

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE (NMFS) REPORT
ON UPDATES TO DEEP-SET BUOY GEAR (DSBG) EXEMPTED FISHING PERMITS
(EFPs)

Issuance of New EFPs

On May 1, 2018, NMFS approved 51 standard DSBG EFPs for issuance. These EFPs are contingent on applicants meeting certain eligibility requirements, including: Pacific Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Permit, United States Coast Guard Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety decal, vessel observability assessment, and participation in a Protected Resources Division (PRD) Protected Species Handling Workshop.

NMFS staff conducted two Protected Species Handling Workshops for DSBG EFP applicants. The first workshop was held on May 17th in Santa Barbara, California, and the second workshop was held on May 25th at the Southwest Fisheries Science Center in La Jolla, California. Workshop materials included gear configuration details, the Terms and Conditions of the EFPs, Observer Program requirements and call-in procedures, sea turtle resuscitation techniques, and methods to avoid vessel collision with protected species. A total of 36 EFP vessel captains and crew members attended the two workshops. Additional workshops may be scheduled in Long Beach, and NMFS is tentatively scheduling a webinar format workshop on June 22nd to be made available to EFP applicants from Oregon and northern California.

Based on participation in these workshops and verbal statements made by participants, NMFS expects up to 12 vessels to begin fishing as early as June/July 2018, with the possibility of 10 to 15 additional vessels by year's end.

NMFS recently completed an Endangered Species Act informal consultation on the likelihood of protected species interactions from use of Deep-Set Linked Buoy Gear (DSLBG). The proposed action that was analyzed includes: (1) limit DSLBG sets to federal waters north of the Northern Channel Islands, the minimum distance from shore being no shallower than the 400 meter depth contour; (2) require the use of line shooters during deployment of DSLBG; and (3) require the "serviceable link" that connects the buoy gear sections to have a minimum of 50 foot (15.25 meters) drop length (originally 36 feet maximum depth). Once the National Environmental Protection Act analysis is complete, NMFS anticipates issuing up to 15 DSLBG vessel EFPs; potentially in summer of 2018.

DSBG EFP Data

The graphics below were assembled to present overarching information for all DSBG EFPs. Between 2014 and 2017, up to six vessels fished with DSBG and up to nine dealers, from San Diego to Santa Barbara, bought fish from vessels using DSBG. Overall annual swordfish landings increased from year to year, as did total revenues from swordfish landings. However, price per pound for DSBG-caught swordfish varied over this time. These EFP vessels recorded landings other than swordfish, including 8 other species.

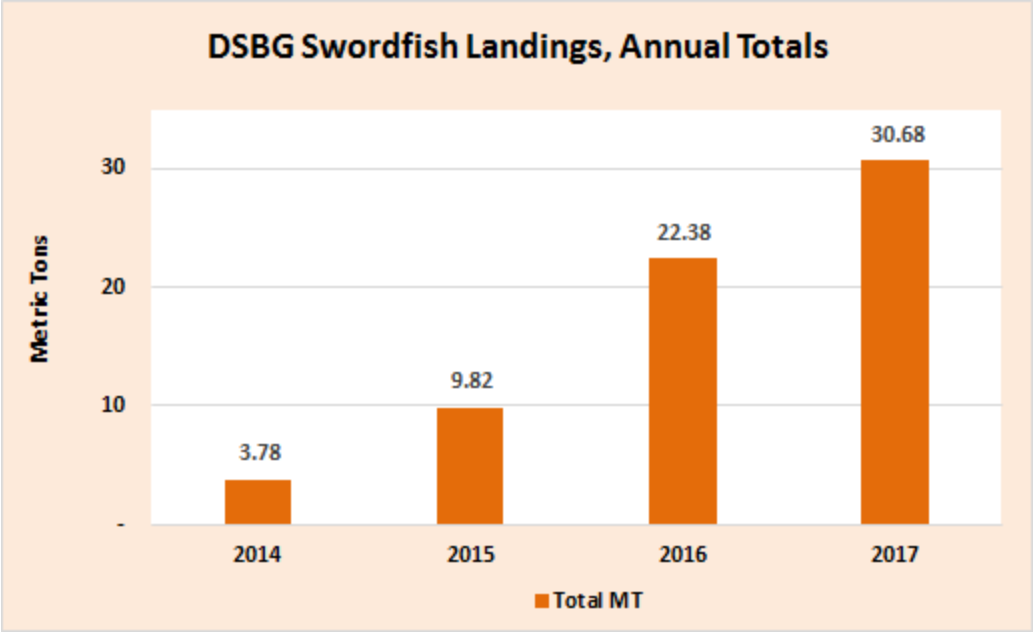


Figure 1. Total metric tons (mt) of swordfish landed by DSBG by year.

