

Staff Summary for February 11-12, 2026

12B. Experimental Fishing Permit (EFP) Major Amendment Request (#2023-02)**Today's Item**Information ☐Action ☒

Receive, consider, and potentially act upon a major amendment request for an EFP (Commission tracking ID #2023-02) approved to test pop-up gear in the Dungeness and rock crab fisheries.

Summary of Previous/Future Actions

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Approved EFP application #2023-02 | June 2023 |
| • Approved first EFP major amendment | April 2024 |
| • Approved second EFP major amendment | February 2025 |
| • Reconsidered and re-approved second EFP major amendment request | April 2025 |
| • Department transmitted a third accepted EFP major amendment request | October 3, 2025 |
| • Published notice of receipt of third EFP major amendment request | October 8, 2025 |
| • Department transmitted recommendation for the request | January 5, 2026 |
| • Published notice of receipt of Department recommendation | January 9, 2026 |
| • Today, discuss and consider approving EFP major amendment request | February 11-12, 2026 |

Background

The Commission and Department jointly administer the EFP Program, authorized by the California Fisheries Innovation Act of 2018 (California Fish and Game Code Section 1022) and implemented through Section 91, Title 14. The program fosters innovation in California's marine fisheries by allowing limited, short-term exemptions from state fishing laws to test new management approaches or conduct research. Learn more about the program, at <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/EFP> and <https://fgc.ca.gov/EFP>.

EFP holders can request amendments (administrative updates, minor, or major) per subsection 91(k)(2). The Department approves administrative updates and minor amendments. Major amendments (affecting species, location, gear, or participants) require Commission approval and are subject to the same review and approval process as new applications.

Approved EFP Application

At its June 2023 meeting, the Commission approved EFP application #2023-02 from the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation to test on-demand pop-up gear systems in the commercial California Dungeness crab fishery.

Staff Summary for February 11-12, 2026

EFP Major Amendment Request Overview

The Commission approved a first major amendment in April 2024, modifying the season (allowing Dungeness crab retention during RAMP closures), authorized agents and vessels, gear (marking, number and configuration of traps, approved pop-up systems) and location, and adding rock crab.

In February 2025, the Commission approved a second major amendment, increasing the number of authorized agents, vessels, traps per trawl, per-vessel trap limit, and trap service interval. To resolve an equity concern between similar EFPs, the Commission reconsidered the second major amendment at its April 2025 meeting and approved an additional increase in the number of traps per trawl.

On August 29, 2025, the Department received a third major amendment request which is under consideration today (Exhibit 1). The EFP holder is generally motivated by a desire to expand the geographic area for gear deployment, allow gear trials in the spot prawn fishery to reduce marine life entanglement risk, and authorize testing of additional and future gear types to support innovation and practical solutions for deep-water fisheries. The foundation specifically requests: (1) expansion of the fishing area, (2) allowances for commercial spot prawn pop-up testing, (3) additional pop-up gear system approvals, and (4) flexibility for future similar gear approvals.

The Department's recommendations (exhibits 2 and 3) were transmitted to the Commission, which noticed them publicly on January 9, over 30 days prior to today's hearing. The Department recommends the Commission approve the requested changes with a modification to the geographic expansion.

Geographic Expansion

- Request: Expand the allowable fishing area southward from the current boundary at Lopez Point (36° 00' N. latitude) to Point Conception (34° 27' N. latitude).
 - Rationale: To allow interested vessels in fishing zone 5 to participate in the EFP.
- Recommendation: (a) Approve the geographic expansion to Point Conception for Dungeness crab and rock crab traps only. (b) However, for spot prawn traps, establish the southern boundary at Point Arguello, consistent with the existing management boundary for the fishery.
 - Rationale: Using the spot prawn fishery management boundary simplifies enforcement and resource management for this portion of the EFP.

Department Amendments

The draft special conditions (Exhibit 3) incorporate amendments made by the Department under subsection 91(k)(1), including administrative amendments following the April 2025 Commission meeting, as well as two minor amendments approved for clarification purposes:

1. Dock Ticket and Electronic Fish Ticket Requirements – Updated to clarify that commercial landings from an EFP fishing trip using non-EFP fishing gear must be recorded on separate dock and electronic fish tickets from those used for EFP fishing.

Staff Summary for February 11-12, 2026

2. Line Marking Requirements – Clarified the prohibition on use of line with markings assigned to another state-managed fishery on the U.S. West Coast unless actively participating in that fishery to ensure that any potential entanglements can be attributed to the correct fishery.

Today, the Department will present the requested amendments, its recommendations, rationale for the recommendations (Exhibit 4), and proposed special conditions (Exhibit 3) for Commission consideration.

Significant Public Comments (N/A)

Recommendation

Commission staff: Approve the EFP major amendment request with proposed special conditions, as recommended by the Department.

Department: Approve National Marine Sanctuary Foundation's EFP (Commission tracking ID #2023-02) major amendment request, with modification to the requested geographic expansion, and with the proposed special conditions as specified on Form DFW 1103 (Exhibit 3).

Exhibits

1. [Major amendment request, transmitted to Commission on October 3, 2025](#)
2. [Department recommendation memo, received January 5, 2026](#)
3. [Draft Form DFW 1103, including standard terms and proposed amended special conditions for major amendment](#)
4. [Department presentation](#)

Motion

Moved by _____ and seconded by _____ that the Commission approves the major amendment request for the EFP (Commission tracking ID #2023-02) with special conditions as recommended by the Department.

