



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
West Coast Region
1201 NE Lloyd Boulevard, Suite 1100
PORTLAND, OREGON 97232-1274

December 14, 2017

Mr. Phil Anderson, Chair
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place
Portland, OR 97220

Dear Mr. Anderson:

By this letter, I am approving Amendment 5 to the Fishery Management Plan for U.S. West Coast Highly Migratory Species Fisheries. As you know, Amendment 5 establishes a federal limited entry (LE) permit system for the California/Oregon large-mesh drift gillnet (DGN) fishery using very similar standards as the existing State of California LE permit program for the DGN fishery. Amendment 5 is intended to streamline management and future decision-making for this fishery by assuming federal control over the permit system. All California LE DGN permit holders on the date of publication of the final rule to implement Amendment 5 will be eligible to receive a federal LE DGN permit. Amendment 5 adopts many of the State of California permit requirements as they relate to the DGN fishery. This action is not expected to increase capacity, incentivize or stimulate fishing effort or activity of current latent permits, or change current fishery practices within the DGN fishery.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) published a proposed rule to implement Amendment 5 (RIN 0648-BG81) on October 31, 2017 (82 FR 50366), and we expect to make the final rule effective in early 2018.

NMFS appreciates the Council's ongoing efforts to develop recommendations to manage fisheries for highly migratory species and to streamline federal fisheries management under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

Sincerely,

Barry A. Thom
Regional Administrator

