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COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
September 5, 2008

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Agenda Item I.6.d

Supplemental Public Comment 2
September 2008

Mr. Donald K. Hansen, Chairman
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101
Portland, OR 97220-1384

Dear Chairman Hansen:

I am writing to express my strong support for continuing the Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) to fish trawl permits with longline, trap, pot, and hook-and-line gear in a community based fishing association. I urge the Pacific Fishery Management Council to approve this application at its September meeting.

This EFP is an innovative partnership between fishermen, harbor masters, conservation organizations, and fishery managers. It will show that, by allowing the switch from trawl to fixed gear and by working cooperatively at the local level, fishermen can do better both economically and environmentally. This will provide information to managers that may be useful in rationalizing the groundfish trawl fishery and particularly in developing the guidelines for cooperative management under Regional Fishing Associations.

As you know, I supported this EFP proposal in 2007. This year's proposal builds on a foundation set with the 2008 Exempted Fishing Permit. Allowing this project to continue to a second year of operation will maximize the benefits of the lessons learned from the 2008 EFP, providing more data and experience for the partners to decide if and how to formalize the community based fishing association and cooperative fishing in this area into a permanent fishing entity that could hold fishing privileges and oversee cooperative conservation and management activities.

Regulations to protect habitat and overfished stocks, market dislocations, increasing costs and diminishing harvest opportunities, as well as buyouts to reduce trawl capacity have taken their toll on many small communities – such as Morro Bay and Port San Luis – that have historically fished the groundfish resource on the West Coast. This project offers a unique opportunity to turn this trend around and improve both the sustainability of the fishery and the community.

I believe this proposal to be a step in the right direction toward restoring our local fisheries. Therefore, I urge you to approve this request, consistent with all relevant rules and regulations. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lois Capps".

LOIS CAPPS
Member of Congress