

12A. Experimental Fishing Permit (EFP) Major Amendment Request (#2023-01)

Today's Item	Information <input type="checkbox"/>	Action <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Receive, consider, and act upon a major amendment to an EFP (Commission tracking ID #2023-01) approved to conduct exploratory fishing for brown box crab and California king crab using “on-demand” pop-up fishing gear systems.		

Summary of Previous/Future Actions

- Approved EFP application #2023-01 June 2023
- Approved first major amendment for EFP #2023-01 October 2024
- Department transmitted accepted second EFP major amendment request to Commission August 4, 2025
- Published notice of receipt of second EFP major amendment request August 6, 2025
- Department transmitted recommendation for second EFP major amendment to Commission December 30, 2025
- 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 may request amendments (administrative updates, minor, or major) under subsection 91(k)(2). The Department may approve administrative and minor amendments, while major amendments — those affecting species, amounts, location, gear, or participants — require Commission approval and follow the same review and approval process as new applications.

Approved EFP Application

In June 2023, the Commission approved EFP application #2023-01 submitted by Kim Sawicki of Sustainable Seas Technology to: (1) Build on a previous experimental gear permit and EFP by conducting exploratory fishing for brown box crab and California king crab; and (2) test the effectiveness of on-demand fishing systems in the deep-water habitats where these crab species occur.

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Participants must exclusively use on-demand fishing systems with strings of trap gear, collect biological and fishery data required by the Department, and support an ongoing tag-recapture study. These efforts aim to fill information gaps for box crab and king crab and inform whether a new commercial fishery is warranted and how it might be designed.

EFP Major Amendment Request

In October 2024, the Commission approved a major amendment request to modify the trap service interval. In February 2025, the EFP holder submitted a second major amendment request (Exhibit 1). In August 2025, the Department accepted the request for consideration and notified the Commission. In December 2025, the Department transmitted recommendations to the Commission (exhibits 2 and 3), which the Commission publicly noticed on January 9, more than 30 days prior to today's hearing.

The second major amendment request is highly complex, covering seven change categories that include 17 individual changes for: (1) additional concurrent fisheries, (2) modified geographic scope and fishing area, (3) increased quotas, (4) modified quota structure, (5) increased authorized vessels, (6) increased authorized agents, and (7) increased trap limits and a weather exemption to the trap service interval. See exhibits 1 and 2.

The EFP holder seeks changes to encourage greater participation and enable testing across a broader range of crab populations, habitat, conditions, and gear types. To increase participation, the proposed changes aim to improve operational flexibility and opportunity, thereby providing incentives for involvement. There is also an interest in aligning trap configurations with other crab EFPs and leveraging existing gear investments.

Department Review and Recommendations

The Department engaged in an extended and detailed review process, including ongoing communication with the permit holder and authorized agents, to determine what would best support the EFP goals while maintaining resource protections. The major amendment request and associated Department recommendations are reflected in exhibits 1-4.

The Department recommends approving most requested changes in six of the seven categories, with several modifications. Due to the complexity of the requests, the Department has prepared a table in Exhibit 2 outlining the EFP holder's requests, the Department's recommendations, and the supporting rationale. The draft amended special conditions (Exhibit 3) incorporate these recommendations, along with administrative and minor amendments previously approved by the Department under subsection 91(k)(2), as well as two additional Department amendments processed under subsection 91(k)(1).

Key considerations in the Department's recommendations are highlighted in this summary; for clarity, this overview follows the sequence of the Exhibit 2 table, rather than numerical order.

Geographic Scope and Fishing Area (Item 2)

- Request: Expand fishing area to statewide, and expand allowable fishing to shallower depths, from 60-200 fathoms to 50-200 fathoms.

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- Recommendation: The Department recommends expanding to statewide, but only authorize the depth change north of Point Conception, to avoid gear conflicts with the lobster fishery south of Point Conception. Additionally, north of Point Conception add a seasonal constraint to avoid conflicts with other fisheries and EFPs..

Quotas and Quota Structure (Items 3 and 4)

- Request: Reassign quotas from vessels to agents, and allow stacking of two agents/quotas on each vessel.
- Recommendation: The Department recommends converting the individual quotas into a permit-wide total allowable catch (TAC) — one TAC for brown box crab and one TAC for aggregate king crab species — for easier tracking and flexibility as participants change. Staff recommend the Commission maintain these recommended TACs as maximum limits, regardless of any increases in authorized agents or vessels. The recommended TACs are calculated based on the original quotas, which were set at precautionary levels for the entire EFP to minimize the risk of overharvest while collecting data for these data-poor species.

Authorized Agents (Item 6)

- Request: Increase from 10 to 40
- Recommendation: Deny (retain at 10), based on low participation in the EFP— no more than three vessels have been active at any time, and currently only one participant is fishing. Existing permit conditions already allow expansion without increasing the number of authorized agents.

Authorized Vessels (Item 5)

- Request: Increase from 5 to 20
- Recommendation: Increase to 10 only. The Department's recommended number of authorized vessels matches the current level of authorized agents (10), supporting measured growth while maintaining a precautionary approach. The Department states this is consistent with previous Commission approvals, which set a precedent of incremental increases for most EFPs.

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

Significant Public Comments (N/A)**Recommendation**

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

Department: Approve the EFP (Commission tracking ID #2023-01) major amendment request with proposed special conditions as specified on form DFW 1103 (Exhibit 4).

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Exhibits

1. [Major amendment request, transmitted to Commission on August 4, 2025](#)
2. [Department recommendation memo with recommendation table attached, received December 30, 2025](#)
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 #2023-01) 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 #2023-01) with special conditions as recommended by the Department, except as follows: _____.

The purpose of this Major Amendment Request is to expand the current project, building on our existing Experimental Fishing Permit (████████) to address critical data gaps in essential fishery information for brown box crab and California King Crab. We also aim to evaluate the potential for a commercial fishery for brown box crab and its design elements. An exploratory fishing program for box crab was initially approved by the California Fish and Game Commission in December 2018 and expired on April 1, 2023. This program concluded that vertical line fisheries shouldn't be expanded due to whale entanglement issues. The initial exploratory box crab fishery was a collaborative research program involving the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), California Sea Grant, and commercial fishers, among other partners and sponsors. Research included exploratory fishing, a tag-recapture study, and laboratory studies of life history. Based on information from previous and current EFPs, brown box crab caught entirely using pop-up fishing gear seems to represent a viable new fishing opportunity in California.

