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## Fish and Game Commission



*Wildlife Heritage and Conservation*  
*Since 1870*

September 13, 2017

Phil Anderson, Chair  
Pacific Fishery Management Council  
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101  
Portland, OR 97220

Barry Thom, Regional Administrator  
West Coast Region  
NOAA Fisheries  
7600 Sand Point Way NE  
Seattle, WA 98115

Subject: Request to consider the range of alternatives for deep-set buoy gear, including linked buoy gear, and authorize use of this gear type

Dear Chair Anderson and Regional Administrator Thom:

It has come to the attention of the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) that the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) is considering authorizing and permitting new gear types for the West Coast commercial swordfish fishery, and is poised to adopt a range of alternatives for this authorization at its September 2017 meeting. I am writing on behalf of the Commission to support your action to consider new gear authorization to open additional access for California fishermen to fish this healthy and sustainable fish stock. The Commission is aware that research on deep-set buoy gear (DSBG), which includes both standard buoy gear and linked buoy gear (LBG) types, is ongoing; the Commission has been tracking and supports advancing such research that could lead to the use of alternative gear types in the swordfish fishery.

Over the past twenty years, the number of U.S. West Coast, large-mesh, drift gillnet swordfish fishery participants and landings have significantly declined, attributed in large part to regulations implemented to mitigate bycatch in the fishery. There remain concerns regarding management measures implemented to address bycatch, and the subsequent economic impacts to fishermen and coastal communities, despite a healthy stock and high demand for swordfish. Through a combined effort of state, Federal and private sector funding, the ongoing research and development of DSBG has resulted from an effort to design a gear type that could reduce potential for interactions with

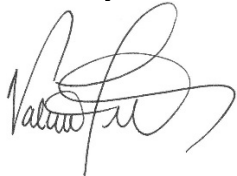
finfish and protected species to the extent practicable, while simultaneously increasing fishery opportunities and economic viability by more selectively targeting swordfish. The Commission appreciates the extensive time and effort expended by PFMC, its staff, and staff of the National Marine Fisheries Service, to facilitate this experimental research.

One of the Commission's goals is to support California's sustainable coastal fishing communities. To maintain a robust coastal fishing economy, fisheries need both adaptive management and flexibility to fish a variety of selective gear types to maximize potential catch and minimize bycatch under varying oceanographic conditions. One of the objectives articulated by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act for a healthy fishery stock, such as West Coast swordfish, is to provide for opportunity and to ensure the economic viability of the swordfish fishery with sustained participation of West Coast fishing communities while, to the extent practicable, avoiding and minimizing bycatch and bycatch mortality.

Results from collaborative research and experimental fishing permit trials of DSBG conducted thus far indicate that both configurations of this highly selective gear can minimize interactions with protected species and minimize finfish bycatch while expanding fishing opportunities, increasing domestic landings, and contributing to the profitability of the swordfish fishery.

Authorizing DSBG configurations will help to address bycatch concerns, while helping achieve optimum yield of a healthy swordfish stock and providing socioeconomic benefits for fishermen and coastal communities. As PFMC considers a range of alternatives for DSBG fishery authorization, the Commission asks that PFMC thoughtfully consider DSBG configurations while also including incentives and mechanisms for drift gillnet fishermen to trade in their gear and permits in exchange for DSBG permits.

Thank you,



Valerie Termini  
Executive Director

ec: Members, California Fish and Game Commission  
Charlton Bonham, Director, California Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Craig Shuman, Marine Region Manager, California Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Marci Yaremko, State/Federal Marine Fisheries Program Manager, California  
Department of Fish and Wildlife