



# UNDERSTANDING RECREATIONAL ANGLER NEEDS FOR CALIFORNIA MPA OUTREACH & EDUCATION

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PREPARED BY THE CALIFORNIA MARINE SANCTUARY FOUNDATION



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# OVERVIEW

A survey was developed and broadcast to California's recreational angling community from January 2023 through November 2024 to gain a better understanding of needs and preferences as they relate to Marine Protected Area (MPA) education and outreach resources. Surveys were administered at the fishing expos, on social media, and through advertisements.

The results from the survey can be used to improve resources to meet the needs of anglers specifically and improve awareness of and compliance with MPAs, since different user groups respond to different outreach tools. Additionally, these results can help inform recommendations 15 (evaluate outreach needs, assess effectiveness of resources, and identify and pursue the most impactful and cost- efficient outreach tools for increasing MPA awareness and compliance) and 16a (work closely with fishing communities to identify the most effective communication channels and outreach materials for these audiences) from CDFW's list of [MPA Decadal Management Review Report recommendations](#).

## Goal:

Form a better understanding of saltwater recreational angler needs and preferences as they relate to MPA education and outreach resources.



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# METHODS



Needs were assessed using a semi-structured questionnaire that was distributed at four of Southern California's more prominent fishing expos, as well as through social media and on the Western Outdoor News platforms. A total of 270 anglers participated in the survey.

## DATA COLLECTION

A survey was developed that included a series of multiple choice, Likert-scale (a rating scale that allows for collection of attitudes, perceptions and opinions), and open ended questions focused on understanding fishing habits, preferences for receiving information, awareness of MPAs, and demographics. The surveys were available to take on paper or online through the Qualtrics survey platform. The target audience for the surveys was English-speaking adults (18 years or older).

## DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative results were analyzed using descriptive statistics, providing simple summaries about the raw data collected to describe the study population, and inferential statistics were used to explore differences among variables.

Qualitative questions acquired descriptive information that otherwise cannot be captured by quantitative questions. Qualitative data were analyzed using a thematic analysis, a method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns discovered through survey responses. Using coding categories, meaningful patterns and trends in responses were identified and grouped.





# FINDINGS





# OBTAINING INFORMATION

## Preferred Sources: Obtaining Saltwater Fishing Information

**Respondents were asked about their preferences for obtaining information about saltwater fishing in California.**

**Social media ranked the most popular**, followed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) website, newspaper articles, magazine articles, and podcasts.

- |                              |                                   |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. <b>Social media</b>       | 8. Television                     |
| 2. <b>CDFW Website</b>       | 9. Regulatory brochures           |
| 3. <b>Newspaper articles</b> | 10. Environmental groups          |
| 4. Magazine articles         | 11. Local meetings/ presentations |
| 5. Podcasts                  | 12. Other                         |
| 6. Radio                     |                                   |
| 7. Other websites            |                                   |

**To identify the outlets anglers frequent for saltwater fishing information, respondents were asked to specify the names of their favorite information sources.**

While many different sources were mentioned, **Western Outdoor News** was the most popular, followed by **social media**, in particular Instagram and local Facebook groups. **CDFW** was the next most mentioned source, followed by **Bloody Decks, Podcasts** (Phil Friedman and Cast and Crank), and **YouTube**.

**WESTERN  
OUTDOOR NEWS**  
EST. 1953



## Preferred Sources: Obtaining MPA Information

**Respondents were asked about their preferences for obtaining information about California's MPAs.**

**News articles ranked the most popular**, followed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) website, radio programs, and podcasts.

- |                       |                                     |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Newspaper articles | 7. Television                       |
| 2. CDFW website       | 8. Regulatory brochures             |
| 3. Radio programs     | 9. Other websites                   |
| 4. Podcasts           | 10. Environmental/community groups  |
| 5. Magazine articles  | 11. Local meetings or presentations |
| 6. Social media       |                                     |

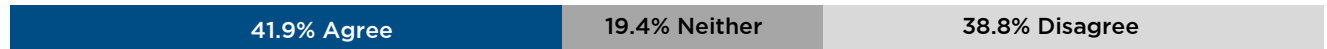




# ACCESSING MPA INFORMATION

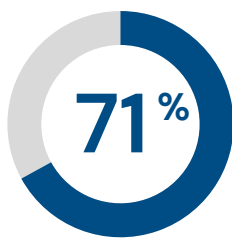
## Ease of Access: MPA Information

**Respondents were also asked if they think it is easy to access information about California's MPAs.** In particular, 41.9% agreed strongly (11.8%) or somewhat (30.1%) that it is easy to find and access information about California MPAs, while 38.8% disagreed strongly (15.1%) or somewhat (23.7%). Over 19% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.



