

CORBIN HANSON
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Mr. Phil Anderson, Chair
And Members of the Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place #200
Portland OR 97220-1384

RE: Agenda Item B.1 ~ Request for relief

Dear Mr. Anderson and Council Members,

My name is Corbin Hanson and I am a commercial fisherman struggling to survive and make a living fishing in southern California's waters. I have been fishing in California for nearly 20 years. During that time, I have seen fish stocks rise and fall due to ocean cycles, and I have experienced booms and busts within California's fisheries. I would like to make a very clear statement. The sardine stock in southern California is rebounded and plentiful. I understand that the current stock assessment does not support the statement. However, this is absolutely true and I know this because I operate in these waters for a living and see it with my own eyes first hand!

We, as commercial fisherman in Southern California, rely on targeting multiple species of fish to sustain our existence. Sardines are a huge component of our income that we are no longer allowed to benefit from. I would like to deconstruct the overwhelming list of the discrepancies with the science/methodology that dictates the sardine stock assessment. However, I understand that cannot be changed at this time, and I only hope this message resonates loudly in the broader conversation of sardine management. Sardine fishing is closed and has been closed for four years now. It has affected myself and my colleagues with overwhelming stress. I have seen friends sell their boats and get out of the business. I have seen markets close their doors and cease from doing business. The socio-economic impact of the sardine closure is overwhelming, and frankly, crippling this industry!

We are all struggling to survive and I don't know how long we can sustain without access to this resource! That is not the end of our problems. Let me try to explain.

If there are no sardines in the water then we can conduct all of our other fisheries without concern of by-catch. On the contrary, if there is an abundance of sardines in our waters, you will see substantial by-catch in all of our fisheries, and this gives us grave concern. A reduction of the by-catch rate from 40% to 20% will effectively close down mackerel fishing to us!!!! **Almost half of the mackerel landed has high numbers of sardines mixed in because they swim and school together. Sardines also mix with anchovy and squid.** This is not a theory, it is a fact. A reduction of the allowable sardine by-catch from 40% to 20% will effectively be the proverbial "nail in the coffin" for those of us trying to hang on and survive in this historic California wetfish industry. Please allow me to present a pragmatic path of common sense to resolve this problem.

There is a large volume of sardines in our water, and we will certainly catch them while conducting our other fisheries. If we can leave the by-catch rate at 40% for the first 1,000 mt, this allows us mobility in our other fisheries and is still within the 4,000 mt Annual Catch Target approved by the Council in April. This is still a responsible management approach and does not change the amount of sardine allowed for harvest.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife submitted an analysis of sardine caught with other fisheries for the Council's April meeting. It showed that the incidental catch of sardines in other CPS fisheries was relatively low (well below 1,000 tons), but the sardine bycatch was above the 20 percent rate in close to

half of the landings of other CPS. That means nearly 50% of our other CPS landings that contain sardine will be eliminated if the bycatch rate is cut to 20%. In reality, this reduction will mean that fishermen will need to avoid targeting any CPS schools if they are mixed with sardines to avoid being in violation. Right now, when I try to go fishing for pure schools of mackerel, the only schools I see are full of sardines. If we catch sardines at a rate of 40% instead of 20%, what is the difference to anyone but us? There is still oversight with precautionary measures written in to refrain from overachieving the TAC.

Please provide relief from the restrictive 20% until the full stock assessment scheduled for 2020 can resolve discrepancies with the science/methodology that dictates the sardine stock assessment.

We are the only players that are affected by this reduction, and that burden is just unnecessary. Please, I implore anyone, to stop the madness and misrepresentation of our sardine abundance and look at this issue from our, "The Fisherman's," perspective. We can achieve the same goal without saddling the burden of a poorly assessed stock to our backs.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Corbin Hanson', written in a cursive style.

Corbin Hanson