

## EXEMPTED FISHING PERMIT – TROLLED LONGLINE FOR CHILIPEPPER ROCKFISH

Request for an exempted fishing permit (EFP).

Project Title: Evaluation of an epibenthic trolled longline to selectively catch chilipepper rockfish (*Sebastes goodei*).

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### Purpose and Goals

Chilipepper rockfish stocks on the west coast are considered healthy. However, because of weak stock management, the OY for this species cannot be taken. In 2006, chilipepper landings were 39.7 mt (<http://www.psmfc.org/pacfin/data/r001.p06>) of a 2000 mt OY. Area closures to protect overfished rockfish species have effectively closed access to this resource. The Council's annual chilipepper set aside for 2011- 2012 (ACL) South of 40.10 N lat. is 1,882.

The long-term objective of this project is to describe and evaluate the effectiveness of a species-selective longline technique, which if proven effective, will allow commercial fishermen access to chilipepper rockfish, a relatively abundant species of rockfish. This fishery is constrained by the current rockfish area closures (Rockfish Conservation Areas, RCA), implemented to protect overfished rockfish species. Despite the depressed condition of some west coast groundfish stocks, there are other stocks that remain healthy. These healthier stocks could safely sustain increased harvest levels if they could be fished more cleanly and without bycatch of more depleted stocks. If stronger stocks could be targeted without increasing fishing mortality on depressed stocks, the California commercial fishing fleet would have alternative fishing opportunities that would provide some economic relief to the industry while providing the public with a highly desirable product.

The objective of the research for which we are requesting an EFP would be to establish the performance characteristics of the gear and to rigorously document the catch and bycatch when deployed in areas where chilipepper are abundant and bycatch species are not, under commercial fishing conditions. The objectives would be: 1) to test the trolled gear and fishing strategy with vertical lines and artificial flies, and 2) determine Groundfish Fishing Areas that are abundant with chilipepper rockfish, and that correspond to low densities of overfished species. The second

objective may better help to answer the question of how EFP results can potentially be translated into future fleet-wide fishing opportunities.

The location, gear characteristics (number of hooks, length of mainline, etc.), species composition, size distribution, and sex ratio (of chilipepper) of each set of gear will be recorded by onboard observers. In addition, a camera may be used to show fishing operations at the discretion of the operator.

The EFP that we are requesting would allow up to three (3) vessels. Each would be allowed to fish inside the current RCA using otherwise legal open access fixed gear. Full retention applies to rockfish species (as defined in Federal regulations), and retention of non-rockfish species will be governed by applicable open access limits, and may be released once documented by an observer. Due to the fact this is a research project there should be no trip limit. Existence of a trip limit would bias the results of the study as fishing effort needs to be standardized and not effected by catch rates. Therefore, we do not want to bias it by the sets with bad days.

This EFP for chilipeppers is a mid-water project and will also be using a test line with no more than twenty hooks. Prospecting is to avoid bocaccio. Line will be an off the bottom longline with corks attached close to the skate line, consisting of drop line, linked (skates) main line, and wire attached to a reel, (Diagram 1. and 2., Pages 4,5). The gear will consist of a maximum of 1000 hooks per set. Gear consists of open access troll fly and vertical hook and line gear that is set and fished in a unique way such that the hooks sink to near, but not hard on bottom (see Diagram). Prior to setting the gear, a test set will be made with vertical gear in which the gear is set vertically. This will be with no hooks closer than 3 fm of the bottom, based on acoustic soundings, to ensure that the target species is present and to minimize the chance of encountering any of the overfished rockfish species.