OR

Moved by _____ and seconded by _____ that the Commission approves the major amendment request for the EFP (Commission tracking ID #2023-02) with special conditions as recommended by the Department, except as follows: _____.



**National
Marine Sanctuary
Foundation**

August 29, 2025

CDFW Marine Region
Attn: EFP Coordinator
20 Lower Ragsdale Drive, Suite 100
Monterey, CA 93940

Subject: Experimental Fishing Permit (██████████) Amendment Request

Dear Owen Mulvey-McFerron:

I would like to request the following amendments to Experimental Fishing Permit (██████████) and its associated terms and conditions, held by the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation.

1) Expand the Geographic Area for Gear Deployment

Under the issued EFP and Special Condition 15 (Allowable Fishing Area and Time of Year), traps may be deployed between the California/Oregon border (42° N. latitude) and Lopez Point (36° 00' N. latitude). We request to expand the southern boundary to Point Conception (34° 27' N. latitude) to allow interested vessels in fishing zone 5 to participate in the EFP.

2) Expand Testing Opportunities in the Spot Prawn Fishery

Under current regulations, participants in the spot prawn fishery may use pop-up gear, provided that one end of each string of traps is marked with a surface buoy. Participants will initially trial gear using a hybrid configuration – retaining a buoy line on one end of the string while testing pop-up gear on the other end – followed by trials without any vertical buoy lines. This request is based on: (1) interest from fishery participants to trial the gear to address marine life entanglement risk; (2) the need to allow trials without surface buoys, as the gear is designed to be deployed to reduce entanglement risk; and (3) the value of testing gear in deep-water fisheries to inform gear development for deep-water applications.

3) Authorize Testing of Additional Gear Types with Flexibility for Future Versions

Under the current EFP, participating vessels may trial several pop-up fishing systems from multiple manufacturers (i.e., Ashored Innovations, Desert Star Systems, EdgeTech, Fiomarine, Guardian Ropeless System, Sub Sea Sonics). We request adding the following systems as approved options.

- **Desert Star Systems ARC-2** – A coastal version of Desert Star's Ropeless Fisher system optimized for the requirements and economics typical of inshore trap fisheries.

- **Devocean Ropeless Systems** – Submersible on-demand buoys equipped with spooled rope to prevent tangling, available in both deep- and shallow-water configurations to support use across diverse fishing environments.
- **Ropeless Fishing Systems Ropeless RISER** – Configurable airbag-based retrieval system, including the RISER AT (Acoustic Timer) and RISER MTA (Multi-code Transponder Actuator) models.
- **SMELTS Lift-Rafts** – Acoustically-triggered lift-bag system with a range of models designed to perform in different depths, lift capacities, and conditions.

Detailed summary descriptions of these systems, their components, and gear marking systems are attached for reference.

We also request flexibility to test new versions or models of gear that are substantially similar to the systems already authorized under the EFP, to enable testing to keep pace with advancing technology and fishery needs, while remaining focused on effective, practical solutions.

We understand that these changes constitute a major amendment, and the associated fee has already been paid. Please let me know if you have any questions or if additional information would be helpful. We appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,



Greg Wells
Gear Innovations Manager
National Marine Sanctuary Foundation

Memorandum

Date: January 5, 2026

To: Melissa Miller-Henson
Executive Director
California Fish and Game Commission

From: Valerie Termini
Acting Director

Subject: **Transmittal of an Experimental Fishing Permit Major Amendment Recommendation for Pop-Up Gear Testing in the California Dungeness and Rock Crab Fisheries (Greg Wells/National Marine Sanctuary Foundation/EFP #2023-02)**

On August 29, 2025, Greg Wells/National Marine Sanctuary Foundation submitted a Major Amendment Request for Experimental Fishing Permit (EFP) #2023-02 (Attachment 1), which includes several revisions to expand the scope of approved fishing activities and revise or remove existing EFP Terms and Conditions. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) accepted the request for technical review on October 3, 2025, and recommends the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) approve all the requested changes, with several necessary additional modifications to the terms and conditions as further detailed in the Recommended EFP Terms and Conditions (DFW1103, Attachment 2) and supplemental environmental documentation (Attachments 3 and 4).

Next Steps

The Department requests the Commission schedule the requested amendment for consideration no sooner than 30 days after public notice is given. The Department has prepared a draft Notice of Receipt of Recommendation (Attachment 5) to support the public notice requirement prescribed in California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 91, subdivision (e)(2).

If you have any questions on this item, please contact Dr. Craig Shuman, Marine Regional Manager, at (805) 568-1246 or by email at R7RegionalMgr@wildlife.ca.gov.

Attachments:

1. Major Amendment Request for EFP #2023-02 (confidential information omitted)
2. Recommended EFP Terms and Conditions (DFW 1103)
3. CEQA Overview Memo
4. Draft CEQA Notice of Exemption (NOE) and NOE Attachment
5. Draft Notice of Receipt of Recommendation

Melissa Miller-Henson, Executive Director
Fish and Game Commission
January 5, 2026
Page 2

ec: Chad Dibble, Deputy Director
Wildlife and Fisheries Division

Craig Shuman, D. Env.
Marine Region Manager

Eric Kord, Assistant Chief
Marine Enforcement Division

Garrett Wheeler, Attorney III
Office of General Counsel

Joanna Grebel, Environmental Program Manager
Marine Region

Claire Waggoner, Environmental Program Manager
Marine Region

Morgan Ivens-Duran, Senior Environmental Scientist Supervisor
Marine Region



Experimental Fishing Permit No. [REDACTED]

Revision Date:

MARINE FISHERIES: EXPERIMENTAL FISHING PERMIT TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Pursuant to California Fish and Game Code (FGC) Section 1022 and Section 91, Title 14, California Code of Regulations (CCR), the Experimental Fishing Permit (EFP) holder is authorized to conduct experimental fishing activities according to the requirements of the EFP approved by the Fish and Game Commission (Commission) and issued by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department).

