



## CALIFORNIA WETFISH PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION

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October 14, 2026

Mr. Pete Hassemer, Chair  
And Members of the Pacific Fishery Management Council

### LETTER OF INTENT TO REQUEST RENEWAL OF EXEMPTED FISHERY PERMIT (EFP) TO ALLOW COLLECTION OF PACIFIC SARDINE BIOLOGICAL SAMPLES IN 2027-28

Dear Chair Hassemer and Council Members,

On behalf of California Wetfish Producers Association (CWPA), I am submitting this request for renewal of the Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) authorizing sardine fishing to collect biological samples, enabling us to continue the field work begun in May 2020. The proposed EFP is the continuation of a time series of fishery dependent data for use in stock assessments. The Council recommended and NMFS approved similar EFPs from 2020-21 to 2026-27.

The EFP is necessary to allow the directed harvest of sardines to collect biological/age data representative of fishery dependent data unavailable because of the directed sardine fishery closure. To provide data that are most reflective of typical fishery dependent data streams, we collect EFP sets from two areas: Southern California fishing areas around Los Angeles and more northern areas around Monterey-Central Coast. The EFP for the current season (2026-27) is about to begin, as permits have just been issued. No trips have happened to date. In the 2025-26 EFP, we landed 14 sets:

Southern California - 171.8 mt in 9 sets on 23 trips  
Central California - 108.3 mt in 5 sets on 15 trips

To support research into the understanding of the stock distribution of Pacific sardines, efforts are being made to collect a sample each month from each area. Vessel availability has and may limit the EFP catches in Central California during winter months, when Monterey EFP vessels transit south to fish for squid, along with a majority of the Monterey CPS fleet. At times multiple trips may be scheduled in a month to compensate for these circumstances. Tables 1 and 2 show the catch under the most recent biological sample EFP and all biological sample EFPs to date. In 2025-26, 280 mt of Pacific sardine were harvested under the EFP, leaving 240 mt unharvested. We intend to schedule biological sampling sets in both Southern California and Monterey-Central Coast, to the degree possible, under the current 2026-27 and the proposed 2027-28 EFPs.

We intend to discuss with the Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC) whether any changes should be made in the sampling framework for the EFP, if the Council advances its action to revise the Pacific sardine stock structure, which is scheduled for final action in November 2026. EFP vessel availability complicates adherence to the proposed framework, but when possible that framework will be followed. All landings under the EFP will be sampled by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to produce biological data, including age, for potential use in the stock assessment model.

Our initial 2020 EFP was motivated by the need to maintain a consistent time series of fishery dependent data for sardine stock assessments. The 2020 Pacific sardine Stock Assessment Review (STAR) Panel review noted that the model used to estimate sardine abundance had lacked fishery dependent biological and age data from 2015 forward due to the closure of the directed sardine fishery. Establishing a data collection that mimics a small, directed sardine fishery fills this void by providing fishery dependent data for use by the Stock Assessment Team (STAT) in its assessments. The EFP's original structure and protocols were developed in coordination with the SWFSC's lead sardine stock assessment scientist and the CDFW to use a systematic framework for collection of sardines that mirror directed fishery landings for the purpose of biological sampling, including age, in both Southern California and the Monterey-Central Coast throughout the usual fishing year.

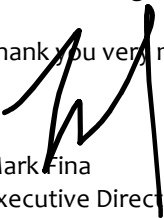
Responding to a question from the CPS Management Team regarding the value of these data, senior assessment scientist Dr. Kevin Hill affirmed the continuing importance of maintaining a time series of fishery dependent age data while the sardine fishery remains closed, stating, "Biological samples from EFP fishing permits (directed loads), as well as the live bait fishery, are essential to assessing the sardine population." (Personal Communication, September 22, 2022). The absence of biological sampling from the anchovy fishery after that fishery declined in the early 1980s caused a 25-year gap in fishery dependent data, which limited stock assessment scientists' ability to develop a new model-based anchovy stock assessment. This EFP is intended to prevent that problem from occurring in sardine management by filling the data void arising from the directed fishery closure. To maintain a continuing time series of fishery dependent biological data, we again request 520 mt of sardine.

Data from this EFP also supported additional research into the stock structure of sardine in the Southern California Bight and the intermixing of sardine across areas. Additional data may be beneficial to further the understanding of the stock structure of sardine and movement of sardine across different areas.

The 2027-28 EFP request for 520 mt of sardines allows for approximately 30 sets of 17 mt on average. This quantity of fish creates a reasonable incentive for fishermen to participate in the EFP, given fuel and crew costs and the potential for some trips to yield no or few sardines. The sale of fish also helps to offset costs for processors who support the EFP through fish handling and bucket sampling the sets. The potential requests acknowledge the current stock status of Pacific sardine, and the need for allocation of available tonnage to other fishery sectors.