There is currently a large and growing demand for box crab and king crab. Our current EFP has reignited serious interest in box crab within the consumer market. In addition to growing demand, there is fleet interest from the fishing community, with increasing curiosity around pop-up gear and lack of viable opportunity. Information gained through the research carried out under this and related EFPs can be used to establish a small fishery with conservative management measures. However, sufficient information is not yet available to enable the CDFW to make a final recommendation on whether a sustainable commercial fishery could be established, nor what management measures are needed and the supporting regulations to implement them. We propose this expansion of our EFP to continue gathering critical information that will allow CDFW to complete its assessment of management strategies for this emerging fishery. This purpose aligns with the guidance of the Marine Resources Committee of the California Fish and Game Commission given during the March 24, 2022, meeting to pursue the development of a new experimental fishing permit program for brown box crab.

Importantly, this project expansion would also allow for continued and more broad-scale testing for the feasibility of using subsea buoy retrieval systems in deep water. The results of the testing will ultimately help enable decision-making regarding the authorization of alternative gear for use in California's box crab fishery. Currently, this EFP is limited to Southern California, but this project expansion will broaden our understanding of the utility of these alternative gear types across a range of habitats, depths, sea conditions, and fishing practices.

Consistent with Fish and Game Code (FGC) Section 7050, this project expansion aims to ensure the conservation of ESA-listed marine species and allow for limited

testing of a brown box crab fishery through effective collaborations and a science-based approach. Efforts included within our current EFP promote scientific research to better inform fishery management decisions that recognize the importance of commercial fisheries while conserving the health and diversity of marine ecosystems.

Expanded list of proposed project activities that are prohibited under current state fishing laws or regulations (cite the specific section number(s), if known), and the reasons to justify authorization (exemption) of those activities under the EFP.

1. Expanded List of Proposed Project Activities Prohibited Under Current State Fishing Laws or Regulations

Proposed Activities:

- 1) Applicant requests permission to include the capture of coonstriped shrimp, sablefish, Dungeness Crab, Northern Rock Crab, and other species covered under open access licenses during exploratory fishing trips that utilize subsea buoy retrieval system devices.

Current Prohibitions:

- 2) Under the current EFP, combined trips are only allowed with Spiny Lobster, Southern Rock Crab, Spot Prawn, and Groundfish.

Justification for Authorization:

- **Fuel and Expense Efficiency:** Allowing the capture of these additional species during exploratory fishing trips is intended to save on fuel and other operational expenses. Conducting mixed trips will optimize resources, reducing the financial burden on participating vessels and increasing the feasibility of the research.
- **Non-Use of On-Demand Gear for Other Species:** It is important to note that these species will not be targeted using the on-demand gear designed for box crab traps. The primary focus will remain on testing and evaluating the subsea buoy retrieval systems for box crab, while the capture of coonstriped shrimp, sablefish, Northern Rock Crab, Dungeness Crab, and other species covered under open access licenses will occur using traditional methods.

These exemptions under the EFP are essential for conducting a thorough and scientifically robust evaluation of the subsea buoy retrieval system's effectiveness and environmental impact while ensuring economic viability for participating fishers.

2. Expanded Experimental Design and Research Plan

Research Objectives:

- Geographic Scope: Conduct experimental fishing for brown box crab between US/Mexico and the California/Oregon Border.
- Data Collection: Gather and share comprehensive data on the brown box crab, including population density, size distribution, and habitat preferences. This data will inform stock assessments and management decisions.
- Gear Testing: Test the efficacy and environmental impact of subsea buoy retrieval systems and other alternative gear types in various marine environments and conditions.

3. Expansion of Proposed Catch Limits

The proposed catch limits are designed to balance economic viability with conservation goals, ensuring the sustainable development of the fishery. An expanded list of target species expected to be harvested as samples or for compensation under the EFP, including anticipated amounts (weight or number) per vessel and proposed use (e.g., bait, sell, personal use, or other (e.g., research or tag and release)).

Target Species and Catch Limits:

- Brown Box Crab (minimum 5 ¾" Carapace): Each authorized agent will be allowed to harvest up to 50,000 lbs. of brown box crab. The catch will be used for commercial sale, tag-and-release studies, and scientific research.
- California Spiny King Crab (minimum 5" Carapace): Each authorized agent will be allowed to harvest up to 50,000 lbs. of California spiny king crab. The catch will be used for commercial sale, tag-and-release studies, and scientific research.
- Scarlet King Crab (minimum 4" Carapace): Each authorized agent will be allowed to harvest up to 50,000 lbs. of scarlet king crab. The catch will be used for commercial sale, tag-and-release studies, and scientific research.

Proposed Uses:

Commercial Sale: The harvested species will be sold to cover operational costs and provide economic incentives for participating vessels.

Tag-and-Release Studies: A portion of the catch will be tagged and released to

gather data on migration patterns, growth rates, and population dynamics.

Research: Samples will be used for laboratory studies on life history, reproductive biology, and ecological interactions.

Species Name	Weight	Proposed Use
Brown Box Crab (minimum 5 ¾" Carapace)	50,000 lbs.	Retain and sell; tag and release; research
California Spiny King Crab (minimum 5" Carapace)	50,000 lbs.	Retain and sell; tag and release; research
Scarlet King Crab (minimum 4" Carapace)	50,000 lbs.	Retain and sell; tag and release; research



Figure 1. Target species including (left) Brown Box Crab (*Lopholithodes foraminatus*), (center) California Spiny King Crab (*Paralithodes spp.*), and (right) Scarlet King Crab (*Lithodes couesi*).

Expanded list of species

Those species expected to be taken incidental to fishing conducted under the EFP, including anticipated amounts (weight or number), proposed use (e.g., bait, sell, personal use, discard, or other (e.g., research or tag and release), and a description of any measures that will be used to reduce incidental catch mortality.

Species Name	Individual Crabs	Proposed Use
Brown Box Crab	7,000	Release females and shorts/tag
California Spiny King Crab	7,000	Release females and shorts/tag
Scarlet King Crab	7,000	Release females and shorts/tag
Dungeness Crab	Up to 5,000	Release females and shorts

Some sublegal-sized box and king crab may be tagged and released as listed above; all other incidental catch not included in requested concurrent species, will be immediately returned to the water. Based on the available data from the previous box crab EFP, most of the catch

will be comprised of box crab with some Dungeness. Bycatch of other invertebrates and finfish has been relatively low relative to target catch. Information about the amount and composition of non-target species caught in box crab traps can be found in the DFW Report: Update on the Box Crab Experimental Fishing Permit Program prepared for the March 24, 2022 MRC meeting (<https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=199373&inline>). These primarily include urchin, rock crab, other non-cancer crabs, and lingcod. However, the species identities and catch rates vary by region and method of sampling. Given that we are proposing to use the same types of traps, it is anticipated there will be similar amounts of bycatch.

