

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT RE: INTENT TO USE  
GILLNET GEAR TO HARVEST CALIFORNIA KING CRAB

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) offers the following comments regarding the notice of intent submitted by Mr. Christopher Williams to the Council office on February 1, 2017, and the Council's response back to Mr. Williams dated February 8, 2017, as shown in Agenda Item B.1.a, PFMC Report, March 2017.

After an extensive public scoping process, the Council recommended revisions to the List of Fisheries (50 CFR 600.725(v)) at its September 2013 meeting. As part of that process, CDFW used landings data through 2012 to identify all existing directed and incidental fisheries off California, and provided its updated list through its representative on the Ecosystem Workgroup. The Final Rule amending the list was published August 7, 2014. A California king crab fishery prosecuted with gillnet gear is not among the list of authorized fisheries off California, as no such fishery existed.

CDFW appreciates that in the process of revising the list, the notification process for commencing a new fishery has likewise been clarified for stakeholders and the public.

In response to Mr. Williams' preliminary notification, CDFW is evaluating existing California statutes, regulations and authorities to determine how best to prohibit development of a California king crab gillnet fishery under state law. CDFW is not aware of what fishery-specific bycatch avoidance and minimization measures would be necessary, nor is CDFW aware of any information suggesting that gillnet gear can selectively harvest this target species while minimizing bycatch and impacts to habitat. Until there is robust scientific information suggesting such a fishery could be prosecuted cleanly and effectively, CDFW cannot support authorization of a new gillnet fishery for California king crab off the California coast.