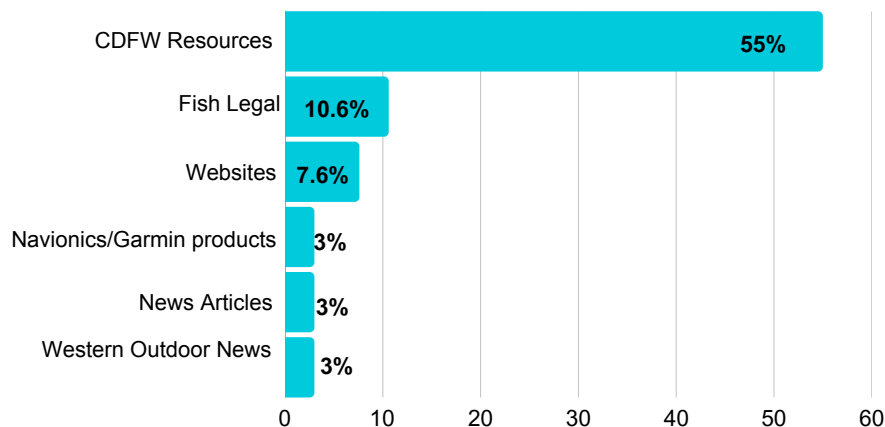
## ACCESSING MPA REGULATORY INFORMATION

**Respondents were asked if they have access to information that helps them understand regulations for California's MPA.**



said they have access to MPA information that helps them understand MPA regulations.

The 71% that responded they do have access to regulatory information were asked which resources they use to access regulation information. The most common answers were CDFW resources, in particular the website and interactive map, the FishLegal mobile app, websites (not specified), Garmin Navionics, news articles, and Western Outdoor News.



The 8.6% that responded that they do not have access to regulatory information were asked what resources they need to better understand California's MPA boundaries. Responses were limited, but included easily accessible websites, larger maps, more detailed information on fish and wildlife policy, an open forum with decision makers, and mobile sites that work when cell service is not available.

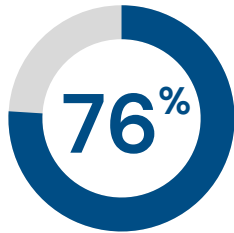
### Summary

A majority of respondents have access to MPA regulatory information, and most obtain this information from CDFW. Despite this, nearly 40% felt that accessing MPA information is not the easiest, so more could be done to make finding MPA information easier on recreational anglers.

# ACCESSING MPA INFORMATION

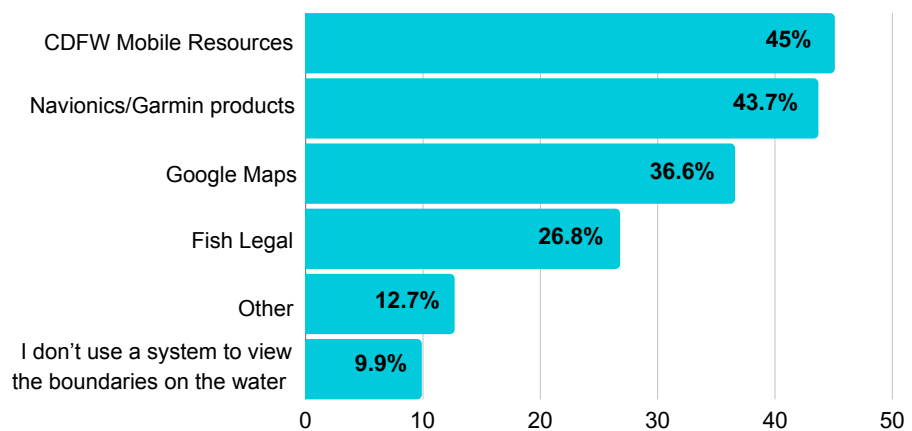
## ACCESSING MPA BOUNDARY INFORMATION

Respondents were asked if they have access to information that helps them understand California MPA boundaries.

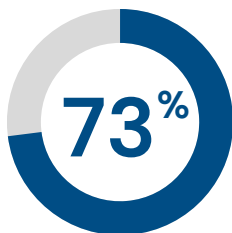


said they have access to MPA information that helps them understand MPA regulations.

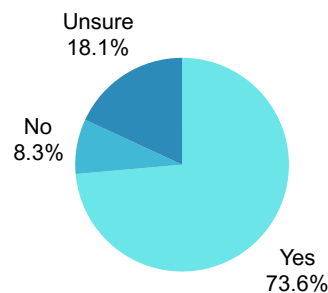
The 76.7% that responded they do have access to boundary information, were asked which resources they use to access regulation information. CDFW mobile resources were the most commonly utilized, followed by Navionics/Garmin products, Google Maps, and FishLegal.