EFP Holder/Entity Administrator Name: **National Marine Sanctuary Foundation (EFP Holder)**

Greg Wells ([REDACTED]), Gear Innovations Manager (Entity Administrator)

EFP Holder Address: [REDACTED]

Entity Administrator Address: [REDACTED]

Authorized Agent Name: **See authorized agent list on Page 3**

Authorized Agent Address: **See authorized agent list on Page 3**

Vessel Name and ID #: **See authorized vessel list on Page 3**

Description of authorized activity:

Test and commercial use of several pop-up fishing systems gear types (acoustic pop-up buoy, timed release pop-up buoy, lift bag, and buoyant spool) from multiple manufacturers (i.e., Desert Star ARC 1XD, EdgeTech 5112, Fiomarine Fiobuoy, Guardian Ropeless System, Sub Sea Sonics TR4RT and AR4RT, Ashored Innovations MOBI) in the California Dungeness crab, and rock crab, and spot prawn fisheries. The experimental fishing activities may only be conducted under the following conditions:

STANDARD TERMS

These standard terms shall apply to all persons or vessels conducting authorized activities under the EFP.

1. The permit shall be operated only on the vessels named on this form, if applicable. Either the EFP holder or the authorized agent must be aboard the vessel when activities are being conducted under this permit, and both are responsible and accountable for meeting the requirements and limits of this permit.
2. Pursuant to FGC Section 7857(d), the EFP holder or authorized agent shall have a valid copy of the Department issued EFP attached to a signed copy of this form in possession when activities are being conducted under this permit.
3. All persons conducting activities under an EFP must comply with all appropriate state and federal



fishing laws and regulations, including but not limited to those relating to protected species, minimum size limits, and seasons or areas closed to fishing that are not otherwise exempted by the permit (see special conditions).

4. The EFP holder and authorized agent shall cooperate with the Department by allowing personnel designated by the Department to board the fishing vessel on any fishing trip (if applicable) or enter a place of business operated by the EFP holder or authorized agent under this permit, to retrieve, observe, or inspect any logbook, records, data, equipment, procedures, or catch throughout the duration of the permit.
5. The EFP holder or authorized agent shall provide Department staff with a 24-hour notice prior to every fishing trip. The contact information for Department staff will be provided for this purpose at the time of permit issuance.

SPECIAL CONDITIONS

As set forth in subsection 91(i), Title 14, CCR, special conditions may be placed on this permit for research purposes and the conservation and management of marine resources and the environment (see following page).

As set forth in subsection 91(k), Title 14, CCR, special conditions may be amended or repealed as necessary for research purposes and the conservation and management of marine resources and the environment.

RECEIPT AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The permit is not valid until the EFP holder has certified by their signature below that they have: 1) read and understand the standard terms and special conditions of the permit; 2) unless otherwise specified in special conditions, paid the appropriate fees specified in Section 704, Title 14, CCR; and 3) returned a signed copy of this form to the Department.

I have read, understand and agree to abide by all standard terms and special conditions of this permit.

EFP Holder Signature

Date

Received by License and Revenue Branch (LRB)

Fee \$ _____

Experimental Fishing Permit No. _____

Revision Date: _____

LRB Signature: _____ Date: _____



Experimental Fishing Permit No. [REDACTED]

Revision Date:

Authorization and Special Conditions

List of approved special conditions, names and addresses of any additional authorized agents, and/or names and identification number of any additional authorized vessels.

Key Participants

1. Authorized Agents and Vessels: This EFP is valid only for the authorized agents and vessels named below. The Department may allow up to a maximum of 40 authorized agents and 40 vessels for this EFP, as it deems necessary for research purposes.

- a. Authorized Agent Name and Address

1. Marc E. Alley ([REDACTED]) – Owner/Operator F/V Ronna Lynn
[REDACTED]
2. Khevin R. Mellegers [REDACTED] – Owner/Operator F/V Areona
[REDACTED]
3. Holly Fruehling [REDACTED] - Owner/Operator F/V Pink Mermaid
[REDACTED]
4. Sean Cross [REDACTED] – Owner/Operator F/V Smeagol
[REDACTED]
5. Tyler Lee Butler ([REDACTED]) – Owner/Operator F/V Reelization
[REDACTED]
6. Daniel Lee ([REDACTED]) – Operator F/V Oceana
[REDACTED]
7. Robert Berry ([REDACTED]) – Owner/Operator F/V Storytime
[REDACTED]
8. Nicholas (Nick) Krieger ([REDACTED]) - Owner/Operator F/V Arianna Rose
[REDACTED]
9. Robert R Maharry ([REDACTED]) – Owner/Operator F/V Migrator
[REDACTED]
10. Bill Blue ([REDACTED]) – Owner Operator F/V Brita Michelle
[REDACTED]
11. Frank Inferrera ([REDACTED]) – Owner/Operator F/V Aurora
[REDACTED]
12. James Rando ([REDACTED]) – Owner/Operator F/V Misty Dawn
[REDACTED]
13. Philip Lafata ([REDACTED]) – Owner/Operator F/V Kendra Jean
[REDACTED]
14. Anthony Doubledee ([REDACTED]) – Owner/Operator F/V Ahoy
[REDACTED]
15. Ozzie Gregorio ([REDACTED]) – Owner/Operator F/V Miss Jessie
[REDACTED]
16. Cody Wakefield ([REDACTED]) – Owner/Operator F/V Taurus
[REDACTED]



