

Accounting for the fuller value of Monterey Bay area fisheries

Carrie Pomeroy, Marine Advisor
California Sea Grant Extension Program
UCCE Santa Cruz County
June 2007

California fisheries contribute substantial and diverse economic benefits to fishing communities, the state and the nation. In measuring the economic value of commercial fisheries, there is a tendency to cite only the “ex-vessel” value – the price paid to fishermen for their catch. This is only part of fisheries’ economic value, however: processing and distribution add substantially to that value.

Economist Michael Dalton and I recently completed a study of the “market channels and value added to fish landed at Monterey Bay ports.” The project objectives were to estimate the value added to fish landed at Moss Landing, Monterey and Santa Cruz harbors, as the fish moved from fishermen to processors, packagers, distributors and seafood retailers, and to map the “spatial distribution” of fishing activity in the region. This information can be used to help policymakers assess the consequences of resource management, as required by state and federal law.

To estimate the “value-added” for Monterey Bay fisheries, we collected and analyzed commercial fishing data, processors’ expenditures and revenues, and local retail seafood prices. We also interviewed fish buyers about the history of their businesses, facilities, numbers of employees, top customers, and sources of goods and services. In addition, local harbor masters provided information on commercial fishing and processing activities at their respective harbors.

Our results provide some key insights into the distribution of fishing activity at and beyond each of the three ports, and the economic value and diversity of fishing operations in Monterey Bay. For example, between 1998 and 2003, Moss Landing was the center of fishing activity in the region, with an average annual ex-vessel value of almost \$6 million. Comparable values for Monterey and Santa Cruz were \$2 million and <\$1 million, respectively. Moss Landing also had the most fish buyers, averaging 61 per year (Santa Cruz had 39 and Monterey, 21).

In 2003, the estimated ex-vessel value of the region’s commercial fisheries was about \$10 million. The value added by processors and vendors was about \$36 million and \$24 million, respectively, for a total value added of \$60 million. California market squid was the biggest contributor to these values, followed by salmon, albacore and sablefish, with several other fisheries playing a role as well.

Much of the catch landed at Monterey Bay ports is processed outside of Monterey and Santa Cruz counties. Of the fish processed in Monterey and Santa Cruz counties, much is sold to vendors in other counties, particularly to businesses around San Francisco Bay

and further north.

The Monterey Bay area hosts a diversity of fisheries, with sizeable value being added locally and farther afield. Fishing activity is greater at Moss Landing than at the other two harbors, but each harbor has its own niche. Together these make Monterey Bay a dynamic area for fisheries.

Note: The complete technical report is available at:

http://repositories.cdlib.org/csgc/rcr/MA05_01. The project was supported in part by the National Sea Grant College Program (NOAA Grant No. NA06RG0142, project R/MA-43), through the California Sea Grant College Program.