



Protecting Marin Since 1934

June 20, 2018

California State Assembly  
Assembly Member Eduardo Garcia, Chair  
Assembly Member James Gallagher, Vice Chair  
Committee on Water, Parks, and Wildlife  
1020 N. Street, Room 160  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Support for SB 1017, the Sustainable Swordfish & Marine Life Protection Act

Dear Asm. Garcia and Gallagher,

Marin Conservation League (MCL) is an environmental organization dedicated to the preservation, conservation and enhancement of the natural resources and environment of Marin County. We support regional measures that protect the bay, marine and coastal areas, and in 2015, our organization supported expanding the boundaries of Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary (CBNMS) and Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary (GFNMS).

Now, it is important to focus on unsustainable fishing practices that threaten the marine life in this and surrounding waters. We support SB 1017 which will significantly protect marine life and the Bay Area's marine ecosystem. We urge you to support SB 1017 to transition California away from one of the most harmful fishing practices on the West Coast by reducing the number of driftnets used to catch swordfish off California's coast. This bill, which implements a permit buyback program combined with incentives and tighter protective requirements, will lead to a phase out of the remaining state driftnet activity. We understand this bill is a work in progress and the author has sought to engage stakeholders to inform the development of the buyback program, and we fully support this effort.

California is the last state that allows fishermen to use harmful driftnets in the swordfish fishery. Large scale driftnets have been banned on the high seas, in all other states, and in many countries worldwide because of the unavoidable impacts on marine wildlife, including whales, dolphins, sharks, pinnipeds, and sea turtles. Many of the species harmed by these nets are protected under state and federal law or covered under international protective agreements, such as the sperm whale, leatherback sea turtle, loggerhead sea turtle, common thresher shark, Bigeye thresher shark, smooth hammerhead shark, scalloped hammerhead shark, shortfin mako shark and longfin mako shark.

According to data collected by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA)

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fishery observer program, California's driftnet fishery discards on average over one half of all fish caught, kills over 70 different marine species as bycatch, and has among the highest rates of marine mammal and sea turtle harmful interactions of all US West Coast fisheries. Continuing to support a method of fishing that discards more than half of what it catches is unacceptable.

According to the latest federal estimates, over the 2001-2015 period California swordfish driftnets were responsible for the death of an estimated six endangered Pacific leatherback sea turtles, four loggerhead sea turtles, and seven sperm whales. During the same period the fishery caught over 1,300 marine mammals and threw overboard over 140,000 fish and sharks. These animals play an important role in the ocean ecosystem.

We strongly support this legislation, and are encouraged that the legislation will end driftnet fishing after 2023. In addition, we encourage you to continue funding to those organizations who are retrieving lost, abandoned, or discarded fishing gear in the Pacific Ocean.

Thank you for this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda J. Novy". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Linda J. Novy

cc: Asm. Marc Levine