

Frequently Asked Questions about Ecotrust and our role in the MLPA Process

1. Who is Ecotrust?

Ecotrust's mission is to inspire fresh thinking that creates economic, social and environmental well-being. Ecotrust works on conservation and economic development from Alaska to California by investing in the distinctive natural advantages of individuals, businesses and communities. Through that investment we seek to inspire new innovations that lead to long-term, reliable prosperity for life in all its forms. Founded in 1991 and based in Portland, Oregon, Ecotrust works in five programmatic areas: Fisheries, Forestry, Native Programs, Food & Farms and Knowledge Systems.

2. What is Ecotrust's motivation for collecting this information? Is Ecotrust neutral?

Ecotrust is a non-profit organization working to find innovative solutions to environmental challenges that balance ecological, economic, and social outcomes. We believe that you cannot achieve robust conservation outcomes without paying attention to the livelihoods of people affected. We pursue both grant funded and contract work where we can help balance this equation. Our motivation is to provide sound economic, environmental, and socially equitable analyses as a part of the projects on which we work.

3. Why participate?

This project is designed to utilize the expert knowledge of commercial and recreational fishermen to influence the decision-making process for designating marine protected areas (MPAs) off coastal California in accordance with the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA), and to consider the socioeconomic impacts of marine reserves on commercial and recreational fisheries as part of the MPA selection process. Without your participation and the participation of other fishermen, the policy-makers would be forced to base their decisions around where to place marine protected areas on the limited data currently available. Using the better, more spatially refined information from the fishermen interviewed for the Ecotrust project helps overcome the "garbage in, garbage out" problem that has plagued other marine planning processes.

Recreational fishermen (other than Commercial Passenger Fishing Vehicles, or CPFVs) can sign up to participate at www.ecotrust.org/mlpa/interviewsignup. Commercial and CPFV fishermen can contact Charles Steinback (charles@ecotrust.org or 971.404.5632) or Jon Bonkoski (jbongoski@ecotrust.org or 503.467.0804) to set up an in-person interview with Ecotrust field staff.

4. Why tell the truth? Does Ecotrust cross-reference information from other sources to ensure accuracy?

Fishermen have every incentive to tell the truth. If fishermen provide false data, they risk losing their fishing grounds by rendering them invisible to decision makers. Any misrepresentation has the potential to do more harm than good, recreating the "garbage in, garbage out" problem. We have designed our methods to minimize this problem, and we work closely with fishermen and a regional stakeholder group to validate and verify the information collected. Your willingness to participate is vital to the success of this project. We appreciate your participation, as well as you referring us to other fishermen to contact.

5. Why should I provide information about ALL of my fishing sites as opposed to looking at use patterns for only those areas that have been identified as requiring protection? Will the data I provide be used against me?

Providing information for all areas you fish allows us to calculate the cumulative impact of all closures (i.e., both existing and proposed). We also provide analyses in our evaluation that consider just the fishing grounds inside state waters as compared to total fishing grounds. The data will be displayed publicly to the Regional Stakeholder Group (RSG) as they begin to design their MPA proposals. The data will be presented to the RSG in aggregated form only, reviewed and verified by the fishing community. Individual information will never be used in a public setting. Also, we have strict protocols in place to prevent the data from being used by third parties, including the State.

6. How are commercial fishermen identified?

Once we stratify our sample by how the commercial fisheries are managed, we use CDFG landing receipts to identify commercial fishermen.

7. How are recreational fishermen identified?

We work with the MLPA Initiative and CDFG, and experts from the recreational fishing community to understand the various user groups within the North Coast study region. We then use this information to help us stratify our sample in such a way so as to be broadly representative of all the major user groups. CPFV fishermen are identified using CDFG information.

8. How do you identify the "right" commercial fishermen and distinguish local fleets from traveling fleets? Do the geographic groups take into account traveling fishermen?

Ecotrust will compare landing port and residence location information for each commercial fisherman interviewed to identify and categorize the fleets. Initially, we consult the landing receipts to obtain landing port versus home port information. We also confirm this information during the interview.

9. Who decides on the fisheries?

Ecotrust work with the study region fishing community, the MLPA Initiative, and the CDFG to identify the fisheries. We focus our efforts on fisheries that are at least partially conducted in state waters, are of economic importance, have at least some benthic habitat impact, and/or are not well captured spatially by existing data sets. Most of the fisheries are obvious from the landing data, but we supplement this with other information. Suggestions are welcome and will be considered.

10. How can you capture information for fisheries that no longer exist?

This information can be collected as non-spatial data. For example, we ask additional questions about the fisheries in which fishermen used to, but no longer, participate.

