

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE

STATE CAPITOL
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA
95814

February 26, 2016

Ms. Dorothy Lowman, Chair
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, #101
Portland, OR 97220

Mr. William W. Stelle, Jr.
Administrator, Northwest Region
NOAA Fisheries
7600 Sand Point Way, NE, Bldg 1
Seattle, WA 98115-0070

Dear Chair Lowman and Administrator Stelle:

We write to express our support for the authorization of deep-set buoy gear (DSBG) under the Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan. Many of us have written previously stating our strong concerns about the continued operation of the drift gillnet (DGN) fishery for swordfish off the California coast and we view the authorization of DSBG as an important step in transitioning away from the use of DGN gear.

We understand that authorization of DSBG will involve several key steps and decision points. By starting the process now in conjunction with ongoing exempted fishing permits currently using this gear, the Council can ensure the availability of a steady, increasing supply of buoy-caught swordfish coming into West Coast ports. We are encouraged that the Council tentatively scheduled action on DSBG at its March, June and September meetings and we recommend the Council prioritize resources to meet this aggressive schedule and authorize the gear during 2016.

The Council has heard from tens of thousands of Californians and citizens from across the U.S. describing continued concerns with unacceptably high bycatch in drift gillnets and the economic and ecological importance of transitioning to more selective fishing gears in the West Coast swordfish fishery. These include fishermen, seafood buyers, chefs, and local business owners.

Through collaborative grants, the California Ocean Protection Council has supported the research and development of innovative methods to catch swordfish that result in low bycatch including DSBG. The benefits and efficacy of using DSBG to catch swordfish include a significant reduction in incidental catch and a higher-quality product entering the market that earns higher prices. After five years of research on the West Coast indicating profitability and minimal bycatch, there is sufficient data to support the authorization of DSBG.

We commend the Council for recommending the establishment of hard caps, performance objectives, and increased monitoring of the DGN fishery, and ask NOAA Fisheries to issue implementing regulations prior to the start of this year's swordfish fishery. In authorizing DSBG, the Council has the opportunity to further develop a plan detailing a switch to more selective

gears. Because the authorization process takes at least three meetings, we are confident the details of a "phase-in" plan for this gear can be developed without needing to delay the process.

By authorizing DSBG, the Council will take a significant step toward transitioning away from DGN gear toward a more sustainable West Coast swordfish fishery. To this end, we recommend that time and resources be spent on developing a West Coast DSBG fishery and not on any efforts to expand the use of drift gillnets into the Pacific Leatherback Conservation Area or expand the use of pelagic longlines off the U.S. West Coast.

Thank you for your attention to this issue. We look forward to an update as things progress.

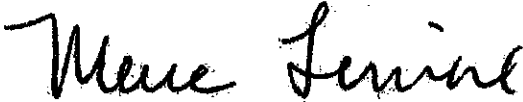
Sincerely,



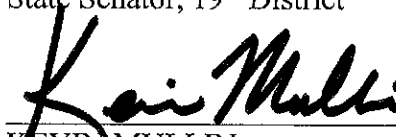
BEN ALLEN
State Senator, 26th District



HANNAH-BETH JACKSON
State Senator, 19th District



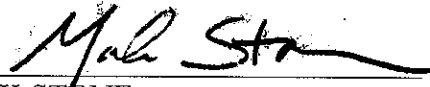
MARC LEVINE
State Assemblymember, 10th District



KEVIN MULLIN
State Assemblymember, 22nd District



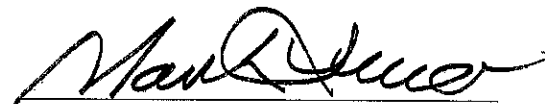
RICHARD BLOOM
State Assmeblymember, 50th District



MARK STONE
State Assemblymember, 29th District



KEVIN MCCARTY
State Assemblymember, 7th District



MARK LENO
State Senator, 11th District

cc: Members of the California Ocean Protection Council
Charlton H. Bonham, Director, California Department of Fish and Wildlife