10/14/2025

Pacific Fishery Management Council

Subject: Request for Approval — Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) for Night Deep-Set Buoy Gear (NDSBG) and Night Linked Buoy Gear (NLBG)

Dear Council Members:

Please accept my application for an Exempted Fishing Permit authorizing Night Deep-Set Buoy Gear (NDSBG) and Night Linked Buoy Gear (NLBG).

Since receiving authorization for Deep-Set Buoy Gear (DSBG) two years ago, I have devoted thousands of hours to fishing operations and to studying the swordfish fishery. Recognizing that NDSBG has received limited evaluation to date, I am committed to advancing this experimental work. My objective is to generate rigorous data and practical insights that support the local fishing community and increase the availability of locally and sustainably harvested seafood within the regional economy.

Approval of this EFP will allow me to expand my skills, deepen my experience, and contribute high-quality data on a species to which I am strongly committed.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,



Andrew Hemstreet
F/V White Pearl

Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) Application
Night Deep-Set Buoy Gear (NDSBG) & Night Linked Buoy Gear (NLBG)

A. Date of application;

October 14, 2025

B. Applicant's names, mailing addresses, and telephone numbers;

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C. A statement of the purpose and goals of the experiment for which an EFP is needed, including a general description of the arrangements for the disposition of all species harvested under the EFP;

Authorize experimental night use of NDSBG and NLBG to target Swordfish (Xiphias gladius) and Pacific bluefin tuna (PBF; Thunnus orientalis) with hooks set ≥90 m (≈≥300 ft).

Goal: Test catch efficiency, economic viability, and bycatch reduction (esp. blue shark) at night using deep hooks and active tending.

Disposition: Retain and land target and legally retainable marketable incidental species for sale under HMS rules. Protected and non-marketable species will be released alive when possible; all interactions documented.

D. Valid justification explaining why issuance of an EFP is warranted;

- Current buoy-gear authorization is daytime-only; managers lack rigorous night data to assess conservation and economics.

- Night deep sets (≥300 ft) are expected to reduce blue shark interactions while maintaining swordfish/PBF catch.

- With the drift gillnet phase-out by 2027, a successful night buoy-gear option could offset lost domestic night-harvest capacity and lessen reliance on imports.

- PBF stock rebuilding and recent under-harvest of U.S. allocations indicate room for responsible catch with selective gears.

E. A statement of whether the proposed experimental fishing has broader significance than the applicant's individual goals;

Yes. Results will inform PFMC/NMFS on whether to authorize night buoy-gear coast-wide, provide practical bycatch-mitigation tools (depth strategies, smart-buoy analytics), and strengthen domestic

supply during periods when imports pressure prices.

F. An expected total duration of the EFP (i.e., number of years proposed to conduct exempted fishing activities);

Two (2) years, beginning July 2025 through June 2027. If needed to complete analyses, request option for an additional two-year extension.

G. Number of vessels covered under the EFP;

- F/V White Pearl — Operator: Andrew Hemstreet (LE DSBG/LBG permitted)

H. A description of the species (target and incidental) to be harvested under the EFP and the amount(s) of such harvest necessary to conduct the experiment, including harvest estimates of overfished species and protected species;

- Target: Swordfish; PBF.
- Indicative night composition: ~80% Swordfish, ~25% PBF, ~3% opah, ~2% sharks.
- Potential seasonal harvest (40–110 nights, acknowledging learning curve): up to ~90 Swordfish and ~20 PBF.
- Incidental marketable: Opah; tunas; oilfish/escolar (as regulations allow).
- Incidental released/undesirable: Blue shark; bigeye/common thresher shark; striped marlin.
- Protected species: Sea turtles, marine mammals, seabirds — no retention; minimize interactions; release alive when feasible; document all events.
- Overfished species: None targeted; any interaction immediately recorded and reported.

I. A description of a mechanism, such as at-sea fishery monitoring, to ensure that the harvest limits for targeted and incidental species are not exceeded and are accurately accounted for;

- Monitoring: Up to 100% at-sea coverage (NMFS observers) or electronic monitoring; detailed vessel logbooks each trip.
- Active tending: Lighted strike indicators (visible ~2 ft above surface; swordfish pulls along surface, non-swordfish often submerges) plus BOG smart buoys to locate gear, detect bites, and reduce loss.
- Accounting: Logbooks, BOG telemetry, and landing receipts reconciled; immediate reporting of protected-species events; annual summaries to NMFS/PFMC.

J. A description of the proposed data collection and analysis methodology;

- Operational & catch fields: set/recovery date-time/lat-lon; gear type/config; hooks per set; minimum hook depth; bait type (incl. artificial); soak time; SST; drift; light color; leader diameter; species/number kept & released; size & disposition.
- Comparative analyses: CPUE, bycatch rates/composition, protected-species outcomes; NDSBG vs NLBG performance; night results vs known daytime DSBG baselines.
- Data handling: Logbooks and/or Excel; sharing with PFMC HMS advisory bodies, CDFW, and collaborating scientists.

K. A description of how vessels will be chosen to participate in the EFP;

From the applicants' fleets based on:

(a) LE DSBG/LBG or HMS experience;
(b) demonstrated safe night operations;
(c) commitment to 100% monitoring; and
(d) geographic coverage to capture Southern and Central California conditions (with optional expansion if authorized).

L. For each vessel covered by the EFP, the approximate time(s) and place(s) fishing will take place, and the type, size, and amount of gear to be used;

Times:
- Night-only: ~1 hr before local sunset to ~2 hrs after local sunrise (final overlap managed to remain consistent with daytime LE DSBG/LBG rules when applicable).
- Weather: Do not fish in >20 kt winds; gyro-stabilized binoculars and active patrolling for strike response on marginal nights.

Tending & Notifications:
- Place & Effort Southern California Bight (Pt. Conception → U.S.–Mexico border):
- up to 180 days/nights
- Central California (Pt. Reyes → Pt. Conception):
- up to 60 days/nights
- Maintain proximity per LE DSBG/LBG: within 5 nm of all gear, ≤3 nm of nearest gear (typically closer at night).
- 48-hour pre-trip notifications to NMFS, CDFW Enforcement, and observer provider (captain; departure/return times; ports; intended unloading port).

Gear (harmonized NDSBG/NLBG):
- Minimum hook depth: ≥90 m (≈≥300 ft). Circle hooks ≥16/0, ≤10° offset.
- Illumination: light affixed near terminal weight; strike-indicator light (solid green ~2 ft above surface).
- Smart buoy & markers: BOG smart buoy in float sequence; radar reflector & strobe on hi-flyer.
- Lines/weights:
- Mainline: ≥2.4 mm (NDSBG); ≤2.8 mm (NLBG).
- Leaders: ≥1.5 mm, up to 15 m length.
- Terminal weight: ≥3.6 kg; variant includes ≥8-lb lead ball with ~300-ft link to ensure depth.
- NDSBG limits: ≤10 pieces fishing at any time; float line 3/8″ polypropylene; typical sequence: strike-indicator → BOG → secondary 10-lb float → ≥45-lb non-compressible hard ball →hi-flyer (strobe + radar reflector).
- NLBG limits: ≤10 links; ≤30 total hooks; suspenders ≥15 m; horizontal footprint ≤5 nm; same terminal weight/illumination/hooks as above.
- Baits: dead and (if available) live baits; artificial baits may be evaluated.
- Concurrent gear use: may opportunistically use hand-held hook-and-line for tunas/yellowtail/dorado at night.

M. The signature of the applicant(s); The HMSMT, HMSAS, SSC, and/or Council may request additional information necessary for their consideration.



Capt. Andrew Hemstreet