



WEST PALM BEACH FISHING CLUB

• Established 1934 •

February 8, 2017

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Margo Schulze-Haugen
Highly Migratory Species Management Division (F/SF1)
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20930

Dear Ms. Schulze-Haugen,

On behalf of the over 1,400 members of the West Palm Beach Fishing Club (WPBFC) I would like to voice our strong opposition to the proposed Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) currently being considered by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) that would allow pelagic longlining in the East Florida Coast closed area. The WPBFC has long supported billfish conservation efforts and was among those years ago who advocated for the pelagic longline closure off Florida's east coast to protect juvenile swordfish, rebuild swordfish stocks and to protect sea turtles and other billfish species that are often caught on the gear. Allowing pelagic longline vessels back into the closed area under the guise of 'research' threatens the many quantifiable gains that have been made to protect these resources and rebuild the swordfish fishery. The WPBFC sees no positive outcome by approving this EFP.

Four years ago the WPBFC submitted comments to NMFS opposing a similar proposal. As we did then, the WPBFC urges NMFS to deny the proposed EFP application. The resurgence of swordfish stocks in our region has been a conservation success story. The NMFS is to be lauded for their foresight in protecting and rebuilding swordfish stocks through prudent management. Please do not jeopardize all that has been accomplished.

Respectfully,

Tom Twyford
President