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May 8, 2015

Dr. Donald McIsaac, Executive Director PFMC  
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Dear Dr. Donald McIsaac,

I am interested in applying to Pacific Fishery Management Council for a preliminary Experimental Fisheries Permit for a two-year term to commence in September of 2015 and terminate December 31, 2017. I am currently a commercial fisherman/educator fishing primarily Southern California waters based out of San Diego. Current species in which I target are Spiny Lobsters, Sea Urchins, Sea Cucumbers (dive), White Seabass, Swordfish (harpoon), and other migratory species such as shark, tuna, yellowtail, dorado etc. I have two small fishing vessels (24ft. and 33ft.) in which I and my sons operate from. I am seeking to expand the efficiency/knowledge of my fishing efforts by the use of "Experimental Deep-Drop Fishing Gear" (DDG) on both my vessels.

### **Statement of the Purpose**

The purpose of acquiring an EFP is to experiment with a different type of fishing method that is fairly new to the West Coast fisheries, specifically California. The goal of fishing with DDG is to find an efficient/economical method of harvesting targeted species for commercial sale while reducing the impact on non-targeted species. The targeted species will be swordfish, shark, tuna, opah, dorado, and yellowtail. While the primary goal of the EFP is to experiment with a different type of fishing method for commercial viability, a broader significance will be the overall knowledge of a "hook&line" method for swordfish and reduced waste and mortality of non-targeted species. Because this method is a more selective process, non-targeted species and or juveniles have a greater chance of being released unharmed thus conserving the resource and appealing to public consumers of wild harvest seafood. In addition, while so many other fisheries are being limited and shut down, if DDG is found to be a viable fishery then it gives promise to young fisherman for a career path in commercial fishing.

### **Proposed Method**

My proposed method of fishing is the use of 10 individual sets of DDG per vessel. DDG is a cross between vertical set line and longline. Each down line will have a 10lb weight at the bottom and two sets of leaded baited hooks attached to it. One leaded hook will be higher in the water column 150-250ft. range and the other will be in the bottom at 800-1000ft. range. Each vertical down line will have a set of floatation buoys and markers at the top, one of which being a "strike indicator" float. A strike indicator is used so that each vessel can continually monitor and identify when a set of gear is hooked to a fish. This will increase the chance of timely retrieval of a "live" species in order for success of fresh harvest or vibrant release of unmarketable non-targeted species.

### **Monitoring**

By using only 10 sets of gear per vessel, monitoring of the gear and recording of failures and success will be ongoing and continually updated. Each time gear is set and retrieved observable data of but not limited to: time, location, surface conditions, SST, bottom depth, depth of baits, species landed or released, and presence or non-presence of other marine life will be recorded in a computer based program/table. By continual monitoring, data can be analyzed and evaluated for patterns of optimal conditions for targeted species thus reducing the chance of by-catch or unmarketable species. Monitoring and recording of incidental catch as well as targeted catch ratio for determining whether true by-catch reduction occurs.

### **Environmental/Economic Impacts**

This will be a far contrast and much more selective process than two of the current methods (Gillnet and Longline) of swordfish and pelagic species. 2 hooks per set x 10 sets = 20 fish maximum potentially, but realistically an average harvest might be 10-20% of that, which would reduce potential "overfishing" and could be enough to sustain both a small fishing vessel and the fishery as well due to a smaller more selective harvest and supply and demand of market. Environmentally, if incidental loss of gear occurs, it will have a much less impact than losing a whole set of longline or DGN gear. This will allow for a low environmental impact and sustainable economic viability for small fishing operations.

### **Participant Selection**

Selection of the vessels will be based upon ones in which operate routinely within 100 miles of shore and are limited to no more than 5 days away from port but normally 1-2 days. These vessel will have a 2-3 man crew. One vessel will be a bit larger and of the standard inboard propulsion non-trailerable type, while the other will be an inboard/outdrive trailerable type. By having two different types of vessels a comparison can be made as to which might be more effective in its efforts. What is more efficient, less efficient or no significant difference from one that is slower with a greater range per trip that can stay work in an area longer or one that is faster and has the ability to move up and down the coast from one port to another on a frequent basis in order to follow shorter range migratory fish. Both vessels will be mainly be fishing within 75 miles from the California coastline and primarily setting during daylight hours. Though will consider the possibility of making night sets as well in order to determine efficiency of the DDG.

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Please consider my application for an EFP for the following reasons:

- I'm specifically interested in learning more about the migratory and feeding habits of swordfish and other migratory species
- I want to use gear that is more efficient and focusses on targeted species thus reducing bycatch
- DDG has greater assurance of a more vibrant release of non-targeted species
- Potentially a viable option to the DGN and Longline fisheries
- Much more environmentally sound and appealing to public awareness (similar to hook&line vs. nets for tuna "dolphin safe" methods)
- I want to be part of the solution not the problem for the sustainability of fisheries and natural resources

Please send the information to me at the address listed above. If you have questions about my request, please contact me by phone at 760-207-7504 or by email at either [elmo.stephens@outlook.com](mailto:elmo.stephens@outlook.com) or [elmo1234@roadrunner.com](mailto:elmo1234@roadrunner.com)

Thank you for your time in looking over my application for and consideration in the issuance of an EFP. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

David Stephens