RE: Gear conflict between IFQ trap boats and Southern CA. LE longline community

Madam Chair and Pacific Fisheries Management Council Members:

My name is John Colgate. I am speaking to you as Vice President of CFSB and am representing the LE longline fleet of the Pt Conception management area. I have been a full time commercial fisherman for the last 42 years. The purpose of this letter is to bring you up to date on the escalating gear conflict between the visiting IFQ trap boats and our LE longline community.

Over the last 2 months these visiting trap boats have started targeting the areas the longline community fish, the 400f to 600f depth range. The major conflict arises when these trap boats leave these areas, they also leave their miles long strings of gear in the area. The location of this unattended gear is unknown. It is often right in the middle of our fishing grounds.

This situation happened to me last month. I had been fishing an area and was seen there by one of the trap boat. After I left to unload, the next day the trap boat moved into the area and worked that area for several days. When I came back to fish my area, just before I was about to set, another longline boat from my home port called to say he just found a string of unattended gear ½ mile from me. What we figured out was when the trap boat left they left approximately 3 strings of gear, over 6 miles of gear, right through the middle of this area effectively blocking me from setting my area. If I hadn’t inadvertently found this out I would have set over their gear creating an
extremely dangerous situation for myself and my crew if we had gotten entangled with it. This unacceptable risk is what I am here to talk to you about.

This was not an isolated incident. This has also happened to several of my fellow fishermen. Fortunately no one has gotten tangled with this gear .....yet.

Our LE fishing community feels this dangerous situation is something that must be dealt with immediately. With the slightest amount of wind this unattended gear is invisible on our radars.

I would like to formally ask you to put this matter on the council’s agenda to be discussed in closer detail as soon as possible. We request that these trap boats be required to return with all their gear to port when they unload.

Thank you for this opportunity to express our community’s views. We have a desire to work out a compromise on this issue. If you have any further questions you may contact me at the above address.

Sincerely,

John Colgate
Vise President CFSB