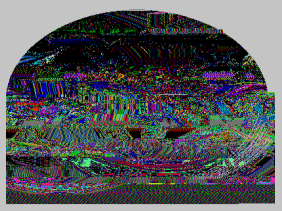
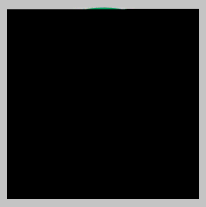

June 9, 2022

Mr. Marc Gorelnik, Chair
Pacific Fishery Management Council
70 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101
Portland, OR 97220

Re: Agenda Item G.4 – Drift Gillnet Fishery Hard Caps

Dear Chair Gorelnik and Council Members:

Wild Oceans, the International Game Fish Association, American Sportfishing Association and Coastal Conservation Association of California are invested in the sustainable management of our Pacific highly migratory species and the removal of indiscriminate fishing gear from our oceans. We support the transition of the California swordfish fishery from drift gillnets to sustainable gear with minimal bycatch or negative impacts on the open ocean ecosystem. In the meantime, we stand behind the Council's effort to develop hard caps on the drift gillnet fishery. We encourage the Council and National Marine Fisheries service to finalize this action as soon as possible.

We represent conservation minded recreational anglers and businesses. Cumulatively, recreational fishing contributes more than $2.5 billion to California's coastal economy every year. For many decades, California's recreational fishing community has embraced conservation measures intended to sustain and rebuild fish populations. We are troubled when we see fishing practices that fail to safeguard precious and valuable ocean resources and marine life.

In particular, the large mesh drift gillnet in California has historically taken a significant toll on non-targeted species as it seeks swordfish. This includes billfish that have high value in the recreational fishery, where the fish are typically released alive, whereas marlin have no commercial value whatsoever since commercial take is prohibited. Large mesh drift gillnets also kill marine mammals, sharks, turtles, and other species without commercial value.

In the past two years, the drift gillnet fishery has changed its focus to target Pacific bluefin tuna, another economically and culturally valuable recreational fish. This shift