



September 4, 2018

Honorable Edmund G. Brown
Governor
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Signature request SB 1017 (Allen)

Dear Governor Brown,

On behalf of the above organizations, we respectfully ask for your signature on SB 1017 (Allen). SB 1017 phases out the use of mile-long nets that drift in the open ocean, compensates drift gillnet fishermen, and encourages a transition to innovative, new swordfishing gear.

The drift gillnet fishery sets nearly-invisible nets, fifty yards deep and up to a mile long. The nets drift freely overnight in the ocean and catch valuable swordfish. But, drift gillnets also ensnare 70 other species of ocean wildlife. This results in half of the catch being discarded as unwanted, prohibited or protected species. Not only are many popular sportfish like marlin and tuna ensnared in drift gillnets, but so are sea turtles, whales, sharks and many other iconic marine species. Recognizing the indiscriminate nature of drift nets, the United Nations banned large-scale drift nets on the high seas twenty years ago. The U.S. prohibits drift nets of any size in the east coast fisheries and the European Union disallowed drift netting among its 27 member states in 2002.

Your signature on SB 1017 will enable the state to develop a drift gillnet transition program seeded with private and public funds. Once established, California will phase out the use of drift gillnet fishing over a four-year period and compensate fishermen a fair market value for their permits and nets. Fishermen will also be required to surrender their nets to ensure the gear is not used elsewhere.

Wild Oceans, the International Game Fish Association, Coastal Conservation Association of California and American Sportfishing Association worked closely with Senator Allen to promote a transition away from drift nets to safer, more selective fishing methods for swordfish, tuna and other commercial species.

One such emerging fishing method is the use of buoy-gear, which fishermen in Florida have used for over a decade to supply a high-value product with virtually no bycatch. Off California, researchers and fishermen have modified buoy-gear to fish deep, during the day. More than 80 percent of the hookups are swordfish and only 2 percent is bycatch. Dozens of drift gillnet swordfish fishermen have applied for permits to use a modified version called deep-set buoy gear. We also recognize that some commercial fisherman may return to the time-honored practice of harpooning swordfish, which results in zero percent bycatch rate and produces some of the best quality commercial harvest in terms of quality.

SB 1017 passed the Senate (36-1) and the Assembly (78-0) with overwhelming bipartisan support. The recreational fishing industry is extremely grateful to Senator Allen for leading this bi-partisan effort that

garnered the support of such a broad coalition united in its desire to transition the California swordfish fishery to more sustainable methods. Passage of SB1017 is a landmark moment for the future of healthy fisheries off the California coast.

We urge you to sign SB 1017 (Allen) and thank you in advance for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,



Theresa Labriola
Pacific Program Director
Wild Oceans



Conservation Director
International Game Fish Association



Bill Shedd
Chairman
Coastal Conservation Association



Mike Leonard
Conservation Director
American Sportfishing Association