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

RE: Agenda Item: D.5 Deep Set Buoy Gear and Federal HMS Permit Update

Dear Chair Lowman and Council members:

Thank you for your work to prioritize the authorization process for deep-set buoy gear. I am writing to encourage you to keep authorization of this innovative fishing method on track in June by offering clear guidance on permitting options.

As executive Director at FishWise, which promotes the health and recovery of ocean ecosystems by providing innovative market-based tools to the seafood industry, I am committed to supporting sustainability through environmentally responsible business practices.

We are especially supportive of deep-set buoy gear due to its proven ability to significantly reduce bycatch. This approach provides the Council an opportunity to reduce the unwanted catch of marine animals such as dolphins, sharks, and sea turtles. We are particularly concerned with the interaction that drift gillnets operating off the West Coast can have with sperm whales and any other ecologically and economically important species.

Thousands of Californians, representing many communities across the state, have consistently called for the inclusion of more sustainable gear options. Our belief is that everyone in the supply chain has an important role to play, from the coastal communities and companies that farm and catch fish, to the specialty retailers and distributors that differentiate themselves through sustainable business practices, to the largest companies that possess the leverage to drive innovation and conservation in their supply chains.

Deep-set buoy gear can provide an alternative and/or additional catch method that supports sustainable fisheries and local economies on the West Coast. Please ensure that deep-set buoy gear authorization stays on track at your June meeting.

Thank you for your consideration,

Tobias Aguirre
Executive Director
FishWise