November/December, 2026

From Ken Bates

Co-Executive Director, CFRA



The CFRA is excited to announce a major initiative.

To begin at the beginning, the world's coastal oceans are increasingly bombarded with industrial development projects, including the conversion of community fishing grounds to energy generation, desalination projects, fish farms, and oil and gas extraction. California's coastal fishing communities face all of these pressures.

Under the direction of Senate Bill 286 (McGuire), the California Coastal Commission conducted 60 meetings over a two-year period to develop a statewide strategy to better "avoid, minimize, and mitigate" negative impacts on commercial, recreational, and tribal fisheries. The strategy included a socioeconomic mitigation model designed to help assess the impacts of fishing ground loss.

The CFRA is now funding a hypothetical trial run of this socioeconomic impact methodology. This important work is being conducted under contract with Northern Economics, Inc., and is made possible by a redirection of Ocean Protection Council grant funds intended to foster cooperation between the fishing industry and offshore wind development.

The trial run requires extensive fisheries landing data covering a significant period of time to evaluate two hypothetical losses of fishing grounds, defined by CDFW fishing blocks: one in Northern California and one in Southern California. The goal is to determine whether this socioeconomic methodology can help quantify both the economic value of the fisheries resources and the value those resources bring to

the adjacent fishing communities that could be affected by a hypothetical ocean industrialization project. For more, see the interview with Northern Economics economist Melissa Errend below.

While this is, as they say, “only a test,” it is an important place to start. Developing a better understanding of how to document the value of fishing grounds is essential to evaluating the potential consequences of industrial development in our coastal waters.

This Month's Pretty Photo



Do you know this pretty little anchorage spot?

Noteworthy articles

*National Fisherma*n examines attempts to hold on to fishing grounds amidst the push for competing Blue Economy uses: https://www.nationalfisherman.com/holding-fishing-grounds-lessons-learned-in-california

The proposed Humboldt Bay Heavy Lift Terminal is now in a public comments phase. For a good overview of what is being proposed, see the brief here by *Humboldt Waterkeeper:* https://tinyurl.com/y3cxs94v. If Humboldt's fishermen are worried, local oyster farmers are deeply concerned. From the *Eureka Times-Standard* (which has a paywall starting at a dollar): https://www.times-standard.com/2026/10/15/we-are-the-watchdogs-for-the-bay-aquaculture-concerns-raised-in-offshore-wind-webinar/. The Wiyot tribe, who have lived on the bay for thousands of years, also have concerns. From the *Lost Coast Outpost:* https://tinyurl.com/3eka7vnc.

NOAA Seeks Fishermen Input

NOAA's Northwest and Southwest Fisheries Science Centers are preparing their annual Ecosystem Status Report for the Pacific Fishery Management Council, regional partners, and coastal communities. These reports are designed to give managers a more complete picture of conditions in the California Current marine ecosystem.

The Science Centers are looking for fishing industry input, with a focus on unusual or unexpected conditions observed during the 2026 fishing season. They've set up an email address (CaCurrent.Observations@noaa.gov) where fishermen can share their observations directly with the team that prepares the Ecosystem Status Report.

Examples of helpful observations include:

- Did you see species in different places, different depths, or at different times of the year than you normally see them?
- Were water temperatures warmer/colder than normal, or were there any other unusual environmental conditions that you observed?
- Are you catching anything new or unusual?
- What are you seeing in the diet/stomachs of fish you catch?
- Are operating costs and the overall level of effort and participation for your focal fisheries different this year as compared to previous years? Have any new challenges or obstacles emerged?

https://www.integratedecosystemassessment.noaa.gov/regions/california-current/fishing-industry-input-needed-2026-27-california-current-ecosystem



An Interview with Northern Economics Economist Melissa Errend (photo above)

Michael Kraft

Kraft: I think of you as a fisheries economist. Would you call yourself a fisheries economist?

Errend: I would call myself that, but with a caveat. I am at my core, interdisciplinary, since my background spans marine science, policy, management, and economics. I started out as a marine biology major, interested in the world's ocean problems. I then took some higher-level courses in the field. What I noticed was the need to find solutions that work for both people and the planet. I started taking environmental economics classes and said, "aha, this is it!" It's not just about money; it's about allocating scarce resources. It's an approach that can help solve problems. I really love that economics provides a lens to support better decision-making, and fisheries management is where I've worked to do that most closely.

Kraft: You've spent time in interesting government positions as well as the private sector. Compare & contrast.

Errend: I have worked mostly in government, and I even started out between grad school and my professional career with a Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship on Capitol Hill in US Senator Maria Cantwell's office. This was through Oregon Sea Grant. It put me directly into the belly of the beast for fisheries and oceans policymaking. I was a part of her fisheries and oceans team, four people who were working almost exclusively on fisheries and oceans, including Coast Guard issues. After my fellowship, I went back to the West Coast (I actually did three cross country moves in three years). I went from Oregon to DC, and then I moved back to Seattle to work for NOAA Fisheries. I worked in the

Northwest Fisheries Science Center reviewing the performance of the West Coast Groundfish Trawl Catch Share Program. From there, I moved to New England to work on the reform of the monitoring program for the New England groundfish fishery. If you ever heard of the Codfather (a massive seafood fraud case), that was what was going on in the context of my move to the East Coast and living and working in Woods Hole. As a consultant, I now have studied catch-share programs all over the country. As for comparing and contrasting, I love the diversity of private sector work. It is so interesting to be able to work with not only a diversity of projects all over the country, but also clients.

Kraft: The CFRA has contracted with Northern Economics to conduct an economic case study. What does the modeling project seek to do?
Errend: I would say that what this project is intended to do is better demonstrate the socioeconomic impact methodology that was produced through the statewide strategy for the coexistence of California fishing communities and offshore wind. It seeks to better communicate what that actually will look like when it's put in place. It really is looking to help fishing communities and fishermen better anticipate the types of outputs that are likely to be produced during those exercises so that they can incorporate that into their planning.

Kraft: What are some of the challenges and nuances of the project you're working on for the Ocean Protection Council & CFRA?
Errend: The biggest challenge is that it's hypothetical and it is way before the real analyses will happen. Sometime over the next decade when there would be more reasonable certainty of any one of these projects moving forward, there will be so much more information and there will be certainly a lot of tools that will be developed to assist with evaluating social and economic impacts. So doing this before any of that has really

social and economic impacts. So doing this before any of that has really been done is a challenge in and of itself. But I would say hopefully this exercise will assist all of those that will be developing those tools and working on that. In addition, this is really the first stress test of what do we need, what types of information, how can we fill some of these gaps or make some improvements on the data and tools that are currently available. This project is really the first time that we'll be getting a look at that.

Kraft: I noticed on your LinkedIn profile that you're a scuba diver. Done any diving recently?

Errend: Oh, I wish that I could say yes. My move to the East Coast had a strong negative effect on my scuba diving career. Moving out here and not knowing a lot of scuba divers and not being close to my scuba diving community back home made it challenging. And at least from my experience in East Coast “tide pools,” I'm not convinced that there's nearly as much to see as there is on the West Coast. People always ask about the mountains and my views of East Coast to West Coast mountains, and I now can say I have a more nuanced understanding and appreciation for East Coast mountains. But as for the underwater landscapes, I think that's West Coast all the way.

Most Recent Board Report

All CFRA board reports are published. Here is the most recent one, for the third quarter of 2026.

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