



**Wild  
Oceans**  
For the future of fishing

# The Horizon

## End Zones

The goal in life, said the Greek philosopher Zeno, is to live in agreement with nature. So too the goal of *Wild Oceans'* programs is to provide fishing opportunities, for both food and recreation, in ways that sustain the ocean environment and all its living communities, our own included.

We are approaching the goal line on a pair of projects to conserve predators and prey. For Atlantic menhaden, it's 4<sup>th</sup> and goal as we get ready for adoption of an ecosystem-based approach to protecting this vital forage fish, an approach we've been advocating for years. If we don't get it in mid-November, the game goes into overtime. (p. 3)

Which is where we are with the Billfish Conservation Act. When Congress passed the law in 2012, we thought we'd won; but things got tied up in implementation and we had to return to Congress to close a loophole in order to de-commercialize all marlin and sailfish on the U.S. mainland. A bipartisan group of lawmakers is on the verge of doing just that (p. 8).

The time and effort we've put into advancing this far on both issues recalls coach Woody Hayes "3 yards and a cloud

of dust," grinding out yardage in a steady march to the end zone.

Of course, the defense always digs in as you near the goal line. After crossing the 50-yard line in our campaign to replace indiscriminate longlines and drift nets in the swordfish and tuna fisheries – safer,



cleaner alternatives such as buoy gear are gaining ground in both the Atlantic and Pacific – NOAA Fisheries is once again studying ways to bring back multi-mile longlining (pp. 2 and 5).

Always, those who don't share our goals, who don't see a problem or don't want to do what's needed to resolve it, will seek ways to slow the game down. Demanding more studies is a favorite strategy (see also menhaden). New players who don't know the history of the game often view more research as reasonable, not to mention a way to avoid making tough decisions.

Our game plan is to achieve healthy resources and fisheries by continually advancing the ball until we reach the goal line. As long as *Wild Oceans* is in the game, that's what we'll be doing. ■

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- OCEAN VIEW: YOU CAN'T FORCE A SQUARE PEG INTO A ROUND HOLE 2
- IT'S TIME TO FISH OR SAVE BAIT 3
- NOAA FISHERIES MISSES OPPORTUNITY TO TEST MORE VALUABLE FISHING METHODS 4
- OCEAN ACIDIFICATION SENDS RIPPLES THROUGH THE FOOD WEB 6
- STAFF TRAVEL LOG 7
- SENATE STRENGTHENS BILLFISH PROTECTIONS 8

## Our Mission

*Wild Oceans* was founded by anglers in 1973. Like the sportsmen before us who pioneered wildlife conservation on land, we are passionate protectors of fish and the wild world we share.

***Our mission is to keep the oceans wild to preserve fishing opportunities for the future.*** To do this, we bring conservation-minded fishermen and pro-fishing environmentalists together to promote a broad, ecosystems approach to fisheries management that reflects our expanding circle of concern for all marine life and the future of fishing.

So much of what we love about the sea, about fish, about fishing, is in the wildness. But that wild world, and the future of fishing, now hangs in the balance. Everything we do, every decision we make, must be guided by a clear vision of the future we want for our oceans and of how the fishing public and responsible consumers will fit into that future.

## You can't force a square peg into a round hole

For a number of years now, NOAA Fisheries has been trying to bring longlining back to coastal waters, in both the Atlantic and Pacific, areas that fishery managers put off-limits to the indiscriminate commercial gear years ago to protect a range of vulnerable species taken as bycatch. Given the virulent opposition of conservationists and fishermen, coupled with successful efforts to promote safer, cleaner alternatives, including by the agency itself, NOAA's actions recall Peter May's cynical dictum: "What we learn from history is that we never learn from history."

The impetus for the return of longlines comes from east coast fishermen still using them in open areas of the Atlantic who want to get back into closed areas, and west coast fishermen who see little future in the swordfish drift net fishery and want an industrial-scale fishery to replace it.