Those that responded that they do have access to MPA boundary information, were asked about the ease of seeing the boundaries with the resources they use.



said that they are easily able to see the boundaries of the MPAs with the resources they use.



Those that responded that they do NOT have access to boundary information were asked what kind of resources they need to understand MPA boundaries. Responses were limited, but included easy access to maps on CDFW's website, large printed maps with more details, an easy to find link for CDFW resources, and buoys that mark the boundaries for ease of understanding when on the water.

### Summary

A majority of respondents have access to MPA boundary information, and most utilize CDFW mobile resources or Navionics. Respondents noted that the resources they use make it easy to see the boundaries of the MPAs. Those that mentioned they do not have access to MPA boundary information are interested in improved access to CDFW's resources, specifically maps, and offering a resource that works when there is no cell service available.

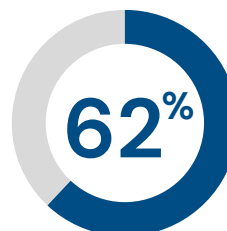


# INVOLVEMENT IN MANAGEMENT

## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN MPA MANAGEMENT

Respondents were asked if they feel well informed about opportunities for public involvement in marine protected area (MPA) management.

Of the respondents, 62% said they do not feel well informed about opportunities for public involvement in MPA management, while 21.7% feel well informed, and 16.3% were unsure. This showcases the need for increased outreach about opportunities as they arise.



said they **do not** feel well informed about opportunities to get involved in MPA management

Respondents were also asked if there is anything that would help them feel more informed about opportunities for public involvement.

34.4% Yes

25.8% No

39.8% Unsure

While a majority of respondents were unsure of what might help them feel more informed about opportunities for involvement, 34% did feel they could use something else to keep them informed. Those who answered yes were asked to offer ideas. The overarching theme of the majority of comments had to do with **increased outreach through channels anglers already frequent**. Suggestions included social media announcements, notices at local bait and tackle shops and charter companies, an email newsletter that specifically highlights opportunities for involvement, and announcements on fishing podcasts, fishing radio shows, and in magazines. Respondents also asked for easier ways to participate, including local public meetings and increased opportunities for involvement with research.

### Summary

Most respondents indicated that they do not feel well informed about opportunities to get involved in MPA management. To fill this gap, the overarching suggestion was to increase outreach through channels anglers already frequent, such as on social media, podcasts, radio shows, in magazines. Additionally, some suggested developing a newsletter dedicated to highlighting opportunities for involvement including Fish and Game Commission meetings and public comment periods.

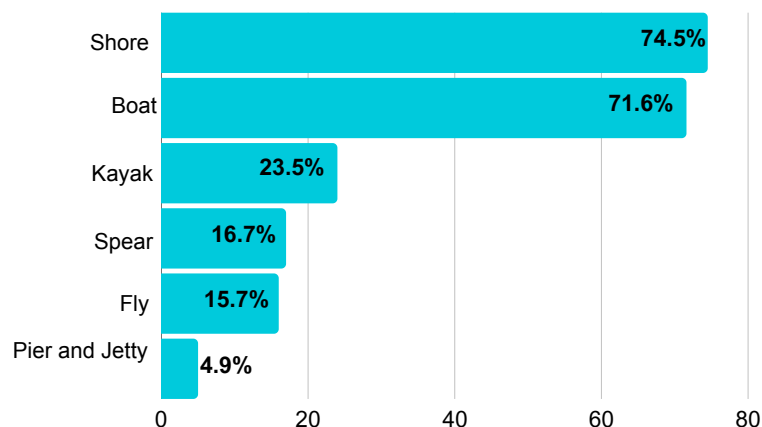


# FISHING DEMOGRAPHICS

## Fishing Type

**Respondents were asked what kind of fishing they participate in.**

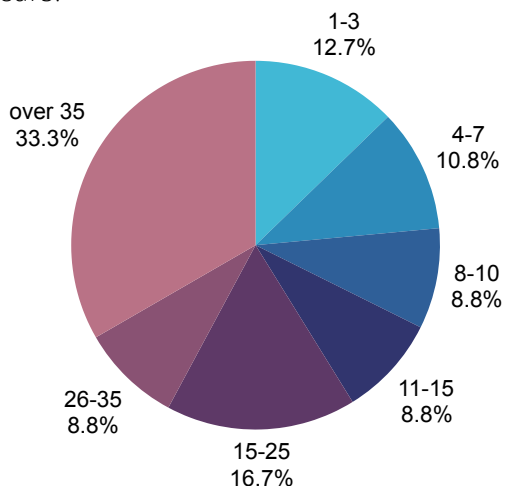
Most respondents participate in shore fishing, followed by boat and kayak. The least common type of fishing participated in were fishing from piers and jetties.