b. Authorized Project Vessel

1. F/V Ronna Lynn ()
2. F/V Areona ()
3. F/V Pink Mermaid ()
4. F/V Smeagol ()
5. F/V Reelization ()
6. F/V Oceana ()
7. F/V Storytime ()
8. F/V Arianna Rose ()
9. F/V Migrator ()
10. F/V Brita Michelle ()
11. F/V Aurora ()
12. F/V Misty Dawn ()
13. F/V Kendra Jean ()
14. F/V Ahoy ()
15. F/V Miss Jessie ()
16. F/V Taurus ()

2. Other Key Participants: All people not listed in Condition 1 who are present on the vessel must be disclosed to the Department prior to departure from port to conduct EFP activities. The authorized agent shall submit the names and commercial fishing license numbers of participants in their 24-hour pre-trip notice via email to EFP@wildlife.ca.gov, LEDMarineNotifications@wildlife.ca.gov, and Kevin.Hare@wildlife.ca.gov. If there is a change in the key participants present on the vessel prior to departure, but after submission of the 24-hour pre-trip notice, the authorized agent shall send an amended list of names and associated commercial fishing license numbers to the email addresses listed above.

General

3. Pursuant to subsection 91(j), Title 14, CCR, it is unlawful to operate an EFP in violation of the permit standard terms and special conditions described herein. All parties (as specified in Conditions 1 and 2) operating under the authority of this permit must be informed of and agree to abide by all standard terms and special conditions of this permit. EFP holders, authorized agents, or any person assisting with activities occurring under the authority of the EFP may be liable for violations of the Fish and Game Code and regulations adopted thereto pertaining to experimental fishing, including violations of permit terms or conditions.
4. For the purposes of this EFP the terms “Dungeness crab” and “rock crab” are as defined in FGC Section 8275, and “spot prawn” is as defined in FGC section 8590.
5. The authorized agent and any person who assists the authorized agent in the operation of the fishing vessel, handling and recovery of commercial fishing gear, and processing of catch and bycatch shall possess the following prior to engaging in any commercial fishing operations authorized by this permit:
 - a. A valid commercial fishing license issued pursuant to FGC Section 7850; and
 - b. Appropriate permits governing commercial take of the target species (i.e., Dungeness crab, ~~or~~ rock crab, and/or spot prawn).
6. The authorized agent shall possess a valid commercial boat registration issued pursuant to FGC Section 7881 for the vessel named above and display the Department Boat Registration



numbers in plain sight on each side of the vessel pursuant to FGC Section 7880.

7. All authorized agents shall only participate in one EFP per fishing trip when participating in multiple EFPs.
8. No other EFP or commercial fishing activities shall take place on the same trip as this EFP, unless specifically authorized by this EFP.

Authorized Species, Take, and Landing Requirements

9. Authorized agents may use authorized EFP gear to participate in the commercial Dungeness crab, ~~or commercial rock crab, and/or spot prawn~~ fisheries. Authorized agents who hold valid permits for the targeted both species may fish for Dungeness crab, ~~and rock crab, and/or spot prawn~~ within the same trip. When conducting EFP activities, authorized agents are exempt from Section 125 (b)(3), Title 14, CCR, Cal. Code Regs., Title 14, section 125, subd (b)(3). Unless specifically exempted by this EFP, adherence to all other regulations regarding the take of these species is required.
10. Authorized agents may retain, possess, and land Dungeness crab when the commercial season is open in that Fishing Zone. Fishing Zones are defined in subsection 132.8(a), Title 14, CCR. Pursuant to FGC Section 8278, only male Dungeness crabs may be taken. No Dungeness crab less than 6 and one-quarter inches in breadth may be taken, possessed, bought, or sold. Dungeness crab shall be measured by the shortest distances through the body from the edge of shell to edge of shell directly from front of points (i.e., lateral spines).
11. Pursuant to FGC Section 8282(a), rock crab less than 4 and one-quarter inches measured in a straight line through the body, from edge of shell to edge of shell at the widest part, shall not be taken, possessed, bought, or sold.
12. Authorized agents may retain, possess, and land spot prawn when the commercial season is open pursuant to Section 180.1, Title 14, CCR.
13. All catch in authorized Dungeness crab gear, other than Dungeness or rock crab gear, or spot prawn gear shall be limited to the species of intended capture for that gear type. Except, rock crab caught in Dungeness crab gear may be retained. All other catch shall be returned to the ocean immediately. All catch in authorized rock crab gear other than rock crab shall be returned to the ocean immediately. Authorized agents shall make all reasonable efforts to return incidental catch to the ocean alive.
14. All dock tickets and electronic fish tickets for EFP landings must have the state EFP number (" ") recorded in the "State Permit #" field, be transmitted within 24 hours, and comply with all other requirements in Section 197, Title 14, CCR. All non-EFP landings must be recorded on separate dock tickets and electronic fish tickets, and comply with all requirements in Section 197, Title 14, CCR.
15. All authorized agents shall notify the Department's Law Enforcement Division (LEDMarineNotifications@wildlife.ca.gov) and EFP Program (EFP@wildlife.ca.gov) of any landings of Dungeness crab made with EFP fishing gear during a fishery closure pursuant to Section 132.8, Title 14, CCR. The notification shall be within 24 hours and include the date, port of landing, number of pounds landed, electronic fish ticket number, and the full name of the receiver.

