



CALIFORNIA WETFISH PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION

PO Box 1951 • Buellton, CA 93427 • Office: (805) 693-5430 • Mobile: (805) 350-3231 • Fax: (805) 686-9312 • www.californiawetfish.org

September 24, 2014

Mr. Michael Sutton, President
Members of the Fish and Game Commission
1416 Ninth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Agenda Item 13 ~ Request for Experimental Market Squid Permits

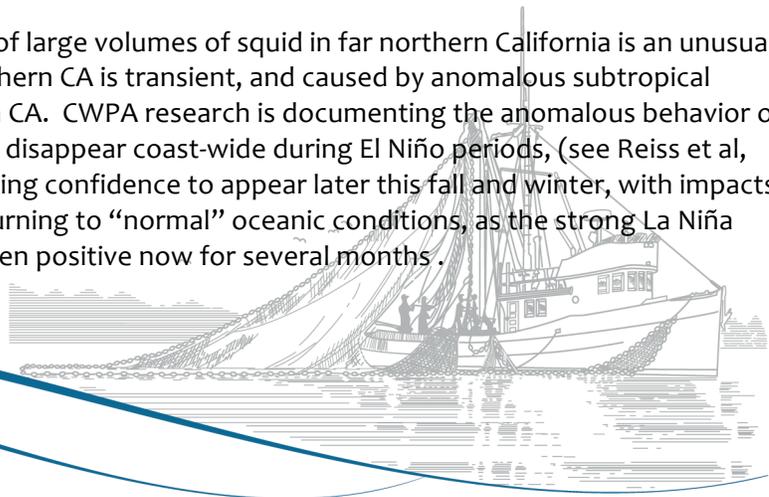
Dear Mr. Sutton and Commissioners,

As you're aware, CWPA represents a majority of fishermen and processors who land and pack coastal pelagic species including market squid in California. CWPA also is pleased to serve as a research partner of the Department of Fish and Wildlife. On behalf of our membership, I would appreciate your consideration of the following points with regard to Agenda Item 13, the request for experimental market squid permits.

After informally consulting with Department and Commission staff, where we discussed the status of the squid fleet and current conditions in the fishery, we would like to point out that the squid resource and fishery are fully utilized now, and our recommendation is that no more permits are needed. Limited entry permits are currently available for purchase.

As I recall, the Commission's initial intent when approving the "experimental" permit class in 2004 was to "develop a fishery in an area previously unfished", but the duration was not specified. Since that time, the fishery has become fully developed: the existing limited entry fleet is mobile and capable of harvesting squid wherever they appear, in northern as well as southern California, as was demonstrated this year. Both processors and fishermen have invested millions of dollars in vessels and infrastructure, including mobile pumps, to maximize the harvest and value of this resource during this decadal squid "boom". This value was lauded in ports that benefited from the upsurge in activity. (See attached article from the Eureka Times Standard.)

Another point to consider: the appearance of large volumes of squid in far northern California is an unusual occurrence. The abundance of squid in northern CA is transient, and caused by anomalous subtropical conditions experienced this year in southern CA. CWPA research is documenting the anomalous behavior of squid in these pre- El Niño conditions. Squid disappear coast-wide during El Niño periods, (see Reiss et al, 2004). El Niño is now predicted with increasing confidence to appear later this fall and winter, with impacts continuing next year. We appear to be returning to "normal" oceanic conditions, as the strong La Niña influence has dissipated and the PDO has been positive now for several months.



We're pleased to report that we expanded our market squid research program into northern California this year. With the support of the Southwest Fisheries Science Center, we accomplished two bongo net surveys, each survey targeting 13 known squid spawning sites, extending from Half Moon Bay to Carmel Bay, where we collected squid paralarvae and water chemistry samples. We will be able to return for one more cruise in October, in addition to our customary fall / winter pattern in southern CA. We accomplished the Monterey surveys in collaboration with a broad group of scientists, including CDFW biologists. We were also able to borrow an underwater video system developed by MBARI. We intend to replicate their "Sea Star" system so we will be able to add video observations of squid egg beds to our research protocol in the future. We're now drafting a research update and will be happy to share it with you all soon.

