



CALIFORNIA WETFISH PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION

Representing California's Historic Fishery

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February 17, 2010

Mr. Dave Ortmann, Chair &
Dr. Don Mclsaac, Executive Director
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place #200
Portland OR 97220-1384

RE: Agenda Item H.3.c: Experimental Fishing Permit (EFP) for Pacific coast Sardine Research in 2010

Dear Chairman Ortmann, Dr. Mclsaac and Council members,

The California Wetfish Producers Association (CWPA) represents the majority of active wetfish fishermen and processors from both Monterey and southern California. We very much appreciate this opportunity, once again, to address the Council on the subject of Pacific sardine research.

As we've testified in the past, we believe developing indices of sardine abundance in addition to DEPM surveys is essential to expand understanding of the sardine resource and improve management. We appreciate the Council's interest in the industry-sponsored aerial research program launched synoptically in 2009, leading to your approval of a 5,000 mt research set aside at your November 2009 meeting for continuing survey work in 2010. We ask that you approve the full EFP application, including both the summer aerial survey and fall pilot project.

The 5,000 mt research request was based in part on the table created by participating scientists, proposing to allocate 2,100 mt each to PNW and CA for the summer aerial survey (a table recommending distribution of the point sets, totaling 4,200 mt, was included in the 2009 EFP final report). As noted in the power analysis conducted for this EFP application, the proposed sample size of $n = 56$ point sets per region, totaling 112 point sets coastwide, is a realistic request given the time constraints and resources available. We expect the full 4,200 mt [but no more than 4,200 mt] will be taken during the course of the summer survey, as this research fish also provides revenue to help finance the survey. Any amount not taken by September 15 will roll into the fall directed fishery, following the Council's recommendation and NMFS rulemaking in 2009.

Industry in both the Pacific Northwest and California supported increasing the set aside to 5,000 mt, with the intent to reserve the remaining 800 mt for a fall pilot project in S.CA. Under the proposed EFP, the West Coast Sardine Survey (a consortium of Pacific Northwest and California sardine industry participants) plans to conduct, for the second year, a semi-synoptic survey of the sardine biomass along the U.S. West Coast, employing the methodology approved by STAR panels and the SSC in 2009. The summer survey is conducted during daylight at a time when sardines are at peak abundance in the Pacific Northwest. Repeating the summer aerial survey in 2010 is important to reduce uncertainty and improve on the 2009 survey.

We've demonstrated that sardines are visible at the surface during daylight hours in California, as in the Pacific Northwest; however, these fish are also observed and may be more readily measured at night in California. Sardine abundance peaks in California during fall and winter months [traditionally California's peak fishing season]. Thus industry and participating scientists request a small portion of this EFP, not to exceed 800 mt, be designated to permit scientists to investigate, compare and further improve survey methodology by evaluating the use of lidar, acoustics, and night-time bioluminescence photography in addition to the daylight photography methods used in the summer survey to estimate sardine abundance.

The proposed fall pilot study allows identified vessels to catch Pacific sardine, both day and/or night as directed by the principal investigator, during October-November 2010, a time when the directed fishery is now closed. The aerial component of the study consists of transects placed in a designated area of southern CA along and adjacent to the fall CalCOFI cruise tracks, extending out 75 miles from the mainland, and will be conducted in conjunction with the fall CalCOFI survey. The goal is to develop and refine survey methodology for review by a sardine STAR panel in 2011, for potential inclusion in future sardine stock assessments to improve measurements of sardine; techniques developed could also be employed to assess other CPS. Conducting this fall research in 2010 is critically important to meet the sardine STAR panel schedule; after 2011 the next panel will not occur until 2013 or 2014. Moreover, the only way this research can be accomplished is under an EFP because the sardine fishery is otherwise closed before October, when this research is planned.

We are fully committed to ensure the success of this sardine research both summer and fall. In CA the research set aside will be taken under the guidance of CA scientists, in coordination with PNW scientists and industry, with the goal to achieve representative samples of school size to reduce uncertainty, improve on the 2009 survey, and test additional promising survey techniques.

Again, we appreciate the Council's interest in this research and urge you to approve the Pacific coast sardine EFP application, including the 800 mt allocated for a pilot project in southern CA in October-November, evaluating methods to improve biomass estimates.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best regards,



Diane Pleschner-Steele
Executive Director