

## JOINT PRESS RELEASE

The representatives of a class of West Coast trawl fishermen have reached resolution with Pacific Seafood Group and Ocean Gold Seafoods of an antitrust case involving the shrimp, groundfish and whiting fisheries. Significantly, the fishermen agreed to drop their damages claims in exchange for a package of measures designed to insure that the West Coast fishing industry is transparent and competitive. The case was scheduled for a trial in early July.

In the resolution agreement, Plaintiffs acknowledged that the extensive discovery revealed that some of what fueled the antitrust concerns in this case has arisen out of mistrust and a lack of understanding between fishermen and seafood processors. Plaintiffs also acknowledge that Pacific Seafood Group and Ocean Gold Seafoods have made substantial investments that contributed to the development of international markets for West Coast seafood products that benefit the industry. Defendants acknowledge there are a number of pro-competitive measures that will reduce fleet/processor conflict over ex vessel prices, increase transparency, and improve the competitiveness of the West Coast fishing industry.

"This case could have gone on for years, including appeals," said U.S. District Judge Michael R. Hogan, who mediated the proposed settlement. "The fishermen and the processors, especially Pacific Seafood Group, are to be commended for taking a statesmanlike approach to resolving this complicated case. These parties focused on how to insure the West Coast fishing industry for the future. How can these markets be transparent? How can we continue to create conditions that make these markets more competitive?"

The result is a five-year agreement with multiple pro-competitive features:

- A 10-year exclusive agreement between Pacific Seafood Group and Ocean Gold Seafoods will not be renewed in 2016, potentially creating a large new processing competitor.

- Provided other processors sign on, Pacific Seafood Group and Ocean Gold Seafoods will report average wholesale prices to a seafood market reporting service, increasing the market data available to both fishermen and processors.
- Potential conflicts of interest involving fishermen's cooperatives will be eliminated.
- Pacific Seafood Group and Ocean Gold Seafoods, who operate the largest fishmeal plants turning fish waste into fishmeal, will accept fish scrap from new processors who enter the market.

"This was an extremely difficult negotiation," said Judge Hogan. "Both sides took the high road and worked out a deal that I believe brings tremendous value to these West Coast fisheries. Competition in this industry benefits both fishermen and processors, but also West Coast consumers over the long run."

The class of vessel owners, captains and crewmembers trawling for shrimp, groundfish and whiting is estimated at 1,200 to 1,500 individuals. A court-ordered notice to all class members will be mailed or published soon. For further information, contact Michael E. Haglund at (503) 225-0777 or Michael J. Esler at (503) 223-1510.