During the previous box crab EFP, fishers found that fishing over sand or at a rock-sand interface resulted in a higher ratio of catch of crab and lower catch of fish compared to reef habitat. Therefore, these soft-bottom habitats will be targeted. In addition, it was determined that cutting a hole of least 4 inches wide in traps allowed more sublegal-sized crab to escape, which both reduces bycatch and increases fishing efficiency; these openings will be made in traps under this EFP.

4. Characterization of Additional Area to be added

Box and king crab habitats are relatively deep compared to most other trap fisheries in northern California at typical depths of 400 – 800 feet. The potential for conflicts with other fisheries is low at these depths; other crabs are targeted at shallower depths, while sablefish is fished deeper and outside of the proposed range we are requesting.

The additional fishers listed in this major amendment request will primarily be utilizing the Sub Sea Sonics AR4RT and DAR4RT (acoustic releases with a 99.6% reliability factor), Guardian Trawl Groundline Sled (line management system), Trap Timer gear marking app, and Sub Sea Sonics Regulatory Portal and Gear Vault online dashboards. For Electronic Monitoring, these additional vessels will utilize either Pelagic Systems solar loggers, ZebraTech Loggers, or Archipelago LIME units.

The dashboard platforms that LED and CDFW Marine Region will be able to access integrates information collected in Sub Sea Sonics Trap Timer gear-marking application which is then submitted to the rmwHub interoperable virtual gear marking system and will allow only authorized CDFW staff to see where SBRS gear is deployed.

Expanded area: The additional area proposed to be added in this major amendment are any state and federal waters north of Point Conception and south of the Oregon/California Border from 50 to 200 fathoms in depth, except for any Marine Protected Areas and Essential Fish Habitat closures for bottom contact gear.

5. New Gear Configurations Requested

A maximum of 20 trawls will be allowed per user and trawls will not exceed a maximum of 20 traps. Traps will be serviced within 168 hours, weather permitting.

6. Expanded Mixed Trip request and combination of quotas for authorized vessels:

We request authorization to fish other permits held by the authorized agents (s) including coon-striped shrimp, Northern Rock Crab, sablefish, Dungeness Crab, and other species covered under open access license during fishing trips under this EFP as long as the operator holds the required permits. We also request to stack up to two authorized agent's quotas on authorized vessels.

7. Vessel and Operator Information

We are requesting 15 additional authorized vessels and *up to* 40 authorized agents (providing for second captains). All vessels and operators currently listed on the EFP will remain in place.

Additional Vessel Information:

Proposed Additional Operators and Vessel Information as follows.

Authorized Agent 1

Name: Leandro Amadeo Patricelli

Address: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email Address: [REDACTED]

Fisher GOID: [REDACTED]

Fisher L Number: [REDACTED]

Authorized Vessel 1

Vessel Name: St. Gino

Vessel FG: [REDACTED]

Vessel Owner GOID: [REDACTED]

Vessel Owner: Mckenzie Amos

Owner Address: [REDACTED]

Authorized Agent 2

Name: Brand D. Little

Address: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email Address: [REDACTED]

Fisher GOID: [REDACTED]

Fisher L Number: [REDACTED]

Authorized Vessel 2

Vessel Name: F/V Pale Horse

Vessel GOID: [REDACTED]

Vessel FG: [REDACTED]

Vessel Owner: Brand D. Little/ SPOTON Fishing Inc

Vessel Owner GOID: [REDACTED]

Owner Address: [REDACTED]

Authorized Agent 3

Name: Stephen F. Melz

Address: [REDACTED]

Phone: 1 [REDACTED]

Email Address: [REDACTED]

Fisher GOID: [REDACTED]

Fisher L Number: [REDACTED]

Authorized Vessel 3

Vessel Name: F/V Jaqueline L

Vessel GOID: [REDACTED]

Vessel FG: [REDACTED]

Vessel Owner: S&J Fisheries

Vessel Owner GOID: [REDACTED]

Owner Address: [REDACTED]

Authorized Agent 4

Name: Jacob Emerling

Address: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email Address: [REDACTED]

Fisher GOID: [REDACTED]

Fisher L Number: [REDACTED]

Authorized Vessel 4

Vessel Name: F/V Sara Brent

Vessel FG: [REDACTED]

Vessel Owner: J&S Fisheries

Owner Address: [REDACTED]

Authorized Agent 5

Name: Michael Cohen

Address: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email Address: [REDACTED]

Fisher GOID: [REDACTED]

Fisher L Number: [REDACTED]

Authorized Vessel 5

Vessel Name: F/V Eagle

Vessel GOID: [REDACTED]

Vessel FG: [REDACTED]

Vessel Owner: Michael Cohen

Owner Address: [REDACTED]

Authorized Agent 6

Name: Daniel Fugere

Address: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email Address: [REDACTED]

Fisher GOID: [REDACTED]

Fisher L Number: [REDACTED]

Authorized Vessel 6

Vessel Name: F/V Pamela Sue

Vessel CF: [REDACTED]

Vessel Owner: Daniel Fugere

Owner Address: [REDACTED]

Authorized Agent 7

Name: Michael J. Phillips

Address: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email Address: [REDACTED]

Fisher GOID: [REDACTED]

Fisher L Number: [REDACTED]

Authorized Vessel 7

Vessel Name: F/V Miss Alison

Vessel GOID: [REDACTED]

Vessel FG: [REDACTED]

Vessel Owner: Michael J. Phillips & James C. Phillips

Owner Address: [REDACTED]

Authorized Agent 8

Name: Andrew Cresalia

Address: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email Address: [REDACTED]

Fisher GOID: [REDACTED]

Authorized Vessel 8

Vessel Name: Southside

Vessel FG: [REDACTED]

Vessel Owner: Andrew Cresalia

Owner Address: [REDACTED]

Additional information requested by CDFW, received via email on 6/2/2025

Request for additional information from SMEs (Inverts/MED):

Applicant Response

1. Gear

a. *Why requesting such a substantial increase in # traps?*

Per fisher request. The central California box crab grounds are a long way away from the harbor and there is a huge expense that has to be covered. The increase allows for us to cover that expense. Also, the expected limited participation will make it hard to collect substantial samples for biological assessment without greatly increasing the number of traps.

Additional response on 6/18/2025: From a Southern California perspective, increasing the trap limit is critical to making the box crab fishery viable for a broader range of participants. Smaller vessels fishing inshore are currently limited to 75 traps, which restricts their ability to generate meaningful income—especially given the cost of fuel, gear, and labor. Increasing the trap limit would allow these operators to fish more efficiently and sustainably.

At the same time, larger vessels fishing farther offshore require longer strings and higher trap counts to justify the operational costs of deepwater trips. Without those adjustments, participation from these vessels is not economically viable.

