Economic Effects of Climate Shift and California Climate Policy on Fishermen

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For generations, fishermen have adapted to changing ocean conditions, including those driven by major El Niño and La Niña events. Presently the lack of real-time adaptive fishery management and loss of local infrastructure now hinder fishermen's ability to respond to changing ocean conditions. A notable example occurred in 2014, when an El Niño event shifted large populations of market squid north to Humboldt County. Despite market squid abundance, local fishermen were not permitted to take squid due to the removal of the two ton "open access" provision in the Market Squid Management Plan. Southern California fleets traveled to Humboldt County and caught 4.5 million pounds of squid. While the squid was landed in the port of Eureka, the absence of processing and freezing facilities necessitated trucking of both squid and ice between Salinas and Eureka. This created a massive carbon footprint for this fishery with minimal local economic benefits.

Similarly, the absence of cold storage facilities in Northern California has forced the albacore fishery to deliver "frozen at sea" catches to Washington state. These missed opportunities reflect a need for forward-looking infrastructure investments in our community.

State climate policies also pose economic risks to North Coast fishing communities. Offshore wind (OSW) development alone, threatens to eliminate five thousand square miles of fishing grounds north of Mendocino. California's 30x30 conservation initiative advocates for more areas closed to fishing including additional and expanded marine protected areas(MPA's). While MPAs may support biodiversity, they do nothing to prevent ocean warming or biological damage from all forms of human caused pollution. Meanwhile, OSW and other ocean industrialization projects raise concerns about impacts on ocean productivity, long-term carbon costs, and cleanup responsibilities.

The California Fishermen's Resilience Association (CFRA) was created to help fishermen engage directly with developers and agencies. Structured for transparency and inclusivity, CFRA advocates for cooperative industry-to-industry agreements that recognize California fishing community needs in state permitting and ocean planning.

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[1] The California Fishermen's Resiliency Association (CFRA), formed in 2022, represents 16 fishermen's organizations in negotiations between private developers and state and federal agencies over ocean development. The CFRA inclusively and democratically represents all fishing gear types and fisheries through its 16 member associations from Crescent City to San Diego, CA; however, no one entity can perfectly capture all experiences and opinions within a given industry or community. Furthermore, the term *fishermen* as used below is inclusive of both our fishing men and women.

To support economic and climate resilience in fishing communities, CFRA urges policymakers to:

1. Require OSW developers and other ocean users to negotiate legally binding industry-to-industry agreements with fishermen's organizations, as outlined in SB 286 (McGuire, 2023) and supported by California Coastal Commission guidance.

2. Restore and modernize critical port infrastructure, including freezing, cold storage and ice facilities, to ensure Northern California ports can land and process catches locally.

3. Provide direct access to state and federal infrastructure and climate adaptation funds to support long-term resilience and prevent fishing industry displacement.

Without these steps, climate adaptation and clean energy policy risk further eroding the livelihoods and traditions of coastal fishing communities.

References

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