

THE VALUE OF COASTAL FISHERIES THE NSW SOUTH COAST

The South Coast extends from Kioloa south to the Victorian border. The main fishing ports include Batemans Bay, Narooma, Bermagui and Eden. The area supports a diverse range of fisheries including ocean trap and line, Lobster, ocean haul, a seasonal longline tuna fishery and a general estuary fishery.

\$ A STRONG ECONOMY

The professional fishing industry contributes more than \$28 million in revenue annually and over 355 full-time jobs to the South Coast economy. 86% of residents believe the industry is important for their area and 88% feel it is also good for tourism, with locally-caught fish a favourite among tourists and locals.

K KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Learning to be a fisher is a complex and lifelong process. Fishers learn by trial and error or through knowledge handed down through the generations. The Sapphire Coast Marine Discovery Centre in Eden was established so scientists could tap into the knowledge held by fishers in the local area.

B FRESH, LOCAL SEAFOOD

- > 97% of South Coast residents agree that it is important we produce our own seafood in NSW
- > 83% want to know where their seafood comes from
- > 100% of South Coast residents surveyed believe buying local seafood is better for their local community.

H CULTURAL HERITAGE

Many towns dotted along the South Coast evolved from professional fishing communities and still identify with their fishing heritage. The working harbours of Bermagui and Eden remain important civic focal points and tourist attractions. 79% of residents are concerned that the industry's decline could lead to a loss of community identity.

E PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

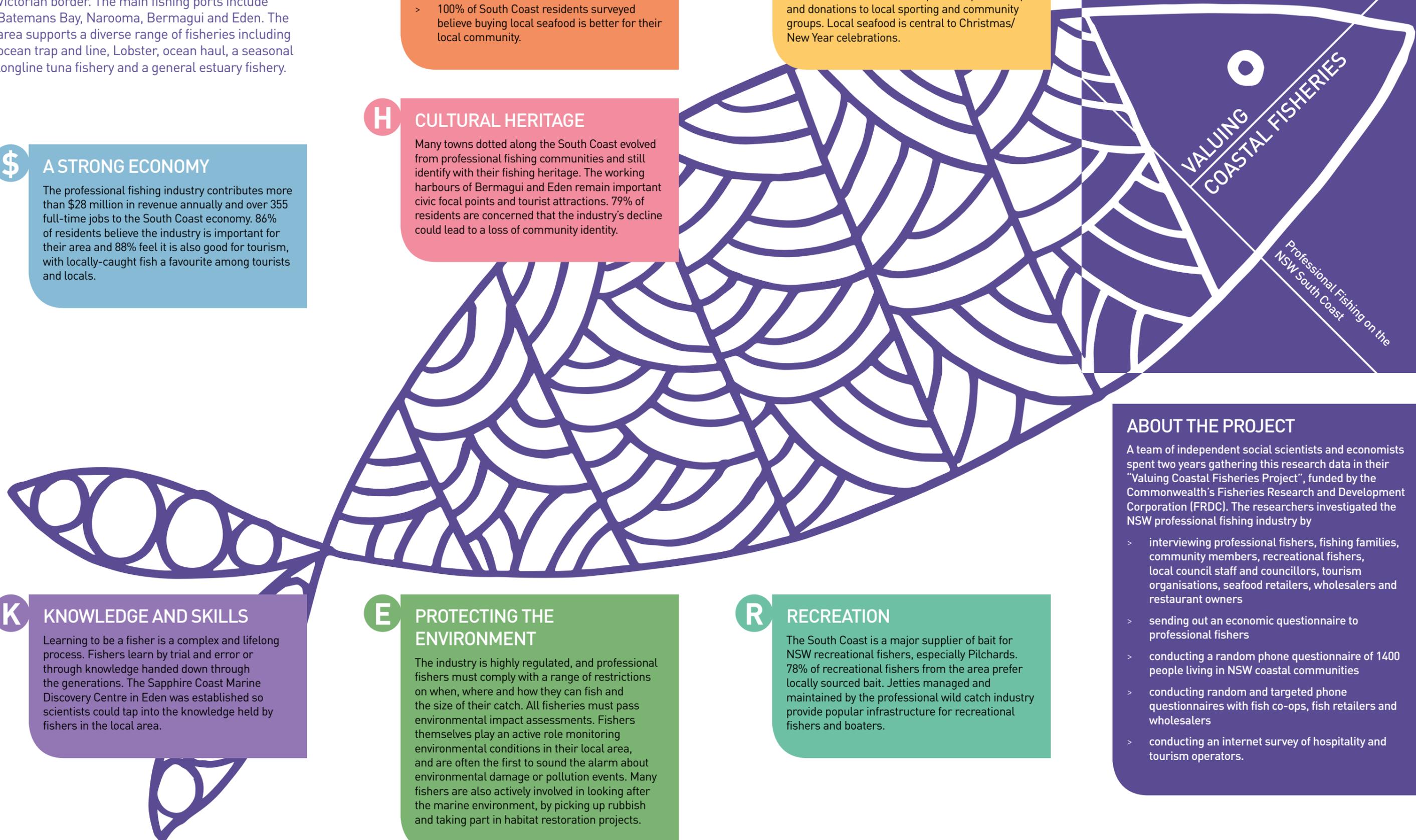
The industry is highly regulated, and professional fishers must comply with a range of restrictions on when, where and how they can fish and the size of their catch. All fisheries must pass environmental impact assessments. Fishers themselves play an active role monitoring environmental conditions in their local area, and are often the first to sound the alarm about environmental damage or pollution events. Many fishers are also actively involved in looking after the marine environment, by picking up rubbish and taking part in habitat restoration projects.

