

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

February 20,2022

Applicant

Captain Kris Honings (CDFW License # L98750)

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Vessel(s) Owner David Haworth

My name is Kris Honings. I am a 3rd generation San Diego Commercial Fisherman with 27 years of experience on the water. In that time, I've been all over the Pacific. Gillnetting for Rock Cod, DGN for swords and Shark, Trolling and Bait fishing for Tuna and Albacore, Longlining for Tuna and swords, Lighting for Squid, and most recently enjoying moderate success with DSBG as operator of the Elizabeth H for the last 2 years. As operator of Longline vessels in American Samoa, Hawaii and the West Coast I've been continuously certified in protected species workshops since 2002. I also hold numerous Merchant Mariner Credentials including a 1600 Ton UFIV Master Upon Oceans endorsement.

While attending maritime classes in the state of Florida, and in preparation for the upcoming DSBG season back home, I went along with fishing colleagues from my longline days on an Atlantic buoy gear sword trip to do some "homework". With minor adjustment to fit our existing West Coast DSBG EFP rules and regs, my EFP petition is modeled after the Federally permitted buoy fishery I observed in Florida¹.

Summary of Goals

Expansion of present standard DSBG EFP to include up to 30 standard buoys of gear, with up to 3 hooks per buoy, & ability to attempt deploying gear at night.

As presently structured with 10 pieces of gear, the DSBG fishery can be profitable for smaller scale vessels with lower overhead, but is not economically viable for the DGN fishery and larger vessels it is meant to replace. With rising costs of fuel, gear and supplies the profit margins are not enough to encourage larger vessels to continue fishing for Swordfish and other HMS with the new gear type. The cost of living in California coupled with the initial investment is prohibitive to any gear change for larger scale vessel operation. If this EFP is granted, I hope to demonstrate, with some minor changes to our existing EFP, that this can be a fishery as economically viable as DGN. I would be targeting swordfish and all marketable HMS.

¹ Evgeny V. Romanov et al., "Buoy Gear—a Potential for Bycatch Reduction in the Small-Scale Swordfish Fisheries: A Florida Experience and Indian Ocean Perspective," Oceanography Faculty Proceedings, Presentations, Speeches, Lectures, Paper 236 (2013), 3, http://nsuworks.nova.edu/occ_facpresentations/236

EFP Intent

To start, I'd like to acknowledge that what works on the Atlantic east coast may not necessarily translate to us here in the California Current Ecosystem. The data shows that established regulations work, and this petition is not meant to "re-invent the wheel". Therefore, all daytime effort would be conducted under the existing standard DSBG terms and conditions, simply using more pieces of gear over a larger footprint. I propose a maximum of 10 miles for the day fishing and 7 miles for the night.

My proposed night time fishing would be a slight alteration of the same. As the Council is aware, the DGN fishery is conducted at night when Swords climb to higher depths. Using this knowledge, we would deploy night buoy gear at no less than the prescribed 90m specified in existing DSBG EFP as minimum depth to avoid interaction with protected species. I would employ a lighted strike detection buoy set up similar to the existing night-set DSBG(NSBG) EFP currently fished by another NSBG EFP holder.

Since September of 2020, I have used GPS trackers on my buoys to prevent gear loss. They give real time GPS positions of all deployed gear direct to vessel, and are also a useful tool to know when you have a fish on when the buoy is beyond the line of sight. This is a direct influence from my colleagues in FL, and how I am confident we can prevent losing any gear, be it day or night. Through tracking the buoys via GPS on a plotter, I can 'actively tend' the buoys and detect when they may have a fish on the line and they move against the current. This will allow me to minimize impacts to fish bycatch and release any protected species from the line and hooks.

EFP Vessel(s)

Initially I ask that this EFP be granted to me for use on F/V Elizabeth H, USCG # 644228, a 40 ft boat with an existing DSBG EFP. But as the purpose of my EFP is to see if these changes can match the catch rate of the DGN fishery, I also ask that if production warrants it, this EFP be permitted to substitute a single larger vessel within the company fleet (Either Sea Haven #635102, Pacific Horizon #627203, or Kaylee H #536620). Only a single vessel would be fishing the proposed EFP at a given time. All 3 vessels have documented history as participants in the DGN fishery, and would give me the latitude to test the profitability of using buoy gear on larger DGN vessels. These sized vessels would also accommodate my petition to use the up to 30 buoys of gear the East coast sword boats are allowed².

EFP Duration

I request a 2-year initial duration. After 2 seasons, if data shows profitability, I would request re-issuance for an additional 5 years.

Monitoring and Reporting

I propose that all reporting guidelines, logbooks, and notifications remain the same as present EFP requirements. Any changes to observer coverage to be left up to the discretion of the NMFS. I cannot cover 100% of observer coverage on EFP trips. I propose NMFS pay for 100% observer coverage on the first 10 sets and then 30% after that like similar EFP holders.

² 50 CFR 635.21(h) [https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-50/chapter-VI/part-635#p-635.21\(h\)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-50/chapter-VI/part-635#p-635.21(h))

Season

Duration of fishing effort would predominantly be conducted from June 1st to December 31st, not to exceed 100 annual sets similar to ongoing DSBG effort terms and conditions.

Area

I would conduct fishing predominately in federal waters seaward of California and would propose the option to potentially fish off Oregon in the second year depending upon the results from the first year of EFP activity.

Signature