



Research Analytics & Strategy
Harnessing the power of information.

**City of Laguna Beach Public Opinion Survey
For the American Sportfishing Association
November 2009**

Research Analytics & Strategy is pleased to present this executive summary of the results from the Laguna Beach, California public opinion research project conducted for the American Sportfishing Association.

The Study

This study was conducted by interviewing active voters within the City of Laguna Beach. During the evenings of November 3 and November 4, 2009, 402 active voters were interviewed by telephone in the City of Laguna Beach, California. Respondents were asked 38 question-items and the average interview lasted approximately 14 minutes.

Respondents for the study were selected using a stratified cluster sample of active voters living in the City of Laguna Beach, and all telephone interviews were conducted by professional interviewers who had been trained.

Results from a study of this size have a margin of error of ± 4.9 percentage points with a 95% level of confidence. The survey questionnaire was designed by Kevin Reikes of Research Analytics & Strategy in conjunction with the American Sportfishing Association.

Aggregate Results

Issues surrounding Laguna Beach's local economy, schools, crime, and the environment ranked among the respondents' top priorities. Throughout the progression of the study, specific local economic issues and coastal environmental issues remained high – although specific local economic issues consistently outweighed specific environmental issues among respondents throughout the study.

Environment v. Business: When respondents were asked their opinion about increasing regulation and protection of the Laguna Beach shoreline versus the potential negative impact to local businesses, respondents chose to reject increased shoreline protection in support of local businesses by nearly 20 percentage points. Asked independently in a non-exclusionary format, respondents ranked “*protecting local business*” and “*protecting marine wildlife*” very similarly – 64% and 63% respectively. However, when given an opportunity to choose between local business interests and increased protection and regulation of marine wildlife, respondents overwhelmingly rejected increased regulations of local marine habitat.

Recreational Fishing: Beyond the support for the local economy, and above increased coastline regulations, respondents in even greater percentages supported the continuation of recreational fishing along the Laguna Beach shoreline. In all cases respondents overwhelmingly rejected the elimination of recreational fishing along Laguna’s coastline.

Questions which were constructed in both affirmative and negative formats generated very similar results when recreational fishing and increasing habitat protections were tested. Although even without a direct match-up with environmental concerns, over 80% of respondents reject the statement that “*All recreational fishing should be eliminated from the Laguna Beach Coastline.*”

When asked about expanding the State Marine Reserve at Heilser Park to include the entire coastline of Laguna Beach and eliminate recreational fishing from the beach and the waters off Laguna’s shoreline, respondents rejected such a proposal by more than 2 to 1.

Furthermore, those respondents who rejected the proposal were given more information about the environmental community’s position and alternatives to fishing along Laguna Beach; and those respondents who supported the proposal were given additional information about the negative impacts to local business. In both cases very few respondents were “pushed” from their original positions.

A Community of Environmentalists: Throughout the study, respondents were tested as to their environmental attitudes culminating in a self-ranking as an environmentalist – (“*On a scale from one to 10, one being not at all an environmentalist, and 10 being the strongest type of environmentalist, where would you place yourself?*”)

It’s clear from the self-ranking test (where nearly half of the respondents placed themselves in the upper 70th percentile on the environmental scale), and from a series of other imbedded questions that most respondents are sympathetic and supportive of environmental protections and causes. The fact that these same respondents overwhelmingly reject proposals to eliminate recreational fishing from Laguna Beach illustrates the opposition within the community’s electorate to the Laguna Beach City Council’s position relating to expanded marine protections at the expense of recreational fishing.

Conclusions

- Independent of each other, respondents rank Laguna Beach's local economy, and the environment very high.
- The majority of respondents consider themselves strong to very strong environmentalists.
- In relationship to each other, concerns for local jobs and local businesses far outweigh concerns for expanding marine and habitat protections along the Laguna Beach coastline.
- Respondents are willing to accept small environmental impacts from recreational fishing along the Laguna Beach shoreline.
- Respondents overwhelmingly reject the proposed elimination of recreational fishing in order to expand the protections for marine habitat.