New Rule (with a nod to Bill Maher): If you're going to get rid of a type of fishing that kills all kinds of ocean creatures indiscriminately, don't replace it with one that does the same thing. A square peg won't fit into a round hole, no mat-

ter how many times you try.

On page 5, Theresa Labriola writes about NOAA's decision to grant a pair of permits for experimental longlining off the west coast, permits *Wild Oceans* opposes. Not because we're against research, but because the intent is to fish with multi-mile, multi-hook longlines in a manner similar to the way they were fished at the time the gear was prohibited, with the exception of the use of non-offset circle hooks.

As Theresa points out, by narrowly focusing on longlining-as-usual, issuance of these permits foregoes an opportunity to test a range of bycatch reduction strategies, specifically shorter sets and soak-times and how they might enhance survival of incidentally-caught fish and other wildlife. Worse still, it could lead to re-opening protected areas to increased bycatch.

Earlier this year we objected to NOAA granting a similar permit to fish longlines up to 25 miles in length in east coast closed areas. NOAA's response to our suggestion that the experiment should instead test shorter mainline lengths (e.g., 5 miles) and soak times was that

"it would not be representative of how commercial (pelagic longline) vessels normally fish their gear." Really? That's the point, isn't it? We should be asking fishermen to change the way they fish rather than expecting the fish and their environment will somehow change to accommodate longlining.

But there's good news on both the eastern and western fronts, too. Because of the bad press it was getting, the Florida university backing the Atlantic longline research recently decided to withdraw its support, leaving the project in limbo. And in direct response to *Wild Oceans*, NOAA Fisheries did release this statement: "(We) agree that research investigating shorter mainline lengths, soak times, and gear retrieval techniques would be valuable," calling it a "high priority" for future research.

Out west, six permits were issued for 2017 to demonstrate the viability of swordfish buoy gear to the Pacific coast's fishing community and two dozen more commercial fishermen have requested permits to fish with the gear in 2018.

– Ken Hinman, *President*

## For the Future of Fishing

Wild Oceans is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to keeping the oceans wild to preserve fishing opportunities for the future.

### Our Goals:

- preventing overfishing and restoring depleted fish populations to healthy levels
- promoting sustainable use policies that balance commercial, recreational and ecological values
- modifying or eliminating wasteful fishing practices
- improving our understanding of fish and their role in the marine environment
- preserving fish habitat and water quality

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# It's time to fish or save bait



by Ken Hinman

On November 13-14, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission will decide whether to move to an ecosystems approach to conserving menhaden beginning in 2018 or stick with the status quo while the role of this small but vital forage fish is studied further. During the public comment period that ended October 24<sup>th</sup>, the commission heard loud and clear from thousands and thousands of citizens of the east coast and dozens of fishing and environmental organizations, including Wild Oceans, that the status quo is not an option.

## **Draft Amendment 3 to the Interstate Management Plan for Atlantic Menhaden Finally Offers a Way to Protect “The Most Important Fish in the Sea”**

In nature, you cannot do just one thing, as Walter Youngquist puts it, because everything is connected to everything else. That’s why you can’t fish for Atlantic menhaden without impacting the ocean ecosystem and why the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission is on the verge of amending its fishing rules for what many call “the most important fish in the sea”, because of its vital role as prey for so many predators – larger fish, birds and marine mammals – up and down the east coast.

The 15-state Commission held hearings and took written comments through October 24<sup>th</sup> on Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Menhaden. The focal point of the amendment, as far as conservationists and the majority of east coast fishermen are concerned, is setting new, precautionary standards, known as “ecological reference points”, de-

signed to leave enough menhaden in the water for dependent predators while allowing reasonable yields to the menhaden fisheries.

