

March 11, 2016
Ms. Dorothy M. Lowman, Chair
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101
Portland, Oregon 97220-1384

RE: Agenda Item F.2 – Report on Ongoing Exempted Fishing Permits

Dear Chair Lowman and members of the Council,

My name is Jonathan Gonzalez and I am from Santa Barbara, CA where I work full-time as an artist at a skateboard company. I spend my spare time volunteering as an advocate for responsible fisheries management and I'm also President of the Ventura County Commercial Fishermen's Association.

(Slide 2) National Standard 1 states: "Conservation and management measures shall prevent overfishing while achieving, on a continuing basis, the optimum yield from each fishery for the United States fishing industry." The use of the word "shall" in National Standard 1 is of particular importance because other National Standards are not phrased as mandates, but rather are modified by such language as "to the extent practicable." The National Standards that are stated as a mandate should be given higher priority by the Council and NMFS than ones that are only to be applied "to the extent practicable." This means that National Standard 1 should be given higher priority than other National Standards, including National Standard 9, which requires FMPs to minimize bycatch only "to the extent practicable."

Americans consume more swordfish than any other single country in the world, and domestic swordfish production supplies less than 25% of our demand. From 2000-2013, CA DGN fishery landings declined 68% even though the stock of swordfish that they target is considered underutilized. Imported swordfish fills the gap, which is caught in regions where swordfish stocks are not as abundant. The majority of our swordfish imports are caught by longline vessels that are exempted from conservation regulations, and where leatherback stocks are most fragile (WPRFMC 2011; Wallace et al. 2010; Shillinger 2008; Martinez et al 2008; Spotila et al. 2000).

The current restrictions in place in CA's DGN fishery not only make it impossible to achieve OY, but they also encourage and increase overfishing by foreign fleets. Something needs to change, and exploring the reintroduction of longlines and reopening the PLCA are goals worth exploring. The 3 EFPs on the table allow for these unique and rare opportunities, and I'm afraid that if we let them slip away or fall through the cracks that we will never have the opportunity to experiment with these gears, in these areas, at these times ever again.

(Slide 3) I'm here today to voice my support for all three of the ongoing EFPs. I ask that the Council support all 3 EFPs moving forward as they begin to face additional scrutiny. Each of these EFPs plays a crucial role in shaping the future of a more productive West Coast swordfish fishery that aims to achieve OY while reducing foreign bycatch and overfishing.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.
Jonathan Gonzalez
EatUSseafood.com