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North Coast towns dealt a double economic blow as salmon fishing ban continues

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The economic downturn has slammed the North Coast, the little-mentioned area that stretches more 300 miles from San Francisco to the Oregon border. Fishing towns are

feeling a double whammy: Commercial salmon fishing has been prohibited for the last two years because of low fish counts, taking away yet another economic lifeline.

Some fishermen, predicting that the fishing ban will continue, are starting to think about life off of the water. Some are turning to wineries or the burgeoning tourism industry of Mendocino County. Others are turning away from salmon, fishing for crab and black cod, or heading north to Alaska to continue to fish.

Even that can be dangerous: Sonny Maahs blames his son's death in 2001 on the fishing bans. He and his son had ventured out to look for crab in high waves, deciding to continue fishing despite the weather because they were having a slow year. Maahs' son, Michael, was swept overboard and drowned.

Now, Fort Bragg fishermen are faced with a difficult choice -- continue their slow careers on the water, despite the peril, or take their boats out of the harbor and look for something new during an economic slowdown. To many, working in wineries or restaurants doesn't appeal.

For the full story, [click here](#). Also check out a [photo gallery](#) of Fort Bragg and the boat graveyard that's sprung up there as fishermen walk away from their boats.

-- Alana Semuels

Photo: Abandoned salmon fishing boats are collected in Bruce Abernathy's yard in Fort

Bragg, Calif. Credit: Alana Semuels / Los Angeles Times

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