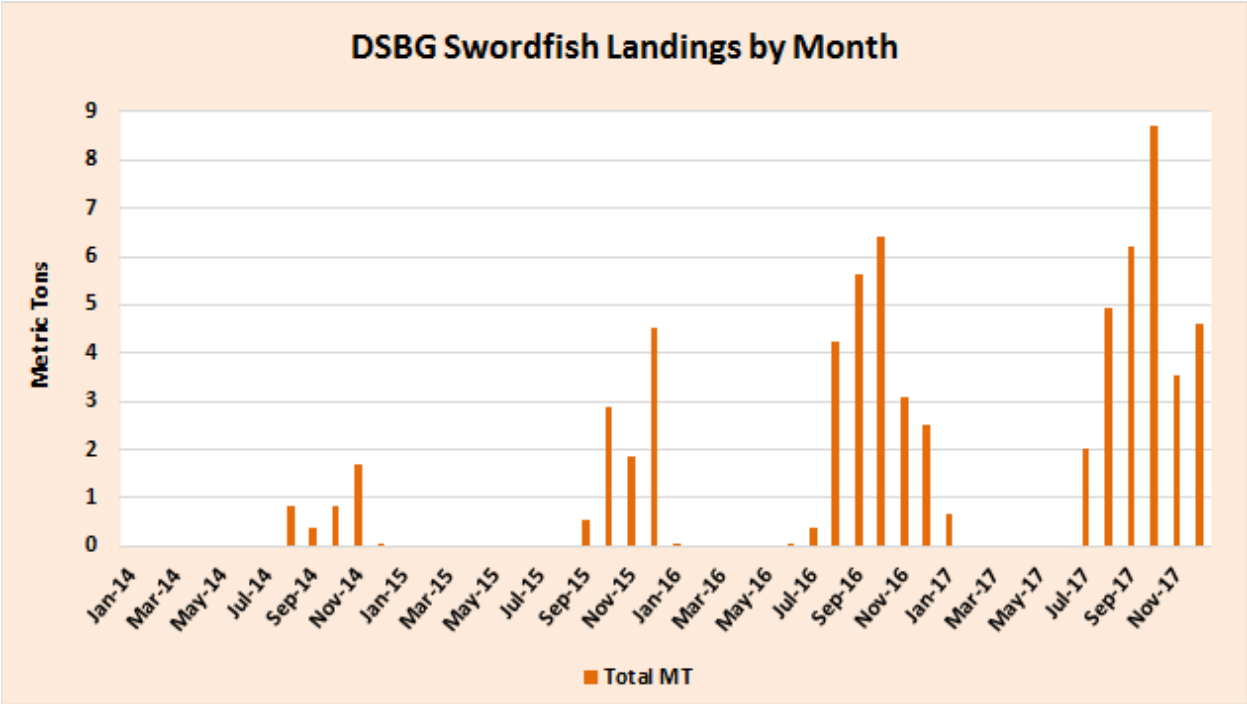


Figure 2. Total swordfish (mt) landed by DSBG by month.

