

Electronic Only, Includes Public
Comment Letter

CALIFORNIA THRESHER SHARK/SWORDFISH DRIFT GILLNET FISHERY SWORDFISH MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING PLAN HARDCAPS

Agenda Item E.3

Pacific Fishery Management Council
June 2015 - Spokane, WA.

Jonathan Gonzalez
Artist, Volunteer Advocate for Responsible Fisheries
EatUSseafood.com

GOING ROGUE - IGNORING SCIENCE



Tweet



OCEANA

Protecting the
World's Oceans



The Pew Trusts

@pewtrusts



Drift gillnets off #CA kill endangered species. Ask @JerryBrownGov to act: bit.ly/1GLIPqB



5/11/15, 11:37 AM

361 RETWEETS 205 FAVORITES

Jon,

It's time we get drift gillnets out of the water, and help save the whales.

Last month, I [shot a PSA](#) with Oceana in California waters and saw enormous, beautiful whales, super herds of dolphins, and so much more. I could hear the dolphins communicate with each other!

But, I couldn't believe what I learned – 100 protected marine mammals, including whales and dolphins, are entangled and killed by drift gillnets off the coast of California every year. Even worse, fishery managers are considering expanding these dangerous nets into protected areas.

How is this possible? Haven't we already passed laws to save the whales and other marine mammals?

[Join me and demand immediate protections for endangered marine mammals, sea turtles and other species, and an end to drift gillnets off the California coast >>](#)

A mile wide, 100 feet deep and virtually invisible, drift gillnets off the California coast are supposed to capture swordfish. But that's not all they catch.

[Can you add your name to our petition before the May 13 deadline?](#)

Please, help get these nets out of the water.



For the oceans,
Kate Mara
Actress, Ocean Advocate

It's On Us to Keep Whales
Swimming and Singing



[Click here to add your name to help save whales from drift gillnets >>](#)

DONATE

POINT

“Every year, hundreds of iconic marine animals – think endangered sperm whales and massive leatherback sea turtles – die an incredibly slow and unnecessary death...”



Andrew Sharpless CEO, Oceana
Huffpost.com, May 20, 2015

“To identify a path forward toward solutions, Oceana is supporting expanded experiments with deep-set buoy gear...”



Andrew Sharpless CEO, Oceana
Huffpost.com, May 20, 2015

COUNTERPOINT

There have been zero observed sea turtle mortalities and 6 observed whale mortalities in the CA drift gillnet fishery in over 14 years.

http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/fisheries/wc_observer_programs/sw_observer_program_info/data_summ_report_sw_observer_fish.htm

Expanded experiments with deep-set buoy gear are in desperate need of funding for observer coverage, and Oceana has yet to put thier money where thier mouth is.



Jonathan Gonzalez, Volunteer PFMC,
June 2015

CREATING A CRISIS OUT OF NOTHING

“Oceana has also engaged California lawmakers and members of Congress to stand against drift gillnets.”



Andrew Sharpless CEO, Oceana
Huffpost.com, May 20, 2015

“Further, we remind you that the members of the California legislature, U.S. Congress, and tens of thousands of members of the public have written the Council and NMFS in support of a transition away from drift gillnets to more environmentally friendly gear types. In a letter to the Council and NMFS, 17 members of Congress wrote to support such a transition and outlined the requirements of the MSA to minimize and avoid bycatch, stating that current drift gillnet bycatch reduction measures “do not go far enough” and that “enforceable bycatch limits are imperative.”



Geoff Shester, Oceana
Agenda Item E.3 Supplemental Public Comments 2
June 2015 PFMC

THANK YOU OCEANA & PEW FOR SUPPORTING DGN INSIDE THE PLCA AND LONGLINES INSIDE THE EEZ

“Last year, Oceana reached a critical point in its campaign when the PPMC committed to transitioning to a suite of cleaner fishing methods...

This progress was the direct result of campaigning by Oceana and its allies...”



Andrew Sharpless CEO, Oceana
Huffpost.com, May 20, 2015

WHAT YOU TALKIN BOUT OCEANA?

“After attending the NMFS Swordfish Workshop and the TRT meeting, it is clear that, rather than focusing on reducing bycatch in this fishery, industry, the TRT and some at NMFS seek only to expand the use of this unsustainable fishing method.”



“It is our view that the TRT has failed to meet this mandate. The TRT’s reluctance to issue recommendations to further reduce bycatch, while recommending the removal of sperm whale protections and opposing Council action to further reduce bycatch, is evidence that the TRT is not effectively addressing bycatch reduction and has no plans to do so.”

