



March 21, 2024

The Honorable Steve Bennett
California State Assembly
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0038

RE: Support for Assembly Bill 2220

Dear Assemblymember Bennett,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we strongly support your Assembly Bill 2220, which will uphold the state's commitment to protecting marine biodiversity. AB 2220 will establish management measures to reduce entanglement, injury, and death of marine life from set gillnet fishing gear— nets that stretch upwards of a mile in length used to catch California halibut and white seabass off Southern California. Enacting AB 2220 will reduce fishery bycatch impacts, strengthen protections for protected species, and provide critical tools for California's state fishery managers.

AB 2220 will clean up existing loopholes in state law that allow set gillnets to incidentally catch and sell protected species, like great white sharks and giant seabass. Of all recreational and commercial fishing gears, the set gillnet fishery is the only one in California allowed to retain and sell protected species. This exemption sets a bad precedent that non-selective gear types are not beholden to the same rules as more sustainable fishing methods.

AB 2220 would remove an exemption that allows gillnets to be used in state waters from 1-3 miles from shore around the Channel Islands, among the most biodiverse and productive waters in California. Eliminating this exemption from the law would support California's 30 x 30 strategy of strengthening coastal protections within National Marine Sanctuaries and would provide the same protections against set gillnets as the rest of the state for California's most vibrant nearshore waters.

AB 2220 would make set gillnet permits non-transferable, meaning the permits cannot be sold and will prevent new entry into the fishery. The handful of existing gillnetters can still fish their permits until retirement.

AB 2220 would give the California Department of Fish and Wildlife the authority to place third-party fishery observers on state-managed fisheries. Independent fishery observers play a crucial role in sustainable and transparent fishery management by collecting unbiased data on fishing activities, catch composition, and bycatch. A critical management gap for many state-managed fisheries, including the California set gillnet fishery, is a lack of fishery monitoring and observer data.

AB 2220 is a significant step towards sustainable fishery management and biodiversity protections in California.

We thank you for your leadership on AB 2220 and urge your colleagues to vote Aye on the bill.

Sincerely,

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Director of Advocacy
Resource Renewal Institute

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California Campaign Director and Pacific Marine Scientist
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