Allowable Fishing Area and Time of Year

16. Dungeness and rock crab traps may only be placed between the California/Oregon border (42° N. latitude) and Lopez Point (36° 00' N. latitude) and Point Conception (34° 27' N.



latitude), and a No Dungeness or rock crab traps or gear shall be placed in the water seaward of the 100-fathom line as defined in Federal regulation (Title 50, Part 660). Spot prawn traps may only be placed between the California/Oregon border and a line drawn due west from Point Arguello, Santa Barbara County.

17. Authorized agents shall be exempted from the requirement to remove all Dungeness crab traps from state waters by 11:59 pm on the last day of the fishing season, pursuant to FGC Section 8276, when operating or fishing with traps with pop-up fishing gear systems as authorized under this EFP in Condition 25. No crab traps shall be placed into the water 30 days prior to the pre-soak period prescribed in FGC Section 8283 or commercial Dungeness crab season opener, whichever comes first.
18. Dungeness crab may only be taken, possessed, or landed during the statutory season and subject to domoic acid and quality take restrictions pursuant to FGC Sections 5523, 8276, and 8276.2. This permit exempts the agent from an early season closure pursuant to Section 132.8, Title 14, CCR, however, take, possession, and landing are prohibited when a season is delayed pursuant to Section 132.8, Title 14, CCR.
19. Possession, take, and landing of rock crab is subject to domoic acid restrictions pursuant to FGC Section 5523.
20. When fishing within any area where take, possession, and landing of commercial Dungeness crab, ~~or rock crab~~, or spot prawn is prohibited as defined in Conditions ~~47 or 12~~, 18, and 19, all deployed traps shall be closed and un-baited.
21. The authorized agents must suspend fishing operations or move EFP fishing gear per Department direction in response to circumstances including elevated entanglement risk or in the event of entanglement report in the fishing or testing location. The Department will provide notice by contacting each authorized agent via the phone and/or email address provided by the EFP holder.
22. Fishing operations shall abide by all applicable Essential Fish Habitat closures for bottom contact gear as described in Federal regulation (Title 50, Part 660, Subpart F).
23. Fishing activities shall not occur in any state Marine Protected Areas pursuant to Section 632, Title 14, CCR.

Gear Allowances, Specifications and Marking Requirements

24. Currently authorized pop-up fishing gear types are listed in the “Description of authorized activity” section of this document. Authorized pop-up fishing systems (specific combinations of manufacturers and an authorized pop-up fishing gear type) are listed below. The following additions may be approved via a minor amendment: (1) for manufacturers not listed below, any authorized pop-up fishing gear type, or (2) for manufacturers listed below, additional authorized pop-up fishing gear types. A major amendment request is required to add all other pop-up fishing gear systems.
 - a. Ashored Innovations acoustic pop-up buoy,
 - b. Desert Star Systems acoustic pop-up buoy,
 - c. Devocean Ropeless Systems buoyant spool,
 - d. EdgeTech acoustic pop-up buoy,
 - e. Fiomarine buoyant spool,
 - f. Guardian Ropeless Systems timed release pop-up buoy,
 - g. Ropeless Fishing Systems lift bag,



- h. SMELTS lift bag.
- i. Sub Sea Sonics acoustic and timed release pop-up buoy.

25. All authorized agents must comply with the following requirements with respect to deployment of the authorized pop-up gear fishing systems:

- a. When fishing single crab traps, an authorized pop-up fishing gear system shall be connected to each trap. Vessels may connect the trap to a length of line attached to a weight or anchor to provide a larger target for grappling.
- b. When fishing a string of crab traps, no more than 50 traps shall be connected by a common groundline. An authorized pop-up fishing system consisting of a containment unit, single line, and at most two buoys (a main buoy and optional trailer buoy) shall be connected to at least one terminal end on strings containing 20 or fewer traps and on both ends for strings containing more than 20 traps. For purposes of determining string length, authorized pop-up fishing systems are not considered traps.
- c. When fishing a string of spot prawn traps with no persistent surface markers, no more than 50 traps shall be connected by a common groundline. An authorized pop-up fishing system consisting of a containment unit, single line, and at most two buoys (a main buoy and optional trailer buoy) shall be connected to at least one terminal end of the string. For purposes of determining string length, authorized pop-up fishing systems are not considered traps.

