

APPLICATION FOR ISSUANCE OF AN EXPERIMENTAL FISHING PERMIT

A. Date of application: April 3, 2001

B. Applicant's names, mailing addresses, and telephone numbers:

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
600 Capitol Way North, Olympia, WA 98501-1091
Contacts: Philip Anderson (360) 902-2720
Brian Culver (360) 249-1205
Michele Robinson (360) 249-1211

C. A statement of the purpose and goals of the experiment for which an EFP is needed, including a general description of the arrangements for the disposition of all species harvested under the EFP.

The goals of the experiment are:

1. To measure bycatch rates for canary and other rockfish associated with the arrowtooth flounder fishery through an at-sea observer program, and
2. To provide fishers with an incentive to participate in the observer program by giving them the opportunity to land arrowtooth flounder in excess of the current monthly trip limit within acceptable bycatch limits of other species.

With regard to the disposition of the species harvested under the EFP:

- Species caught within current trip limits may be retained by the vessel.
- Species caught in excess of current trip limits, but permitted within the EFP, will be retained by the vessel.
- Rockfish species caught in excess of current trip limits, but required to be retained under the EFP, will be forfeited to the state consistent with the current forfeiture of overages in the shoreside whiting fishery.

D. Valid justification explaining why issuance of an EFP is warranted:

Arrowtooth flounder are an extremely important species in Washington groundfish fisheries. The stock is healthy and Washington fishers and processors have worked aggressively to develop strong markets for this species. A large component of the Washington trawl fleet, and at least two major processors, are heavily dependent upon arrowtooth flounder.

Fishers targeting arrowtooth are currently constrained by their limit of canary rockfish. As such, fishers are limited to 30,000 lbs/month for all flatfish which includes arrowtooth. This trip limit is based upon the assumed bycatch rate of canary rockfish. Fishers who have historically targeted arrowtooth have indicated that under this monthly trip limit, targeting arrowtooth will not be economically feasible. Further, these fishers believe that they can prosecute an arrowtooth fishery with a much lower canary bycatch rate, thereby allowing a higher arrowtooth catch.

E. A statement of whether the proposed experimental fishing has broader significance than the applicant's individual goals.

The applicant of this EFP believes that the information collected during this experiment will have broader significance than the applicant's individual goals by:

- Producing data on the amount and location of canary rockfish bycatch in the arrowtooth flounder fishery, and
- Providing valuable and accurate data on the species composition of the trawl flatfish fishery off the Washington coast.

These data could allow the Council to establish trip limits in the future that maximize fishing opportunities while meeting conservation goals.

F. Vessels covered under the EFP:

Fishers covered under the EFP will include those who have historically participated in the targeted arrowtooth fishery off Washington. These fishers must have:

- Cumulative landings of at least 200,000 lbs of arrowtooth flounder landed into Washington in one of the following calendar years: 1998, 1999, or 2000, and
- A valid Washington delivery permit

A list of the fishers (and their designated vessels) that meet these criteria will be provided as part of the final EFP application.

G. A description of the species (target and incidental) to be harvested under the EFP and the amount(s) of such harvest necessary to conduct the experiment:

- The targeted species is arrowtooth flounder which would not be subject to a monthly trip limit, but which would be constrained by the measured bycatch allowance of canary rockfish.
- Other species could be landed under current trip limit levels and fishers could land up to the current limit of other flatfish in addition to their arrowtooth flounder landings.
- Incidental catches of rockfish species in excess of trip limits must be retained.

H. For each vessel covered by the EFP, the approximate time(s) and place(s) fishing will take place, and the type, size, and amount of gear to be used:

- The EFP will be valid in Pacific Ocean waters adjacent to Washington outside three miles.
- Approximate time for the fishery is July - September of 2001 and 2002.
- All vessels fishing under the authority of the EFP must:
 - Carry a Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife-provided observer onboard all fishing trips
 - Land all fish caught under the authority of the EFP into the State of Washington.
 - Employ legal trawl gear as defined in current federal regulations. Vessels fishing under the EFP may experiment with flatfish selective gears as long as such gears comply with current footrope restrictions.

I. The signature of the applicant:

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife