

ENFORCEMENT CONSULTANTS REPORT ON DEEP-SET BUOY GEAR
AUTHORIZATION – RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES AND LIMITED ENTRY CRITERIA

The Enforcement Consultants (EC) reviewed and discussed agenda item J.4, including the Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) report on the range of alternatives for the authorization of a deep-set buoy gear (DSBG) fishery for swordfish in Federal waters off the West Coast. The EC met with the HMSMT to solicit feedback and clarify questions from the report. The EC provided a statement on this topic at the March 2018 council meeting and would like to reiterate some of these concerns and comments.

Concerns about the number of Exempted Fishing Permits issued and or open access considerations

As the Council considers the alternatives for the appropriate level of participation in a potential DSBG fishery, the EC has concerns that there are potential enforceability and safety issues from the potential increase in the number of vessels fishing in a constrained geographic area. Depth restrictions for this gear along with the aggregating behavior of swordfish exacerbates the potential crowding problem, as vessels will likely converge on schools of fish within the Southern California bight. This may create difficulty for an enforcement officer to readily identify gear and attribute it to a specific vessel, as well as determine if that vessel is actively tending the gear within any required footprint. In addition, this situation could further contribute to gear conflicts, safety and navigation concerns.

PFMC
11/06/18