

From: Jerry Murphy

6/20/2022

To: Ryan Rindore

Per- Wenchman and associated catch

I am providing fish catch records for the vessels "Capt. Grumpy" and "Mistake". These fishing vessels were used in the Butterfish fishery mostly under my control from 1993 till after the BP oil spill. I did some fishing on other vessels later, most recently for about 1 ½ years as captain on the "Capt. Salty".

The quote "Butterfish" fishery usually targets Butterfish but also Scad, sometimes dogfish. All of the "by catch" is economically important as is demonstrated by the catch records. Wenchman are usually caught in depths of water from 50 fathoms to 100 plus fathoms. They have been caught by myself and where I fish in that depth range. Most of the time the volume of Wenchman seems to be directly related to the length of the Trawl time on the bottom. When Butterfish or Scad are catching well the time of tows will be short and the amount of Wenchman will be low. Butterfish, Scad and sometimes White Trout will school up and actual fishing time will be short. Other fish we catch and possibly don't want such as Croaker, Long spine porgy, ect. also catch very fast sometimes.

The bottom line from my experience is that Wenchman are scattered everywhere in the depth range, but have never been found by me in schooling quantities. My fish range extends roughly from the North edge of the Madison/Swanson closed area off Cape San Blas to approximately south of Morgan City, La. I fished that range from 15 fathoms to 120 fathoms.

Where as I catch Wenchman in their depth range, I have never seen where I could target them only. They are so ubiquitous that if they are closed to catch it will effectively close the trawl fishery for Butterfish, Scad, etc. until the Wenchman are reopened.

Generally I have found more Wenchman produced in the western areas fished. My range to fish has been limited by distance from port. Ours has been a fresh fish business, so travel from grounds to dock are a practical limit on range. That said I see no reason not to believe that these fish don't go right around the coast to Mexico.