

November 20, 2016

Mr. Herb Pollard, Chair
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Pl.
Suite 101
Portland, Oregon 97220-1384

AGENDA ITEM I.4 – DEEP-SET BUOY GEAR EXEMPTED FISHING PERMITS (EFPs)

Dear Chair Pollard and Members of the Council,

(Slide 2) My name is Jonathan Gonzalez and it is an honor to be here today to speak on behalf of the Ventura County Commercial Fishermen's Association. As I mentioned in our public comment in the advanced briefing book, in anticipation of some of the topics that are being discussed at this meeting the VCCFA decided to conduct a survey among the 71 fishermen who currently (as of August 9, 2016) own HMS permits with DGN endorsements. The purpose of the survey was to gather information from fishermen that can hopefully be used to facilitate the difficult and important Council processes of authorizing DSBG and Federalizing HMS permits. But for the sake of relevance to this Agenda Item I will focus on our intention to use this opportunity of surveying 71 experienced swordfish fishermen (some of which who may not even be aware that the EFPs exist) as way to potentially recruit new EFP applicants with the goal of satisfying some of the Council's data gathering priorities.

The survey questions are listed below:

- 1.) Did you know that the PFMC is soliciting applications for, and has issued Exempted Fishing Permits to target swordfish using deep-set buoy gear in California over the last few years? **Yes** **No**
- 2.) Do you have any interest in applying for an Exempted Fishing Permit to target swordfish using deep-set buoy gear? **Yes** **No**
Please explain why you answered, "Yes" or "No" to question 2.
- 3.) Do you have any interest in a deep-set buoy gear permit once it becomes an authorized fishery in the next few years? **Yes** **No**
Please explain why you answered, "Yes" or "No" to question 3.
- 4.) Do you plan on renewing your HMS/drift gillnet permit next year? **Yes** **No**
Please explain why you answered, "Yes" or "No" to question 4.
- 5.) How do you prefer to be contacted in the future if more info is needed (mail, email, phone, text, etc.)?
- 6.) Do you have any additional comments, questions or suggestions?

(Slide 3) Out of the 71 HMS/DGN permittees surveyed, six permit holders live in Oregon, one permit holder lives in Nevada and the remaining 64 permit holders live in California. Considering the fact that all EFP fishing activity to date has occurred in the SCB, we split California in two on this slide as far as permittees that live either North or South of Point Conception. In doing so we can see that out of the 64 permittees in California, only 15 live North of Point Conception while the other 49 live within the SCB. It's important to note that the geographic location of the permit holder does not necessarily restrict the permit holder to fish close to home. For example, Mr. Steve Mintz lives in Southern California but he is willing and able to fish under an EFP North of Point Conception.



(Slide 4) Here are the final results of our survey:

VCCFA HMS/DRIFT GILLNET SURVEY SUMMARY			
	NUMBER OF PERMITTEES	% OF SURVEY RESPONSES (N=24)	% OF ISSUED PERMITS (N=71)
TOTAL COMPLETED SURVEYS	24		33.8
DEEP-SET BUOY GEAR EXEMPTED FISHING PERMIT:			
Current PIER EFP participant	5	20.8	7.0
Interested in applying for DSBG EFP (not currently participating) 	15	62.5	21.1
Only interested in EFP with no observer costs	1	4.2	1.4
Not interested in applying for DSBG EFP	3	12.5	4.2
Knew DSBG EFP existed prior to survey	20	83.3	28.2
Did not know DSBG EFP existed and want to apply	4	16.7	5.6
DEEP-SET BUOY GEAR PERMIT:			
Interested in DSBG permit once the fishery is authorized	23	95.8	32.4
Not interested in DSBG permit	1	4.2	1.4
HMS/DRIFT GILLNET PERMIT:			
Recent participant in CA DGN fishery (2015-17 fishing seasons)	8	33.3	11.3
Did not participate in last two or more fishing seasons	16	66.7	22.5
Plan to renew permit next year (2017-18 fishing season)	23	95.8	32.4
Do not plan to renew permit next year	1	4.2	1.4

The good news is that we now have 15 folks that are interested in applying for a DSBG EFP. Four of these 15 folks never even knew that the DSBG EFPs existed.

The bad news is that on average, we only received one response to every three surveys sent out. The list of current HMS/DGN permit holders that we obtained provided only mailing addresses, and not email addresses or phone numbers. But fortunately I happened to have phone numbers and or email addresses of 20 current HMS/DGN permit holders, so all 20 of those surveys were completed over phone or email. Out of the remaining 51 surveys that had to be mailed out, only 4 were completed and mailed back to me, and all 4 were folks who never even knew that the DSBG EFPs existed and want to apply.

We would like to point out that the CDFW conducted a phone survey of all DGN permittees just a few years ago that produced responses from 75% of the fleet compared to the 33.8% of responses to our survey. I have a full-time job that takes priority over any of this so my time is limited, as were my resources and ability to conduct a more thorough survey. To that point, and considering the fact that 4 fishermen surveyed did not know DSBG EFPs existed and want to apply, we believe there is a purpose and need for a follow-up phone survey conducted by CDFW or NMFS in an attempt to solicit additional EFP applicants to gather more data.



(Slide 5) Here we can see the geographic location of the 15 experienced swordfish fishermen that are interested in applying for an EFP that are not current participants. This was just a thought experiment for visual communication so again I will point out that that the geographic location of the permit holder does not necessarily restrict the permit holder to fish close to home, though it may be more convenient.

The September 2016 Supplemental HMSMT Report under Agenda Item J.4 points out that EFP testing outside the SCB may even be considered a prerequisite to authorizing a fishery outside the SCB. According to the same HMSMT Report, recreational fishermen have already started to voice complaints on recreational fishing forums regarding DSBG conflicts. As we mentioned in our Supplemental Public Comment under this Agenda Item, Mr. Steve Mintz is willing and able to fish under a DSBG EFP North of Point Conception. I'd also like to point out that according to our survey responses and personal conversations that followed, I learned Mr. Mintz is not the only experienced swordfish fisherman interested in testing DSBG North of Point Conception.

Moving forward, additional gear configurations are also identified as one of the Council's data gathering priorities. The last question on our survey produced some ideas from future EFP applicants regarding gear modifications intended to increase swordfish production using DSBG. We would like to ask the Council to encourage expanded testing of linked buoy gear as well as any other future gear configurations to see whether or not they can produce higher catch volumes and ultimately higher profits. To this point, in addition to recommending an extension on the Mintz EFP, we would also like to ask the Council to recommend that NMFS issue an EFP to PIER and Mr. Hepp for the fishing activities described under Supplemental Attachments 1 and 2. We would also like to ask the Council to consider the idea of requesting new applicants willing to test modified DGN gear within the PLCA.

Considering the new interest in EFPs resulting from our survey, authorizing DSBG and linked buoy gear in all of California and possibly Oregon and Washington in the future sounds like a worthy goal. But much more importantly, we feel that moving forward cautiously and gathering more EFP data is not only the right thing to do, but it will also give us the best chance at setting up the future DSBG fishery for success. If we fail at this than it was all for nothing.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathan Gonzalez". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Jonathan Gonzalez
President