We look forward to the opportunity to continue to provide support for sardine stock assessments and the understanding of the Pacific sardine population through this EFP.

Thank you very much for your consideration.



Mark Fina  
Executive Director

Attachments: 2026-27 Bio Sampling EFP application

Table 1. EFP Trips and Landings – 2025-2026.

| Jul 1 2025- June 30 '2026 – 520 metric tons |          |                           |              |              |            |                  |                       |         |                   |            |
|---------------------------------------------|----------|---------------------------|--------------|--------------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|---------|-------------------|------------|
|                                             | S.CA     | 260 mt                    |              |              |            |                  |                       |         |                   |            |
|                                             | Set #    | Landing Date              | Vessel       | Port         | Processor  | Capture Latitude | Capture Longitude     | SST - F | Total Sardine Lbs | Sardine MT |
| Semester 1                                  |          | 9/23/2025                 | Provider     | San Pedro    | Cal Marine | N 33.42.53       | W 118.12.37           | 67      | 23,211            | 10.53      |
|                                             |          | 10/8/25                   | Provider     | San Pedro    | Cal Marine | N 33.42.16       | W 118.16.50           | 65      | 58,765            | 26.66      |
| Jul-Dec '25 (EFP rec'd 9/18/2025)           |          | 12/9/2025                 | Provider     | San Pedro    | Cal Marine | N 33.39.98       | W 118.032.8           | 63      | 11,994            | 5.44       |
|                                             |          | 12/16/25                  | Provider     | San Pedro    | Cal Marine | NO SARDINES      |                       |         |                   |            |
| SubTotal                                    | S.CA.    |                           |              |              |            |                  |                       |         | 93,970            | 42.62      |
| Semester 2                                  |          | 1/7/2026                  | Provider     | San Pedro    | Cal Marine | NO SARDINES      | (Weather)             |         |                   |            |
|                                             |          | 1/13/2026                 | Provider     | San Pedro    | Cal Marine | NO SARDINES      | (Porpoise)            |         |                   |            |
| Jan-Jun '26                                 |          | 1/15/2026                 | Provider     | San Pedro    | Cal Marine | N 33.43.08       | W 118.12.97           | 61      | 15,960            | 7.24       |
|                                             |          | 2/4/26                    | Provider     | San Pedro    | Cal Marine | N 33.18.21       | W 118.24.42           | 62      | 1,310             | 0.59       |
|                                             |          | 2/25/26                   | Provider     | San Pedro    | Cal Marine | N 33.35.86       | W 118.54.76           | 61      | 39,014            | 17.70      |
|                                             |          | 3/4/26                    | Provider     | San Pedro    | Cal Marine | NO SARDINES      | (Weather)             |         |                   |            |
|                                             |          | 3/19/26                   | Provider     | San Pedro    | Cal Marine | NO SARDINES      |                       |         |                   |            |
|                                             |          | 3/20/26                   | Provider     | San Pedro    | Cal Marine | NO SARDINES      | (Fog)                 |         |                   |            |
|                                             |          | 4/7/26                    | Provider     | San Pedro    | Cal Marine | NO SARDINES      |                       |         |                   |            |
|                                             |          | 4/20/26                   | Provider     | San Pedro    | Cal Marine | NO SARDINES      | (Mechanical problems) |         |                   |            |
|                                             |          | 4/22/26                   | Provider     | San Pedro    | Cal Marine | NO SARDINES      | (scattered schools)   |         |                   |            |
|                                             |          | 4/30/26                   | Provider     | San Pedro    | Cal Marine | NO SARDINES      | (lots of 2" anchovy)  |         |                   |            |
|                                             |          | 5/14/26                   | Provider     | San Pedro    | Cal Marine | NO SARDINES      |                       |         |                   |            |
|                                             |          | 5/21/26                   | Provider     | San Pedro    | Cal Marine | 33.27.78         | 118.35.77             | 65      | 27,533            | 12.49      |
|                                             |          | 6/3/26                    | Provider     | San Pedro    | Cal Marine | 33.27.71         | 118.35.92             | 67      | 101,877           | 46.21      |
|                                             |          | 6/9/26                    | Provider     | San Pedro    | Cal Marine | NO SARDINES      | (squid)               |         |                   |            |
|                                             |          | 6/10/26                   | Provider     | San Pedro    | Cal Marine | 33.27.84         | 118.36.33             | 67      | 99,105            | 44.95      |
|                                             |          | 6/29/26                   | Provider-RA  | San Pedro    | Cal Marine | NO SARDINES      | (squid)               |         |                   |            |
|                                             |          | 6/30/26                   | Provider-JA  | San Pedro    | Cal Marine | NO SARDINES      | (squid)               |         |                   |            |
| SubTotal                                    | S.CA.    |                           |              |              |            |                  |                       |         | 284,799           | 129.18     |
| Total S.CA.                                 |          |                           |              |              |            |                  |                       |         |                   | 171.81     |