Ben Entiknap & Geoff Shester, Oceana
Agenda Item E.3 Supplemental Public Comments 2
June 2015 PFMC

LISTEN TO THE SCIENCE - IGNORE THE HYPE

“The POCTRT has been intimately involved in the development of bycatch reduction measures in this fishery, which largely have been adopted and implemented by NMFS, and have proved to be successful for the last 20 years (including the achievement of the zero mortality rate goal (ZMRG) for most stocks over that same period).

We believe that the TRT system provides the most effective and appropriate process for addressing bycatch reduction, and do not believe that the PFMC’s proposed measures will improve the management of marine mammal bycatch in the DGN fishery.”

“The Council does not explain how hard caps would reduce bycatch of protected species, or by how much. There is no explanation of why they are needed in addition to the measures that result from the TRT process, or, why they would be an improvement.”

STATUS QUO IS THE WAY TO GO

2.1 PROPOSED ACTION: *OPPOSED*

Reducing bycatch below the levels currently permitted by law is not practicable and will stifle efforts to maintain or enhance a viable fishery.

2.2 PURPOSE AND NEED: *OPPOSED*

In regards to National Standard 9, the proposed action is not needed because it seeks to reduce bycatch to an extent that is not practicable.

GOAL 1 AND IT'S OBJECTIVES: *OPPOSED*

The objectives of Goal 1 subvert National Standards 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10.

GOAL 2 AND IT'S OBJECTIVES: *OPPOSED*

The objectives of Goal 2 subvert National Standards 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9.

GOAL 3 AND IT'S OBJECTIVES: *SUPPORT*

The objectives of Goal 3 will help to maintain or enhance the DGN fishery.

HARD CAPS: *SUPPORT NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE*

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES: *SUPPORT NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE*

FISHERY MONITORING: *NO ACTION*

"THE BLUE SERENGETI" IS THRIVING

California
Sea
Lion



PBR:
9,200

New pup counts made in 2011 totaled 61,943 animals, the highest recorded to date

Northern
Elephant
Seal



PBR:
4,882

The population is reported to have grown at 3.8% annually since 1988

Short-
Beaked
Common
Dolphin



PBR:
3,440

Average annual human-caused mortality in 2004-2008 (64 animals) is estimated to be less than the PBR (3,440)

California
Gray
Whale



PBR:
624

The population size of the ENP gray whale stock has increased over several decades resulting in ESA delisting in 1994

Humpback
Whale



PBR:
11

Population estimates have increased substantially from 1,200 in 1966 to approximately 18,000-20,000 whales in 2004 to 2006

Sperm
Whale



PBR:
2.7

Including both fishery and ship-strike mortality, the annual kill and serious injury (1.7 per year) is less than the calculated PBR for this stock (2.7)

Blue
Whale



The number of California blue whales has rebounded to near historical levels, according to new research by the University of Washington

Source: nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/sars/

Note: The restoration of all of these stocks coexisted with status quo CA DGN fishery management

A background image of several fishing boats docked in a harbor, with their masts and rigging visible against a light sky. The boats are white with some blue accents. The water is calm, reflecting the boats and the sky.

THANK YOU

Jonathan Gonzalez
Artist, Volunteer Advocate for Responsible Fisheries
EatUSseafood.com

June 14, 2015

Ms. Dorothy M. Lowman, Chair
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101
Portland, Oregon 97220-1384

RE: Agenda Item E.3 – Swordfish Management and Monitoring Plan Hard Caps

Dear Chair Lowman and members of the Council,

My name is Jonathan Gonzalez and I'm from Santa Barbara, CA. I have worked full-time as a professional graphic designer the last 16 years and I blog over at EatUSseafood.com. I am here to represent the public-at-large as a volunteer advocate for responsible fisheries.

(Slide 2) It's safe to say that for the last few years the spotlight has been shining bright on CA's drift gillnet fishery for all the wrong reasons. But fortunately, after being forced into the spotlight, I believe this fishery is shining like never before for all the right reasons. Bycatch concerns put the spotlight on this fishery, but it seems like the deeper you dig into this fishery, the better it looks. This is something I think we should all be excited about, but not everyone in this room is as excited as I am about this fishery. That's why I think now is the time to shift the spotlight off of the drift gillnet fishery, and instead start shining it on the folks that continue to go rogue by ignoring the best available science. It's extremely disheartening for me to see that the world's largest ocean conservation groups believe that effective ocean conservation comes from asking donors to sign anti-science robot petitions littered with misinformation and half-truths addressed to the Council and Governor Brown. I think it's important for the Council to consider the source of these petitions before you get concerned with how many folks sign them. Unfortunately, all those signatures represent is the number of how many well-intentioned citizens that have been duped.