## Years of Fishing Experience

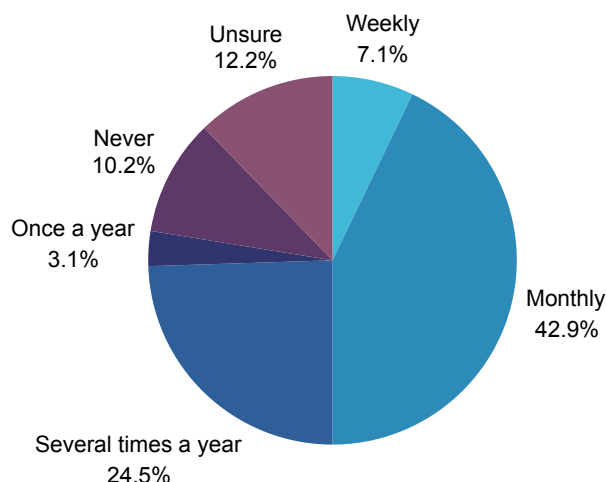
**Respondents were asked how many years of saltwater fishing experience they have.**

A majority of respondents have fished for over 35 years.



## Frequency of Visits to MPAs that Allow Fishing

**Respondents were asked how often they visit MPAs that allow fishing.** A majority of respondents visit monthly.



## Location of Fishing

**Respondents were asked what coastal counties they fish in.** A majority of respondents frequent the coastal counties of Southern California.

San Diego	Orange	Los Angeles	Ventura	Catalina	Santa Barbara	Channel Islands	San Luis Obispo	Monterey	Santa Cruz
63.4%	53.5%	51.5%	48.5%	42.6%	37.6%	35.6%	22.8%	17.8%	12.9%
Marin	San Francisco	Sonoma	Humboldt	Mendocino	San Mateo	Del Norte			
10.9%	10.9%	6.9%	5.9%	5.9%	5.9%	2.0%			





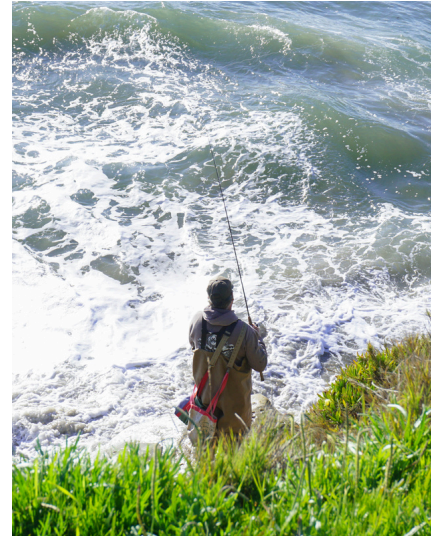
# RECOMMENDATIONS





### INSERT INFORMATION AT OUTLETS ANGLERS ALREADY FREQUENT

Nearly 40% of respondents felt that accessing MPA information is not the easiest, so more could be done to make finding MPA information easier on recreational anglers. To improve access, we recommend working with sources and outlets anglers already frequent to include MPA information, whether relevant to regulations and boundaries or opportunities for involvement. This could be on social media channels and local fishing Facebook groups, in fishing newspaper and magazine articles, and on fishing podcasts and radio shows. Popular outlets that were mentioned in survey responses include Western Outdoor News, Bloody Decks, Pacific Coast Sportfishing magazine, The Log, Phil Friedman's podcast, Cast and Crank, and Chasing Pelagics YouTube.



### IMPROVING RESOURCES FOR MPA REGULATIONS AND BOUNDARIES

Most respondents expressed that they have access to MPA regulatory and boundary information, but, when asked if there is anything that could help them access this information, a recurring theme was the mention of a resource that will work in areas where there is no cell service.

### IMPROVING AWARENESS OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVOLVEMENT

Most respondents indicated that they do not feel well informed about opportunities to get involved in MPA management. To fill this gap, the overarching suggestion was to increase outreach through channels anglers already frequent, such as those mentioned above. Additionally, some suggested developing a newsletter dedicated to highlighting opportunities for involvement including Fish and Game Commission meetings and public comment periods. Contributing resources toward the development of these ideas could have a lasting impact for recreational anglers who would like to be more involved.







# QUESTIONS?

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