Compounding the issue, the majority of king crab landed to date has been unsellable due to parasitic contamination. This affects both inshore and offshore operators and has effectively made box crab the sole commercially viable species in this fishery. Without increased trap limits, the fishery remains economically constrained for nearly everyone involved.

b. *How did you land at 400 trap max?*

Per fisher request. 400 traps was chosen to be more inline with the existing d crab EFP and the expected box crab participants. This allows them to simply use the preconfigured gear profiles that they have already invested in for pop up crab.

c. *Increase in max # traps requested for central/northern CA only, or statewide?*

Per fisher request; all of CA

2. *Mixed-fishery trips:*

a. *All catch in EFP traps other than box and king crab cannot be retained. Please clarify if the request is for other species caught during participation in other fisheries to be retained, or to also expand the species that may be retained from EFP traps?*

To expand the species that may be retained from EFP traps, but not past that which is allowed with other fisheries.

3. *Fishing depths:*

a. Asking for decrease in minimum fishing depth statewide (60 to 50 fm), or in central/northern CA only?

All of CA

4. *Quotas:*

a. Why is an increase in quotas for box and king crab requested?

Per fisher request, economic in nature.

It is unknown what kind of biomass we expect to run into. The size of the biomass will dictate the actual harvest amounts. Increasing quotas will not be relevant if there is not a substantial biomass on the grounds.

b. Why scarlet king crab, and in such large quantities? Is there knowledge of large numbers in similar habitats as box/king crab?

Per fisher request, economic in nature.

It was put on there because we have seen them incidentally. We are not anticipating any significant harvest, but their biomass is really an unknown until we get out and start fishing.

c. What is the justification for the proposed size limit of scarlet king crab – how was this derived?

Per fisher request, economic in nature.

d. Please clarify the request to stack quotas; the maximum allowable pounds are already per-vessel.

We want this to be a permit that follows the fisher and not a vessel. There is a significant data gap from fishers who assisted authorized agents in the past who “split” landings. Landings not tied to the vessel but to the fishers and their individual buyers.

5. *Concurrent fisheries:*

a. What are you considering open access? “Open access” is a federal groundfish term.

General Trap Permit

Additional response on 6/18/2025: For species for the Southern participants, I would request to keep spider crab.

**State of California
Department of Fish and Wildlife**

Memorandum

Date: December 29, 2025

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

From: Charlton H. Bonham
Director

Subject: Transmittal of an Experimental Fishing Permit Major Amendment Recommendation for Pop-Up Gear Testing in the Brown Box Crab and King Crab Fisheries (Kim Sawicki/Sustainable Seas Technology, FGC Tracking #2023-01)

On June 19, 2025, Kim Sawicki/Sustainable Seas Technology submitted a final version of a Major Amendment Request for Experimental Fishing Permit (EFP) #2023-01 (Attachment 1) that 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 July 31, 2025, and recommends the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) approve the majority of the requested changes with modifications as further detailed in the Recommended EFP Terms and Conditions (DFW1103, Attachment 2) and supplemental environmental documentation (Attachments 3 and 4).

Since receipt of the major amendment request on February 21, 2025, the Department has worked with Ms. Sawicki to refine and clarify several elements of her initial request, as well as discuss proposed solutions to resolve requests in the amendment. Clarifications received in writing from Ms. Sawicki on June 2, 2025, were incorporated into Attachment 1 as pages 10-11. The Department discussed the proposed restructuring of current per-vessel quotas to an annual Total Allowable Catch with Ms. Sawicki on October 10, 2025, and received preliminary support to include this in the recommendation.

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). Given the complexity of the amendment request and the associated recommendations, the Department has also prepared a Summary of Recommendations table (Attachment 6) summarizing each component of the request, which may be a useful addendum to Attachment 5 or when preparing materials for consideration by the Commission.

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.

Melissa Miller-Henson, Executive Director
California Fish and Game Commission
December 29, 2025
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Attachments:

1. Major Amendment Request for EFP #2023-01 (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
6. Table with the Department's Summary of Recommendations

cc: 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

Department's Summary of Recommendations for Major Amendment Request for Experimental Fishing Permit #2023-01

December 2025

To support California Fish and Game Commission decision-making at its February 11-12, 2026 meeting regarding a request for a major amendment to Experimental Fishing Permit (EFP) #2023-01, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) staff summarized each element in the EFP holder's request for a major amendment and the Department's recommendation (Table 1). The major amendment request included additional concurrent fisheries, changes to the allowable fishing area, increased quota and trap allocations, additional authorized agents and vessels, and a weather exemption to the service interval.

Table 1. Summary of current EFP conditions, permittee-requested amendments, and the Department's recommendation for amendments with rationale for including or not including the change. Each element is identified by a letter (a-q) as well as the numbered Item from the Notice of Receipt of Recommendation for this major amendment. ***Starred, bolded and italicized words** indicate where the Department's recommended special conditions are different from the permit holder's amendment requests. Rationale for differences are provided.

Element (Item #)	Current EFP Condition	Permit Holder's Amendment Request	Department's Recommendation and Rationale
a (Item 1)	Permitted concurrent fisheries: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- rock crab- spot prawn- lobster- groundfish- swordfish (<i>Xiphias gladius</i>) with harpoon and deep set buoy gear (DSBG)- tuna with hook and line- California halibut w/ hook and line- white seabass w/ hook and line	Allow concurrent fishing (i.e., mixed-trips) for sablefish and northern rock crab using commercially authorized gear.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Activities are already approved. Proposed revisions to the DFW1103 clarify:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Concurrent fishing for groundfish is for species specified in California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 91 (including sablefish) with hook and line gear.○ Concurrent fishing for rock crab includes activities conducted under either a Northern or Southern rock crab permit.

Element (Item #)	Current EFP Condition	Permit Holder's Amendment Request	Department's Recommendation and Rationale
b (Item 1)	See element a above.	Allow concurrent fishing for coonstripe shrimp using commercially authorized gear.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support request.
c (Item 1)	See element a above.	Allow concurrent fishing for Dungeness crab using commercially authorized gear.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Does not support request. <i>Rationale:</i> Recommended season north of Point Conception (element e) precludes the potential for concurrent fishing for Dungeness crab.
d (Item 1)	See element a above.	Allow concurrent fishing for species allowed under a general trap permit using commercially authorized gear.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Does not support request. <i>Rationale:</i> Ensure concurrent fishing activities are compatible with existing prohibitions on use or possession of pop-up gear when taking finfish
e (Item 2)	Fishing allowed between Point Conception and the California/Mexico border.	Expand the geographic scope statewide.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support request, *with a seasonal restriction north of Point Conception limiting EFP activities to the statutory closure for the commercial Dungeness crab season. *Prohibit EFP fishing gear from using line markings required in other West Coast fisheries. <i>Rationale:</i> Reduce gear conflicts with existing fisheries and other EFPs operating north of Point Conception and allow proper identification and attribution of marine life entanglements.
f (Item 2)	Fishing allowed between 60-200 fathoms.	Allow fishing between 50-200 fathoms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support request *for waters north of Point Conception only. <i>Rationale:</i> Reduce gear conflicts with existing fisheries operating south of Point Conception.
g (Item 4)	Quota assigned to authorized vessels.	Assign quotas to authorized agents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Replace per-vessel quotas with a permit-wide Total Allowable Catch (TAC), which would run from March 1 through February 28 of the following year. <i>Rationale:</i> Provide additional flexibility to authorized agents to fully use available quota and maximize overall data collection efforts; simplify tracking and oversight by both the Department and EFP holder.

