



**GAVIN NEWSOM**  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

Mr. Phil Anderson  
Chair, Pacific Fishery Management Council  
770 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101  
Portland, OR 97220

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

RE: Support for Essential Fish Habitat Protections off California

April 2, 2018

Dear Mr. Anderson and Mr. Oliver,

I am writing to express my support for protecting the living seafloor in the Southern California Bight under the Oceana et al. proposal (Alternative 1.b). These unique deep-ocean ecosystems provide vital habitat that supports recreationally and commercially important fisheries, and have been generally untouched by human activity. Designating this area as an Essential Fish Habitat Conservation Area will protect this pristine habitat and ensure these ecosystems continue to function for the benefit of both local fisheries and environmental processes.

The ecosystems of the Southern California Bight, such as kelp forests, estuaries, and beaches, support a high level of biological diversity – and the deep ocean is no exception. Southern California's undersea geology includes rocky reefs, faults, canyons, and underwater mountains that create a unique seafloor that we are only beginning to explore and understand. Slow-growing and long-lived species of deepwater coral and sponges are unique to this habitat, but are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of bottom trawling.

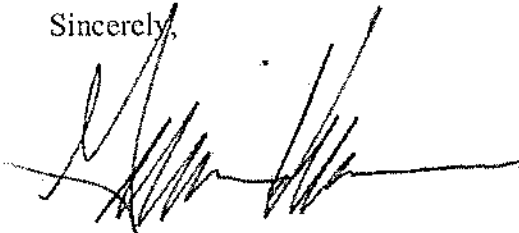
Designating this deep-sea ecosystem as an Essential Fish Habitat Conservation Area will preserve rocky substrate and habitat-forming invertebrates that are important to the foraging, reproduction, and development of recreationally- and commercially-important groundfish species. These habitat protections could indirectly benefit other fisheries by preserving ecosystem function in the complex and interconnected marine environment. Additionally, the large footprint of this protected habitat might also act as a buffer against a warming and acidifying ocean. Creating a refuge for species that are vulnerable to human impacts, such as pollution, overfishing, or climate change, can potentially lessen the impacts of these stressors, safeguarding the resilience of our marine ecosystems and fisheries.



Under the Oceana et al. proposal, designating portions of the Southern California Bight as an Essential Fish Habitat Conservation Area would have a minimal impact on fishing communities. The space that would be closed to bottom trawling encompass areas that have not been utilized by the fishery, and therefore would not displace any current fishing effort. Stakeholder involvement in the development of this proposal has been comprehensive, resulting in a management strategy that successfully balances the needs of the industry with an unprecedented level of protection for deepwater habitat.

The Pacific Fisheries Management Council has an opportunity to establish protections for deep-sea habitat that are bold in scale, yet deliberate in the preservation of current fishing effort. Freezing the footprint of trawl fishing will protect pristine deep-sea habitat that is vital to other important species, creating benefits that extend throughout the region. Ensuring the ecosystem health of the Southern California Bight, a global hotspot of marine biodiversity, is essential to maintaining vibrant fisheries in a time of rapid and extreme environmental change. Please join me in supporting a forward-thinking policy that benefits our ecosystems and fisheries.

Sincerely,

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GAVIN NEWSOM  
Lieutenant Governor  
State of California



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LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

October 26, 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

Dear Chair Pollard and Mr. Thom:

I am writing to express my support for the protecting living seafloor project to ensure sustainable fisheries and healthy ocean ecosystems along the Southern California Bight – the area extending from Point Conception, California to the U.S./Mexico border. We have an opportunity to implement a precautionary management approach to a truly unique ocean habitat which will ensure that the Pacific Ocean off Southern California continues to be a global hotbed for marine wildlife by eliminating the threat of bottom trawling on the seafloor.

The deep sea is a vast unexplored territory and the complexity of undersea geology is lined with rocky reefs, faults, canyons, and underwater mountains throughout Southern California waters, which makes for a diverse seafloor unlike any other place off the U.S. west coast. Federal government advisors are aware of this unique global hotspot, and as Californians, we have an opportunity to work together secure habitat for a broad variety of sea life. This includes migratory large whales, nurseries for white shark pups, breeding habitat for California sea lions; and productive ocean ecosystems for biodiversity such as deep sea corals, octopus, and sponges that provide food and shelter for the economically robust commercial and sport fisheries in Southern California.

It is timely and crucial that we continue to develop new innovative ways to prepare, manage, and mitigate changing ocean conditions caused by climate change along our coastlines, and develop policy and programs to research issues such as ocean acidification and hypoxia. Protection of pristine deep sea habitat found in the Southern California Bight is essential for data collection and understanding California's greatest ally – the Pacific Ocean. Critically, these areas are threatened because of possible expansion of bottom trawling along the seafloor. If bottom trawling is stretched beyond its current small near shore areas, we run the risk of significant and long-term negative impacts to these ecosystems and biodiversity.





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We are in a position to continue to be at the forefront of protecting essential wildlife in our ocean ecosystems by implementing the precautionary management approach. We have the opportunity to set a precedent for the best possible way to protect these systems, while encouraging the discovery of even more species in the process. The ultimate goal is to designate all un-trawled areas south of Point Conception as an Essential Fish Habitat Conservation Area closed to bottom-trawling. This would eliminate the single greatest impact to seafloor habitats among all fishing gears in use off the West Coast.

Please stand together with me as we lead the advancement of sustainable protection of our precious marine wildlife and California's ocean heritage. I am excited at the opportunity to advance meaningful change to protect these species while ensuring sustainability of our fisheries, and I hope that you will join me in this effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gavin Newsom", written over a horizontal line.

Gavin Newsom  
Lieutenant Governor

