

Application to the Pacific Fishery Management Council for an Expanded HMS EFP for DSBG

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Applicant

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Captain & owner of the Fishing Vessel D.J., Official # 550062

Dear Council:

I have been a full time Commercial fisherman since 1978, including various gears and species such as Drift Gill Net, Set Net, Longline, Salmon, Seabass, Yellowtail, Albacore, squid, and rock fish. I have been participating the last 3 years in the DSBG & DSLG EFP trials. I also switched back to Drift Gill Net (DGN) last season because of very low production in the buoy fisheries.

I am requesting this EFP because I feel the restriction of sunrise to sunset set times, and an 8-hour soak time, is definitely hampering our production potential. **I would like to expand my allowable set time to include 3 hours before daylight through sunset** and, all else being the same, we have been excluding valuable bite time of the day presently. Most fish begin their active time of the day at or before daylight. We need our gear in the water at this time to include this most valuable bite time.

In every other fishery, missing the daylight or morning bite is always a disadvantage. Harpooners have a different strategy, focusing on the time of the day when the fish are least active, basking in the sun or just relaxing on the surface. Seems like the buoy gear fishery was designed after the harpoon fishery, a totally different approach as we can only benefit on biters (i.e. actively feeding swordfish). Our expenses as you know have greatly increased and we need to be able to take advantage of the time we are on the grounds, not missing critical times of the fishing day.

I am also requesting an increase in # of buoys to 15. I have an electronic method for the location of each buoy in its exact location. I've tried it, and it works very well. All other restrictions would be the same as existing DSBG EFPs; i.e. configuration of the gear, 30 hook limit, and 5-mile footprint. We may

or may not set all 15 buoys depending on weather, fishing, and common sense but would desire that option.

We presently have a very strong market, much more than in the past. The shipping prices have increased tremendously, making it much more difficult for imports to arrive on our docks. I am not a fan of imports that are not equal to the same restrictions as American fishermen face. Because of this, domestic caught fish are even more so in demand with much higher prices reflecting this. We need more production and overly restrictive rules or regulations are holding back our production.

I am requesting this EFP for fishing this coming season from June 2022 thru May 2023 and after that time the Council can re-evaluate. As far as vessels participating, I would welcome any other experienced buoy gear fisherman to participate as approved by the Council. This would lead to the collection of more data and information than just from one vessel, and more production.

The species we are targeting is primarily swordfish. Other species caught may be Thresher and Mako Sharks, Opah, Escolar, and Tuna. All very marketable except for Big Eye Thresher and Escolars; a more difficult market. If the DSBG EFP rules are loosened up a little bit, we may be able to achieve the goal of comparable catch rates to DGN.

Monitoring our fishing can be done as currently by NMFS Observers, or electronic cameras. I am requesting that observers would be provided by NMFS as it is with the current DSBG EFPs. There is little reason to believe this EFP would jeopardize our endangered species any more than at present, which is agreed by all as to be almost non-existent. We will continue to complete our logbooks daily.

I am asking for approval of this EFP to help DSBG become more of a productive commercial fishery as it is not considered as a consistent producer and certainly has a long way to go to replace the drift net fishery landings. With no improvement in the catch rate, the buoy gear fishery will slowly lose participants and even appear to be less appealing.

Thank you,

Steve Mintz