

Pacific Fisheries Management Council

Mike Burner,

We felt it necessary to explain our position with regards to the Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) Application. As you may know the California Wetfish Producers Association (CWPA- Ms. Diane Pleschner-Steele) and the Northwest Sardine Survey, LLC did not reach an agreement on how to jointly manage a coastal sardine survey. Sadly, we will be submitting our EFP Application separately.

The purpose of the aerial survey was to document an abundance of sardines greater than what was predicted by the current assessment model with the final goal of having this data included in the model. To meet this objective it is best to survey as much of the Pacific Coast as possible. And, the EFP Application does include a plan to extend the survey into California. The last thing we want is to limit the surveys to the Northwest. Expanding the survey to only help our efforts.

We fully encourage CWPA and anyone from California to develop a program that gets us better data about sardines. Having said that it is far from certain that the Monterey sardines can be photographed from an airplane during daylight hours the same way they can in the PNW. We suspect that there is a method to capture fish with digital equipment and to quantify their abundance but it may mean employing different tools or taking photographs at night. We feel that it is reasonable to ask for a "proof of concept" development as opposed to a blind assumption that the research will track in the exact fashion as it did in the PNW.

As we worked to accommodate CWPA in our EFP Application it became apparent that they would not allow for a "proof of concept" study prior to deciding where the 1200 ton EFP be used. Our proposal was to have the designers of the Northwest Sardine Survey, Mr. Tom Jagielo and Dr. Vidar Wespestad involved to administer and direct a "proof of concept" survey in California. They would then decide how best to use the 1200 ton set aside. It is not important whether they decide that best use of the EFP is in the Northwest or California. What is important is that 1200 tons be used to achieve the best scientific outcome.

It is still possible to move forward for the benefit of all industry participants in the Northwest and California. We request that the CWPA acquire a digital camera system mounted in an airplane with the same capabilities as used in the NW survey, set up a computer with adequate software to record and measure the surface area of fish schools and a scientific recording depth sounder to measure the thickness of fish schools on a fishing vessel. The task is not difficult, especially with our help.

We are still very much committed to assisting the Californians in performing a scientifically accepted survey but it must follow a proven method in order to satisfy the Stock Assessment Review Panel and the Scientific and Statistical Committee. Anything short of this will be wasting the 1200 ton EFP.

Regards,

Jerry Thon
Northwest Sardine Survey, LLC