

# Monterey Bay Regional Chilipepper Rockfish Final Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) Report 2021-2022

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## Summary of EFP Activity

During this permit period (2021-2022), two vessels were able to make trips utilizing our EFP: F/V Salt n Season, and the F/V Lady LeBlanc. This information and data was provided in the previous report for EFP Permit Period 2019-2020 but the 2021 data is parsed out in this report for clarity and redundancy. We are also including the previous years report for ease of access.

Collectively, during this period, the participating vessels made 8 trips and caught 1303 pounds of chilipepper rockfish, 1417 pounds of bocaccio rockfish, and no cowcod (Table 1, Table 2).

After the last June 2021 landing fishermen continued to express interest in the EFP and we issued available permits to support their intentions to fish but unfortunately none of the fishermen were able to make EFP trips. Our limited impression was that uncertainty in the Dungeness crab fishery, in terms of actual start dates, required fishermen to set up for fishing crab and be on standby until the fishery opened. With the later start date fishermen also fished for crab up until the start of the salmon season, which ended up being a productive season. It is also around this time that the word started going around the docks that the gear type in this EFP was going to be authorized in the open access fishery and therefore many of the previous and potential participants decided to wait for the 2023 federal register postings to fish the gear. Lack of fishing trips could have also been tied to financial risk, recognizing the previous

years trips and participants were partly supported by grants to cover the cost of gear and fuel to offset the cost and time of prospecting new areas. On the periphery, as mentioned in our previous report, several Monterey Bay fishermen continued to fish the same gear under their limited entry permits.

## EFP Fishing Activity (January 2021 - June 2021)

Table 1: Number of Trips per Vessel

F/V	State Reg. #	# of Trips	P.O.L.s
Lady LeBlanc	CF8978SM	1	Half Moon Bay
Salt n Season	CF0911HT	7	Half Moon Bay, Moss Landing

Table 2: Trip Dates, Ports of Landing, and Total Landings (in pounds)

Trip #	Date of Trip	P.O.L.	Chilipepper	Bocaccio	Widow	Vermillion	Canary	Shelf	Discards	Total Landings
1	4/15/2021	Moss Landing		125.0		52.0	4.0	60.0	10.0	251.0
2	4/23/2021	Moss Landing	523.0	543.0	2.0	31.0	14.0		9.0	1122.0
3	4/24/2021	Moss Landing	751.0	416.0	2.0	9.0			11.0	1189.0
4	4/24/2021	Half Moon Bay		52.1				94.8		52.1
5	4/29/2021	Moss Landing	15.0	39.0			5.0			59.0
6	5/17/2021	Moss Landing								0.0
7	6/3/2021	Moss Landing	12.0	113.0	4.0			263.0		392.0
8	6/11/2021	Moss Landing	2.7	129.1	1.8	8.6	6.7	35.4		184.3
			<b>1303.7</b>	<b>1417.2</b>	<b>9.8</b>	<b>100.6</b>	<b>29.7</b>	<b>453.2</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>3249.4</b>

## EFP Market Activity

All of the fish landed went to local markets, split between the local wholesaler, retailer and restaurant, Sea Harvest, and Real Good Fish. It is important to note that compared to the previous period the ex-vessel price is much lower. This lower average is because there were not off the boat sales during this time period.

Table 3. Average price/lb for each species from wholesale and Real Good Fish.

Chilipepper	Bocaccio	Widow	Vermillion	Canary	Shelf
\$1.60	\$1.38	\$1.38	\$1.38	\$1.25	\$1.00

## Lessons Learned & Recommendations

### Market Concerns

Post COVID the market continues to demonstrate significant volatility for hook and line rockfish. Demand for whole fish in Asian markets continues to be strong however that market is limited. The largest opportunity is the rockfish filet market which is highly competitive and is challenged by the relative affordability of comparable rockfish filet products caught by trawl boats. With continued concerns around inflation and food cost, affordability is at the top of mind for consumers. Differentiated markets and shorter supply chains continue to demonstrate opportunity for market access for both fishermen and consumers but these markets are less mainstream and are limited by distribution and inconsistent availability of fresh product.

### Participation Variables

Throughout the permit period there was steady interest in joining the EFP. However the divide between getting permitted and making sanctioned trips was wide. Our experience shows that dominant fisheries like black cod, king salmon, and Dungeness crab take precedence over this EFP and heavily influences the willingness and operational readiness to fish this gear. It is also likely that our fishing communities and industry lack a critical mass or participation threshold that would result in a few fishermen finding continued success with this gear type. To be clear

most of our participating fishermen were able to successfully and profitably fish this gear, but the variables on top of existing fishery uncertainty continued to drive a risk averse mentality that kept boats from prospecting. From a financial perspective, the previous permit period was partially supported by a grant by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and Environmental Defense Fund to offset fuel and gear expenses, most importantly, to cross the divide from permit to fishing trip, de-risking the majority of the upfront investment and operational costs of the experiment.

Lastly it was about this time that fishermen started hearing that this gear type was going to be authorized in the federal register for open access fishing. Many of the interested fishermen decided to wait until the federal register was published to make these trips to avoid the mandated observer coverage and additional administrative complexity. That said, the set asides were compelling enough for fishermen to evaluate the opportunity, but on their own not enough to encourage fishing.

## Conclusions

Though this permit period was not as productive as the previous period, we are proud that we contributed to the Council and NMFS establishing the regulatory framework for enhancing the open access fishery, creating more opportunity for early entrants and veteran fisherman to access new fishing grounds and plentiful stocks. More broadly, it is promising to see more fishermen benefit from the West Coast groundfish recovery and conservation success efforts and gaining access to abundant rockfish species while avoiding stocks that require additional time and attention. We recognize that the ocean and markets are more dynamic than ever but creating options and opportunities where they exist is one of the best ways for us to protect our industry and feed our communities.

Again, we would like to thank the Pacific Fishery Management Council for the opportunity to explore the use of this fly-line gear in the RCA, and look forward to future opportunities to work together for the betterment of our oceans, fisheries, and communities.