

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
EXEMPTED FISHING PERMIT APPLICATIONS

Two applications for exempted fishing permits (EFPs) - one dated April 3, 2001 and the other dated May 16, 2001 - were presented to the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC). A third proposal from the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) was not reviewed due to late submission.

The April 3 application, which was submitted by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, is designed to measure the bycatch rates of canary and other rockfish in the arrowtooth flounder fishery. The proposal requires vessels covered by the EFP to conduct their arrowtooth tows north of 48° N latitude, where it is expected that fishers would achieve lower canary rockfish bycatch rates. The SSC raised questions regarding potential confounding of gear and area effects, due to lack of a control study in the area south of 48° . The applicants indicated that it would be possible to use the federal observer program to estimate the area effect. However, it is not clear to the SSC whether the combination of EFP and federal observer data would be adequate for this purpose. The SSC recommends that information be included in the EFP application regarding estimated quantities of catch by species expected for the duration of the study.

The May 16 proposal is designed to be a collaborative project among CDFG, vessel owner Mr. Kenyan Hensel and the Pacific Marine Conservation Council to test the feasibility of using vertical hook-and-line gear to selectively catch yellowtail rockfish without significantly increasing the incidental bycatch of canary rockfish. The SSC notes that this is not a statistical study to measure selectivity, but represents an opportunity for one vessel to test the feasibility of selective vertical hook-and-line gear. The results of this study could not be extrapolated to the rest of the fleet. The SSC recommends the following information be included in the EFP application: (1) the end point of the EFP, such as maximum number of trips under the EFP or an ending date, (2) a provision to end the study if allowable canary bycatch limits are prematurely exceeded, (3) a provision that an observer be onboard for all trips, and (4) estimates of the quantities of catch by species expected for the duration of the study.

For future reference, the SSC requests guidance from the Council regarding how rigorously EFP applications should be reviewed on a scientific basis. On the one hand, EFPs are not research permits. On the other hand, in cases where the results of studies conducted under EFPs are used as a basis for changes in fishery regulations, it will be important that adequate justification be provided for such changes.

PFMC
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