

Dorothy Lowman, Chair
Pacific Fishery Management Council
1100 NE Ambassador Place, #101
Portland, Oregon 97220

RE: Agenda Item F.3 – Deep Set Buoy Gear Amendment Scoping

Dear Chair Lowman and Council members,

Sportfishing is the backbone of our industry and sportfishermen are the lifeblood keeping our businesses running. We write to stand with the thousands of sportfishermen calling for change in the West Coast swordfish fishery, and encourage you to begin the authorization process for deep-set buoy gear in March.

The West Coast commercial fishery for swordfish needs alternative gear types to drift gillnets. These mile-long nets, set for hours at a time overnight, ensnare finfish such as striped marlin and many other species of marine life resulting in 64% of the catch being discarded overboard, often injured or dead.

Last year, the Pacific Fishery Management Council took several positive steps in developing a comprehensive Swordfish Management & Monitoring Plan with the goal of reducing bycatch in the West Coast swordfish fishery. We commend the Council for its approval of hard caps on protected and vulnerable species, as well as 100 percent monitoring in the drift gillnet fishery, as interim measures until a transition to cleaner gear occurs.

Additionally, we applaud the Council's decision to leave authorization of shallow-set longline gear outside the Exclusive Economic Zone off of the Council's 2016 agenda. We hope this deletion is permanent, as any West Coast-based longline fishery would not achieve the Council's goal of reducing bycatch and are not a sustainable alternative to drift gillnets.

Deep-set buoy gear provides such an alternative, and we strongly encourage the Pacific Fishery Management Council to authorize this gear in a timely manner. Buoy gear is actively tended, using a hook-and-buoy system that enables fishermen to drop their hooks as deep as 1,200 feet to reach swordfish and respond to a bite within minutes. Scientists and cooperating fishermen have tested the gear extensively for nearly five years and it maintains a 94 percent marketable catch rate.

We believe the work to implement hard caps and 100 percent monitoring can coincide with authorization of deep-set buoy gear. Please ensure that authorization of this important innovation is a priority in 2016.

Thank you in advance on behalf of the International Game Fish Association, Coastal Conservation Association California, the American Sportfishing Association, and the over one hundred sportfishing businesses listed below.

Sincerely,

We the undersigned

American Sportfishing Association

Mike Leonard- Ocean Resource Policy Director
Alexandria, VA

Daiwa Corporation

Terry Pederson- VP of Sales/Marketing
Cypress, CA

Fred Hall Shows, Inc.

Bart Hall- Producer
Camarillo, CA

Pelagic

Colin Sarfeh- Marketing Director
Costa Mesa, CA

Tow Boat US & Vessel Assist

Ben Scanlan- General Manager
Avalon, CA

Dana Wharf Sportfishing and Whale Watching

Donna Kalez- Vice President
Dana Point, CA

Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association

Liz Hamilton- Executive Director
Oregon City, OR

Hobie Cat Company

Morgan Promnitz- Fishing Product Manager
Oceanside, CA

Westernbass

Wayne Wasulko- President
Sacramento, CA

OFBoutdoors

Michael Tapocik- Founder/President
Dana Point, CA

Salmon King Lodge

Bill Divens- Owner/Guide
Red Bluff, CA

Bob Sands Fishing Tackle, Inc.

Sal Vallone- President
Van Nuys, CA

American Fishing Tackle Company (AFTCO)

Bill Shedd- President
Santa Ana, CA

West Marine

Randy Repass- Founder
Watsonville, CA

Shimano American Corporation

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Irvine, CA

BD Outdoors, LLC

Ali Hussainy- President
San Diego, CA

Western Outdoor News

Bob Twilegar- President
San Clemente, CA

Pacific Coast Sportfishing Magazine

Drew Lawler- President & Editorial Director
Newport Beach, CA

Cousins Tackle

Charlie Albright- Customer Service Manager
Huntington Beach, CA

Better Fishtrap/ The Quickline System

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Oakland, CA

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Dosh McClendon- Owner
Novato, CA

AA Worms

Matthew Paino- General Manager
Temecula, CA

Tackle Warehouse

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San Luis Obispo, CA

SeaGuide

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Missoula, CA

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Elise Walker- Associate Marketing Director
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Marshall Madruga- Owner
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Steve Huber- Owner
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Terence Johnson- Owner
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Marianne Papa- Vice President
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Scent Blazer Lures

Mike Rennie- Pro Staff/Distribution
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K Neil Patrick- Chairman
Fremantle, Australia

Jen Wren Sportfishing

Mark Rayor- Owner/Captain
Baja California, Mexico

Baja Fishing Convoys

Orchid Martinez- Owner/President
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Pro-Cure

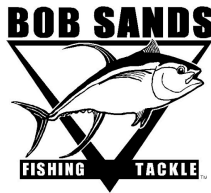
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Bob Rees' Guide Service

Bob Rees- Owner
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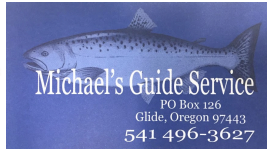
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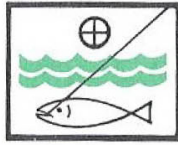
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