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Proposal for a Standard Deep-Set Buoy Gear EFP and Night-Set Buoy Gear with 20 Buoys in Total

We would like to propose a two-year daytime Standard Deep-Set Buoy Gear (DSBG) and Night-Set Buoy Gear (NSBG) Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) to deploy a total of 20 pieces of standard DSBG gear (i.e. 10 pieces in addition to the 10 already allowed under existing standard DSBG EFPs).

Fishing DSBG with more than one leader per buoy array has not been feasible due to leader entanglement issues as has been mentioned in many of the EFP fishermen reports to date.

The goal of this EFP proposal is to increase swordfish and marketable HMS catch to increase economic returns in the DSBG fishery. This activity will also help to determine if increasing the number of gear pieces (i.e. buoys) to 20 is reasonable in order to manage, maintain, and actively monitor gear sets, evaluate the effects of an increase in gear pieces on selectivity for swordfish and marketable HMS, and observe any effects on the rate of interactions with protected species (expected to be zero).

We would only use one hook per piece of DSBG or NSBG and 20 hooks total, and not exceed the 30 hook limit of existing DSBG EFPs. We would keep the 20 buoys in the same allowed footprint (i.e. within 5 nm) of the 10 buoy standard DSBG (i.e., not linked). All other existing DSBG EFP terms and conditions would be adhered to such as, minimum depth (>90 M), active tending, buoy and hook specifications, reporting, and observer coverage. We don't see any conflict with this gear between commercial and sport fishermen.

We would also like to test 20 pieces of DSBG at night using our Night Set Buoy Gear (NSBG) with the terms and conditions applicable to the 2020 – 2021 NSBG EFP, including the Enforcement Consultant September 2020 recommendations¹ for NSBG marking and reporting lost gear. NSBG terms and conditions include deploying gear sunset to sunrise, with a clear distinction from daytime DSBG activity (i.e. no overlap from daytime and night time gear deployments).

¹ <https://www.pcouncil.org/documents/2020/09/e-2-a-supplemental-ec-report-1.pdf>

We have shown that we can manage 10 pieces of gear easily and not cause conflict with other commercial fishermen or sport fishermen.

Our vessel is equipped with two radars, a flybridge, and a tower. Our crew is well trained to monitor the buoys and use gyros-stabilized binoculars to actively tend the gear for miles. Since testing DSBG starting in 2017 and NSBG during the 2020 and 2021 seasons, we have been able to retrieve all of our gear every day and night without any loss of gear.