

## HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON UPDATES TO EXISTING DEEP-SET BUOY GEAR EXEMPTED FISHING PERMITS

At its March 2015 meeting, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) recommended the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) issue two exempted fishing permit (EFP) applications for deep-set buoy gear (DSBG) – one to the Pflieger Institute of Environmental Research (PIER) and one to Tim and Laura Perguson. NMFS subsequently issued the EFPs, and the permit holders conducted EFP fishing during 2015 and 2016. For the March 2017 Council meeting, both permit holders provided their required progress reports on fishing activity under the EFPs. The Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) has reviewed both reports and provides the following comments.

The HMSMT and Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) received an update presentation from Dr. Chugey Sepulveda on catch and effort results from the PIER DSBG EFP to date. The HMSMT acknowledges that continuing this EFP is likely to result in a better understanding of DSBG.

The HMSMT also discussed the Perguson EFP report ([Agenda Item J.2, Attachment 1](#)). In addition to providing the update, the Pergusons requested a reduction in observer coverage level from 100 percent to 30 percent for both participating EFP vessels. However, the HMSMT found the report unclear and lacking clear information (such as pieces of gear fished) which would allow the HMSMT to evaluate the progress of this EFP and potentially consider recommending the Council approve the request.

In deciding whether to recommend lower observer coverage, the HMSMT considered the rationale for the initial 100 percent observer coverage requirement. The HMSMT considers the following factors as important reasons for higher initial observer coverage requirements: (1) to monitor a participant's ability to successfully deploy and retrieve gear while minimizing gear loss, (2) to monitor the participant's ability to handle and release non-target catch quickly and in good condition, and (3) to monitor bycatch, especially for species of concern. Based on these factors, the HMSMT determined that the 100 percent observer requirement for the Perguson EFP should remain. The HMSMT welcomes any additional Council guidance for such determinations.

PFMC  
03/11/17