

February 27, 2017

Mr. Herb Pollard, Chair
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Pl.
Suite 101
Portland, Oregon 97220-1384

AGENDA ITEM J.3 – PROPOSED DEEP-SET BUOY GEAR EXEMPTED FISHING PERMITS

Dear Chair Pollard and Members of the Council,

I wanted to give a brief update regarding the survey we conducted during October and November of 2016. As I mentioned in our public comment in the advanced briefing book for November 2016, in anticipation of some of the topics that are being discussed at this meeting as well as last November's meeting, the VCCFA decided to conduct a survey among the 71 fishermen who currently (as of August 9, 2016) own HMS permits with DGN endorsements. The purpose of the survey was to gather information from fishermen that can hopefully be used to facilitate the difficult and important Council processes of authorizing DSBG and Federalizing HMS permits. But for the sake of relevance to this Agenda Item I will focus on our intention to use this opportunity of surveying 71 experienced swordfish fishermen (some of which who may not even be aware that the EFPs exist) as way to potentially recruit new EFP applicants with the goal of satisfying some of the Council's data gathering priorities.

The survey questions are listed below:

- 1.) Did you know that the PFMC is soliciting applications for, and has issued Exempted Fishing Permits to target swordfish using deep-set buoy gear in California over the last few years? **Yes** **No**
- 2.) Do you have any interest in applying for an Exempted Fishing Permit to target swordfish using deep-set buoy gear? **Yes** **No**
Please explain why you answered, "Yes" or "No" to question 2.
- 3.) Do you have any interest in a deep-set buoy gear permit once it becomes an authorized fishery in the next few years? **Yes** **No**
Please explain why you answered, "Yes" or "No" to question 3.
- 4.) Do you plan on renewing your HMS/drift gillnet permit next year? **Yes** **No**
Please explain why you answered, "Yes" or "No" to question 4.
- 5.) How do you prefer to be contacted in the future if more info is needed (mail, email, phone, text, etc.)?
- 6.) Do you have any additional comments, questions or suggestions?

Here are the updated results of our survey with changes highlighted in **RED**:

VCCFA HMS/DRIFT GILLNET SURVEY SUMMARY			
	NUMBER OF PERMITTEES	% OF SURVEY RESPONSES (N=26)	% OF ISSUED PERMITS (N=71)
TOTAL COMPLETED SURVEYS	27 (+3)		38.0
DEEP-SET BUOY GEAR EXEMPTED FISHING PERMIT:			
Current PIER EFP participant	5	18.5	7.0
Interested in applying for DSBG EFP (not currently participating)	18 (+3)	66.7	25.4
Only interested in EFP with no observer costs	1	3.7	1.4
Not interested in applying for DSBG EFP	3	11.1	4.2
Knew DSBG EFP existed prior to survey	20	74.1	28.2
Did not know DSBG EFP existed and want to apply	7 (+3)	25.9	9.9
DEEP-SET BUOY GEAR PERMIT:			
Interested in DSBG permit once the fishery is authorized	26 (+3)	96.3	36.6
Not interested in DSBG permit	1	3.7	1.4
HMS/DRIFT GILLNET PERMIT:			
Recent participant in CA DGN fishery (2015-17 fishing seasons)	8	29.6	11.3
Did not participate in last two or more fishing seasons	19 (+3)	70.4	26.7
Plan to renew permit next year (2017-18 fishing season)	26 (+3)	96.3	36.6
Do not plan to renew permit next year	1	3.7	1.4

So the real news here is as you can see, 3 additional survey responses trickled in since the last November 2016 PFMC meeting and none of them knew the DSBG EFPs existed prior to the survey. The good news is that we now have 18 folks that are interested in applying for a DSBG EFP. Seven of which never even knew that the DSBG EFPs existed prior to this survey.

So now I can imagine you may be asking yourselves, if there are 18 folks interested in applying for a DSBG EFP, then why don't we have 18 new EFP applications, or at least 18 new vessels applying for an EFP at this March meeting? The short answer is that organizing and coordinating something like that in between last November and now would have been a job within itself that I simply don't have time for. However, I want to point out that I acknowledge and appreciate the Council tasking the HMSMT last November with developing criteria for deciding if a DSBG EFP application could be approved in one Council meeting rather than the current two. While it is important for an EFP applicant to personally attend Council meetings where their EFP is being considered, this can be difficult for any fisherman for a number of reasons, especially two out of state meetings. I have informed interested EFP applicants of the progress regarding the Councils intent to streamline this important EFP process and I look forward to a large number of new and well-informed DSBG EFP applicants at the June 2017 PFMC meeting.

I would like to point out that the EFP applications described under this Agenda Item as Attachments 2, 3 and 5 are in no way linked to our survey. So far, the only EFP application to date that derived from our survey is described under Attachment 4, but the applicant did all the work himself while the VCCFA only provided what little early guidance was needed to assist in the effort. The EFP application described under Attachment 2 came from word of mouth prior to our survey, as the applicant is the brother of a close friend of mine who happens to fish for swordfish with drift gillnets. The VCCFA is not affiliated with the DSBG EFP applications described under Attachments 3 & 5, so we cannot support these applications based off what little knowledge we have regarding these EFPs as well as the applicants themselves. That being said, the VCCFA would like to ask the Council to please recommend that NMFS approve the EFP fishing activities described under Attachments 1, 2 and 4 as is at this meeting in an attempt to have any possible chance of these applicants being able to start fishing under this EFP as soon as the fish start to show up.

We would also like to express our support of the DSBG EFP application submitted by the VCCFA on behalf of David Haworth and Arthur Lorton. We recognize that it was turned in a few days late, but we would like to ask the Council and the HMSMT to please consider it at this meeting in an effort to be able to start fishing and gather data as soon as possible.

So time is of the essence. Delaying Council action until June will only delay NMFS' approval even further into the summer season, which tends to provide productive swordfish fishing (and data gathering) opportunities using DSBG. It would be unfortunate for the new applicants to miss out on these opportunities for a number of reasons.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Gonzalez
President