

MAY 15, 2024



To: San Mateo County Harbor District Commissioners

RE: May 15, 2024 Meeting Agenda Item G1 Rates and Fees

The Half Moon Bay Seafood Marketing Association represents the active, productive, collaborative commercial fishermen working out of Pillar Point Harbor. We are writing to express opposition to the proposed fee increase of 3.7% for the commercial fleet and related businesses within the San Mateo County Harbor District. We are troubled by the implications of such an increase, particularly as it appears out of touch with the significant challenges our industry has been facing.

The complete closure of the Salmon season in California in 2023 was a profound blow to our industry, and we are facing the same for 2024. While the fleet is grateful that a Federal Disaster has been declared for 2023, this will not make up for the losses. According to the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFW) losses were estimated at 45 million dollars, and just \$20.6 million of the \$35.2 million dollars requested was allocated for all sectors. This would cover 67% of the average estimated loss, according to CDFW, leaving many fishermen without adequate support. Most commercial salmon fishermen (58% statewide) will receive only \$739.50 as their total disaster "relief" as a reimbursement for the permit fees they paid in 2023. So far, no funds have been distributed, and there is uncertainty surrounding relief for 2024. With the crab season closed 3 months early, and no salmon season, there are very limited revenue generating fishing opportunities for the remainder of 2024.

Dungeness Crab fishing has also been challenging. The statutory season for California Commercial Dungeness Crab is 7.5 months long. However, in 2024, the season was open for just 80 days, and vessels were able to use only half of their allocated (and paid for) gear. This equates to an 80% decrease in harvest opportunities compared to a typical full season with full gear. Furthermore, in 2024, crab prices to vessels hit their lowest point in 20 years, while fuel, bait and other operating expenses were at an all-time high. So, while there was Dungeness Crab harvested earlier this year, this provided minimal economic relief to fishermen and related businesses. Overall, things are very precarious for those reliant on fishing for their livelihoods.

It's disheartening that while other harbors are implementing measures to support their commercial fishermen during these challenging times, the San Mateo County Harbor District is considering increasing costs. This decision seems out of touch with the realities faced by our community and may further strain the already struggling fishing industry.

Given these circumstances, we urge the San Mateo County Harbor District to reconsider the proposed fee increase.

Thank you,  
Frank Sousa Jr  
President- Half Moon Bay Seafood Marketing Association

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