

June 24, 2016
Ms. Dorothy M. Lowman, Chair
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101
Portland, Oregon 97220-1384

RE: Agenda Item D.5 – Deep-Set Buoy Gear and Federal Permit Update

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) According to the CDFW, the CA DGN fishery landed 72.5mt (166,478lbs) of swordfish during the 2015-2016 fishing season. In comparison the US imported nearly 11,000mt of swordfish valued at nearly \$90 million in 2015. Since there were 20 participants in the DGN fishery last year that landed 166,478lbs of swordfish in 378 sets/or days, we can estimate that each participant fished for an average of 19 days and caught an average of 440lbs of swordfish per day. And with an average of 2.4 dolphins caught per 100 sets we can estimate that 9 dolphins were caught by DGN gear last year.

(Slide 3) In comparison, according to CDFW fish ticket data there were 17,000lbs of swordfish landed in CA by 4 EFP participants using DSBG during 2015-2016. Since there were 4 participants using DSBG last year that landed 17,000lbs of swordfish in 138 days, we can estimate that each participant fished for an average of 35.5 days and caught an average of 119lbs of swordfish per day. And with one elephant seal caught every 138 days, we can estimate that .72 elephant seals are caught every 100 days of fishing with DSBG. So what am I getting at?

(Slide 4) The situation summary says stakeholders and the Council have discussed whether a permit program should foster a transition of current DGN permit holders to a future DSBG fishery through permit conversion, incentives or other mechanisms. In the situation summary Attachment 1 under section 5 which covers swordfish fishery permitting, once again I read that the Council and stakeholders have also considered the linkage between these fisheries as far as permitting. Attachment 1 goes on to say that some stakeholders advocate an explicit transition of DGN fishery participants to use other gear types, particularly DSBG even though pelagic longline is already a proven fishery that produces a higher catch volume. I also noticed in the first public comment letter under this Agenda Item that one of these stakeholders claims that a transition from DGN to DSBG could maintain or increase West Coast swordfish landings while minimizing bycatch. So let's take a closer look.

(Slide 5) Using the numbers above, it would require 1,399 days of fishing effort using DSBG in order to produce 166,478lbs of swordfish in a single fishing season compared to 378 days using DGN. But what's interesting is we can estimate that 10 elephant seals would be caught as bycatch due to this increased fishing effort compared to 9 dolphins caught by DGN gear.

(Slide 6) It's important to note that the DGN fishery produces a lot more than just swordfish. Last year it was 1.7 fish vs. 10.4 fish per day. It is unclear to me why some stakeholders believe that the advent of a new, experimental buoy gear must come at the expense of existing net gear that is proven to be way more efficient at catching fish while having a negligible impact to species of concern and their habitats according to the latest BiOp.

(Slide 7) I understand the Council voted unanimously in November 2014 to take the word transition off the table as far as DGN goes, which is why it's concerning to say the least when I see the "T-word" mentioned at all by anyone at this point because it is so off base. It's this type of off base thinking from certain stakeholders that leads to misguided bills such as AB 2019 and SB 1114. These bills accomplished nothing other than wasting a bunch of folks' time while threatening responsible fisheries management. These bills are dangerous and very divisive at a time when we should be focusing on building partnerships. Fortunately there are a couple stakeholders that do not advocate the T-word and I look forward to hopefully helping to connect-the-dots between these stakeholders and fishermen. I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank the Council for sending a timely letter to Senator Allen.

(Slide 8) Moving forward, I agree 100% with all of the recommendations presented by the HMSAS. I am delighted at the advent of DSBG and the EFP trials to date because it is a tool that may increase overall West Coast swordfish production as well as possibly promoting new recruitment in CA commercial fisheries. This is why I would like to see the Council proceed with the authorization of DSBG while realizing that more information gathering and data collection may be needed at this point in time. Page 3 of the March 2016 PFMC CDFW report under agenda item F.3 states, "additional effort in a wider geographical range and possibly with other configurations is necessary." The report also warns, "Rushing the process is likely to leave data gaps that should be addressed prior to authorizing new gear."

While listening in on the PFMC Pre-Council Delegation Meeting Call last week I learned that Senator Allen is planning on reintroducing SB 1114 next year. I sure hope this news serves as an impetus for the Council to get ahead of any future legislative attack by beginning the two-meeting process to federalize the HMS permits this September. Failure to begin the process in September will all-but ensure anti-drift gillnet legislation next year.

(Slide 9) I'd like to end on a positive note by sharing and celebrating the observer data from last season. As you can see, there was only one observed marine mammal interaction and 94% of the DGN catch was either sold or released alive. This was during a year when a lot of "bad stuff" that DGN fishermen want to avoid as far as species of concern were present due to warmer waters. DGN fishermen self-policed themselves by choosing to stay tied to the dock rather than taking a chance. I've said it before and I'll say it again that it's the fishermen that are the true stewards of the sea. I look forward to seeing the Council continue with its stated goal to support the economic viability of the swordfish fishery so it can meet demand for a fresh, high quality, locally-caught product.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.
Jonathan Gonzalez
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