

## CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON USE OF HOOK AND LINE GEAR TO TARGET SWORDFISH

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has received inquiries regarding the legal configuration of hook and line gear used to target swordfish. CDFW reviewed a specific request from a commercial fisherman to use hook and line gear with similar aspects to deep set buoy gear (DSBG) but connected to hand held rods aboard a vessel using electric reels (Figure 1). The Department, in consultation with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Office of Law Enforcement, determined that this gear configuration is legal and can be used to target swordfish under a California state commercial fishing license and swordfish permit along with a federal Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Permit.

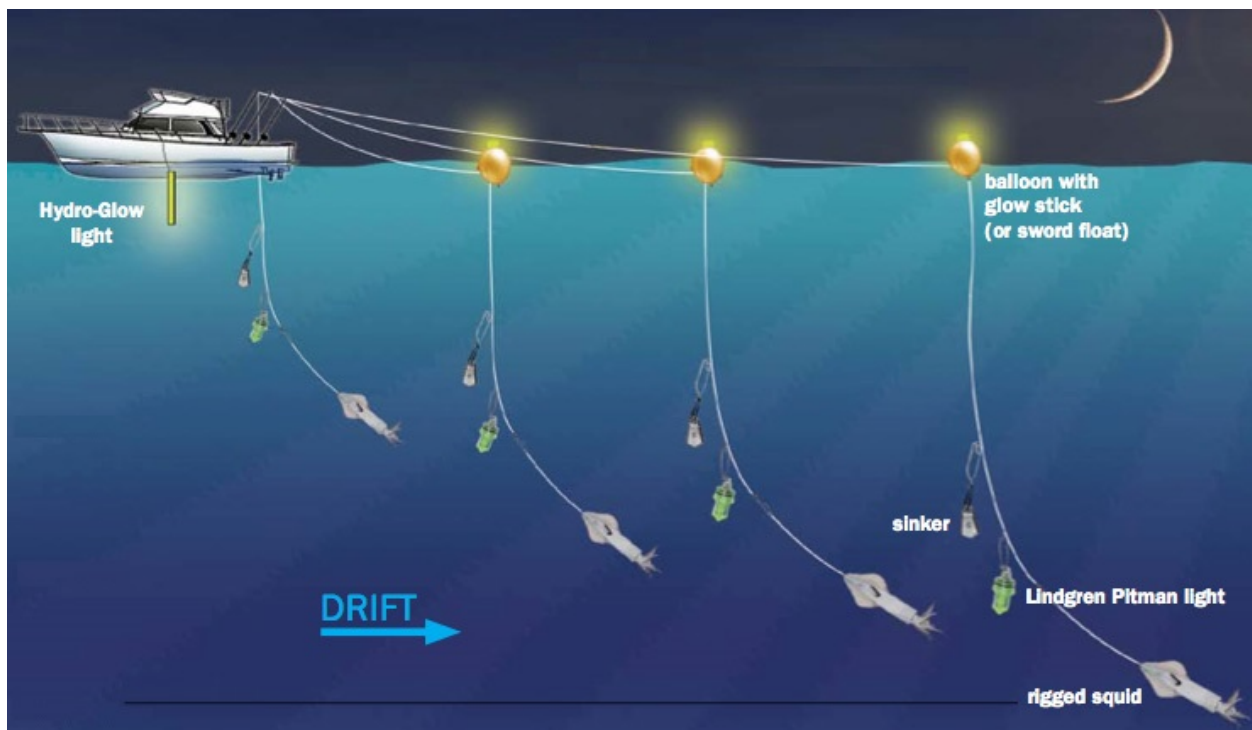


Figure 1. Example hook and line gear using surface floats and permanently attached to rods onboard the vessel. (Image modified from: On The Water - <http://www.onthewater.com/video/rig-swordfish-night>)

The HMS Fishery Management Plan (FMP) authorizes commercial legal HMS gear as harpoon, surface hook and line, drift gillnet (14 inch stretched mesh or greater), purse seine, and pelagic longline. Surface hook and line gear is defined in the FMP as:

One or more hooks attached to one or more lines (includes troll, rod and reel, handline, albacore jig, live bait, and bait boat; excludes pelagic longline and mousetrap gear). Pelagic longline gear is defined in the FMP as a main line that is suspended horizontally in the water column, which is not stationary nor anchored, and from which dropper lines with hooks (gangions) are attached. Mousetrap gear is defined in the FMP as a free-floating set

of gear thrown from a vessel, composed of a length of line with a float on one end and one or more hooks or lures on the opposite end.

Based on these definitions, hook and line gear with floats terminating to a rod and reel onboard is legal hook and line gear already authorized for use in HMS fisheries.

This gear resembles DSBG, given the surface float downline and strike indicators. However, it differs from DSBG and mousetrap gear in that it is attached to the vessel, not free-floating. Thus, it also fulfills the proposed DSBG requirements for maintaining close proximity and gear tending. This gear or similar configurations of hook and line gear attached to a vessel provide an opportunity to test the efficacy of such configurations without waiting for exempted fishing permit approvals or issuance.

Given widespread interest on the part of the Council and stakeholders in developing alternative gears to harvest swordfish, CDFW encourages industry's use and testing of new and different configurations of surface hook and line gear consistent with the legal definitions established under the FMP.