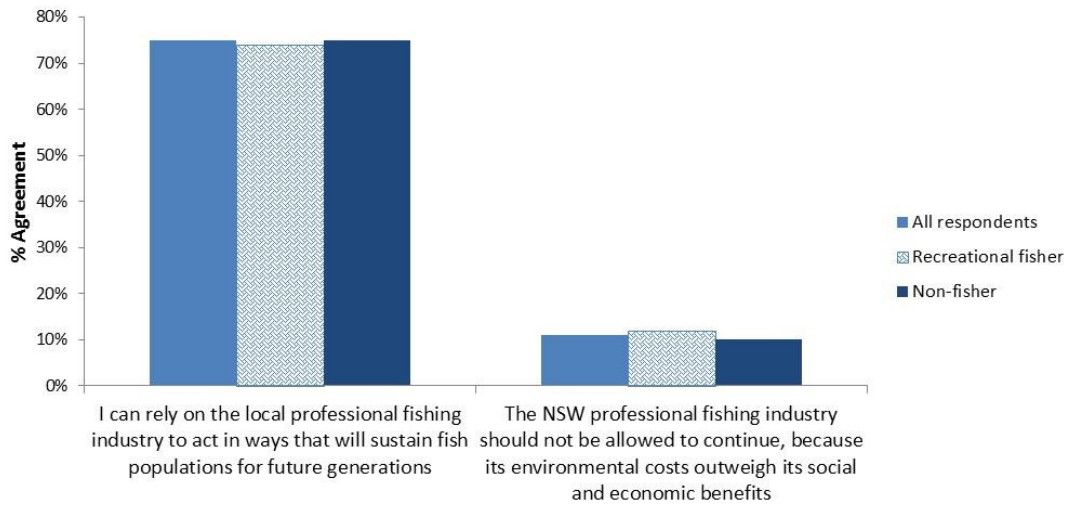
Member of tourism body (070515_4) South Coast

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 South Coast operates under a range of regulatory and voluntary controls aimed at minimising its environmental impact. The majority of the South Coast community supports the continuation of their local industry and believes the industry can be relied on to act in a sustainable manner.



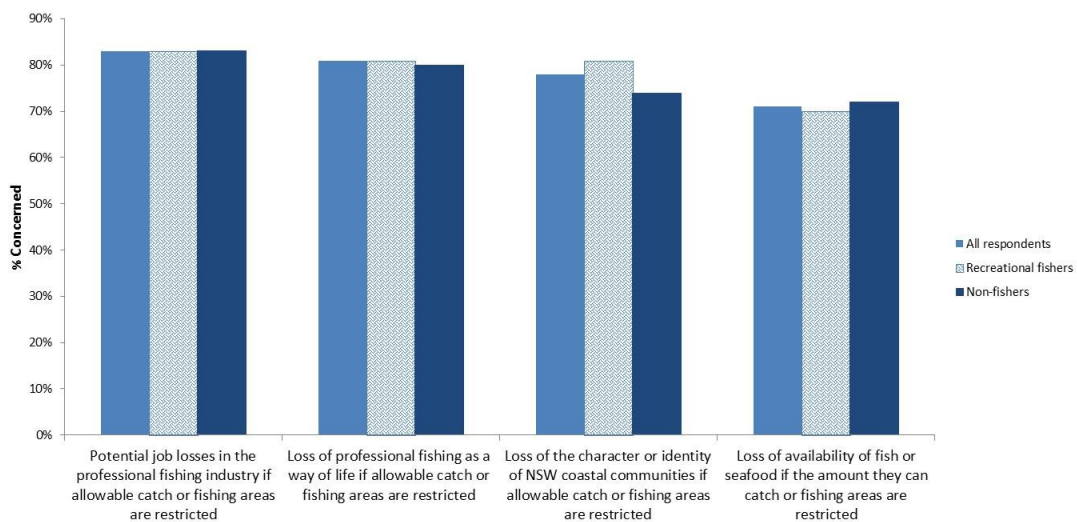
Integrated, culturally diverse and vibrant communities

The fishing industry plays an active role in South Coast communities. The Bermagui co-op and other fish merchant businesses like Southlands in Eden provide sponsorship and donations – especially ice – to local sporting and community groups. The South Coast professional fishing industry is also particularly significant to local Indigenous communities who have had a long history of involvement.

Seafood forms an important component of cultural celebrations and recreation in the South Coast, especially over the summer period – 74% of residents purchased seafood the preceding Christmas, and 77% during the summer holiday period (excluding Christmas/New Year). Other celebrations and cultural events also involved seafood consumption including Easter (73%), New Years Eve (53%) and Australia Day (46%).

Cultural heritage and community identity

The fishing industry is an important part of the history of the region and the port areas of Eden and Bermagui in particular have strong ties to the industry as working harbours from which fishing operations were conducted. The Eden Killer Whale museum is a popular tourism attraction which tracks the history of the industry in the region. Residents expressed high levels of concern over the loss of community identity (79% concerned) and the loss of a ‘way of life’ for fishers (85% concerned) if fishing were to be further restricted.



Leisure and recreation

Nearly a half (45%) of residents surveyed on the South Coast were recreational fishers. They indicated a strong preference for locally sourced bait – 78% 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%), 85% also thought it was better for the local environment and 59% believed it was more effective in catching fish. The infrastructure established in Eden and Bermagui to service the wild-catch industry - such as wharves, slipways and jetties - are also popular with recreational users as fishing platforms and sources of fuel and provisions for recreational vessels.