



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
West Coast Region
Sustainable Fisheries Division
510 Desmond Drive SE, Suite 103
Lacey WA, 98503

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The Honorable Marc Levine
California State Assembly, 10th District
State Capitol
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0115

Dear Mr. Levine,

Thank you for your recent letter expressing your concerns about the use of large-mesh drift gillnets off the coast of California.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is committed to reducing bycatch in all West Coast fisheries, including by fostering the development and use of sustainable gear as alternative options for harvesting swordfish. Given the challenges involved and the importance of this endeavor to local industry, California communities, and consumers, the support you expressed for experimentation of alternative gears is appreciated.

At its November 2014 meeting, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) discussed management of the California drift gillnet fishery. Although the Council did not recommend prohibiting the drift gillnet fishery, the Council expressed interest in testing new approaches and methods for targeting swordfish that would be commercially viable and reduce bycatch. To this end, at its March 2015 meeting, the Council will be evaluating proposals for exempted fishing permits (EFPs) to test alternative gear at sea. Any EFP applications that the Council recommends to NMFS will be further evaluated for compliance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and other applicable laws—the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, etc. We look forward to working with the Council, including the State of California representatives, throughout this process.



Additionally, NMFS is seeking collaborative solutions to improve the environmental and economic sustainability of the fishery and is in the early stages of planning a small workshop in May to discuss a long-term vision for the swordfish fishery. We will share more information about the workshop with you in the coming months.

I appreciate your continued interest in improving the sustainability of swordfish harvest off California. NMFS will continue to work with the Council and others toward this goal.

Sincerely,



Robert Turner
Assistant Regional Administrator

cc: Dorothy Lowman, Pacific Fishery Management Council
Donald McIsaac, Pacific Fishery Management Council
Francisco Werner, Southwest Fisheries Science Center