## **Menhaden are Key to a Healthy Coastal Ecosystem**

*Ecological reference points (ERPs) will protect the critical role of menhaden as forage by maintaining a larger population, which means more food in the water for dependent predators and more robust east coast fisheries, sport and commercial.*

Atlantic menhaden occupy an important link in the coastal marine food chain, according to Draft Amendment 3, transferring energy from plankton into animal biomass. Menhaden support a wide variety of predator species, including important commercial and recreational fish such as striped bass and bluefish, iconic birds such as osprey and bald eagles, and charismatic marine mammals such as the humpback whale. Reduced menhaden populations impact the abundance and diversity of predator populations, particularly if other prey options are limited or unavailable. Given menhaden are found from Maine to Florida, the species serves an ecological role along much of the Atlantic coast. Thus, maintaining a healthy Atlantic menhaden population contributes to a balanced marine ecosystem.

## **Marine Predators Depend on Menhaden**

Striped bass and osprey are just two of the many predators whose numbers are directly linked to the abundance of menhaden. A brand new study of ecological reference points for menhaden validates what anglers know full well

– the health of the striper population is directly linked to the abundance of menhaden. Fewer menhaden in the water means fewer striped bass. The diets of many seabirds on the Atlantic coast are predominantly menhaden, according to the Audubon Society. For the osprey, for example, menhaden make up 75-100% of their diet, depending on the time of year.

The effects of predators not finding enough menhaden ripple throughout the food web. Forced to turn to other prey, competition for a finite food base intensifies, with a loser for every winner. Hungry striped bass in Chesapeake Bay, for instance, are consuming larger quantities of bay anchovy, a staple in the diet of weakfish, along with larger numbers of young weakfish, severely depressing a population that supported stable fisheries for 200 years.

## **Option E – Interim Use of 75% Target, 40% Threshold Is the Best Available Science**

*Wild Oceans is supporting ERP Option E – “The 75% Solution” – because it’s the best available science and it’s ready to be implemented in 2018.*

We have been advocating for the “75% Solution” since June 2009, when, after reviewing the scientific literature, we submitted a white paper recommending a target population of 75% of an un-fished population and an overfished threshold of  $B_{MSY}$ , approximately 40% of un-fished biomass. Subsequently, Smith *et al* and the Lenfest Ocean Program published peer reviewed papers by multiple co-authors, revealing an emerging consensus around the 75/40 ‘rule of thumb’ approach to conserv-

(Continued on page 4)

ing forage species. This consensus and the rationale behind it is discussed and referenced in depth in the landmark 2015 *Wild Oceans* report, *Resource Sharing: The Berkeley Criterion*.

Now, eight years later, the 75/40 option is presented as Ecological Reference Point Option E in Draft Amendment 3 to the Interstate Menhaden Plan. It has strong backing within the scientific community – a letter signed by over 100 ecologists was recently submitted to the ASMFC– and is ready to be implemented now, fairly balancing the needs of the ecosystem with those of the fisheries for menhaden and other species.

### **Status Quo is NOT an Option!**

*Option E allows for work to continue on the development and testing of menhaden-specific ecosystem models, but waiting years until they are usable (Option B) is unnecessary and extremely risky.*

If adopted, Option E reference points would stay in place while a team of ASMFC scientists works on multi-species models and evaluates their ability to suggest alternative ERPs more specific to menhaden. This work is slated to be completed by the end of 2019 – a timeline the researchers admit is “ambitious” – after which the results will be peer reviewed and then tested through a process called a Man-

agement Strategy Evaluation. If the ASMFC considers the models appropriate for meeting agreed-upon ecosystem objectives, they likely would not be implemented before the 2022 fishing season.

The Commission has been talking about implementing an ecosystems approach to conserve menhaden for at least 15 years. Further delay is unnecessary and very risky. In fact, the strongest argument against delay is the prospect of the fishery being managed another 5 years or more using the current, single-species reference points, which could allow for a more than 50% increase over current catch levels, resulting in a loss of the growth in the menhaden stock we've seen in recent years.