- 26. The maximum number of crab traps each authorized vessel may use, possess, or deploy at any time when attempting to take crab shall not exceed the vessel's permitted tier as allocated by subsection 132.1(c), Title 14, CCR. This limitation shall not apply to lost or abandoned gear recovered pursuant to Sections 132.2 and 132.7, Title 14, CCR.
- 27. All crab traps must comply with the requirements specified in FGC Section 9011 for Dungeness crab or rock crab. All traps used or deployed must have at least one destruct device pursuant to FGC Section 9003 and Section 180.2, Title 14, CCR.
- 28. The maximum number of spot prawn traps each authorized vessel may use, possess, or deploy at any time when attempting to take spot prawn shall not exceed the vessel's permitted tier as allocated by subsection 180.1(c), Title 14, CCR.
- 29. All spot prawn traps must comply with the requirements specified in FGC Section 9015 and Sections 180.1 and 180.2, Title 14, CCR.
- 30. The EFP holder shall provide the Department access to the gear marking applications and associated platforms (Ropeless Fisher, Ropeless Control, Trap Tracker, Trap Timer, ATLAS, Devocean, EarthRanger, and the rmwHUB) as identified in the EFP application and amendment(s) for data sharing and enforcement purposes.
- 31. Authorized agents shall affix buoy tags specified in subsection 132.1(b), Title 14, CCR and FGC Section 8276.5 to their Dungeness crab traps deployed under this EFP. Deployed Dungeness crab gear shall also include a trap tag as defined in subsection 132.1(a), Title 14, CCR.
- 32. For the interval between gear deployment and activation of the pop-up mechanism, authorized agents shall be exempted from the requirements to mark each trap with a buoy as defined pursuant to FGC Section 9005 and Sections 132.6(a) and 180.5, Title 14, CCR. Following release of the pop-up mechanism as identified in the EFP application and amendment(s), the location of each single trap or at least one terminal end of each string shall be indicated by the presence of one or more buoys at the surface, as specified in Conditions 33 29 and 34 30. When testing FioBuoy buoyant-spool style pop-up units gear



types, the location of each single trap or at least one terminal end of each string shall be indicated by the presence of one or more buoyant spools at the surface, as specified in Condition ~~35~~ 34. When testing lift bag pop-up gear types, the location of each single trap or at least one terminal end of each string shall be indicated by a floated lift bag at the surface, as specified in Condition 36.

33. The main buoy and any trailer buoys shall be marked with the operator's commercial fishing license identification number. All identification numbers shall be at least 1.5 inches in height and drawn with a line no less than 0.25 inch thick.
34. Pop-up gear types that include one or more buoys ~~Buoy markings~~ shall comply with requirements specified in Section 180.5, Title 14, CCR. Every buoy shall be marked exclusively with the Identification Letters "EC" with at least one buoy marked with the operator's commercial fishing license identification number followed by the Identification Letters "EC".
 - a. Buoys that are 4 inches in diameter or greater shall have Identification Letters marked on four opposing sides.
 - b. Buoys that are smaller than 4 inches in diameter shall have Identification Letters marked on two opposing sides.
 - c. The commercial fishing license identification number shall be at least 1.5 inches in height and drawn with a line no less than 0.25 inch thick.
 - d. The Identification Letters "EC" shall be at least 3 inches in height and drawn with a line no less than 0.25 inch thick.
 - e. All Identification Numbers and Identification Letters on a buoy shall be clearly and distinctly marked, and in a color that contrasts with the buoy; the numbers and letters shall be applied and maintained so that they are visible and legible.
35. ~~When testing FieBuoy~~ buoyant-spool style pop-up units gear types, one end of the spool body shall be marked exclusively with the operator's commercial fishing license identification number and the Identification Letters "EC". All markings shall be drawn with a line no less than 0.25 inch thick and at least 1.5 inches in height, and larger if available space allows. All markings shall be clearly and distinctly marked, and in a color that contrasts with the spool body; the numbers and letters shall be applied and maintained so that they are visible and legible.
36. When using lift-bag style pop-up gear types, a placard shall be affixed to the sled and marked with the permittee's commercial fishing license identification number followed by the Identification Letters "EC".
 - a. The commercial fishing license identification number shall be at least 1.5 inches in height and drawn with a line no less than 0.25 inch thick.
 - b. The Identification Letters "EC" shall be at least 3 inches in height and drawn with a line no less than 0.25 inch thick.
 - c. All Identification Numbers and Identification Letters on a buoy shall be clearly and distinctly marked, and in a color that contrasts with the buoy; the numbers and letters shall be applied and maintained so that they are visible and legible.
37. Buoy Line Marking Requirements. Fishing gear shall not have on any part of the gear line marks or multi-colored line required for any Washington, Oregon, or California state fishery operating in state or federal waters off the U.S. West Coast unless legally participating in the fishery requiring such line marks or multi-colored line (Section 181, Title 14, CCR). The authorized agents will test and report on the efficacy and durability of marking line markings when requested by the Department.
38. Traps fished under the authority of this EFP are exempted from the 96-hour trap service



interval specified in FCG Section 9004. Authorized agents shall service (i.e., raise, clean, ensure mechanisms are properly functioning, and empty) their traps at intervals not to exceed 168 hours, weather conditions at sea permitting, unless otherwise authorized in writing by the Department. Additionally, when using gear where a timed-release device serves as the primary release mechanism, authorized agents must service their traps within two hours of the selected release interval, weather conditions at sea permitting. If an authorized agent is unable to comply with these requirements due to mechanical breakdown of their vessel, or another circumstance, they must notify the Department as soon as possible via email to the Department's Law Enforcement Division (LEDMarineNotifications@wildlife.ca.gov) and Marine Region (WhaleSafeFisheries@wildlife.ca.gov).

