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From: **jnozicka** <[jnozicka1@peoplepc.com](mailto:jnozicka1@peoplepc.com)>

Date: Thu, Aug 1, 2013 at 8:00 PM

Subject: Please help- F/V San Giovanni

To: [will.stelle@noaa.gov](mailto:will.stelle@noaa.gov)

Cc: [Frank.Lockhart@noaa.gov](mailto:Frank.Lockhart@noaa.gov), [Dmlowman@comcast.net](mailto:Dmlowman@comcast.net), [Donald.Mclsaac@noaa.gov](mailto:Donald.Mclsaac@noaa.gov)

Dear Board and Council members,

My name is Jiri Nozicka. I am the current operator of the F/V San Giovanni. The F/V San Giovanni( Fed# 244706) has been operating out of port of Monterey under the West Coast Trawl Catch Share Program since the programs launch in 2011. Until recently (May 2013) we have been using services of Alaskan Observers Inc. to comply with the programs 100% observer monitoring requirement. Last month our cooperation with the AOI have ceased and we have tried to contract another catch share observer provider for our fishing to continue. Much to our great surprise, we have learned that none of the listed providers(MRAG, Saltwater Inc., Sea-tech) are currently providing observer coverage not only for area of our coast, but in reality for most of the coast of California as well. Due to this shortage we are now being forced out of the Catch Share program entirely until at least next spring.

The F/V San Giovanni have been the only bottom trawl vessel operating out of Monterey`s Harbor for last 8 years and the only vessel providing local catches of groundfish for local markets and the only vessel working with the Royal Seafoods co. which has been so greatly affected by this problem, that it`s owners are considering shutting their operation completely. The Royal Seafood is the only licensed Catch Shares first receiver in Monterey.

The F/V San Giovanni have also worked for the North Coast Fisheries, where most of our catches were processed in last 5 years. Their operation is also being affected by our vessel not being able to bring our catches to them as well. As I learned from their representative, one of their another boats from Fort Brag had a very difficult time finding observers for many fishing trips trough last and this year. This problem is seems to getting bigger and I am afraid it can get worse.

I am writing this letter not only bring awareness to this arising problem, but I want to urge you and the council to make sensible changes to the current Catch Shares monitoring program to accommodate small operators and small ports like Monterey, or Fort Brag in their need to successfully participate in the groundfish fisheries in the short and long term. We fully understand and accept the need of the 100% data monitoring requirement for the success of the Catch Share program, but under current circumstances and conditions the status quo actually threatens the very existence and the future of our industry and its infrastructure in our and other similar ports and possibly the rest of California.

Our case is unfortunate result of multiple reasons accumulated in the past decade`s years. The complete restructuring of our markets infrastructure, multiple buybacks etc.. has led to dramatic decline in both boats and markets especially in our parts of the coast. The resulted very small number of vessels operating out of these ports do not provide enough activities to make coverage possible for these private enterprises, whom needs, and its only natural, to make a profit for their own existence. So this resulted in practically nonexistent observer provider competition in our area. Within just one year of the programs existence the AOI has become the only provider on our coast. This is very dangerous situation, which can very easily erupt in a disaster for our industry. Especially if we consider that the other companies are not really eager to cover our ports and then possibly loose money in the process.

Having said all this, I understand the challenge, that more flexible and small port and small operator friendlier monitoring system might be to developed and establish, but this might be the exact time to try to bring it in to existence. Our vessel have been currently scheduled to install a electronic monitoring equipment aboard, I understand that the Archipelago co. is really confident in accurate monitoring aboard of bottom trawl vessels. I also understand that council is considering an Experimental Fishing Permit for electronic monitoring aboard of bottom trawl vessels within the Catch Share program. I personally would like to ask you to consider faster action on implementing the Electronic monitoring and I would like to request that our boat will be selected to demonstrate how the electronic monitoring without the observer aboard can be successful in accurate monitoring of our fishing operation. I am very confident in our ability to provide good and reliable process aboard of our vessel, to make the monitoring process easy, accurate and reliable. We can assure you that we will provide the best service for this program, to ensure future success for our industry. At the same time I would like to encourage you to work on further improvement of the other aspects of the monitoring program. For instance allowing another companies participate in the program would probably improve situation as well. I would even consider licensing individual observers through NMFS. We have a lot of Graduates here in our area looking for work. It seems like a natural thing to help them get certified and work more closely with individual boats, since they will have places to live already and can have another jobs on the side and will get pay more per each trip. The same principle should be applied to the catch monitor positions, because even if we will have success in launching of the electronic monitoring, we will most likely face challenge in searching for the catch monitors for the offloading, unless there will also be cameras installed on the docks as well. But, if there is a certified graduate living in our area it should be readily easy to keep them busy or to contact them at call. I think that this area of the monitoring will also need special attention by the council to improve.

At last, I would like to thank you for your time and effort you and the council have already put in resolving this issue, but I would like to stress one more time how urgent this is for the very existence and the survival of our operations and jobs in our area. It would be very unfortunate, if more full time, year around fishing operations like ours as well as small ports like Monterey, would have to face the very hard choices of leaving the industry for a problems like this. We love to fish in our area and the way we do. We have been adjusting to the new management and we were becoming part of what you might call "boutique fisheries" on our coast. Most of us, who are left, do smaller volume fishing and are focusing on developing more direct and higher quality and value marketing. Our industry is changing and we need your help in matching the management and the monitoring system to the real situations and problems in our world that might differ from the areas in Oregon and Washington. I firmly believe, that this situation can bring the needed changes and it will actually help the industry in the long term. I would like to offer you my help and expertise in solving this issue for the better end. Please consider our plea, and our commitment.

Thank you  
Sincerely  
Jiri Nozicka  
F/V San Giovanni  
Monterey,CA  
[c \(831\)324-3808](tel:(831)324-3808)  
[h \(831\)393-4945](tel:(831)393-4945)