

Oct. 14, 2014

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

RE: Agenda Item I.4, Drift Gillnet Hard Caps and Other Priorities

Dear Chair Lowman and Council Members,

As a teenager visiting the ocean for the first time, I remember being transfixed by the sight of gray whales migrating down the California coast. I had never seen such natural splendor, and that moment set me on a path to painting marine life in a way that elicits an appreciation for the ocean, especially among children. Today, my work carries me around the world, yet I continue to be inspired and amazed by the incredible marine ecosystem right here at home. I know I'm not alone. Millions of other West Coast residents and visitors take inspiration from the array of marine life drawn to our shores – whales, sea turtles, dolphins, tuna, sharks, and seals come together to paint a rich tapestry that reminds us all of the complex web of life beneath the ocean surface and our duty to conserve it.

As an important steward of this resource, the Council should follow through on the commitment you made earlier this year to transition the drift gillnet fishery for swordfish to more environmentally sustainable fishing gear.

Although it is important and worthwhile for the council to establish firm limits and 100 percent monitoring to reduce the inadvertent capture and death of non-targeted marine life, I view those measures as interim in nature. Leaving mile-long drift gillnets in the water for hours at a time will inevitably result in catching and drowning many non-targeted species of wildlife teeming along our shore. This situation should not be acceptable under any circumstances, but it's especially hard to justify when other alternatives exist for catching swordfish.

Preliminary research suggests that actively tended fishing techniques like the use of deep-set buoy gear can be effective at catching swordfish while minimizing interaction with species like leatherback sea turtles and sperm whales. As I stated in my letter earlier this year, I am encouraged that the Council appears to recognize the need to protect these ecologically and economically critical species. I look forward to the Council fulfilling its commitment to shift this fishery to a more sustainable future.

Thank you.

Wyland

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