



TONI G. ATKINS
S P E A K E R E M E R I T U S

November 16, 2016

Mr. Herb Pollard, Chair
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101
Portland, OR 97220-1384

Mr. Barry Thom, West Coast Regional Administrator
National Marine Fisheries Service West Coast Region
7600 Sand Point Way NE, Bldg. 1
Seattle, WA 98115-0070

RE: Support for Essential Fish Habitat Protections off Southern California

Dear Chair Pollard and Mr. Thom:

Californians have a vested interest in the stewardship of healthy oceans, from the seafloor up. As a member of the California State Legislature, I am writing in support of protecting the living seafloor in federal waters off our Southern California districts as an Essential Fish Habitat Conservation Area closed to bottom trawling to support dynamic deep sea ecosystems and sustainable fisheries.

Thousands of Californians have expressed support for protecting ocean resources that provide us with valuable services that contribute towards our coastal economy. Nutrient-rich ocean waters off the coast of Southern California boast amazing diversity of wildlife and support recreational and commercial fishing opportunities that drive our coastal economy. The seafloor on the continental shelf—extending more than one hundred miles from the shoreline—abounds with special habitats like coral gardens, sponge beds, rocky reefs, and underwater canyons. Images of gold corals adorned with shark eggs, Christmas tree corals decorated with crabs, and sponge beds teeming with fish, illustrate what an uncommon place this is. We are only beginning to understand where new biological discoveries are still being made. What we do know, however, is that these deep sea ecosystems are ecologically significant.

Fragile seafloor habitats like these are susceptible to disturbance from bottom trawls, the most damaging fish gear to the seafloor off the U.S. West Coast. While bottom trawl fishing is used in nearshore state fisheries to target California halibut, sea cucumbers, prawns and other species, most of the seabed in the Southern California Bight—stretching from Point Conception to the U.S./Mexico border—has never been trawled, and is largely pristine. Expansion of bottom trawling in the Southern California Bight beyond the nearshore areas where it currently takes place could have significant detrimental effects to the health and productivity of this deep sea ecosystem.

As stewards of healthy oceans, we support actions that ensure productive marine ecosystems and sustain healthy fisheries. We strongly urge you to safeguard Southern California's living seafloor for the benefit of future generations by designating all un-trawled areas south of Point Conception as an Essential Fish Habitat Conservation Area closed to bottom trawling.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Toni G. Atkins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

TONI G. ATKINS
Speaker Emeritus of the Assembly
Assembly District 78

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

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Assembly California Legislature



LORENA GONZALEZ
ASSEMBLYWOMAN, EIGHTIETH DISTRICT

COMMITTEES
CHAIR: APPROPRIATIONS
SELECT COMMITTEES
CHAIR: WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

November 11, 2016

Mr. Herb Pollard, Chair
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101
Portland, OR 97220-1384

Mr. Barry Thom
West Coast Regional Administrator
National Marine Fisheries Service West Coast Region
7600 Sand Point Way NE, Bldg. 1
Seattle, WA 98115-0070

RE: Support for Essential Fish Habitat Protections off Southern California

Dear Chair Pollard and Mr. Thom:

Californians have a vested interest in stewardship of healthy oceans, from the seafloor up. We, the undersigned representatives of the State of California, are writing in support of protecting the living seafloor in federal waters off our Southern California districts as an Essential Fish Habitat Conservation Area closed to bottom trawling to support dynamic deep sea ecosystems and sustainable fisheries. Thousands of Californians have expressed support for protecting ocean resources that provide us with valuable services that contribute towards our coastal economy.

Nutrient-rich ocean waters off the coast of Southern California boast amazing diversity of wildlife and support recreational and commercial fishing opportunities that drive our coastal economy. The seafloor on the continental shelf—extending more than one hundred miles from the shoreline—abounds with special habitats like coral gardens, sponge beds, rocky reefs, and underwater canyons. Images of gold corals adorned with shark eggs, Christmas tree corals decorated with crabs, and sponge beds teeming with fish illustrate what a unique place this truly is. We are only beginning to understand this special place, where new biological discoveries are still being made. What we do know, however, is that these deep sea ecosystems are ecologically significant.