Once the test set establishes the presence of chilipepper rockfish, the gear will be deployed as follows: The vessel moves slowly ahead as the gear is deployed. The gear remains attached to the vessel at all times. Artificial “flies” are used in lieu of bait. The mainline consists of 200-800 lb. test monofilament, and may be spooled to a drum. One end, with buoy and weight attached in such a way that the gear does not touch the bottom is sent overboard as the boat moves slowly ahead, and the remaining gear is deployed. The weighted buoy line length is adjusted in such a way that does not have bottom contact to reduce the likelihood of bycatch and to prevent the hooks from hanging up on bottom. Hooks on leaders are spaced approximately 13” apart on 12” monofilament gangions/leaders with swivel (approximately 60 lb test). Hooks are tied with artificial flies, and no bait is used. This gear is reported by the fisherman to selectively catch chilipepper rockfish when properly deployed (Steve Fosmark, Moss Landing, CA, F/V SeeAdler, Phone: 831-373-5238; cell phones: 831-601-4074; or Boat 831-601-7934 email: [FVSeeAdler@aol.com](mailto:FVSeeAdler@aol.com)).

The research would be conducted off central California (38 to 36 degrees), at depths of approximately 80-120 fm (chilipepper rockfish tend to get smaller in size and schools are thinner in shallow depths). Fishing effort will be concentrated in areas with canyon edges and walls, smooth hard bottom, with no rocks (example: canyon south of Año Nuevo). This depth range is currently within the non-trawl RCA established to protect overfished rockfish species.

To ensure that this experimental fishery has a minimal impact on overfished rockfish species, the Council recommended aggregate catch limits on the fishery for overfished species as follow:

Bocaccio: 3.300 mt  
Canary: 0.027 mt (*20 fish*)  
Cowcod: 0.015 mt (*3 fish*)  
Darkblotched: 0.400 mt  
POP: none  
Widow rockfish: 3.000 mt  
Yelloweye: 0.005 mt (*3 fish*)

Under the terms of this EFP, each vessel will carry an observer with the cost of observer coverage borne by the EFP participants. All species will be retained. Catch of species other than the above are expected to be uncommon although some yellowtail and perhaps other rockfish may be encountered in small numbers. Attaining any of the above aggregate catch limits will terminate the EFP for all vessels.

We anticipate that fishing as described in this EFP will not be constrained by these caps.

Chilipepper rockfish caught under this EFP will be retained and sold by the permitted vessel.

We request that NMFS issue this EFP for one year, or 12 calendar months.

This EFP will incorporate a standardized data collection and reporting format as determined by the NMFS Northwest Fisheries Science Center. All vessels participating in this EFP fishery will be required to carry an observer. The observer will record all fish caught and ensure that aggregate bycatch limits are not exceeded. Vessel captains will keep records of catch by species by set for all sets under this EFP. As it is possible that the catch and bycatch will change seasonally,

The applicant and the scientist will be responsible for data analysis. Data analysis will consist of statistical analysis of catch and bycatch of all species by set, trip, and month. Catch rates will be expressed as catch per hook, per set, per day, and per trip. Value of the catch will be recorded following sale. The final report will provide an estimate of fishing effort and total catch; absolute and relative species composition summarized by set, trip, and month; size composition of catch and bycatch; and sex ratio and stage of maturity for chilipepper.

Vessels to participate in this EFP fishery will be chosen on their ability to accommodate an observer, their willingness to maintain detailed catch data and their willingness to participate during months when fish are available to this fishery.

Areas to be selected for high-density target species will be between 38.0 degrees (Pt. Reyes) and 36 degrees (Point Lopez).

### Equipment needed:

Hydraulic puller, conveyor belting or wide runner, fly-hooks, line, wire, snaps, small buoys, one large buoy, 3 and 5 lb. weights.

### Description:

200 leader hooks per skate at 5 skates with sets from sunrise to sunset; 1,000 hooks would be the best as the sets are limited to available time. Time to fish short at daybreak and late evening

### Design:

Determine depth: if 90 fm deep, use 85-89 fm of drop line, deployed first and 5 pound weight at the end with attached long line to drop line 1 fathom above weight. Buoy attached to line at surface to sustain depth. Longline is approximately 1000 - 1,083 feet, 1000 leaders at 12-13 inches apart with about 20 small floats attached to longline at 50 hook intervals between leaders. Floats have short tethers and are attached to the long line with snaps.