Element (Item #)	Current EFP Condition	Permit Holder's Amendment Request	Department's Recommendation and Rationale
h (Item 3)	Annual per-vessel quotas of 36,000 lbs brown box crab.	Increase annual per-vessel quota of brown box crab to 50,000 lbs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support request to increase quota for brown box crab; *replace per-vessel quota with a TAC set to 10 times the per-vessel request (500,000 lbs). Rationale: Maintain requested per-vessel opportunity, given proposed restructuring of quota as a TAC (element g) and increases in participation (element m).
i (Item 3)	Annual per-vessel quotas of 36,000 lbs California king crab; no retention of spiny king crab in EFP gear	Allow retention of spiny king crab, and increase annual quota of California and spiny king crab, combined, to 50,000 lbs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support request to allow retention of spiny king crab; *replace per-vessel quota with a TAC for aggregate king crab and set to 5 times the current per-vessel quota (180,000 lbs), instead of the requested quota. Rationale: Increase flexibility to collect essential fisheries data on non-target, data poor species that co-occur with brown box crab within an aggregate quota for both California and spiny king crab. With limited information regarding stock status for these species, a precautionary approach to not exceed the amount of king crab currently allowed (36,000 lbs * 5 currently authorized vessels) is warranted. Prior harvest has been well under the existing quota, further supporting this approach.
j (Item 3)	No retention of scarlet king crab in EFP gear.	Add new, annual per-vessel quota for scarlet king crab (50,000 lbs).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support request to allow retention of scarlet king crab; *include in new TAC for aggregate king crab (element i). Rationale: Allow collection of essential fisheries data on a data poor species that co-occurs with brown box crab. The extremely limited information available for this species complicates identifying an appropriate species-specific quota; instead, allow retention with a 4-inch size limit within the proposed aggregate quota for king crab.
k (Item 3)	No retention of Dungeness crab in EFP gear.	Allow retention of Dungeness crab.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Does not support request. Rationale: Dungeness crab are rare south of Point Conception, and recommended season north of Point Conception (element e) limits EFP fishing to the statutory Dungeness crab closure, which is intended to protect the stock during vulnerable periods.

Element (Item #)	Current EFP Condition	Permit Holder's Amendment Request	Department's Recommendation and Rationale
l (Item 4)	Stacking not permitted.	Allow stacking up to two authorized agent quotas on a given authorized vessel.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Do not allow “stacking” of quotas. Instead: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Explicitly assign each participating fisher (including the EFP holder) to particular vessel(s).</i> <i>Fishers may be assigned to multiple vessels.</i> Rationale: With proposed restructuring of quota as a TAC (element g), “stacking” quotas is no longer relevant. Also, see element o.
m (Item 5)	Five authorized vessels.	Increase the number of authorized vessels from five to twenty.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support request to increase the number of authorized vessels, *however, increase to 10 rather than 20. Rationale: Expand incrementally, consistent with the approach for other EFPs. Facilitates additional participation and testing, while mitigating risk of gear conflict.
n (Item 6)	Ten authorized agents.	Increase the number of authorized agents from ten to forty.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Does not support request. Rationale: Applicant requested additional authorized agents to facilitate secondary operators for authorized vessels and increase participation. Since recommended trap allocations are fisher-based (element o), and the vessel-based quota is being replaced with a TAC (elements g-j), a second operator model is no longer relevant; the number of authorized agents should match the number of authorized vessels.
o (Item 7)	75 traps per authorized vessel.	Increase trap limit from 75 to 400 traps per vessel.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support request, *however, assign trap allocations to each fisher. Fishers may use up to 200 traps, and up to two fishers may be assigned to each vessel. Rationale: Assigning trap limits to fishers rather than vessels is consistent with current requirements to mark gear with commercial fishing license identification numbers (Conditions 18-20).
p (Item 7)	Per-string maximum of 7 traps.	Increase maximum traps per string from 7 to 20.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support request.
q (Item 7)	168-hour service interval with no weather exemption.	Maintain the current 168-hour service interval, with an added exception for weather.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support request.



Experimental Fishing Permit No. [REDACTED]
Revision Date: [REDACTED]

MARINE FISHERIES: EXPERIMENTAL FISHING PERMIT TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Pursuant to California Fish and Game Code 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: **Kim Sawicki** ([REDACTED] **EFP Holder**)

EFP Holder/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:

This permit authorizes testing and commercial use of pop-up gear fishing systems for take of brown box crab and California king crab pursuant to the standard terms and special conditions outlined below.

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 Fish and Game Code 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 10 authorized agents and 10 5 vessels for this EFP, as it deems necessary for research purposes. Authorized agents may only participate in EFP fishing activities on the vessels they are assigned as operators below. No more than two authorized agents may be assigned to each vessel.

a. Authorized Agent Name and Address

1. Kim Sawicki (EFP holder) (Be Determined) - Owner/Operator F/V To

2. Tylor Rechany ([REDACTED]) – Owner/Operator F/V Aida Philis

3. Marco Voyatzis ([REDACTED]) – Owner/Operator F/V Dimi

4. Michael Andrew Volaski II ([REDACTED]) – Owner/Operator F/V Coastal Reign

5. Austin Paul Ashe ([REDACTED]) – Operator F/V Pacific Knight

6. Bradford Sawicki ([REDACTED]) – Operator F/V To Be Determined

b. Authorized Project Vessel

1. F/V To Be Determined ([REDACTED])

2. F/V Aida Philis ([REDACTED])

3. F/V Dimi ([REDACTED])

4. F/V Coastal Reign ([REDACTED])

5. F/V Pacific Knight ([REDACTED])

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. Permittees (i.e. EFP holder and authorized agents) 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 Joe.Johnson@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, permittees shall send an amended list of names and associated commercial fishing license



numbers to the email addresses listed above.

3. Any persons who are deemed ineligible by the Department as a key participant may not be present onboard any authorized vessels identified in Condition 1(b) during any fishing operations authorized by this EFP.

