WESTERN
PACIFIC
REGIONAL
FISHERY
MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL

MEMORANDUM

To: Chuck Tracy, PFMC Executive Director Date: November 15, 2019

From: Kitty Simonds, WPFMC Executive Director

Subject: PFMC Scoping for an Amendment Authorizing Shallow-set Longline Gear Outside of the Exclusive Economic Zone

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I understand that the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) is conducting a scoping at the November meeting for a potential amendment to authorize shallow-set longline (SSLL) gear outside of the EEZ off the West Coast. I appreciate your staff Brett Wiedoff for keeping my staff informed of the scoping progress. On their last call on October 28, 2019, Brett and my staff Asuka Ishizaki discussed continuing informal engagement at the staff level to determine when and how more formal engagement with the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (WPFMC) may be appropriate, depending on the outcome of your November meeting.

Since the last staff call, we noted that a couple of supplemental documents have been posted on your online briefing book, one of which is a letter from the California Fish and Game Commission. The letter makes several references to the Hawaii SSLL fishery. Below, I provide for your information additional context in response to those comments. Please do not hesitate to contact me for any additional information to help address the Commission's questions and concerns regarding the Hawaii SSLL fishery.

Information Regarding Comments from the California Fish and Game Commission

Commission Comment: As you are aware, drift gillnet permits are being phased out in California due to bycatch rates for unmarketable and protected species; our understanding is that SSLL has similar rates of bycatch. An analysis of the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council's (Western PFMC) SSLL gear fishery shows a discard rate that the Commission considers unacceptable. Adding another SSLL swordfish permit could increase bycatch, including for protected species, whether fishing occurs inside or outside the West Coast EEZ, thereby complicating and delaying progress toward significantly reducing bycatch in the fishery. Other gear types that have been tested off the U.S. West Coast, such as deep-set buoy gear, offer alternatives for targeting swordfish and have significantly lower bycatch rates.

Response:

It is not clear from the letter what information the Commission reviewed of the Hawaii SSLL fishery and the DGN bycatch rates. However, it appears that they may be referring to discard rates of shark and non-target bycatch for which there is limited market demand or value, such

as blue shark (100% released) and mako shark (81% released; see Table 1 enclosed). For shark species, at-vessel mortality is low (e.g., less than 5% for blue sharks) and post-hooking mortality is also low (e.g., ~15% for blue sharks)[1]. Research is also ongoing by PIFSC to determine post-hooking mortality rate differences by amount of trailing gear left on the shark.

Commission Comment: Permitting, observer, and Hawaii landings data for the Hawaii Fishery are not readily available to the [Pacific] Council or the National Marine Fisheries Service West Coast Region, although nearly 70% of swordfish landed in California comes from the Hawaii Fishery.

Response:
Recent information on the Hawaii SSLL fishery is available in the Annual SAFE report for the Pelagic Fishery Ecosystem Plan, as well as through PIRO and PIFSC. We direct you to the most recent report for the 2018 fishing year on our website at: http://www.wpcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Pelagic-FEP-SAFE-Report-2018-Optimized-v4.pdf

Commission Comment: Why aren't the most effective bycatch mitigation methods and gear already required for the Hawaii Fishery?

Response:
The Hawaii SSLL vessels are required to follow an extensive suite of protected species bycatch mitigation measures. Many of these measures were pioneered in the Hawaii longline fishery and are now considered a gold standard in the international arena. Current measures include:

- Circle hooks and mackerel type bait for sea turtles
- Dehooking tools and handling procedures for safely releasing protected species
- Night setting and blue-dyed bait, or side-setting at all times for seabirds
- Non-retention of oceanic whitetip sharks
- Protected species workshop requirement for owners and operators
- Hard caps for loggerhead and leatherback turtles (Fishery Ecosystem Plan Amendment pending)

If the Commission is referring to other mitigation measures, we would be happy to review that information.

[1] For example, see: Curran, D. 2014. Shark catch in pelagic longline fisheries: A review of mitigation measures. WCPFC-SC10-2014/ EB-IP-11.

Table 1. Released catch, retained catch, and total catch (number of fish) for the Hawaii shallow- set longline fishery, 2018.

	Released Catch	Percent Released	Retained Catch	Total Catch
Tuna				
Albacore	1	0.7	136	137
Bigeye tuna	70	5.4	1,221	1,291
Bluefin tuna	0	0.0	2	2
Skipjack tuna	0	0.0	16	16
Yellowfin tuna	17	2.2	761	778
Other tuna	0	0.0	0	0
Total tunas	**88**	**4.0**	**2,136**	**2,224**
Billfish				
Swordfish	466	7.6	5,644	6,110
Blue marlin	3	60.0	2	5
Striped marlin	21	33.9	41	62
Spearfish	5	11.4	39	44
Other marlin	0	0.0	0	0
Total billfish	**495**	**8.0**	**5,726**	**6,221**
Other PMUS				
Dolphinfish	13	2.0	626	639
Wahoo	2	7.7	24	26
Moonfish	15	8.7	157	172
Oilfish	103	60.9	66	169
Pomfret	7	29.2	17	24
Total other	**140**	**13.6**	**890**	**1,030**
Non-PMUS fish	**0**	**0.0**	**0**	**0**
PMUS Sharks				
Blue shark	2,538	100.0	0	2,538
Mako shark	283	81.8	63	346
Thresher shark	24	96.0	1	25
Oceanic whitetip shark	0	0.0	0	0
Silky shark	0	0.0	0	0
Total PMUS sharks	**2,845**	**97.8**	**64**	**2,909**
Non-PMUS Sharks	**1**	**100.0**	**0**	**1**
Grand Total	**3,569**	**28.8**	**8,816**	**12,385**

Source: 2018 SAFE Report