CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE **Signed memo on file.**

MEMORANDUM

Date: November 12, 2026

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

From: Meghan Hertel, Director

Subject: **Transmittal of an Experimental Fishing Permit Application Recommendation for East Pacific Red Octopus Bycatch Retention in the Commercial Coonstripe Shrimp Fishery (Commission Tracking ID #2026-01)**

On August 28, 2026, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) accepted an application for an Experimental Fishing Permit (EFP) from Brand Little, #2026-01 (Attachment 1).

The application requests a Tier 1 EFP with a permit fee reduction.

The proposed project would allow one authorized agent to participate in an experimental fishery retaining East Pacific red octopus (*Octopus rubescens*) bycatch caught while targeting coonstripe shrimp (*Pandalus danae*) using existing on-demand pop-up commercial coonstripe shrimp gear on one authorized vessel (Project). The stated purpose of the Project is to collect information on East Pacific red octopus abundance and quantify bycatch in coonstripe shrimp gear in the Southern Management Area (Sonoma/Mendocino County border to the U.S/Mexico border). The applicant seeks an exemption from the prohibition on retention of bycatch in shrimp or prawn traps in Fish and Game Code, section 8595, subdivision (b).

The Department reviewed and considered the information provided in the EFP application. The Department recommends the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) deny the application as further detailed below.

The primary goal of the proposed EFP (recording information on East Pacific red octopus bycatch) can be accomplished within existing

regulations as long as octopus are released rather than retained. The Department also has concerns with the ability for the proposed EFP to accomplish the proposed project goals as the EFP lacks a clear experimental design, and data collection would be limited with only a single vessel participating. The applicant has indicated that they are willing to collect additional data at the Department's request, but there are currently no priority data needs identified by the Department relevant to this project.

Very little is known about the status of the East Pacific red octopus population off California and biological baselines should be established before retention can occur to minimize the risk of adverse impacts to the resource. Information collected under the current regulations and reported to the Department could inform biological baselines and possible future actions to allow for retention.

Next Steps

The Department requests the Commission schedule the requested application for consideration at least 30 days after public notice is given, per 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 Region Manager, at (805) 568-1246 or by email at R7RegionalMgr@wildlife.ca.gov.

Attachments:

1. EFP Application #2026-01(confidential information omitted)

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