Pathway to Self-Funding: A Case Study on the California Commercial Spiny Lobster Fishery

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Research Questions
1. Can the California commercial spiny lobster fishery profitably self-fund Marine Stewardship Council Sustainability Certification?
2. Is self-funding supported by the California commercial spiny lobster fishery?
3. Can successful self-funding legislation be developed?

Methods
Cost Benefit Model
- Summary Table
- Cost Benefit Model
- Legal Analysis
- Commercial Fishermen Survey
- Fishermen Support Survey
- Management Benefits
- Legal Advocate/Lobbyist
- Research Questions
- Self-Funded Fisheries
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Cost Benefit Model
We created a cost benefit model to determine whether the California commercial spiny lobster fishery could profitably self-fund MSC Certification. The cost benefit model evaluated the net benefits of MSC Certification per commercial fishing permit under three self-funding collection mechanisms: a flat fee of $300, a price per pound fee, and a combination of a smaller flat fee and price per pound fee.

Commercial Fishermen Survey
After we found that the fishery could profitably self-fund MSC Certification, we wanted to see if the fishery would support self-funding. The mail survey assessed support for self-funding through a Lobster Stamp, collection mechanism preferences, fishery project priorities, and willingness to participate in collaborative research.

Legal Analysis
Once we determined through our cost benefit model that the California commercial spiny lobster fishery could profitably self-fund MSC Certification and found from our survey results that fishery members support self-funding, we next sought to explore the legal viability of the commercial Lobster Stamp. To determine the potential for successful self-funding legislation, we did independent research for connected fishery leaders, DFG NGO’s and lawyers.

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Pathway to Self-Funding
The pathway combines the results of our group project with the additional steps necessary to transform the lobster stamp into a political reality. As of March 2009, Assembly Bill (AB) 571, which will implement the Lobster Stamp, has been referred to the Committee on Water, Parks and Wildlife for legislative review.

Conclusion
This project shows that implementing a self-funding mechanism in the California commercial spiny lobster fishery is economically, socially, and politically feasible. The Cost Benefit Model demonstrates not only that the fishery could self-fund MSC Certification, but that this project could lead to net profits for the fishery.

The Commercial Fishery Survey results suggest that the majority of active fishers support the Lobster Stamp and use of the collected funds for MSC Certification.

The Legal Analysis presents existing legislation on which to model the stamp law and establishes the legal and political feasibility of Lobster Stamp legislation.

While the pathway to the Lobster Stamp includes details specific to the California commercial spiny lobster fishery, the general procedure we present here is applicable to similar fisheries wishing to develop self-funding.