

Proposal

The goal of this exempted fishing permit (EFP) is to demonstrate it is possible to harvest healthy stocks of Chilipepper Rockfish while avoiding other species deemed less healthy. This EFP would allow a limited number of vessels (6) take Chilipepper rockfish shoreward of the RCA boundary line using trolled hook and line gear known as “carpet runner” gear. At this time pursuing this underealized resource is economically unfeasible due to Chilipepper rockfish being considered part of the 200 pound bimonthly shelf rockfish limit. Allowing Chilipepper rockfish to be in a separate category and increasing the limit to 2000 pounds per month would make this a viable fishery. This would provide an alternative to replace lost fishing opportunities available to small vessels as a result of other closures. By allowing fishing with selective gear in the present RCA, the fishing would be done in the area where the targeted fish are found in the greatest numbers. There would be 100% retention of legal fish with only prohibited species being discarded. Trips would have 100% observer coverage to document and record the species caught.

Long Term Goal

The long term goal of this project is to provide access to Chilipepper rockfish stocks in the open access category fisherman. The monthly limits would be set by the biological abundance data. It is not known how many vessels would participate so the season may need adjustments to control the overall take.

Rationale:

1. The California Department of Fish and Game, in their regulations encourages experimental fishing methods (section 8606). This section allows new types of commercial fishing gear and methods in areas otherwise closed. Carpet runner gear allows for the use of existing salmon fishing machinery with limited expenditure for modifications.
2. The Chilipepper rockfish stock is healthy and harvest should be allowed if it is proven that non-target fish stocks can be avoided. A quote from a DFG document: dfg.ca.gov/MRD/MLPA/response/shelf “A few shelf rockfish species such as Chilipepper and Yellowtail appear to be comparatively healthy; their allowable take has been set at levels below the potential yield to protect the weaker species that tend to be caught with them, such as Bocaccio and Canary”.
3. The fishing gear proposed can be set at a depth that is less likely to have contact non-target species such as Canary rockfish (further from the bottom). Cowcod and

Yelloweye rockfish are not commonly found in the proposed fishing area. During several salmon fishing trips within the RCA in 2005 the abundance of Chilipepper rockfish was noted. No Bocaccio rockfish were encountered with the trolled salmon gear during those trips.

4. Trolled gear, unlike trawl gear, has a relatively small catch capacity. The number of hooks used limits the catch in any one “set” so any contact with non-targeted species would be limited. The tows are much shorter in duration than trawl tows and the vessel can easily move to another fishing area if non-targeted species are encountered.
5. The fish caught by hook and line are handled much differently than trawl caught fish. Their superior appearance allows them to be more easily sold in the round for a higher price than trawl fish destined for the fillet market. The large ethnic communities in the San Francisco Bay area represent a consistently reliable market for this high quality round fish. A similar fish, Ocean Perch, are currently being imported from Canada to fill this market. Hook and line fishing seems to be a way of allowing a small harvest of a healthy resource for the most economic benefit to small vessel fishermen.
6. The limited availability of observers presents a challenge, however most vessels are already fishing in the groundfish fishery where observers are required. If the experimental fishing were done during the period the observer was already required to be aboard the vessel there would not be a net increase in observer coverage. The assumed higher catch rate fishing Chilipepper rockfish over nearshore fishing would allow the limit to be reached with fewer trips so it is possible the number of observer covered trips could actually be reduced.

Fishing Gear

The fishing gear would consist of the following elements:

A vertical 3/32 diameter stainless steel cable attached to a 50 pound lead ball.

A horizontal main line of 400 pound test monofilament line with crimped stops and swivels placed approximately every 30 inches. Attached to the swivel are an approximately 12 inches of 80 pound test monofilament line and an artificial shrimp fly.

The main line would contain a maximum of 200 hooks.

The main line is deployed and retrieved from a separate reel. The main line is overlaid with a piece of plastic carpet runner between wraps to prevent the hooks from tangling.

Fishing Technique

The vessel will motor through areas know to hold Chilipepper rockfish. Once a school of fish is located using depth sounder readings, a test line using a maximum of 6 hooks will be lowered to the indicated depth to determine the species of fish present. If other non-target species are found a new location will be sought. If Chilipepper rockfish are present the boat will be positioned to troll the gear through the school of fish at the depth noted

by depth sounder readings. The hooks will be kept at least 10 fathoms from the bottom by noting the amount of main line extended.

Bycatch Caps

Pounds

Species	Per Vessel 2 mo. Period	Per Vessel Annually	Annually All vessels
Widow/yellowtail	200	600	3600
Bocaccio	200	600	3600
Canary	20	40	240
Cowcod	1 fish	1 fish	6 fish
Yelloweye	1 fish	1 fish	6 fish
Target species			
Chilipepper	4000	16,000	96,000

Applicant Information:

Applicants:	Robert Kraencke 280 Douglane Ave. San Jose, Ca. 95117 Phone: 408-887-4567	Jerry Pemberton 426 Beach Street Half Moon Bay, Ca. 94019 Phone 650-619-0388
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Vessel: Lady LeBlanc
F&G 49548

Fishing Area: Latitude 38N to 36:50
Depth 60 to 100 fathoms

Time Period: April – November for a 2 year period