General

4. 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. Permittees or any person assisting with activities occurring under the authority of the EFP may be liable for their violations of the FISH AND GAME CODE and regulations adopted thereto pertaining to experimental fishing, including violations of permit terms or conditions.
5. The permittee and any person who assists the permittee in the operation of the fishing vessel, handling and recovery of commercial fishing gear, and processing of catch and bycatch shall possess a valid commercial fishing license issued pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 7850, and a valid general trap permit issued pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 9001.

A valid commercial boat registration issued pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 7881 for EFP- authorized vessels must be onboard the vessel and the Department Boat Registration numbers must be displayed in plain sight on each side of the vessel.

6. The EFP Holder shall be responsible for coordination, oversight, and reporting of all authorized activities as described in the EFP application.
7. On fishing trips when EFP activities are taking place (i.e., deployment, retrieval, or servicing authorized gear), permittees may also participate in the following non-EFP commercial fisheries using the gears identified (if applicable) if appropriate permits for retained species are in place:
 - a. rock crab (as defined in Fish and Game Code Section 8275),
 - b. spot prawn (*Pandalus platyceros*),
 - c. coonstripe shrimp (*Pandalus danae*),
 - d. lobster (*Panulirus interruptus*),
 - e. groundfish (as defined in, Section 1.91 Title 14, CCR) with hook and line gear,
 - f. swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*) with harpoon and deep-set buoy gear (DSBG),
 - g. tuna with hook and line,
 - h. California halibut (*Paralichthys californicus*) and white seabass (*Atractoscion nobilis*) with hook and line.

~~However, lobster and rock crab may not be possessed on the same trip pursuant to FISH AND GAME CODE Section 9011. Adherence to all other regulations regarding the take of these species is required. Lobster and rock crab may not be possessed on the same trip pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 9011.~~

**Authorized Species, Take Allowances, and Landing Requirements**

8. **Catch Limit:** The total allowable catch (TAC) for this EFP shall be 500,000 lbs. of brown box crab (*Lopholithodes foraminatus*), and 180,000 lbs. aggregate king crab (California king crab, *Paralithodes californiensis*; spiny king crab, *Paralithodes rathbuni*; and scarlet king crab, *Lithodea couesi*; hereafter collectively referenced as "king crab"). The TAC allocation shall run from March 1 through the last day in February of the following year. Each authorized vessel may take up to 36,000 pounds (lbs.) of brown box crab (*Lopholithodes foraminatus*) and up to 36,000 lbs. of California king crab (*Paralithodes californiensis*) annually.
 - a. Incidental landings by permittees of up to 25 lbs. of brown box crab and California king crab are allowed in other fisheries pursuant to Section 126, Title 14, CCR, but will count towards the annual limit TAC until the Department is notified that the limit has been reached.
 - b. If an authorized vessel is replaced on this permit, all brown box crab or California king crab landed by any permittees who fished from the original vessel will count towards the annual limit.
9. If the annual limit TAC for brown box crab or California king crab is reached before the end of the TAC period permit expires for any authorized vessel, all authorized fishing gear deployed under this EFP from said vessel must be removed from the water immediately, the permittee EFP holder must notify the Department in writing via email (Lindsay.Orsini@wildlife.ca.gov), and all crab must be landed within 24 hours after returning to port. Once the TAC for king crab is reached, all king crab taken in authorized EFP fishing gear must be immediately released. For the remainder of the TAC period, up to 25 lbs. per day of each species may be landed pursuant to Section 126, Title 14, CCR.
10. All catch in authorized EFP gear other than brown box or California king crab shall be returned to the ocean immediately. Permittees shall make all reasonable efforts to return incidental catch to the ocean alive.
11. All dock tickets and electronic fish tickets reporting catch under the EFP 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. Any landings of brown box crab or California king crab taken either under the EFP or incidentally in other fisheries shall record "SpeciesID" as follows:
 - a. Brown bBox crab (*Lopholithodes foraminatus*): species code 809
 - b. California, spiny, and scarlet Kking crab (*Paralithodes spp.*): species code 804

Additionally, any king crab landings recorded in Etix shall reflect the landings for each species and shall have the common name of the species (i.e.: California king crab, spiny king crab, scarlet king crab) written in the Notepad section.
12. **Minimum size limits:** Brown box crab must have a minimum width of 5 3/4 inches, and all California and spiny king crab must have a minimum width of 5 inches, and scarlet king crab must have a minimum width of 4 inches, as measured across the widest part of the carapace including spines. No crab under the minimum size shall be retained, possessed, or landed, unless authorized in writing by the Department to retain smaller crab for research purposes.



13. No processing or packaging may take place until all crab is weighed, recorded on a landing receipt, and a landing receipt is provided to the permittee by the receiver.
14. Samples shall be provided to the California Department of Public Health when requested for public health testing.

Gear Allowances, Specifications and Marking Requirements

15. Traps fished under the authority of this EFP are exempted from the 96-hour trap service interval specified in Fish and Game Code Section 9004. Permittees 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, permittees must service their traps within two hours of the selected release interval, weather conditions at sea permitting. If a permittee is unable to comply with these requirements due to ~~hazardous conditions at sea~~, 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 (Lindsay.Orsini@wildlife.ca.gov). Any exemptions to the service interval requirements may be granted on a case-by-case basis and will be provided in writing by the Department.
16. All traps must comply with the requirements specified in Fish and Game Code Section 9011 for rock crab, except the Department may allow and/or request deployment of specific trap designs for research purposes. All traps used or deployed must have at least one destruct device pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 9003.
17. For the interval between gear deployment and activation of the pop-up mechanism, permittees shall be exempted from the requirement to mark each trap with a buoy as defined pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 9005. Following release of the pop-up mechanism, the location of 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 18-20.
18. Pop-up gear that includes one or more buoys (i.e., Sub Sea Sonics and Desert Star) shall comply with buoy marking requirements specified in Section 180.5, Title 14, CCR. Every buoy shall be marked exclusively with the Identification Letters "EB" with at least one buoy per string marked with the permittee's commercial fishing license identification number followed by the Identification Letters "EB".
 - 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 "EB" 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.



19. When using Ropeless Riser pop-up units, a placard shall be affixed to the sled and marked with the permittee's commercial fishing license identification number followed by the Identification Letters "EB".
 - 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 "EB" 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.
20. When using FioBuoy pop-up units, one end of the spool body shall be marked exclusively with the permittee's commercial fishing license identification number and the Identification Letters "EB". 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.
21. Each permittee may use up to 200 traps and must be onboard the assigned authorized vessel when their traps are being deployed or serviced. Per Condition 1, no more than two permittees may be assigned to each authorized vessel; therefore, a maximum of 75 400 traps may be deployed, serviced, or possessed on board a onboard each authorized vessel when both permittees are onboard. All gear must be fished in strings of no more than seven 20 traps.
22. All EFP fishing gear must utilize pop-up gear at one end of a string. A vertical line may be used for redundancy only while pop-up gear is being tested and actively tended.
23. 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.
24. Permittees will test and report on the efficacy and durability of line-marking and surface gear-marking methods when requested by the Department.
25. Permittees must suspend fishing operations or move fishing gear per Department direction in response to circumstances including gear conflicts, public health, and elevated entanglement risk or an entanglement report in the fishing or testing location. The Department will provide notice by contacting each permittee via the phone and/or email address provided by the EFP holder.

