

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE (NMFS) REPORT ON EXEMPTED FISHING PERMIT (EFP) APPLICATIONS

Publication of a Notice of Availability of the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for a Longline EFP

A Notice of Availability and request for comments on the Draft EA for a Longline EFP was published on September 2, 2016 (<https://federalregister.gov/a/2016-21196> and http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/fisheries/migratory_species/highly_migratory_species_rules_req.html). Written comments on the Draft EA must be submitted by October 3, 2016. Comments should be submitted to the Sustainable Fisheries Division, NMFS, 501 West Ocean Blvd., Suite 4200, Long Beach, CA 90802, or by email to RegionalAdministrator.WCRHMS@noaa.gov.

The original application for the EFP was discussed during the March 2015 Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) meeting and published on the Council's website. A revised application for the EFP and the Council's additional recommendations regarding EFP issuance were published in the Federal Register on May 22, 2015 ([80 FR 29662](#)), and public comments were accepted and considered through June 22, 2016.

Currently, fishing with longline gear is prohibited inside the U.S. West Coast exclusive economic zone off California and Oregon (hereafter, the action area). The Draft EA considers the potential environmental, social and economic impacts of issuing an EFP for two vessels to fish with shallow-set and deep-set longline gear in the action area. As stated in the Council's July 2, 2014, letter soliciting EFPs to test alternative gears and/or new approaches or methods for the California large mesh drift gillnet fishery ([Agenda Item G.3.a, Attachment 1](#)), the purpose of issuing the EFP is to gain more understanding about the utility, selectivity, and viability of the gear for catching highly migratory species, including swordfish, in the action area.