

ALLIANCE OF COMMUNITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES

Press Release

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STUDY RESULTS SHOW STRONG SUPPORT FOR CALIFORNIA'S FISHING INDUSTRY

MONTEREY, Calif. – April 11, 2007 – A recent study of 801 Californians, conducted by Responsive Management, a nationally recognized public opinion and attitude survey research firm, on behalf of the **Alliance of Communities for Sustainable Fisheries (ACSF)** showed overwhelming support for local, sustainably harvested seafood and family-run fishing operations. The telephone survey evaluated Californians' opinions on and attitudes toward commercial and recreational fishing in coastal areas of California, the ecological health of California's coastal fisheries and wildlife, and fisheries and wildlife management along the coast.

According to the results of the study, two-thirds of Californians (66%) disagree that fishing harms the ocean. There was much more support (by more than 2 to 1) for allowing fishing in all areas, with science-based limits on the total harvest (68% support this position) over fully protecting (i.e., prohibiting *all* harvesting in) some areas with the concomitant result that fishermen would concentrate their fishing in remaining open areas (24%). In simple terms, Californians support *harvest limitations over complete harvest bans*.

Respondents were asked to directly rate the importance of commercial fishing to California's economy, and why they think it is important: a large majority, 79% rated commercial fishing at the midpoint or higher; only 17% rated it less than the midpoint. Many items reflect that the public does not blame family fishing for concerns about the ocean/fish populations, 59% consider foreign factory or large corporations as the type of fishing that is harming the ocean, 66% do not feel that fishing is even harming the ocean, 25% rated their concern for continuing family fishing at the highest level possible and 55% disagree that family fishing is harming the ocean.

Results illustrated that the public does not want to jeopardize the family fishing industry. Knowing that California fishing is more highly regulated than other countries, 82% would prefer to buy local and 63% would not be willing to buy imported seafood, if that meant putting California's family fishermen out of business. In response to the study's findings, Vern Goehring, manager of the California Fisheries Coalition of which the ACSF is a member stated, "It's difficult to understand why national conservation groups work in partnership with fishing in foreign countries, yet they seem not to care about marine protected areas and reserves in the U.S. that are driving small, local fishing businesses out of business."

When presented with the scenario where fish stocks are stable or already recovering, there was little support for a ban, as only 24% agree that commercial fishing should still be banned if scientific evidence shows that fish stocks are stable or already recovering (66% disagree). Slightly higher agreement (37%) was found when suggested that commercial fishing be banned while allowing recreational fishing, if scientific evidence shows that fish stocks are stable or already recovering (53% disagree). Kathy Fosmark, member of the Federal Pacific Fisheries Management Council and co-chairperson of the ACSF stated, "The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has reported, and science is telling us that there is no overfishing on the

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west coast of California. The seven fish stocks that had been declared overfished are in stock rebuilding plans that are already improving faster than predicted.”

In regard to fisheries and tourism, the survey found that working waterfronts are important for tourism in coastal towns, as a large majority of Californians (71%) agreed that they seek out and enjoy visiting working waterfronts in communities that have them; only 7% disagreed. "Perhaps the most important message in these study results is for policymakers. Californians overwhelmingly value the sustainable use of resources over policies that stop humans from using areas of the ocean. This study finding is consistent with communities such as the City of Monterey, where the City Council supports the management of sustainable fisheries." said Steve Scheiblauber, City of Monterey Harbormaster and ACSF member.

Several questions indicated the public's preference for "balance" in protecting fish populations. Study results favored moderation over the extreme of fully using or totally banning. 87% of respondents indicated that sustainability to them meant a "balanced" use over no use at all. Frank Emerson, co-chairman of the ACSF stated, "It is clear that Californian's concept of protection is not putting fishing areas off limits, but allowing for a reasonable amount of harvest.”

The ACSF is concerned that the Marine Life Protection Act initiative process has failed to consider the conservation benefits of existing fishing regulations and other factors detrimental to ocean health, including pollution. Study results show that 92% rated pollution in any form as a high or moderate threat to the ocean and 61% think wildlife viewers who interfere with wildlife are a threat.

According to Monterey fisherman and ACSF member Mike Ricketts, "This study shows that the State of California is out of step with the values of the majority of Californians when it comes to how the ocean will be protected, and in valuing the role of the family run commercial fishing businesses. The state officials are going to close 40% of the best fishing areas to fishing, yet Californians clearly want our ocean resources managed for sustainability, and not to exclude human use of large areas. Policymaker's actions will put many of these small fishing businesses out of business, and Californians will lose the ability to buy local, fresh fish.”

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Based in Monterey, California, the Alliance of Communities for Sustainable Fisheries (ACSF), a federally recognized 501 c (3) organization, advocates for the heritage and economic value of fishing to California coastal communities. To preserve and enhance that value, the ACSF offers a broadly representative educational and promotional voice for waterfront communities to work constructively with interested agencies, individuals, and other marine protection organizations in order to ascertain and guarantee that: the best and most current oceanographic, socio-economic and fisheries science is accurately compiled; that science is readily available to the public for use in crafting and promoting public policy; and that the linkage between healthy sustainable fisheries, marine conservation, and coastal communities is firmly established in the public mind. To learn more about the ACSF visit <http://www.alliancefisheries.org/>

The California Fisheries Coalition (CFC), partnered with the ACSF on this survey. The CFC was formed with a single purpose - to provide a mechanism for recreational and commercial fishing groups to work together in a proactive manner on the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) Initiative to ensure a credible, fair and science-based outcome. CFC consists of 23 ocean-dependent recreational and commercial fishing associations, seafood processors, abalone growers and kelp harvesters, contributing \$5.5 billion annually to California's economy. Coalition membership encompasses more than 14,000 commercial fishermen, in excess of 4,000 fishing vessels, several million recreational anglers and more than 200 seafood companies. Approximately 172,000 people are employed by CFC partner businesses. For more information, visit www.cafisheriescoalition.org or call (916) 444 – 8194.

Responsive Management, based in Harrisonburg, Virginia is a nationally recognized public opinion and attitude survey research firm specializing in natural resource and outdoor recreation issues. Their mission is to help natural resource and outdoor recreation agencies and organizations better understand and work with their constituents, customers and the public. Responsive Management has conducted almost 1,000 quantitative and qualitative projects over the past 20 years on natural resource, environmental, and outdoor recreation issues for organizations such as the National Wildlife Federation, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Ducks Unlimited. Clients include the federal natural resource and land management agencies, most state fish and wildlife agencies, state departments of natural resources, environmental protection agencies, state park agencies, tourism boards, as well as most of the major conservation and sportsmen's organizations. For more information, visit <http://www.responsivemanagement.com/index.html>