

Notice of Exemption

Appendix E

To: Office of Planning and Research
P.O. Box 3044, Room 113
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From: California Fish and Game Commission
P.O. Box 944209
Sacramento, CA 94244-2090

County Clerk
County of: NA

Project Title: Increase Testing of Longlining Traditional Gear for Dungeness crab (Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations and California Coast Crab Association; Commission Tracking #2023-04)

Project Location: Waters off the coast of California between the California/Oregon border (42° N. latitude) and Point Conception (34° 27' N. latitude).

Project Location - City: N/A

Project Location - County: Multiple

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

An approved experimental fishing permit (commission tracking #2023-01) tests traditional longline fishing systems in the California commercial Dungeness crab fishery. The EFP tests the use and efficacy of using longline gear to help fill critical information gaps for alternative gear usage in the Dungeness crab fishery. Any changes to the approved EFP are subject to review by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and approval by the California Fish and Game Commission.

At the request of the permit holder, the project revises the permit terms and conditions to increase the number of allowable participants and total traps deployed, increase the number of traps used per fishing line, and enable transit through and anchorage in marine protected areas.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: California Fish and Game Commission

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Exempt Status (check one):

- Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268)
- Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a))
- Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c))
- Categorical Exemption: Class 6, California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 15306
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number:

Reasons why Project is exempt: See attachment

Lead Agency: California Fish and Game Commission

Contact Person: Melissa Miller-Henson Telephone: (916) 653-4899

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a notice of exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? Yes No

Signature:  Date: February 19, 2026 Title: Executive Director

Signed by Lead Agency Signed by Applicant. Date Received for filing at OPR:

**Attachment to Notice of Exemption
Regarding Increase Testing of Longlining Traditional Gear for Dungeness crab
(Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen’s Associations and California Coast Crab
Association; Commission Tracking #2023-04)**

The California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) has taken final action under the California Fish and Game Code and the Administrative Procedure Act with respect to the experimental fishing permit (EFP) major amendment for the above-referenced project on February 11, 2026. In taking its final action for the purposes of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA; Public Resources Code, Section 21000 et seq.), the Commission authorized the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) to amend a Tier 2 EFP for the project in accordance with Section 91, Title 14, California Code of Regulations (CCR), relying on the Class 6 categorical exemption for “Information Collection” contained in the CEQA Guidelines (Section 15306, Title 14, CCR).

Categorical Exemption for Information Collection

Section 15306, Title 14, CCR provides a categorical exemption for information collection projects that consist of basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource (Class 6 exemption). The section goes on to note that these information collection projects may be strictly for information gathering purposes, or as part of a study leading to an action which a public agency has not yet approved, adopted, or funded.

The purpose of the project is to allow fishers and scientific partners to obtain limited, short-term exemptions from state fishing laws and regulations to engage in experimental commercial or recreational marine fishing activities that are otherwise prohibited to inform fisheries management. Specifically, this EFP tests the effects and efficacy of using longline fishing gear in an experimental fishery targeting Dungeness crab. Activities authorized under the EFP will further the Department’s collection of biological and fishery data and will help inform the Department about the effectiveness of new gear technologies including its ability to reduce entanglement risk with marine mammals. The amendments to the EFP will increase the number of allowable participants and total traps deployed, and the number of traps used per string (i.e., connected by a common groundline). The amendments will also allow for safe transiting through and anchorage within state marine protected areas, and require buoy tags to be affixed to the inside of each trap to support enforcement of the permit requirements.

EFPs may be approved for one or a combination of the following purposes: research, education, limited testing, data collection, compensation fishing, conservation engineering, and exploratory fishing. All activities conducted under the authorized EFP must comply with the terms and conditions placed on the permit for research purposes and the conservation and management of marine resources and the environment. As such, the project is the proper subject of CEQA’s Class 6 categorical exemption.

All activities authorized under the EFP Program are specifically prohibited from adversely impacting any established fisheries, marine living resources, or other natural resources under the provisions of Fish and Game Code, Section 1022. An EFP shall be revoked if the continued use would have an adverse impact on any resource or allocation of a resource, or other adverse impact to established fisheries or other marine living resources (Fish and Game Code, Section 1022, subdivision (a)(2)). Therefore, the exceptions set forth in Section 15300.2, Title 14, CCR that would preclude the use of the categorical exemption do not apply and no further review is required.