

APPLICATION FOR ISSUANCE OF AN EXEMPTED FISHING PERMIT TO TEST A SUSTAINABLE HOOK AND LINE FISHERY FOR CHILIPEPPER ROCKFISH OUTSIDE THE NON TRAWL RCA IN CENTRAL CALIFORNIA (40°10' N LAT.-34°27' N LAT.)

**Date of application:** 5/21/07

**Applicant Name:**

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**Purposes and Goals of the Proposed Experiment**

The goal of the exempted fishing permit is to develop a sustainable method for harvesting the abundant stocks of Chilepepper rockfish in the central California region (40°10' N Lat.-36° N Lat.) that will eliminate bycatch.

- Design a low impact, rod and reel fishery model that could be replicated for future open access vessels in this area.
- Restore a historic method of fishing for shelf rockfish and re-establish a sustainable fishery that strives for total retention.

The specific goals of the experiment are to:

- Evaluate whether vertically-fished gear, using a maximum of one hundred hooks outside the current R.C.A., effectively eliminates bycatch.
- Develop a harvest method that is equally accessible to vessels of all sizes.

**Disposition of Fish Harvested under the Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP)**

Species caught may be retained and sold.

**Justification Explaining Why an EFP is Warranted**

The traditional "fixed gear" fishery has two tragic flaws. First, is the fact that it is a bottom contact fishery. Central California contains three national marine sanctuaries whose guidelines prohibit any disturbance of the benthic habitat. This EFP proposes a non-bottom contact fishery that could be replicated throughout California. The experiment will use a vertical line to fish for Chilepepper (which swim in mid-water) that will not contact the bottom.

The second flaw is the fact that too many hooks are deployed on any given set. If the set lands on a spot where there are fish that you are not able to retain, the impact is significantly greater

the more hooks there are. Traditional long line methods can use 1,000s of hooks in one set. This EFP will limit the number of hooks to 100 per set, thereby reducing bycatch.

The major goal of this EFP is to reduce bycatch and strive toward total retention. Current regulations have created a situation where discard is inevitable. In thirty years of fishing for shelf rockfish, I have landed over one million pounds. For twenty three of those years, I never discarded a fish. Due to regulations over the past seven years, I have been forced to discard fish every time I go out. In the process of trying to catch my allotted quota of a Chilipepper, I am forced to throw back un-allotted Widows and Bocaccio that come to the surface dead. In those seven years, I always stopped fishing before I reached my quota of Chilipepper because the discard factor became too disgusting. Mandatory discard has removed the honor from what was once my favorite fishery. This experiment will explore whether discard can be virtually eliminated using the rod and reel model.

### **Statement of Project Significance**

Historically, the three major ports in this area (Bodega Bay, San Francisco Bay, and Half Moon Bay) all had significant hook and line landings. The ex-vessel values of hook and line caught fish have always been much higher than trawl caught fish of the same species. If this EFP is successful, it could restore a vibrant hook and line fishery to these ports. An increase in boats using hook and line to catch fewer fish of higher value will be more efficient, have less environmental impact, and benefit local economies with a high quality, high value product. Prior to the turn of the century all fish were harvested with hook and line. This EFP has the potential to restore a truly “historic” method of take for shelf rockfish.

### **Vessels to be Covered by the EFP**

FV Palo FG 27309 GF 0056 Josh Churchman  
Bodega Bay

### **Species and Amounts to be Harvested**

The target species to be harvested is the Chilipepper rockfish (*Sebastes goodei*), Bocaccio and Widow rockfish. Bocaccio and the Widow often swim with the Chilipepper. For this reason, this EFP combines these species into a *Sebastes* group with an allotment of five thousand pounds per two month period. By creating one allotment for the three species combined, the experiment strives to eliminate bycatch. There is no anticipated take of Canary, Yelloweye or Cow Cod outside the current R.C.A.

### **Other EFP Specifications**

- All fishing will take place seaward of 150 fm.
- All vessels will declare the time and place of landing to allow access to interested biologists.
- All vessels will have a VMS system.
- A standardized data collection and reporting format will be coordinated by the California Department of Fish and Game, NMFS Northwest Fisheries Science Center, and Pacific States Marine Fisheries.

- All vessels will be subject to the current observer requirements for fishing outside the R.C.A.

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