| Balance REMAINING IN SCA                    |          |                           | (260 mt)     |              |            |                  |                       |         |                   | 88.19      |
|                                             |          |                           |              |              |            |                  |                       |         |                   |            |
|                                             | MONTEREY | 260 mt                    |              |              |            |                  |                       |         |                   |            |
|                                             | Set #    | Landing Date              | Vessel       | Port         | Processor  | Capture Latitude | Capture Longitude     | SST - F | Total Sardine Lbs | Sardine MT |
| Semester 1                                  |          | No landings in Semester 1 |              |              |            |                  |                       |         |                   |            |
| Jul-Dec '25 (EFP rec'd 9/18/2025)           |          |                           |              |              |            |                  |                       |         |                   |            |
| SubTotal                                    | Monterey |                           |              |              |            |                  |                       |         | 0                 | 0.00       |
| Semester 2                                  |          | 5/14/2026                 | King Philip  | Moss Landing | Cal Marine | 36.51.250        | 121.49.715            | 60      | 13,948            | 6.33       |
|                                             |          | 5/19/2026                 | Natalie Rose | Moss Landing | Del Mar    | NO SARDINES      |                       |         |                   |            |
| Jan-Jun '26                                 |          | 5/21/2026                 | King Philip  | Moss Landing | Cal Marine | NO SARDINES      |                       |         |                   |            |
|                                             |          | 5/22/26                   | Natalie Rose | Moss Landing | Del Mar    | NO SARDINES      |                       |         |                   |            |
|                                             |          | 5/29/26                   | King Philip  | Moss Landing | Cal Marine | NO SARDINES      | (squid)               |         |                   |            |
|                                             |          | 6/3/26                    | King Philip  | Moss Landing | Cal Marine | NO SARDINES      |                       |         |                   |            |
|                                             |          | 6/4/26                    | King Philip  | Moss Landing | Cal Marine | 36°40'500        | 121°49'500            | 55      | 41,637            | 18.89      |
|                                             |          | 6/5/26                    | King Philip  | Moss Landing | Cal Marine | 36°44'506        | 121.49.084            | 53      | 34,292            | 15.55      |
|                                             |          | 6/11/26                   | Natalie Rose | Moss Landing | Del Mar    | NO SARDINES      | (mechanical)          |         |                   |            |
|                                             |          | 6/12/26                   | Natalie Rose | Moss Landing | Del Mar    | NO SARDINES      | (swell)               |         |                   |            |
|                                             |          | 6/17/26                   | King Philip  | Moss Landing | Cal Marine | 34°44'020        | 121°49'150            | 60      | 97,459            | 44.21      |
|                                             |          | 6/18/26                   | Natalie Rose | Moss Landing | Del Mar    | NO SARDINES      | (wind switched)       |         |                   |            |
|                                             |          | 6/19/26                   | Natalie Rose | Moss Landing | Del Mar    | NO SARDINES      |                       |         |                   |            |
|                                             |          | 6/24/26                   | King Philip  | Moss Landing | Cal Marine | 36°49'780        | 121°38'835            | 60      | 51,482            | 23.35      |
|                                             |          | 6/30/26                   | Natalie Rose | Moss Landing | Del Mar    | NO SARDINES      | (anchovy)             |         |                   |            |
| SubTotal                                    | Monterey |                           |              |              |            |                  |                       |         | 238,818           | 108.33     |
| Total Monterey                              |          |                           |              |              |            |                  |                       |         |                   | 108.33     |
| Balance REMAINING IN Monterey               |          |                           |              |              |            |                  |                       |         |                   | 151.67     |
| TOTAL EFP SARDINES LANDED                   |          |                           |              |              |            |                  |                       |         |                   | 280.14     |
| BALANCE REMAINING IN EFP                    |          |                           |              |              |            |                  |                       |         |                   | 239.86     |

Table 2. Available Tonnage and Use under previous EFPs (2019-20 to 2026-27) – in mt.

|             | Catch               |                    |       | Available | Unused |
|-------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------|-----------|--------|
|             | Southern California | Central California | Total |           |        |
| 2019 - 2020 | 345.1               | 241.1              | 586.2 | 640       | 53.80  |
| 2020 - 2021 | 373.4               | 245.1              | 618.4 | 740       | 121.58 |
| 2021 - 2022 | 340.0               | 0.0                | 340.0 | 520       | 180.01 |
| 2022 - 2023 | 102.3               | 95.8               | 198.1 | 520       | 321.88 |
| 2023 - 2024 | 190.9               | 168.3              | 359.2 | 520       | 160.80 |
| 2024-2025   | 130.2               | 22.0               | 152.2 | 520       | 367.8  |
| 2025-2026   | 171.8               | 108.3              | 280.1 | 520       | 239.9  |

Note: No fishing has taken place under the 2026-27 EFP, as permits are just being issued.