Pop-up Gear Testing Requirements

26. The EFP Holder shall conduct workshop(s) to train the authorized agents (if applicable) in data collection and pop-up gear operation protocols prior to at-sea trials of the pop-up gear.
27. All traps using pop-up gear must be recorded in a gear-marking web-based application upon deployment and retrieval, and all associated data fields must be populated with accurate information.
28. Permittees shall provide the Department access to the gear-marking web-based platforms identified in the EFP application and amendment(s) for data sharing and



enforcement purposes.

29. The EFP Holder must notify the Department when exploratory fishing begins for each permittee and provide descriptions and/or illustrations of the pop-up gear configurations and the gear-marking applications being used via email to the Department's Marine Enforcement District (LEDMarineNotifications@wildlife.ca.gov) and the Marine Region (Lindsay.Orsini@wildlife.ca.gov).

Allowable Fishing Area and Time of Year

30. Fishing activities under this EFP may occur between the California/Oregon Border Point Conception (34° 42' 27" N. latitude) and the California/Mexico border (32° 32' N. latitude). EFP fishing shall be permitted year-round south of Point Conception (34° 27' N. latitude). EFP fishing north of Point Conception is allowed as follows:
 - a. Between the Sonoma/Mendocino County line (38° 46,125' N) and Point Conception, July 1 through November 12
 - b. Between the California/Oregon Border and the Sonoma/Mendocino County line, July 16 through November 12
31. All EFP fishing gear set south of Point Conception (34° 27' N. latitude) must be set at depths between 60-200 fathoms. All EFP fishing gear set north of Point Conception (34° 27' N. latitude) must be set at depths between 50-200 fathoms.
32. Except for purposes of continuous transit, it is prohibited for authorized vessels to enter any State Marine Protected Area designated pursuant to Section 632, Title 14, CCR. Continuous transit is defined as on a heading as nearly as practicable to a direct route through a State Marine Protected Area; while maintaining expeditious headway at speeds greater than three knots at all times throughout transit without delay and with fishing gear stowed and secured in such a manner that it is rendered unusable for immediate deployment.
33. Fishing operations shall abide by all applicable Essential Fish Habitat closures for bottom contact gear as described in Federal Regulations (Title 50, Part 660, Subpart F).
34. Fishing shall be subject to delays or area closures due to marine life entanglement risk pursuant to Section 132.8, Title 14, CCR, or public health concerns pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 5523.

Other Requirements

35. No fishing for brown box crab or California king crab may take place unless one or more functioning electronic monitoring systems are installed and used as specified by the Department. Required systems may include but are not limited to location positioning loggers with a ping rate of at least 1 per minute and electronic trap tags. The permittee shall grant the Department access to all data.
36. At least 24 hours prior to commencing a fishing trip during which EFP activity is expected to be conducted, notice of vessel name, targeted fishery, anticipated fishing date(s), port of departure, expected landing port, and the type of EFP activity to be conducted (e.g., gear testing with un-baited traps or exploratory fishing with deployment or recovery of baited traps) 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, permittees 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.

37. Permittees shall follow the best practices for avoiding whale entanglement described in the attached guide. This includes fishing gear and incident reporting requirements.
38. In instances where gear cannot be retrieved via the primary release mechanism, permittees may use grappling or back-up release mechanisms to recover the gear. Permittees shall document all unrecovered gear, including traps, buoys and other equipment per the data reporting requirements (see Attachment A). Failure to keep or submit required information may result in revocation or suspension (including non-renewal) of the permit.
39. Authorized vessels may be required to carry a fisheries observer at the discretion of 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 permittee may be required to contract with a qualified fisheries observer company.
40. Any electronic monitoring and sampling equipment issued to key participants by the Department for the purposes of data collection on an authorized vessel shall be returned to the Department within 30 days of either (a) this permit expiring, or (b) the key participant being removed from the permit, whichever comes first. Department-issued electronic monitoring and sampling equipment shall not be transferred to other key participants or used on other vessels without prior written approval from the Department.
41. Unless otherwise specified by the Department, the EFP Holder shall submit the annual and final reports required by subsection 91(l), Title 14, CCR to the EFP Coordinator (EFP@wildlife.ca.gov) no later than 60 days after the permit expiration date (see Attachment A).
42. Prior to commencing at-sea testing, the EFP Holder and all authorized agents shall 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/#/>. Permittees 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 (Lindsay.Orsini@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 (Lindsay.Orsini@wildlife.ca.gov).

**Attachment A: Data Collection and Reporting Requirements**

1. **Gear Location Marking.** Permittees shall make fishing locations publicly available to other fishers and the public, subject to direction of the Department. Communication of fishing locations may include notification to local harbor districts and to the Department's web pages, and/or other publicly accessible web pages via one of the approved gear-marking applications (Subsea Sonics TrapTimer, rmwHUB). Other applications may be approved by a minor amendment. The permittees shall make the following information available for the purpose of avoiding gear conflict.
 - a. The location of the first and last traps in a string, as well as an indication that they are part of a string.
2. **Data Collection.** Permittees shall participate in all fishery and biological research data collection activities required by the Department, including but not limited to:
 - a. Documenting all fishing activities as directed by the Department, including using specified forms or logbooks.
 - b. Documenting trap contents as directed by the Department, including using specified forms or logbooks.
 - c. Recording information on recaptured tagged crab as directed by the Department, including using specified forms or logbooks.
 - d. Collecting biological samples.
3. **Unrecovered Gear Information.** Unrecovered gear shall be reported to the Department via email as soon as possible, but not more than 12 hours after the initial attempted recovery. The report shall contain:
 - a. Summary of attempted recovery efforts.
 - b. Reason for loss (if known).
4. **Data Submission.** Permittees shall submit the records required by Attachment A Items 2 and 3 to the Department's Law Enforcement Division (LEDMarineNotifications@wildlife.ca.gov) and Marine Region (Lindsay.Orsini@wildlife.ca.gov) within 72 hours after each fishing trip. Failure to keep or submit required records of fishing activity and catch within 72 hours after each fishing trip may result in removal from the permit, and/or revocation or suspension (including non-renewal) of the permit.
5. **Reports.** In addition to the requirements of subsection 91(l), Title 14, CCR, annual and final reports to be submitted by the EFP Holder shall include:
 - a. A short summary of fishing activity and findings.
 - b. A record of all unrecovered gear, including traps, buoys, and other equipment.
 - c. A summary of the efforts taken to recover lost gear, and the outcome of those efforts.
 - d. Summaries of any trainings or workshops conducted for fishers or Law Enforcement personnel, including outcomes and accomplishments.
 - e. A table or other database containing pop-up gear deployment and recovery data described below for all strings of traps deployed during exploratory fishing conducted under the authority of this permit, including:
 - i. Deployment Data:
 1. The pop-up gear system(s) used.
 2. The number of traps in the string, and the latitude and longitude of the



first and last traps in each string, given to the highest precision allowed by onboard instrumentation (“location”).

