

California Legislature

December 22, 2014

Mr. William Stelle, Regional Administrator
NOAA Fisheries, West Coast Region
7600 Sand Point Way NE
Seattle, WA 98115

Ms. Dorothy Lowman, Chair
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101
Portland, OR 97220

RE: TRANSITIONING THE CALIFORNIA DRIFT GILLNET FISHERY TO MORE
SUSTAINABLE GEAR TYPES

Dear Mr. Stelle and Ms. Lowman:

California lawmakers have written letters in the past outlining our concerns regarding the use of drift gillnets in California. While progress has been made, the amount of bycatch caught in drift gillnets used to capture swordfish remains unacceptable.

Consequently, this letter is to express our continued concerns and to request that the Pacific Fishery Management Council and the National Marine Fisheries Service provide a written swordfish fishery transition plan. The plan should include a timeline for the eventual prohibition of drift gillnet gear, immediate implementation of hard caps, and a goal of 100% catch and bycatch monitoring.

Much of the bycatch is wasted. Additionally, large-mesh drift gillnets catch endangered and protected species that are of great significance to the people of California and are an important part of the ocean ecosystem. The California drift gillnet swordfish fishery kills more marine mammals than all other West Coast and Alaska fisheries combined. Due to the indiscriminate nature of drift gillnets, they are banned on the high seas, prohibited throughout the Mediterranean Sea, not permitted by Oregon or Washington states, and are prohibited by the National Marine Fisheries Service in the North Atlantic swordfish fishery off the U.S. East Coast.

In March 2014, the Pacific Fishery Management Council committed to the "goal of developing a comprehensive plan to transition the current drift gillnet fishery to a fishery utilizing more environmentally and economically sustainable gear that can effectively target the healthy West

Coast swordfish stock." As we seek to achieve a sustainable fishery only alternatives with very little or no bycatch should be pursued. For example, in furtherance of that goal, recent experiments by the Pflieger Institute of Environmental Research and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (funded largely by the California Ocean Protection Council) with deep-set buoy gear have shown promising results as an alternative gear type with reduced bycatch.

We encourage efforts to develop and promote such alternatives to drift gillnets, and believe these experiments should continue as part of the swordfish fishery transition plan away from drift gillnets.

We look forward to working together on this important issue.

Sincerely,



MARC LEVINE
Assemblymember, 10th Assembly District



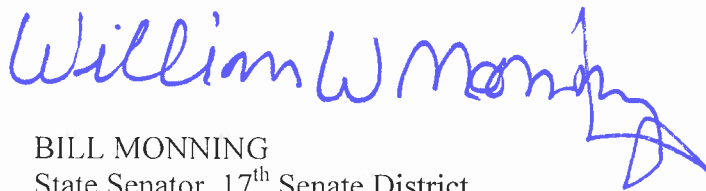
MARK STONE
Assemblymember, 29th Assembly District



DAS WILLIAMS
Assemblymember, 37th Assembly District



RICHARD BLOOM
Assemblymember, 50th Assembly District



BILL MONNING
State Senator, 17th Senate District

cc: Chuck Bonham, California Department of Fish and Wildlife Director



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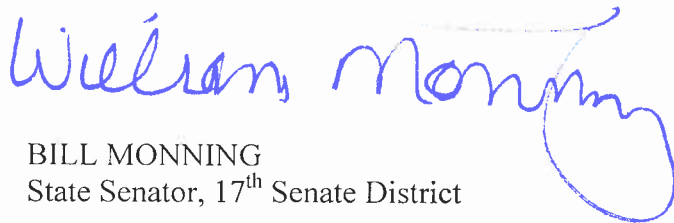
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