



International Game Fish Association, Inc.

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May 11, 2018

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Ted Lieu
U.S. House of Representatives
236 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ben Allen
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 5072
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: State and Federal Legislation on Drift Gillnets

Dear Senator Allen,

I am a lifelong and passionate recreational angler and conservationist residing in Laguna Niguel, California. Ever since witnessing the introduction of drift gill nets to California waters in the 1980s, I have been incredibly concerned about the amount of bycatch produced by this indiscriminant fishing gear.

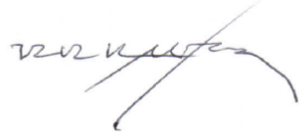
At the peak of the fishery in 1986, there were 251 permitted vessels. Over the past 30 years, managers have tried to reduce bycatch in the drift gillnet fishery by imposing gear restrictions and time area closures. Today, even with these increased regulations and less than 20 vessels participating, the California drift gill net fishery still kills more dolphins, porpoises, and whales than all other fisheries on the U.S. West Coast and Alaska combined. They also kill their fair share of striped marlin, even though the California legislature banned the commercial sale or importation of striped marlin in 1937.

For last several years, as an individual and board member of the International Game Fish Association (IGFA), I have been ardently advocating for the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) to take the appropriate steps to phase out drift gill nets and replace them with more targeted fishing methods, including deep set buoy gear which incurs very little bycatch.

In 2015, over 1,000 concerned recreational anglers submitted the enclosed letter to PFMC Chair Dorothy Lowman requesting the implementation of hard bycatch caps and 100% monitoring while transitioning the swordfish fishery from drift gill nets to more selective gear such as deep set buoy gear. Unfortunately, NOAA did not allow this PFMC proposed requirement to take effect. Little has happened since and our swordfish fishery remains one of the "dirtiest" on the west coast.

On behalf of over 1,000 anglers that signed the 2015 letter to the PFMC, we strongly support legislation that will remove destructive drift gill nets from our waters and replace them with deep set buoy gear. It's time to retire drift gill nets and substitute an alternative gear which will allow California's commercial fishermen to harvest higher quality swordfish without incurring unacceptable levels of bycatch. Thank you for your leadership on this issue. We look forward to our continued work together on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Robert R. Kurz', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Robert R. Kurz
Trustee
International Game Fish Association (IGFA)

CC: Senator Kamala Harris
Senator Shelley Moore Capito
Senator Robert Hertzberg, Chair, Senate Natural Resources & Water Committee
Assembly member Eduardo Garcia, Chair, Assembly Water Parks & Wildlife Committee
Senator Ricardo Lara, Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
Assembly member Lorena Gonzalez, Chair, Assembly Appropriations Committee
Senate President Pro Tem Toni G. Atkins
Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon
Chuck Bonham, Director, California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr.
Lt. Governor Gavin Newsom

and recognition of outstanding accomplishments in the field of angling.

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