3. The name and vessel ID of the vessel the string was deployed from.
4. The experimental fishing permit number the string is deployed under.
5. The time and date of deployment.
6. The time and date the release mechanism is programmed to allow the marker buoy to surface, if applicable.

ii. Recovery Data:

1. The time and date of recovery or attempted recovery.
2. The location where the gear was recovered or attempted to be recovered.
3. The distance between the location where the gear was deployed and recovered.
4. The time elapsed between the programmed release time and recovery or attempted recovery, if applicable.
5. Documentation of any pop-up system malfunctions (e.g., early release or unresponsive to release signal).

- f. The number of trips testing pop-up gear, the total number of deployments, and the number of unsuccessful recoveries.
- g. Descriptions of the pop-up gear systems and configuration(s) used and assessment of their performance, including any issues identified regarding their utility in deep-water fixed gear fisheries.
- h. Descriptions of virtual gear-marking applications used and assessment of their performance.



Sustainable Seas Technology Experimental Fishing Permit Major Amendment

February 11, 2026

Presented to:

California Fish and Game Commission

Presented by:

Lindsay Orsini, Ph.D.
Environmental Scientist
Marine Region



Overview

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

Overview of SST EFP

- Exploratory fishing for Brown box crab and California king crab using strings of traps and on-demand pop-up fishing systems

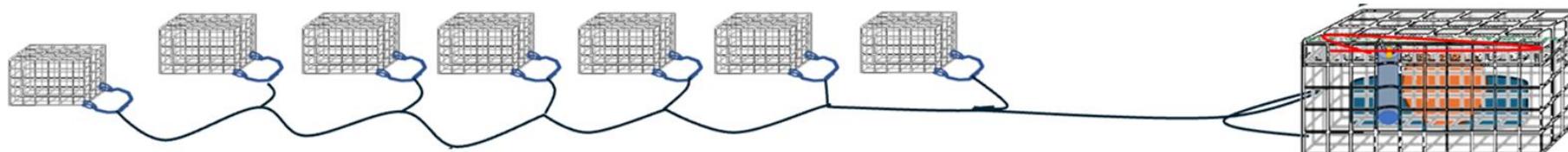
*Brown
box crab*



*California
king crab*



Example gear configuration





Overview of SST EFP (cont. 1)

Ropeless Systems RISER



Photo credits: Ropeless Systems

Subsea Sonics AR4RT/DAR4RT



Photo credits: Sub Sea Sonics

Fiomarine Fiobuoy AC200



Photo credit: Fiomarine

Desert Star ARC1-XD



Photo credit: Desert Star Systems



Overview of SST EFP (cont. 2)

Permit year	# active participants	# fishing days	#(%) strings recovered using pop-ups	Total pounds landed
2024	3	71	347 (96%)	11,271 box; 2,854 king
2025	5	120	tbd	17,221 box; 2,627 king



Photo credit: Greg Olsen



Photo credit: Tylor Rechany



Photo credit: Austin Ashe



Photo credit: Greg Olsen



Overview of SST EFP (cont. 3)

- Fishing area: South of Pt. Conception, 60-200 fm
- Target species/quotas: 36,000 lbs box and king crab per vessel
- Participation: 10 authorized agents (AA) and 5 authorized vessels
- Gear limits/configurations: 75 traps per vessel, 7 traps per string
- Concurrent fisheries: spot prawn, rock crab, lobster, groundfish, tuna, halibut, white seabass
- Trap service interval: 168 hours with no explicit exemption for bad weather



EFP Amendment Requests

- Fishing area: South of Pt. Conception, 60-200 fm
Statewide 50 – 200 fm
- Target species/quotas: 36,000 lbs box and king crab per vessel
50,000 lbs box, 50,000 lbs spiny/CA king, and 50,000 lbs scarlet king crab per AA
- Participation: 10 authorized agents (AA) and 5 authorized vessels
40 AAs and 20 vessels
- Gear limits/configurations: 75 traps per vessel, 7 traps per string
400 traps per vessel, 20 traps per string
- Concurrent fisheries: spot prawn, rock crab, lobster, groundfish, tuna, halibut, white seabass + coonstripe shrimp, ***Dungeness crab, sablefish, northern rock crab***
- Trap service interval: 168 hours with no explicit exemption for bad weather
Add weather exemption



Proposed Terms and Conditions

Updated or new terms from the previous term and conditions are marked in ***bold italics***

Requested Conditions	Department Proposed Conditions
Expand geographic scope to statewide 50 – 200 fm	<p>Allow fishing statewide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• North of Pt. Conception <i>allow fishing July 1-Nov 15</i>, 50-200 fm• South of Pt. Conception <i>maintain 60-200 fm</i>
36,000 lb vessel quotas to 50,000 lb AA quotas; allow retention of spiny king and scarlet king crab	<p>Allow retention of spiny and scarlet king crab; eliminate vessel-based quotas; <i>replace with annual permit-wide Total Allowable Catch (TAC) of 500,000 lbs for box crab and 180,000 lbs for king crab spp; starts March 1.</i></p>
Increase to 40 AAs and 20 vessels	<i>Up to 10 AAs and 10 vessels</i>



Proposed Terms and Conditions (cont. 1)

Updated or new terms from the previous term and conditions are marked in ***bold italics***

Requested Conditions	Department Proposed Conditions
Increase trap limit to 400 per vessel, 20 traps/string	<i>200 traps per AA, up to 400 traps per vessel if 2 AAs fish from the same vessel.</i> 20 traps/string.
Allow stacking of two quotas per vessel	Stacking quotas irrelevant under TAC, but up to two AAs may fish from the same vessel
Add concurrent fisheries	N. rock crab and sablefish (H&L) already approved, add coonstripe shrimp; <i>no concurrent Dungeness crab fishing; no retention of non-target species in EFP traps</i>
Add weather exemption to maximum trap service interval	Add weather exemption



Proposed Terms and Conditions (cont. 2)

Updated or new terms from the previous term and conditions are marked in ***bold italics***

- ***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

