

November 24, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Act on Senate-passed bill (S. 906) to curtail use of wasteful driftnets

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader Hoyer:

We represent a group of varied stakeholders within the fisheries management world. Although we have disagreed in the past, in this case we are in agreement in urging the House to take up and vote on S. 906, the *Driftnet Modernization and Bycatch Reduction Act* as passed by the U.S. Senate. Enactment of this bipartisan legislation will transition the last fishery in the country that uses large mesh drift gillnets away from this damaging fishing practice. Although the fishery is small, with fewer than twenty active fishermen, it discards more marine life, including valuable gamefish, than it keeps and kills more dolphins, whales, and porpoises than all other fisheries combined along the West Coast and in Alaska.

We understand that the House Appropriations Committee has raised concern regarding section 6 of the bill, which was added during the bill's markup in the Senate Commerce Committee. Although this language is not directly related to the driftnet issue or the bill as introduced, section 6 is necessary to make workable an important management tool in the Pacific halibut fishery. The section's fee authority, proposed not to be subject to appropriation or fiscal year limitation, is modeled after existing provisions under the Magnuson-Stevens Act that are routinely used in other fisheries around the country.

Despite the bill following existing statutory precedent, the House Appropriations Committee position would tie collection and disbursement of these fees to the appropriations process. Unfortunately, such a change will significantly hamstring the application of this well-used tool to the halibut fishery. Therefore, we strongly encourage the House to consider S. 906 as passed by the Senate. We are hopeful that the House Appropriations Committee's concerns can be addressed through the appropriations process, report language, or another means that otherwise does not amend S. 906.

Thank you for your consideration of our views, and we look forward to working with you, the Appropriations Committee, and the Natural Resources Committee on this important issue and seeing S. 906 enacted into law.

Sincerely,

American Sportfishing Association

BoatU.S.

Center for Sportfishing Policy

International Game Fish Association

National Marine Manufacturers Association

Oceana

The Pew Charitable Trusts

Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

cc: The Honorable Raúl Grijalva, Chair, U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources
The Honorable Nita Lowey, Chair, U.S. House Committee on Appropriations

November 10, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Steve J. Scalise
Minority Whip
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Hoyer, Minority Leader McCarthy, and Minority Whip Scalise:

As leading recreational fishing and boating organizations, we write you to respectfully request your support of a scheduled suspension vote and passage of the Driftnet Modernization and Bycatch Reduction Act (S.906/H.R. 1979) during the lame duck session.

For many years, our community has supported efforts to transition away from drift gillnets to safer, more selective fishing methods for swordfish, tuna and other commercial species. Large-mesh drift gillnets are an anachronistic commercial fishing method that produce excessive bycatch and waste, including of popular sportfish, marine mammals and sea turtles. Over half of the catch in the California drift gillnet fishery is discarded as unwanted, prohibited, or protected species. It's time large-mesh drift gillnets are eliminated from California as they have been throughout the rest of the country.

In other U.S. and international fisheries, these gillnets have already been replaced by methods like deep-set buoy gear that are efficient for the targeted species and produce virtually no bycatch. By helping to transition the California drift gillnet fishery toward these more sustainable fishing methods, this legislation would represent a tremendous marine conservation victory that we have been working toward for many years.

We greatly appreciate your leadership on this important legislation that will benefit the health and abundance of the marine resources we depend on.

Sincerely,

American Sportfishing Association
Angler Action Foundation
Balboa Angling Club
Boat US
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Center for Sportfishing Policy
Coastal Conservation Association
California Coastside Fishing Club
Dana Angling Club
Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation
International Game Fish Association
Kenai River Sportfishing Association

Laguna Niguel Billfish Club
Los Pescadores Fishing Club
Marine Retailers Association of the Americas
National Marine Manufacturers Association
National Professional Anglers Association
Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association
Recreational Fishing Alliance
The Billfish Foundation
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Tuna Club of Avalon
Wild Oceans