### **The Menhaden Constituency: These Are Our Fish!**

*The menhaden industry does not own the resource, it belongs to all of us. We enjoy the fisheries menhaden support, directly and indirectly, value the wildlife it sustains, and benefit socially and economically from a healthy and diverse ocean environment. The public pays the costs of management – from stock assessments and all the science that goes into them to fisheries regulation, monitoring and enforcement. The ASMFC has a responsibility to manage and conserve menhaden for*

the greatest benefit to the nation as a whole.

In November, the ASMFC Menhaden Management Board should listen to the public and:

- Adopt **ERP Option E** because it is the best science available and will protect menhaden's ecological role NOW, not later, providing interim protection for menhaden while studies continue, but recognizing that the results of those studies are uncertain and years away.
- Explicitly agree to manage the menhaden population to a new **TARGET of 75%** the unfished level. Maintaining this level of abundance in the water is the goal for a forage species, not simply preventing depletion (threshold).
- Adopt **Chesapeake Bay Reduction Fishery Cap Option B with Sub-option B**. The Chesapeake Bay is the most critical nursery area for Atlantic menhaden. This option would reduce the allowable reduction fishery catch to the most recent 5-year average and would prevent unused catch from rolling over into subsequent years. ■



IMPACTS ON ECOSYSTEM NOT CONSIDERED

# NOAA fisheries misses opportunity to test more valuable fishing methods

by Theresa Labriola,  
Pacific Programs Director

For decades, recreational fishermen have advocated for protecting California's open ocean ecosystem from industrial longline vessels. A tide of evidence suggests that longlining harms the ocean because the practice discards nearly half its catch, negatively affects recreational species, and regularly kills endangered sea turtles as well as seabirds. Now, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) stands poised to issue an exempted fishing permit (EFP) that allows two California commercial fishing vessels to test multi-mile longlines baited with up to 2500 hooks. Their decision misses an opportunity to take the "long" out of longlines and to research fishing methods that may prove valuable to the fisherman and the ecosystem.

The Pacific Fishery Management Council, the California Legislature and the California Fish and Game Commission have historically rejected multi-mile longlines because of unavoidable bycatch problems with endangered sea turtles as well as recreationally-important species such as marlin, sharks and tuna. NOAA Fisheries incorrectly asserts that these prohibitions were based on old longline gear fishing practices (i.e., J-hooks and squid bait) rather than those used in Hawaii starting in 2004 and proposed for EFP fishing (i.e., circle hooks, mackerel-type bait, sea turtle handling procedures, 100 percent observer coverage, etc.).

*Wild Oceans* has supported a moratorium on Pacific longlines, including those used in Hawaii, because of the nature of the way it is fished. Multi-

mile longlines, baited with thousands of hooks, cannot control what they catch, and a significant portion of the catch is dead when brought to the boat or post-release. Despite the use of circle hooks, which we support in all fisheries, longline-caught fish can remain on the line for many hours. Those that take the bait when the gear is being set die regardless of how non-lethal the hooks may be. That must change, which is why we need NOAA Fisheries to take this opportunity to encourage the testing of modified gear, such as shorter sets and soak-times, that might enhance survival of incidentally-caught fish and undersize target fish.

Instead NOAA Fisheries is moving forward with issuing an EFP without adequately considering the impact on the California Current Large Marine Ecosystem (CCLME). For example, NOAA Fisheries predicts the bycatch of 6,395 blue sharks for every 1000 shallow-set hooks. But, recent shallow-set longline tests with a soak time of just four hours resulted in the catch of 28 blue sharks per thousand hooks. By ignoring this data, NOAA Fisheries has failed to adequately analyze the impact of this EFP on blue sharks and their role in the CCLME.