Other Requirements

39. No testing or fishing for crab may take place unless a functioning electronic monitoring system is installed and used as specified by the Department. The electronic monitoring system must be a satellite or cellular based system designed to monitor location and movement of vessels using global positioning system (GPS) coordinates. The electronic monitoring system must be capable of accurately tracking and recording vessel location at a frequency of no less than once per minute without interruption during the entire fishing trip when participating in fishing operations covered under this EFP, including transiting to and from the fishing area. Vessel location data shall be uploaded automatically and made available to the Department or an authorized agent within 24 hours. Authorized agents shall grant the Department access to all data upon request.
40. At least 24 hours prior to commencing a fishing trip during which EFP activity is expected to be conducted, notice of vessel name, target fisheries fishery, anticipated fishing dates, port of departure, and expected landing port shall be made via email to the Department's Law Enforcement Division (LEDMarineNotifications@wildlife.ca.gov) and EFP Program (EFP@wildlife.ca.gov). Upon request from the Department, authorized agents shall coordinate with the Department and allow for inspections of the traps and associated gear prior to deployment or when gear is being serviced at sea.
41. Authorized agents shall follow the best practices for avoiding whale entanglement described in the attached guide. This includes fishing gear and incident reporting requirements.
42. The permittee shall provide training to Department personnel on any aspect of the permitted project on request.
43. The permittee shall comply with data reporting requirements as described in Attachment A. Reports shall be submitted via email to the Department's Law Enforcement Division (LEDMarineNotifications@wildlife.ca.gov), Marine Region (WhaleSafeFisheries@wildlife.ca.gov), and EFP Coordinator (EFP@wildlife.ca.gov).
44. The vessel shall be capable of safely carrying an observer when requested by the Department and provide that observer with accommodations equivalent to those provided to the captain and crew for both single and multi-day trips if multi-day trips are conducted. The observer shall be permitted to collect additional opportunistic biological data.
45. In instances where gear cannot be retrieved via the primary release mechanism, authorized agents may use grappling or back-up release mechanisms to recover the gear as described in the EFP application and amendment(s). The permittee will document all unrecovered gear, per the data reporting requirements in Attachment A, including traps, buoys and other equipment. Failure to keep or submit required information may result in revocation or suspension (including non-renewal) of the permit.
46. Unless otherwise specified by the Department, the permittee shall submit the annual and



Document

final reports required by subsection 91(I), Title 14, CCR to the EFP Coordinator (EFP@wildlife.ca.gov) no later than 60 days after the permit expiration date.

47. Prior to commencing at-sea testing, permittee shall ensure all authorized agents have completed the freely available Level 1 entanglement response training provided by the National Marine Fisheries Service, available at <https://west-coast-training.whaledisentanglement.org/#/>. Permittee shall provide screen shots documenting course completion to the EFP Coordinator (EFP@wildlife.ca.gov), Department's Law Enforcement Division (LEDMarineNotifications@wildlife.ca.gov) and Marine Region (WhaleSafeFisheries@wildlife.ca.gov). Once available, official course completion emails shall be forwarded to the EFP Coordinator (EFP@wildlife.ca.gov), Department's Law Enforcement Division (LEDMarineNotifications@wildlife.ca.gov) and Marine Region (WhaleSafeFisheries@wildlife.ca.gov).



Document

Attachment A: Data Reporting Requirements

1. Deployment Data. Permittee or authorized agent shall make available to the Department the following data for each trap deployed during the fishing trip. Data shall be provided via one of the approved gear-marking applications or platforms identified in Condition 26-30, or as otherwise directed in writing by the Department. Other applications and platforms may be approved by a minor amendment.
 - a. The latitude and longitude of each trap, given to the highest precision allowed by onboard instrumentation (“location”), and whether or not the trap was deployed with weak rope. If multiple traps are deployed on a single line (“string”), the number and configuration of traps in the string and the location of the first and last traps of the string.
 - b. The name and vessel ID of the vessel the trap was deployed from.
 - c. The experimental fishing permit number the trap is deployed under.
 - d. The time and date of deployment.
 - e. For non-acoustic releases, the time and date the release mechanism is programmed to allow the marker buoy to surface.
2. Gear Location Marking. The permittee or authorized agent shall make fishing locations publicly available to other fishers and the public subject to direction of the Department. Communication of fishing location may include notification to local harbor districts and to the Department web pages, and/or other publicly accessible web pages. The permittee or authorized agent shall make the following information available via one of the approved gear marking applications or platforms identified in Condition 26 30, or as otherwise directed in writing by the Department, for the purpose of avoiding gear conflict:
 - a. The location of deployed single traps.
 - b. The location of the first and last traps in a string, an indication that they are part of a string, and the orientation of the string with respect to each terminal end.
3. Coordination with other EFPs. The permittee shall use all available resources to understand where gear may be set, including review of pending and approved EFP applications identified on the [Fish and Game Commission website](#) and checking gear marking applications.
4. Lost Gear Information. Unrecoverable gear shall be reported via email to the Department as soon as possible, but not more than 12 hours after initial attempted recovery. Data shall be provided via email to LEDMarineNotifications@wildlife.ca.gov and WhaleSafeFisheries@wildlife.ca.gov. This report shall contain:
 - a. The target species/fishery (i.e., Dungeness crab, rock crab, or spot prawn).
 - b. Gear manufacturer and model.
 - c. The location of each trap. If multiple traps are deployed in a string, the number of traps in the string, and the location of the first and last traps of the string.
 - d. The name and vessel ID of the vessel the trap was deployed from.
 - e. The experimental fishing permit number the trap is deployed under.
 - f. The time and date the gear was last serviced.
 - g. Summary of attempted recovery efforts, including documentation of any pop-up system malfunctions (e.g., early release or unresponsive to release signal).