Fragile seafloor habitats like these are susceptible to disturbance from bottom trawls, the most damaging fish gear to the seafloor off the U.S. West Coast. While bottom trawl fishing is used in nearshore state fisheries to target California halibut, sea cucumbers, prawns and other species,

most of the seabed in the Southern California Bight—stretching from Point Conception to the U.S./Mexico border—has never been trawled, and is largely pristine. Expansion of bottom trawling in the Southern California Bight beyond the nearshore areas where it currently takes place could have significant detrimental impacts to the health and productivity of this deep sea ecosystem.

As stewards of healthy oceans, we support actions that ensure productive marine ecosystems and sustain healthy fisheries. We strongly urge you to safeguard Southern California's living seafloor for the benefit of future generations by designating all un-trawled areas south of Point Conception as an Essential Fish Habitat Conservation Area closed to bottom trawling.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'L. Gonzalez', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

LORENA S. GONZALEZ
Assemblywoman, 80th District

California Legislature

March 30, 2018

Mr. Phil Anderson
Chair, Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101
Portland, Oregon 97220-1384

Mr. Chris Oliver
Assistant Administrator
NOAA Fisheries
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

RE: Support for Essential Fish Habitat Protections off California

Dear Mr. Anderson and Mr. Oliver:

Californians have a vested interest in stewarding healthy oceans, from the seafloor up. We, the undersigned representatives of the State of California, are writing in support of protecting the living seafloor in federal waters off our California districts. As such, we support the designation of new and modified Essential Fish Habitat Conservation Areas, closed to bottom trawling, and the conservation of California's deep-sea ecosystem. Thousands of Californians residing in our collective districts have expressed support for protecting ocean resources that provide us with valuable services upon which we rely and that contribute towards our coastal economy.

Nutrient-rich ocean waters off the coast of California boast amazing diversity of wildlife and support recreational and commercial fishing opportunities that drive our coastal economy. The sheer diversity rivals that of any other ocean waters across the globe and supports more than 596,000 jobs and generates \$42.3 billion through fishing, tourism, and recreation. The seafloor on the continental shelf—extending more than one hundred miles from the shoreline—abounds with special habitats like coral gardens, sponge beds, rocky reefs, and underwater canyons. Images of gold corals adorned with shark eggs, Christmas tree corals decorated with crabs, and sponge beds teeming with fish illustrate what a unique place this truly is. While new biological discoveries are still being made, we do know that these deep-sea ecosystems are of global significance.

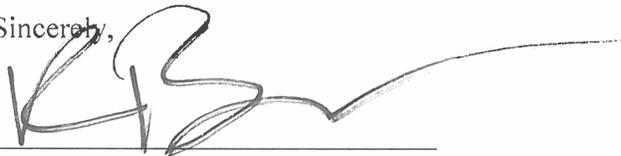
Fragile seafloor habitats like these are susceptible to disturbance from bottom trawls, the most damaging fishing gear to the seafloor off the U.S. West Coast. While bottom trawl fishing is used in

nearshore state fisheries to target California halibut, sea cucumbers, prawns and other species, there are specific areas where this fishing practice is inconsistent with exquisite, fragile, and irreplaceable living seafloor habitats that are pertinent to driving fisheries production. Some areas of the seabed—like the Southern California Bight stretching from Point Conception to the U.S./Mexico border—have never been trawled, and are largely pristine. Other areas have been closed to bottom trawling for the last 17 years to recover overfished rockfish populations. We request that you act to achieve a win-win for habitat conservation and domestic fishing opportunities by increasing the protection of sensitive seafloor habitats as merited by research findings over the last decade, while also increasing fishing opportunities through carefully selected re-openings of areas currently closed to bottom trawl fishing.

As you work toward a final decision on the designation of new and modified Essential Fish Habitat Conservation Areas and the opening of the trawl Rockfish Conservation Area, we urge you to safeguard ocean resources by increasing, not decreasing, overall seafloor habitat protections across all geographic regions off the state of California. Before opening any areas to bottom trawling, however, it must be well supported by science that the fish habitats will not be adversely impacted.

As stewards of healthy oceans, we support actions that ensure productive marine ecosystems and sustain healthy fisheries for the benefit of future generations. Thank you for your work to uphold the directives of our nation's fishery management laws and the conservation of our marine environment.

Sincerely,



RICHARD BLOOM
Assemblymember, 50th District



MARK STONE
Assemblymember, 29th District



RICARDO LARA
Senator, 33rd District



BEN ALLEN
Senator, 26th District