

Proposal #: 20WCR006-004

Project Title: Combining underwater video and hook and line surveys of untrawlable areas in the Cowcod and Rockfish Conservation Areas to inform harvest opportunities and management measures

Applicant: San Jose State University Research Foundation

Priority Addressed Priority #2 – Science or Technology that Promotes Sustainable U.S. Seafood Production and Harvesting

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Abstract: This project will address the S-K Priority #2- Science or Technology that Promotes Sustainable U.S. Seafood Production and Harvesting. This project brings together the fishing industry, NGOs, state and federal agencies, and academia to demonstrate how new technology (stereo video lander) and standardized fishing surveys can be combined to provide information about the distribution, density, and size structure of demersal groundfish in untrawlable habitats to inform stock assessments, spatial management measures, and fishing opportunities. By conducting visual surveys in the untrawlable parts of the Cowcod and Rockfish Conservation Areas (CCAs, RCAs, established in 2001) and comparing results with the density of demersal species as determined by NMFS hook and line surveys, we will provide data to support stock assessments on important groundfish species and inform management decisions that promote increased fishing opportunities in the CCAs. Also, we will gather information about habitats for the future potential of using habitat maps in the stock assessment process. The proposed research is in response to data gaps currently identified in groundfish stock assessments species associated with untrawlable habitats as well as in the PFMC's Research and Data Needs document.

Summary of potential commercial benefits to the fishing community of the research results: Currently, many groundfish stocks on the US West Coast have been rebuilt. This creates a paradox in which catch allocations of some rebuilding species are still quite low, although their populations have been rebuilt, thus greatly constraining fishing opportunities. Our work will inform NMFS Stock Assessment scientists as they strive to estimate allowable catches for areas that may soon be reopened to fishing. More information about the structure of fished stocks will reduce the uncertainty in stock assessments, thus leading to more reliable (and thus higher) estimates of allowable catch. Also, we will charter fishing boats.