Document

h. Reason for loss (if known).

5. In addition to the requirements of subsection 91(l), Title 14, CCR, annual and final reports shall include:

- a. A table or other database containing trap deployment and recovery data for each trip conducted under the authority of this permit. In addition to the deployment data in requirement 1 above, this includes:
 1. Gear manufacturer and model.
 2. Target species/fishery.
 3. The time and date of recovery or attempted recovery.
 4. The location the gear was recovered.
 5. The distance between the location where the gear was deployed and recovered, if the difference between deployment and recovery is greater than $\frac{1}{4}$ mile.
 6. The time elapsed between the programmed release time and recovery or attempted recovery, if the difference between programmed release time and recovery is greater than one hour.
- b. A summary of landing data including the volume (pounds) of each species landed at each port by each vessel.
- c. The number of trips conducted by each vessel participating in the EFP, the total number of trap deployments, and the number of unsuccessful recoveries.
- d. A summary of the efforts taken to recover lost gear, and the outcome of those efforts.



National Marine Sanctuary Foundation Experimental Fishing Permit Major Amendment

February 11, 2026

Presented to:

California Fish and Game Commission

Presented by:

Allegra La Ferr
Environmental Scientist
Marine Region



Overview

- Overview of EFP
- EFP amendment requests
- Proposed Terms and Conditions
- CDFW recommendation

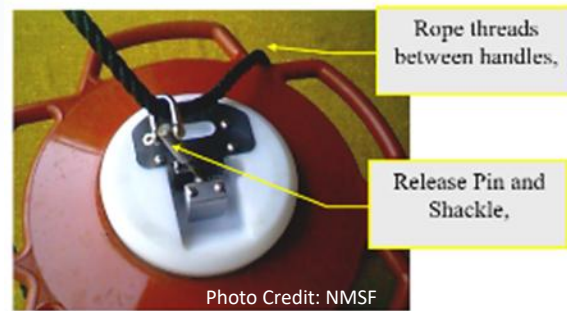


Overview of NMSF EFP

- CA/OR border to Lopez Point (36° 00' N. latitude), all shoreward of 100 fm line
- Uses four pop-up fishing systems
 - 3 Acoustic Release and 1 Timed Release



Desert Star Arc-1XD



Fiomarine Fiobuoy



EdgeTech 5112



Longsoaker Guardian
Ropeless Gear



Overview of NMSF EFP (Cont.)

Commercial Fisheries: Dungeness crab & Rock crab

Currently approved:

- 40 agents and 40 vessels

- Maximum number of traps tied to vessel tier

- Maximum 50 crab traps per string

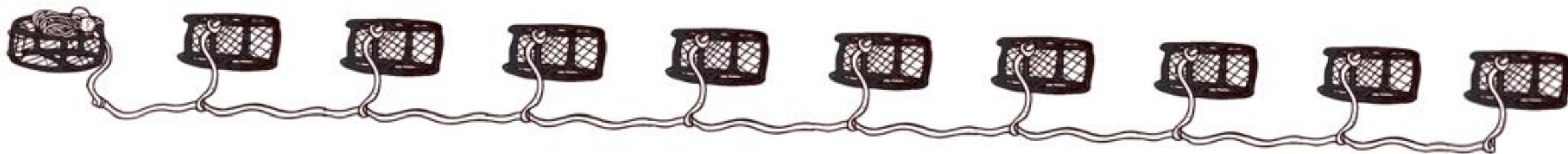


Figure Credit: Ellie Brauer



EFP Major Amendment Requests

- Expand the geographic area
- Expand testing to include spot prawn fishery
- Authorize testing of additional gear types - flexibility for future versions

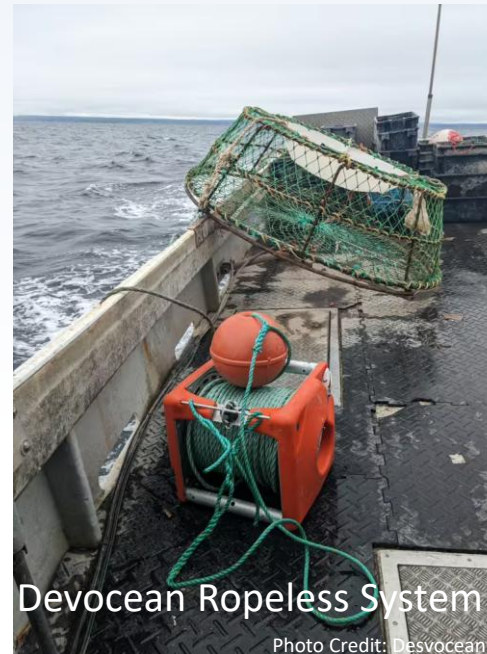


Photo Credit: Ropeless Fishing System



Proposed Terms and Conditions

Requested Conditions	Department Proposed Conditions
Expand southern boundary to Point Conception	Expand southern boundary to Point Conception *except for Spot Prawn, southern boundary is <i>Point Arguello</i>
Allow testing in the commercial spot prawn fishery	Allow testing in the commercial spot prawn fishery
Authorize additional gear types	Authorize additional gear types



Additional Conditions

- Updated dock and fish tickets requirements to clarify landings
- Prohibit EFP fishing gear from using line markings required in other state-managed West Coast fisheries



Recommendation

Approval of Major Amendment with Proposed
Department Special Conditions

Thank You

For additional information please contact:

EFP@wildlife.ca.gov