Furthermore, NOAA Fisheries' analysis relied on limited longline observer records from the high seas longline fishery east of 140° west latitude. That data provides an incomplete picture of bycatch. By stratifying the data, NOAA Fisheries fails to adequately consider the probable impact of longlines on the CCLME which produces abundant ecosystem goods and services includ-



Blue shark photo courtesy of Mark Conlin, Southwest Fisheries Science Center

ing fisheries, recreation, tourism, energy production, climate regulation, pollution control, and transportation. This highly productive ecosystem supports forage fish populations that serve as food for larger species, including migratory fishes, birds and mammals that transit the California Current every year. By failing to consider how the composition of species within the CCLME differs from the composition in the high seas data area and ignoring these differences, NOAA Fisheries fails to consider the impact of the EFP on marine mammals, sea turtles, sea birds and large predatory fish that reside in or migrate through the CCLME.

The benefit of the prohibition on industrial longliners is the protection of the health of the California Current Large Marine Ecosystem, including California's multi-billion dollar recreational fishing economy. Imagine the effect that placing hundreds of thousands of hooks in the water will have. Valuable top predators that are not on the menu will be discarded dead or alive. NOAA Fisheries' one-dimensional decision focuses on increasing commercial outcomes at the expense of our long-term goal of maintaining a healthy open ocean ecosystem and its top predator populations. Therefore, we will continue to seek your support to keep multi-mile longlines out of the Pacific and for research on more selective gears that avoid bycatch, lead to the successful live release of bycatch species, and support small-scale commercial fishing communities in California. ■



Photo of pteropod courtesy of Russ Hopcroft, UAF/NOAA

SCIENTISTS FORECAST TROUBLE FOR PREDATORS OF THE OCEANS SMALLEST CREATURES

# Ocean acidification sends ripples through the food web

by Pam Lyons Gromen,  
Wild Oceans Executive Director

They are the most abundant animal life forms on our planet, the mightily important yet often overlooked zooplankton. Free-floating along with ocean currents, zooplankton are the ocean's primary energy conduit, grazing on microscopic plant life called phytoplankton (which capture the sun's energy to produce food) and then transferring this food energy to forage fish and larger filter-feeding ocean predators like whale sharks and the majestic baleen whales.

But the ocean's plankton foundation may be starting to crumble.

Since the Industrial Revolution, our oceans have absorbed nearly 30% (550 billion tons) of global carbon dioxide emissions. As a result, the acidity of seawater is rising, and the availability of carbonate ions, the building blocks of shelled organisms, is declining. Today, the average pH of surface ocean water is 8.1, a 30% decrease from the pre-industrial era.

Among the zooplankton species most affected by ocean acidification are the pteropods or sea butterflies, pea-sized snails that dwell in the water column. A research team led by Dr. Richard Feely of the NOAA Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory collected pteropods from nearshore waters off the west coast, from central California up to the

Canadian border, and found that more than half of them had severely dissolved shells.<sup>i</sup> Weakened shells impair the snails' ability to swim and escape predation, which inevitably leads to diminishing populations.

As scientists dive deeper into the effects of ocean acidification, "the other carbon dioxide problem," they are finding that impacts are more far-reaching than originally thought. Organisms not harmed directly by acidifying waters will be affected by changes to their food web, the complex matrix of feeding relationships that helps maintain the structure and balance of an ecosystem. In the California Current Large Marine Ecosystem, pteropods are an important food source for pink and chum salmon, sablefish and rock sole.

A report summarizing eight years of investigations into how ocean acidification alters food webs and the ecosystem services that benefit humans was released in October by the German research network BIOACID (Biological Impacts of Ocean Acidification).<sup>ii</sup> The researchers found that "even small alterations at the base of the food web can have knock-on effects for higher trophic levels." They caution that warming waters combined with the effects of acidification will make it increasingly difficult for economically important fish species to find prey, which leads to reductions in fishery yields. "It is crucial to consider ocean acidifica-

tion and warming in the management of fish stocks and marine areas," the report authors advise.

