

OPEN COMMENT

This attachment includes three letters as examples of approximately two dozen sent to National Marine Fisheries Service and Pacific Fishery Management Council staff. The letters were not submitted via the Council public comment portal and are included here as part of the official meeting record.

PFMC
8/31/2026

Dear NOAA Fisheries officials and Pacific Fishery Management Council members,

I respectfully ask you to safeguard endangered North Pacific loggerhead sea turtles by fully implementing the Pacific Loggerhead Conservation Area closure and maintaining momentum toward the federal phase-out of large-mesh drift gillnets.

Warm-water events can bring loggerheads into the Southern California Bight, where they face serious entanglement and drowning risks. The closure is an important safeguard grounded in these conditions and should remain in effect unless updated, credible science demonstrates that reopening would not pose unacceptable harm.

Please strengthen enforcement through vessel inspections, observer coverage, reliable monitoring, transparent public reporting, and close coordination with the Pacific Fishery Management Council. A precautionary approach is essential as ocean temperatures become more variable and marine species face increasing climate pressures.

Large-mesh drift gillnets also threaten whales, dolphins, seals, sea lions, sharks, and other wildlife. With the federal commitment to end use of this gear by the close of 2027, NOAA should ensure that the transition remains timely, enforceable, and consistent with the nation's responsibility to protect endangered species and ocean ecosystems.

Thank you for taking decisive action to protect loggerhead turtles and the broader marine environment.

Dear NOAA Fisheries officials and Pacific Fishery Management Council members,

I am writing with deep concern for the endangered North Pacific loggerhead sea turtle population and the broader marine ecosystem. Please uphold the Pacific Loggerhead Conservation Area closure, prevent large-mesh drift gillnets from operating in important turtle habitat, and complete the federally required phase-out of this harmful gear.

Warm-water conditions can draw loggerhead turtles into the Southern California Bight, where drift gillnets pose a serious risk of entanglement and drowning. The 2026 closure, established after elevated sea surface temperatures and El Niño forecasts met the legal criteria, reflects the urgency of protecting these turtles when conditions are most dangerous.

Please ensure the closure is fully enforced and do not authorize an early reopening without clear, current scientific evidence demonstrating that loggerheads are no longer exposed to unacceptable risk. Stronger monitoring, vessel inspections, observer coverage, transparent public reporting, and close coordination with the Pacific Fishery Management Council are essential.

Large-mesh drift gillnets also threaten whales, dolphins, seals, sea lions, sharks, and other wildlife. Because the nation has committed to ending use of this gear by the close of 2027, NOAA should maintain momentum and ensure that the transition is timely, enforceable, and grounded in conservation science.

Thank you for protecting endangered sea turtles and safeguarding the future of our shared ocean.

Dear NOAA Fisheries officials and Pacific Fishery Management Council members,

The Pacific Ocean and the wildlife that depend on it cannot wait for preventable harm to occur. I ask you to maintain strong protections for endangered North Pacific loggerhead sea turtles by enforcing the Pacific Loggerhead Conservation Area closure and keeping large-mesh drift gillnets out of critical feeding habitat.

Warm-water conditions can bring loggerheads into the Southern California Bight, where these indiscriminate nets pose a serious risk of entanglement and drowning. NOAA's 2026 closure, established for June 1 through August 31 after elevated sea temperatures and El Niño forecasts, must be treated as a vital conservation measure, not a temporary inconvenience.

Please ensure that enforcement is thorough and transparent. That includes regular vessel inspections, robust observer coverage, reliable public reporting, and close coordination with the Pacific Fishery Management Council. The area should not be reopened early unless up-to-date scientific evidence clearly demonstrates that loggerheads are no longer at unacceptable risk.

Drift gillnets also threaten whales, dolphins, seals, sea lions, sharks, and many other ocean animals. The federal commitment to phase out this gear by the end of 2027 must remain firmly on schedule, with no weakening of protections or avoidable delays.

Please act with the urgency this endangered population deserves and help protect the ocean we all share.