YUROK TRIBE

190 Klamath Boulevard • Post Office Box 1027 • Klamath, CA 95548

To: Mr. Peter Hassemer, Chairman - Pacific Fisheries Management Council
From: Chairman Joseph James, Yurok Tribe
Date: November 4, 2025

Re: Pacific Whiting Exempted Fishing Permit for At-sea Processing South of the California/Oregon Border (42º North Latitude)

Dear Council Members,

I am writing to oppose the issuance of an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) as applied for by the Pacific Whiting Conservation Cooperative (attached). In 1992, NOAA Fisheries published an emergency rule which prohibited at-sea processing of Pacific whiting south of 42º N latitude (California/Oregon) border. Part of the rationale was a high salmon incidental catch (4,600 salmon) from the Eureka, CA area in 1991. Following the emergency rule, a regulation was codified (660.131(e)) to prohibit the at-sea processing which has been in effect for over 30 years.

The purpose of this exempted fishing permit (EFP) application is to test whether allowing vessels to process Pacific whiting at sea south of 42° N latitude could maintain Pacific whiting catch in the face of changing ocean conditions and high variability year-to-year without significantly increasing interactions with Chinook salmon and other non-target species. If approved, the permit would allow a by-catch salmon allowance of 500 fish, nearly all Klamath River Fall Chinook (KRFC) stocks as KRFC are the largest contributor to ocean salmon fisheries from Humbug Mountain, OR, to Horse Mountain, CA. The KRFC salmon stocks are in an overfished status, managed as a de minimis fishery since 2018, and the in-river Tribal quotas have been extremely low in recent years. The California commercial salmon fleet has been closed for 3-years, and the Sacramento River runs are also very low. Allowing additional pressure on the already depleted salmon fishery from the Whiting fleet is not acceptable to the Yurok Tribe. The EFP proposal also lists substantial tonnage of rockfish and flatfish, which are harvested by Tribal members as well.

As the Council has done in the past, the Yurok Tribe requests the EFP request be denied.

Sincerely,
Joseph L. James
Digitally signed by Joseph L. James
Date: 2025.11.06 21:27:50 -08'00'

Joseph L. James
Chairman, Yurok Tribe