



Coastside Fishing Club

P.O. Box 5928, Napa, CA 94581

Agenda Item H.1.b
Public Comment
September 2015

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Support for Recreational Midwater Gear – September Agenda Item H.1

The Coastside Fishing Club is an all-volunteer CA non-profit organization dedicated to improving the recreational fishing experience for all Californians. We have long advocated for conservation measures to aid in the recovery of constraining overfished groundfish stocks. Our leadership on the issue of barotrauma treatment for regulatory discards has brought us to the forefront of this issue at the local and national levels. But there is a better way – avoid these species in the first place!

That is why we strongly urge the Council to move forward in the most expeditious manner possible to authorize the recreational use of this gear type in ALL federal waters within the Council's authority. Not only does this improve on and extend the conservation actions associated with barotrauma treatment; but it also serves as a limited means to open waters now closed to recreational fishermen: the Rockfish Conservation Areas (the RCAs) which have restricted recreational groundfishing to shallower waters since their creation. And at the same time, adoption of the midwater gear will relieve pressure on nearshore stocks that have been heavily targeted ever since the creation of the RCAs.

The EFP conducted in Oregon clearly demonstrates the efficacy of this gear type concept: the long drop leader and upper float keep the hooks off the bottom, thus avoiding those groundfish species that typically prefer the benthic habitat. The data from the Oregon EFP clearly show that Yelloweye and Canary are essentially avoided through the use of this gear. And similarly, the data from the commercial EFP of Dan Platt and Barbara Emley in California waters show the same lower contact potential. This is not surprising as the gear is designed with the fish behavior in mind, not the state boundaries.

The Oregon EFP was successfully conducted more than 5 years ago, and the adoption of the gear type has been long delayed by the Council in order to address issues in the commercial fishing sector – primarily the TIQ program. It is now time to provide recreational fishermen restricted access to the RCAs in a manner consistent with their reason for existence – conservation of critical species. We urge the Council to allow recreational fishermen limited access to the RCAs when using midwater recreational gear to target groundfish species in all waters within the jurisdiction of the Pacific Fishery Management Council.

Thank you,

Rick Sturiza

Director, Coastside Fishing Club