



International Game Fish Association

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Agenda Item D.5.b
Supplemental Public Comment 8
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Pacific Fishery Management Council
1100 NE Ambassador Place, #101
Portland, Oregon 97220

Dear Chair Lowman and members of the Council:

We write in support of the swift authorization of deep-set buoy gear (DSBG) in the West Coast swordfish fishery. As a recreational fishing advocacy organization, the International Game Fish Association (IGFA) works toward the conservation of game fish and the promotion of responsible, ethical angling practices through science, education, rulemaking and record keeping. As conservation-minded anglers, we are greatly concerned about the bycatch of recreationally important species in drift gillnet (DGN) and longline fisheries, particularly striped marlin. We are working to better understand this species through Great Marlin Race program where anglers fund and satellite tag marlin in order to assess population connectivity and habitat utilization.

DSBG provides an alternative method for fishing for swordfish and other HMS species without the bycatch of marlin and other finfish associated with DGN and longline gear. After 6 years of research and development, DSBG is ready to become a full-fledged fishery. DSBG is highly selective with a consistent rate of over 90 percent marketable catch. In all of the research and fishing conducted to date, there has not been a single marlin caught.

In considering options for authorizing DSBG, we recommend that the Council require that gear be actively tended by fishermen. This is fundamental to the nature of the gear and should not be addressed through incentive programs. Active tending ensures that any non-target species are released within minutes, greatly reducing the mortality rate of bycatch. It also ensures that gear will not be lost posing a risk to other ocean wildlife.

We appreciate the Council's recent actions to implement hard caps and other management measures in the DGN fishery to limit the bycatch of recreationally important finfish and marine mammals. However, these measures do not go far enough. DGN gear is a fundamentally non-selective gear. Therefore, in considering the potential scope of the range of alternatives, the Council should include options for sunseting the DGN fishery and providing opportunities for active members of the DGN fleet to transfer their permits to a DSBG permit.

Finally, throughout the authorization process, we encourage the Council to work with the recreational fishing community to identify any areas of potential conflict in order to ensure the DSBG fishery is a success. We look forward to working with the Council to ensure the implementation of a buoy gear fishery is a success.

Sincerely,

Jason Schratwieser; IGFA Conservation Director

The International Game Fish Association is a not-for-profit organization committed to the conservation of game fish and the promotion of responsible, ethical angling practices through science, education, rule making and record keeping.

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