11. MPA packages affect some fisheries and fishermen more than others — in some cases, comprising 100% of their fishing grounds. Despite the full coverage, many of these commercial fishermen don't produce high revenues. How does the process accommodate disproportionately affected commercial fishermen?

The Blue Ribbon Task Force and the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) Commissioners have expressed great interest in wanting these disproportionately affected commercial fisheries and/or commercial fishermen brought to their attention. Ecotrust pointed out particular instances of this issue in the Central Coast process, and fully incorporated these factors into the North Central Coast and South Coast processes. An evaluation of individual commercial fishermen who would be disproportionately affected will also be a component of the North Coast process.

12. Does the number of fishermen include only those surveyed, or is it an extrapolated assessment?

The number includes only those surveyed. Survey responses can be used to extrapolate if appropriate.

13. Can this data be used in monitoring the MPAs after the initial development of the network?

Updates and annual interviews are possible if authorized and incorporated into the CDFG monitoring plan.

14. How do you take into account the potential for federal regulation to change the location of fishing grounds now or in the future?

Fishermen are asked to describe their fishing grounds based on their cumulative experience and to identify all fishing areas/locations of economic importance, disregarding any political boundary (state waters) and current restricted areas. This data can then be used to evaluate changes to area-based regulations during the monitoring and adaptation phases of the MLPA process.

Frequently Asked Questions about the Interview Process

15. How long will the interview take and what can I expect?

The length of an interview varies depending on the number of fisheries in which you participate. They can be as quick as 30 minutes or as long as two hours.

In-person interviews are conducted by two field staff and fishing grounds are mapped directly onto a laptop. If you have your vessel documentation numbers and fishing license number, please bring those to your interview.

Recreational fishermen who do not have the time and/or would prefer not to meet in-person for an interview can still participate in the process by completing an online survey. Please sign-up for this at www.ecotrust.org/mlpa/interviewsignup.

16. How is Ecotrust handling confidentiality issues?

In terms of data collection, we thoroughly train our field staff in handling confidential information and making use of data-securing technologies, such as password protected files that limit access to Ecotrust staff persons only. The data remains the property of the fisherman who provided it. In the North Coast process, as was the case in the South Coast and North Central Coast processes, final products will be reviewed and verified by the fishing community before released to the public.

17. My fishing grounds change season to season, how can I possibly capture that?

We recognize this question requires some thought; however, we want you to think about what areas, historical and currently, are most important to you, regardless of seasons, weather, closures, or limits. If your areas change annually or semi-annually, we suggest thinking about what areas you either consistently find yourself going back to or wish you could return to but cannot because of closures.

18. I fish multiple fisheries in the same area; do I have to drawn multiple shapes and assign them each a penny value?

Yes, unfortunately at this time you will need to draw each overlapping shape separately for each fishery. This may be addressed in the future, if time allows; however, as it stands now you will need to draw each fishery one at a time and provide a penny value for each shape.

19. If I draw my shapes too large, will I dilute the value of my areas by spreading my pennies too thin?

This is difficult to answer because yes, indeed, you will be spreading the value of your pennies over the entirety of your shape. It is important to depict your fishing grounds as accurately as possible, but we understand there are limitations to the map tool we provide. We just ask that you take your time and do the best you can.

Frequently Asked Questions about Prior Study Regions

20. Is there a report that describes this project?

Yes. A final [report](#) was submitted to the MLPA Initiative staff that included descriptions of our work on the Central Coast, as well as peer-review reports by project reviewers with experience publishing similar work. Links to these reports, as well as to the North Central Coast report and the South Coast report (forthcoming) can be found on our website.

21. Has Ecotrust collected data from recreational fishermen prior to the North Coast study region?

Yes, we collected recreational fishing data for the South Coast and North Central Coast study regions.

22. What direction did Ecotrust take from the Science Advisory Team (SAT) during the North Central Coast process?

The SAT guided Ecotrust to use the same statistics in our reporting as it would use to evaluate each of packages.

23. Some fishermen in the Central Coast region summarized their experience with the MLPA process by saying, "negotiating openly, and revealing our prime fishing spots resulted in them being targeted for closure." – What was Ecotrust's role in the Central Coast process?

Ecotrust was contracted to do work late in the Central Coast process and the information we provided was not used effectively — because of time pressures we were not able to bring the information to stakeholders until after they had drafted closures, and it ended up only being used to evaluate the proposals. In addition, Ecotrust was not asked to conduct interviews or evaluate the consumptive dive fishery (commercial or recreational) in the Central Coast process.

The North Central Coast and South Coast processes provide a better example of the analyses we provide — there, stakeholders used the information in the design phase, and our iterative evaluations of proposals were used by them to lower socioeconomic impacts to commercial and recreational fishing communities while still meeting other requirements (e.g. size, spacing, and habitat type).