



April 20, 2018

Senator Robert Hertzberg, Chair
Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Water
State Capitol, Room 5046
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Senate Bill 1017 – Allen

Dear Senator Hertzberg:

Wild Oceans, Coastal Conservation Association of California, International Game Fish Association and American Sportfishing Association are invested in the sustainable management of our Pacific highly migratory species and the removal of indiscriminate fishing gear from our oceans. We support Senator Allen's effort to develop legislation that transitions the California swordfish fishery to sustainable gear with minimal bycatch or negative impacts on the open ocean ecosystem.

Our organizations represent conservation minded recreational anglers and businesses in California. Cumulatively, recreational fishing contributes more than \$2.5 billion to California's coastal economy every year. For many decades, California's recreational fishing community has embraced conservation measures intended to sustain and rebuild fish populations. We are troubled when we see fishing practices that fail to safeguard precious and valuable ocean resources and marine life. In particular, the large mesh drift gillnet in California has historically taken a significant toll on non-targeted species as it seeks swordfish. This includes billfish that have high value in the recreational fishery, where the fish are typically released alive, whereas marlin have no commercial value whatsoever since commercial take is prohibited. Large mesh drift gillnets also kill marine mammals, sharks, turtles, and other species without commercial value.

We have actively participated in state and federal development of best fishing practices for the California swordfish fishery. We supported the Pacific Fishery Management Council's careful consideration of the benefits and risks associated with drift gillnets and their decision to adopt hard caps on bycatch. Unfortunately, NMFS refused to implement the hard caps recommended by the Council, frustrating the deliberative process. Recently, we engaged in conversation convened by California Department of Fish and Wildlife with commercial fishermen, recreational fishermen, and conservationists to negotiate a drift gillnet permit buyout program. Regrettably, discussions ended without a resolution.

The draft legislation picks up where the Council action and CDFW discussions left off and provides a springboard for discussion between stakeholders. We support California legislation as a means of transitioning away from the use of drift gillnets in California and replaces them with them with selective, sustainable alternatives. We commend the draft legislation for including voluntary retirement of drift gillnet permits, incentivizes that encourage fishermen to cede permits and nets, non-transferability of remaining large drift gillnet permits, as well as accountability measures on the remaining fleet.

We look forward to working with Senator Allen to develop a robust bill to change the tide from indiscriminate industrial gears toward fisheries that support small scale, high yield, low bycatch fisheries, the future of fishing in California.

Sincerely,



Theresa Labriola
Pacific Program Director
Wild Oceans



Jason Schratwieser
Conservation Director
International Game Fish Association



Bill Shedd
Chairman
Coastal Conservation Association
of California



Mike Leonard
Conservation Director
American Sportfishing Association

cc. Jerry Brown, Governor of California
Gavin Newsom, Lieutenant Governor of California
Chuck Bonham, Director, California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Senator Ben Allen