(Slide 3) And what's scary is this irresponsible behavior comes from the CEOs themselves, which shows how some of these groups have severe flaws from the top CEOs all the way down to the bottom Ben and Geoff Shesters. I believe at this stage of the game, this kind of behavior not only deserves to be put under the spotlight, but it should also be defined as a criminal act considering all the money and time it wastes. I don't know about you, but I'm sick and tired of watching these groups and their misguided influence carry so much weight at these meetings by making non-issues seem like emergencies.

(Slide 4) I attended the NMFS swordfish workshop last month and I remember Geoff Shester said, "We support a viable west coast swordfish fishery, but the fact is that we are hearing from members of Congress, state lawmakers and the general public who are concerned about the unacceptable bycatch in this fishery." But these politicians did not engage Oceana about bycatch concerns in this fishery. Instead, according to the CEO of Oceana, Oceana engaged these members of Congress and state lawmakers urging them to stand against drift gillnets. And judging from their track record of spreading misinformation about this fishery, it's no wonder the politicians they got to are concerned about what they learned. It's because a crisis is being created out of nothing and just like the general public, these politicians aren't hearing the truth about this fishery. And once someone hears enough misinformation to form their own negative opinion about this fishery, I believe it's three times as hard to convince them that this is a responsible fishery regardless of how much science there is to back it up.

(Slide 5) Just last June, the idea of “transitioning” this fishery was being thrown around, but a lot of science has happened since then. Now the word “transition” is off the table and the possibility of allowing EFPs to test modified DGN gear inside the PLCA as well as longline gear inside the EEZ is now on the table in an effort to satisfy the Council’s commitment to revitalize the west coast HMS fishery. Ironically, the CEO of Oceana claims this progress of exploring a suite of fishing methods was the direct result of campaigning by Oceana and it’s allies, and I sincerely thank them for that. So why is Oceana and its allies opposing the EFPs that they claim they campaigned for? It’s because their campaign backfired in their faces. The new and or modified gear that makes the most sense to scientists and other experts does not jive well with Oceana and PEWs anti-science based agenda, and it’s forcing Oceana, PEW, and the turtle people to behave more irresponsibly than ever before.

(Slide 6) I thought I had seen it all as far as how low Oceana et al. is willing to go, but then I started reading the supplemental public comments under this Agenda Item. After Geoff Shester attended his first and only POCTRT meeting this last March, rather than being impressed with the process and successes of the TRT, Geoff stood up and offended everyone in the room by making an insulting public comment that questioned the effectiveness of the Team and even questioned the need for their continued existence. I was not there to hear it, but he went on the record with these shocking comments under the supplemental public comment 2. So here we have the world’s largest ocean conservation organization openly mocking scientists. Again, just when I thought I had seen and heard it all...

(Slide 7) But once again, the science and the truth behind this fishery shine bright. The NMFS Report under this Agenda Item clearly states the TRT’s track record of successful bycatch mitigation, which completely negates Oceana’s latest anti-science rhetoric. What really stood out in the NMFS Report among other things was this quote, “The Council does not explain how hard caps would reduce bycatch of protected species, or by how much. There is no explanation of why they are needed in addition to the measures that result from the TRT process, or, why they would be an improvement.” Now that is something I strongly suggest the Council to consider before falling victim to this so-called crisis.

(Slide 8) Status quo is the way to go regarding future DGN management. I ask the Council to please support the no action alternatives across the board, with the exception of Goal 3 and it’s objectives, which I ask the Council to support.

(Slide 9) Which brings me to the Blue Serengeti, as I like to call it. Marine life is thriving off our coast and we should be celebrating this. But judging from recent comments and actions it’s clear that rather than paying attention to the science, Oceana et al. is set on dragging this all on. Does the Council want to keep listening to these dishonest groups and have this Agenda Item drag on for another year or more, or would the Council rather listen to the scientists and put this non-issue to bed come September? Enough is enough if you ask me. I look forward to putting this all behind us so we can get back to focusing on stuff that really matters. I really think we owe that to ourselves as well as our Oceans.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.
Jonathan Gonzalez