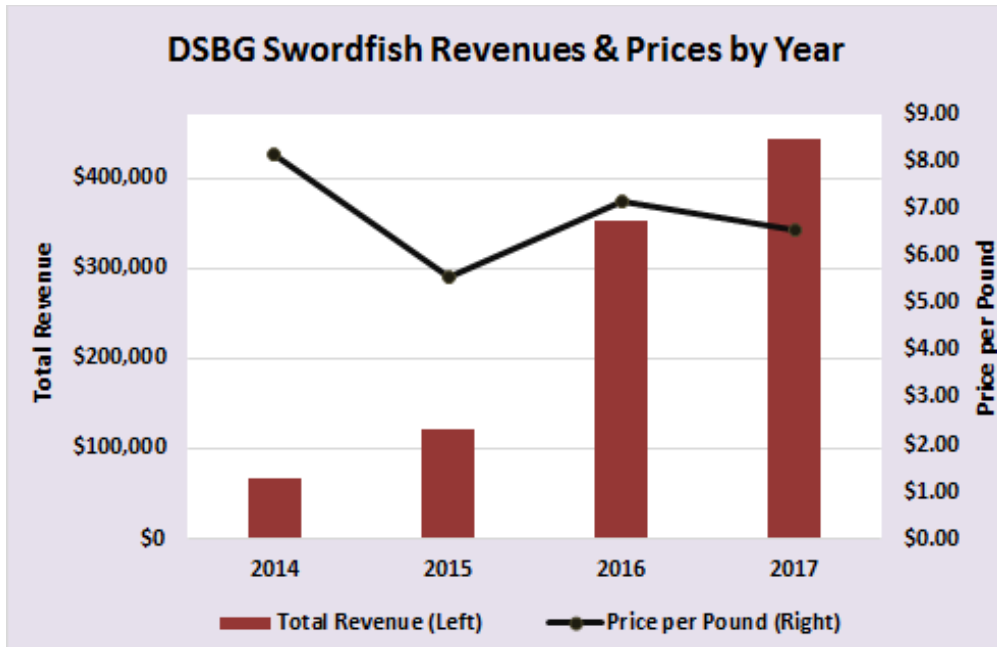


Figure 3. Total revenues and price per pound of DSBG-landed swordfish by year.

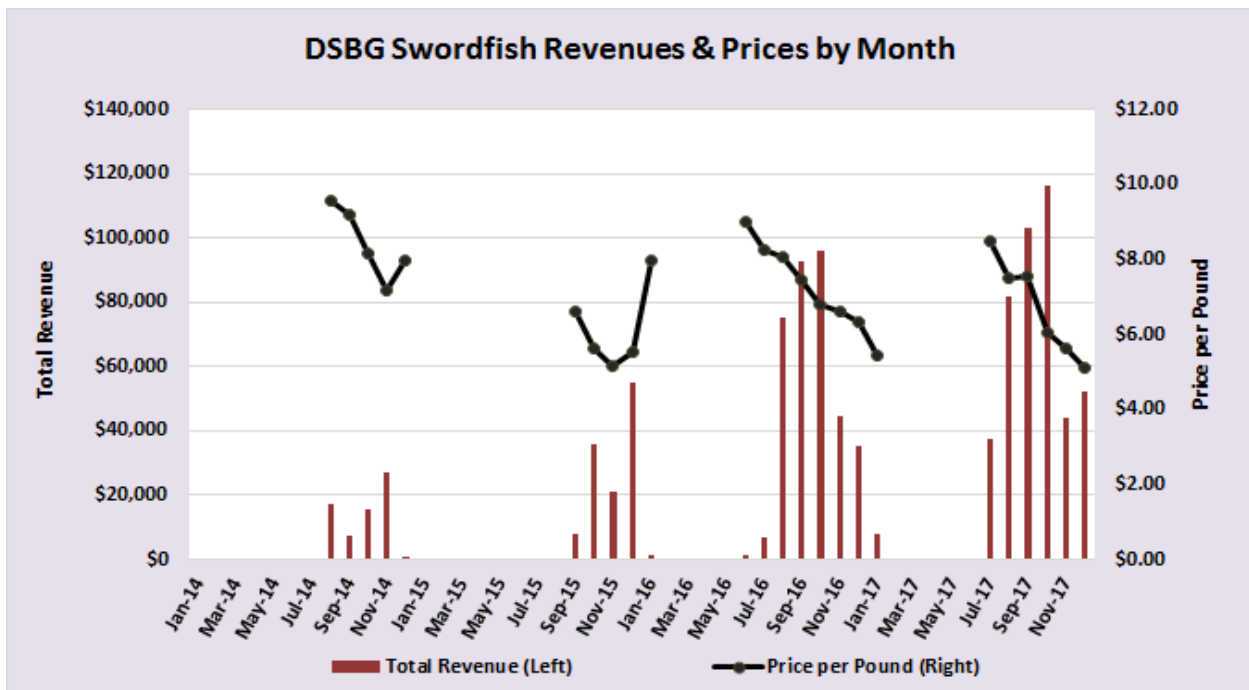


Figure 4. Total revenues and price per pound of DSBG-landed swordfish by month.

Table 1. Landings composition of all DSBG vessels by year.

Species	Landed Weight (Pounds)			
	2014	2015	2016	2017
Escolar		68	34	99
Louvar				321
Opah	1,528	860	123	
Shark, Bigeye Thresher		381	568	1,285
Shark, Bonito (Mako)	60			
Shark, Common Thresher		1,155	492	442
Shark, Pelagic Thresher		105		
Shark, Unspecified				55
Swordfish	8,340	21,652	49,343	67,647
Total	9,928	24,221	50,560	69,849