C COMMUNITY LIFE

Professional fishers play an active role in community life. They frequently join in water search and rescue missions, including daring rescues of sailors in the Sydney to Hobart yacht race. The Bermagui co-op and fish merchants such as Southlands in Eden provide sponsorship and donations to local sporting and community groups. Local seafood is central to Christmas/ New Year celebrations.

R RECREATION

The South Coast is a major supplier of bait for NSW recreational fishers, especially Pilchards. 78% of recreational fishers from the area prefer locally sourced bait. Jetties managed and maintained by the professional wild catch industry provide popular infrastructure for recreational fishers and boaters.



ABOUT THE PROJECT

A team of independent social scientists and economists spent two years gathering this research data in their "Valuing Coastal Fisheries Project", funded by the Commonwealth's Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC). The researchers investigated the NSW professional fishing industry by

- > interviewing professional fishers, fishing families, community members, recreational fishers, local council staff and councillors, tourism organisations, seafood retailers, wholesalers and restaurant owners
- > sending out an economic questionnaire to professional fishers
- > conducting a random phone questionnaire of 1400 people living in NSW coastal communities
- > conducting random and targeted phone questionnaires with fish co-ops, fish retailers and wholesalers
- > conducting an internet survey of hospitality and tourism operators.

HOW DO PROFESSIONAL FISHERS CATCH WILD FISH?

They use

- > estuary meshing of fish and prawns
- > line fishing (catch includes Snapper and Kingfish)
- > trapping of Mud crabs, Lobster and fish
- > **trawling or purse-seining (catch includes Flathead and Sardines and prawns)**
- > ocean (including beach) hauling (catch includes Mullet and Salmon)
- > diving for Abalone and Sea Urchins.

For more information visit:
masterfishermen.oceanwatch.org.au

MULTIPLE MARKETS

The fish caught through the purse seine fishery are popular with recreational fishermen as they supply a significant amount of the NSW bait market. Australian Salmon is also sought after by professional fishers for cray bait.

“Due to my long time experience in the bait industry, I’ve advised people that have tried to get into the industry to sell human consumption standard products...when people go into the shops for their bait they want top quality. If you don’t provide this, you will not survive”

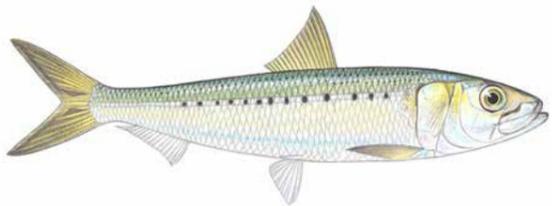
Ron Lambourn – bait processor and wholesaler (Eden)

As well, new boutique markets are opening up for Sardines for human consumption, especially smoked or butterflied in restaurants.

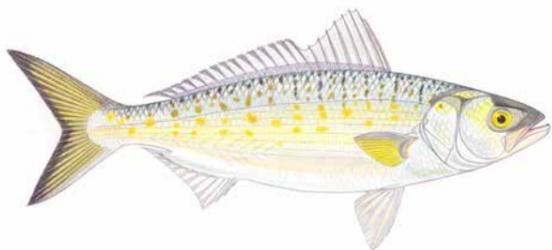
PURSE-SEINING ON THE SOUTH COAST

In NSW, purse seine fishing boats operate out of Iluka, Wollongong and Eden, fishing in both NSW and Commonwealth waters. The management of the fishery includes restrictions on gear and areas of operation, as well as strict quota in Commonwealth waters.

Purse seine fishers target species that live in the open ocean, including Australian Salmon, Sardines and Blue Mackerel.



Sardines or Pilchards (*Sardinops saga*), can be up to 20cm in length and 80g in weight.



Australian Salmon (*Arripis*) was named by European settlers who thought it was like Atlantic salmon. It can be up to 96cm long and weigh up to 10.5 kg.



A FISHING COMMUNITY

Eden’s Snug Cove is the main harbour for the South Coast. In one small area, all the different businesses work together to support the local fleet. A slipway, marine mechanic, ice manufacturer, seafood processors, bait factory, retail fish shops, seafood restaurants and fuel providers all surround the iconic Snug Cove wharf.

“Economically I see the fishing industry as a baseline in our community... it’s something that’s been there for a hundred years providing a steady economic benefit to the town and the region... It also has the benefit of being a sustainable fishery, not only from the point of view of its fishing practices, but also from a family point of view. So it’s the type of business that can be handed down through families if they choose, which builds a sense of tradition in the town, and also gives those families a feeling of self-worth that they’re a second, third or even fifth generation family business.”

Kari Esplin – Secretary Eden Chamber of Commerce and business owner

CATCHING THE FISH

Set near the ocean surface, purse seine nets do not touch the sea floor and selectively target only one species at a time, causing little impact on other marine species. Quota determines how much fish is allowed to be caught each year.

“That’s what makes that fishery so unique... You’re shooting in a patch of fish that’s mainly on the surface so the skipper knows what species of fish he is targeting, which could be pilchards or it might be blue mackerel or salmon.”

Ron Lambourn – bait processor and wholesaler (Eden)