Time to fish is short. During the day chilipepper come off the bottom and once they are mid-water they are difficult to catch by this method. Therefore the morning and evening are the best times.

Diagram 1.: Trolled Longline Gear may be deployed by reel to reel over a belt. Forward reel has coiled line gear over a conveyor belt and can be deployed over stern by a powered stern reel or by hand. Belt is coiled from the forward reel over a stern reel and line spools off into water. Pull line back with powered forward reel by rolling line and conveyor belt onto forward reel. Line revolves over stern reel onto belt and forward reel, the conveyor belt is moving with it. Line is never coiled onto stern reel, only over the conveyor belt. The line always goes from water over the stern reel, and coiled back onto the forward reel. Belt acts as a protection from entanglement for gear separation. Stern reel acts as a roller to hold coiled belt. This operation is reversed for pulling.

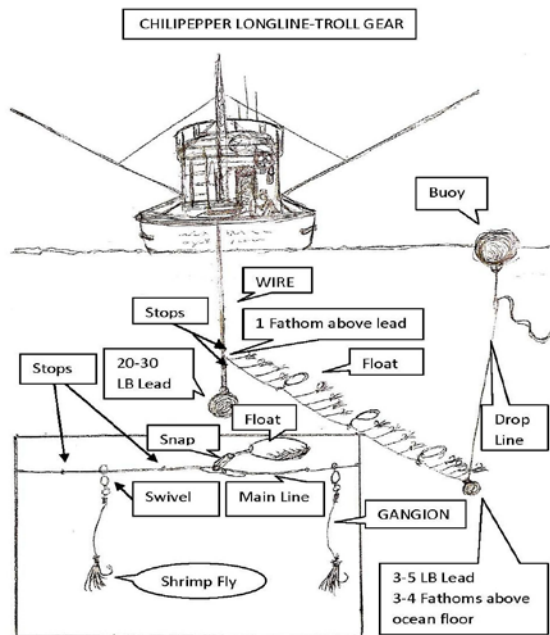
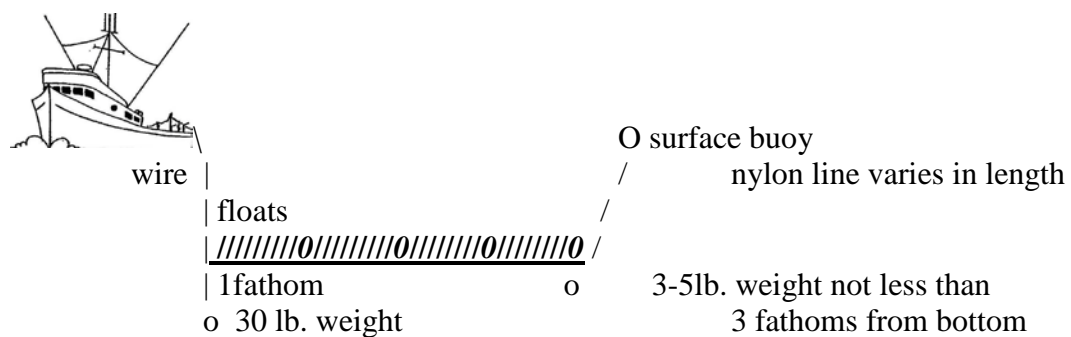


Diagram 2.



Line is approximately 1,000 feet long and the weight is 3 fathoms from the bottom to provide control. When the line reacts to bites, take the boat out of gear and fish will climb the line to the floats as they do with vertical gear on up and as line is pulled, line rises to the surface. Boat must be going ahead while pulling to keep the fish on. The terminal drop line remains at 85 fathoms. As the boat moves forward the drop line moves close to the end of the boat tight and fish continue to climb the line. As the line is towed in, fish stay in area of line where school is, (pull through spot of fish). As line is pulled on board it becomes vertical and can be alternatively stacked in basket gear.