In the meantime, we appreciate your consideration of our comments, in support of our recommendation that additional "experimental" squid permits are not needed in the squid fishery at this time.

Best regards,



Diane Pleschner-Steele
Executive Director

Enclosures: Eureka Times Standard article
Fig. 4 from Reiss et al 2004

Reprint from Eureka Times Standard:



Squid fishing debuts on North Coast

Posted: 09/11/2014 11:21 PM

Squid fishing boats docked in Eureka for the first time Thursday, unloading 124,000 pounds of squid at the Fisherman's Terminal.

Commercial squid fishermen from Southern California were drawn to the North Coast by following squid that were driven out of their typical habitat by a rise in ocean water temperatures, said Jeff Huffman, Eureka dock manager with Wild Planet, who helped to facilitate the docking and unloading of the squid boats.

With few squid left in their typical fishing zones this year, Southern California Sea Food, Inc., has been moving up the coast. On Wednesday, two boats fished in the area between the mouth of the Mad River and the False Cape, south of the Eel River, bringing the first boat into the dock at 2 a.m. Thursday and the second at 7:30 a.m., Huffman said.

"The squid fishery has always been a Southern California fishery, but because of the warm water down south the squid are all up here," he said. "There have always been some squid here, but not in these numbers."

Unusual patterns in the Pacific Ocean have shifted water temperatures, creating unusually warm water both to the north and south of California's North Coast, said Eric Bjorkstedt, research fishery biologist with NOAA's Southwest Fisheries Science Center and an adjunct professor in Humboldt State University's fisheries biology department.

The temperatures have not grown warmer off the Northern California coast, which appears on National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration maps that track water temperatures as one of the only places along the West Coast that does not appear dark red — the color that indicates warming waters.

While this is not a typical El Nino year, Bjorkstedt said some patterns are consistent with the weather phenomena's conditions.

"Normally in an El Nino, market squid do very badly — usually the catches go nearly to zero," he said. "The reproductive success is not high, and the squid industry basically crashes for that year."

Squid populations could be shifting north because of a change in water temperatures or shifting closer to shore because they are following a shift in nutrients and food supply, said Jeffrey Abell, chairman of HSU's oceanography department.

Shifts in weather patterns and climate causes water temperatures and ocean nutrients patterns to change, he said.

"It manifests the shifts in ocean circulation, which alters the input of nutrients into the ecosystem, and then the organism responds to that and moves into a range where it is not usually found," Abell said.

Either way, there is an unprecedented number of squid off the North Coast, Huffman said.

Southern California Sea Food, Inc., hopes to bring in 300 tons of squid every 24 hours, and the squid is then transported in trucks to Monterey, where it is processed at a company plant, he said.

Huffman added the company is limited by the number of squid that they can process, unload and truck, but not by the amount of squid in the bay.

"I think they can definitely catch more than we can actually get through the place and shipped out," he said.

By Sunday the company will have five boats in the area, and they are hoping to continuing fishing here for two to three weeks, Huffman said.

Having the fishermen in town will be a boost for the local economy, he said, as the crew of more than a dozen people stays in local hotels, eats, shops, buys fuel and pays for moorings at the marina.

"This is a great plus to the whole waterfront and the town," Huffman said.

The goal of the Fisherman's Terminal was to bring in this type of business, he said. The dock is typically used for processing crab, salmon and some other fish, but being able to unload squid there adds another avenue for profit.

"It is a unique opportunity for the city to use its loading dock. Normally this isn't something that we get to do," said Eureka Councilwoman Marian Brady.

"It is all money that is coming back into our economy," she said. "We definitely need industry, and this is a form of commerce that uses our bay for its purpose. We built all this infrastructure, and it hasn't been used optimally."

The city is working on plans to get a cold storage facility in town to keep even more of the business local, she said. All the squid is currently being taken out of town to be processed.

"But these three to five ships that are in here, that is adding a spurt to our economy," she said.

This is a positive development for the economy and the city, said Ken Bates of the Humboldt Fishermen's Marketing Association.

"This activity at Fisherman's Terminal is exactly the kind of thing we were hoping to see in Eureka when this facility was built," he said. "It's exciting."

Figure 4, Reiss et al, 2004 – illustrating the coast-wide decline in squid abundance during the 1997-98 El Niño.