And in the United States, NOAA Fisheries is working with our regional fishery management councils to do just that. In 2015, the agency released its Climate Science Strategy, providing a national framework for the development and inclusion of climate science in the management of living marine resources. The strategy is being implemented through regional action plans that *Wild Oceans* is following through the work of the Pacific and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils.

Established by Congress in 2009, NOAA's Ocean Acidification Program supports regional action plans by funding research to monitor ocean chemistry, model and forecast ecosystem impacts, and better understand how human communities will be affected. Assessing the United States' vulnerability to ocean acidification is essential to building resiliency into our fisheries management system and safeguarding the millions of people dependent on our nation's fishery resources. ■

i Bednarsek, N., Feely, R.A., Reum, J.C.P., Peterson, W., Menkel, J., Alin, S.R., Hales, B., 2014. *Limacina helicina* shell dissolution as an indicator of declining habitat suitability due to ocean acidification in the California Current Ecosystem. *Proc. Roy. Soc. B* 281, 20140123. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2014.0123>.

ii Exploring Ocean Change: BIOACID – Biological Impacts of Ocean Acidification." Ocean Acidification, Ocean Acidification International Coordination Centre, 24 Oct. 2017, [news-ocean-acidification-icc.org/2017/10/24/exploring-ocean-change-bio-acid-biological-impacts-of-ocean-acidification/](https://www.ocean-acidification-icc.org/2017/10/24/exploring-ocean-change-bio-acid-biological-impacts-of-ocean-acidification/).

## Taj Mahal Concert Benefits Wild Oceans

Legendary blues artist, Taj Mahal, paused his international tour to host a benefit concert for *Wild Oceans* and do some marlin fishing at the 31<sup>st</sup> Big Island Marlin Tournament. On August 27<sup>th</sup>, Taj Mahal and the Hula Blues Band with special guest Willie K played to a standing room only crowd at the Hawaii Big Game Fishing Clubhouse at Honokohau Harbor in Kona. As a life long avid fisherman, Taj has a deep connection to the ocean. He was bitten by the marlin-fishing bug early in his career as he traveled to a number of foreign destinations, although Hawaii remains in his heart.

Join *Wild Oceans* today with a special Taj Mahal membership and receive Taj Mahal and The Hula Blues Band “Live From Kauai” CD and a *Wild Oceans* vintage t-shirt. Visit: <https://wildoceans.org/Taj+Mahal+Membership+Special>



### CURRENTS

## Staff travel log

 Theresa Labriola, *Wild Oceans* Pacific Program Director, met with the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean at their annual plenary meeting held in **Vancouver, British Columbia** from July 12-17. The ISC delegates reviewed the most recent stock status information for northern Pacific stocks. She spoke with delegates specifically about *Wild Oceans* concern about the historically low Pacific bluefin tuna stock as well as the continued overfishing of striped marlin.

 The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened August 8-10 in **Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**. *Wild Oceans* Executive Director Pam Lyons Gromen attended the meeting to support next steps for implementing the Council's Ecosystems Approach to Fisheries Management Guidance Document, which is to systematically evaluate important ecosystem interactions and identify areas at high risk. Pam advocated for the inclusion of key food web connections in the risk assessment. Pam also urged the Council to evaluate options for safeguarding bullet and frigate mackerel as prey for marlin and other highly migratory species. Earlier this year, the National Marine Fisheries Service declined to include these mackerels in a Council action that prevents the development of commercial fisheries for unmanaged forage fish.

 *Wild Oceans* president Ken Hinman attended a meeting of the ASMFC

Menhaden Management Board on August 2<sup>nd</sup> in **Alexandria, Virginia**. The board approved Draft Amendment 3 for public comment, which was accepted through October 24<sup>th</sup>. The amendment proposes to manage Atlantic menhaden to balance the needs of the ecosystem and fisheries (see page 3). Hinman also participated in a strategy meeting of fishing and environmental groups cooperating to maximize public input in favor of ecosystem-based catch limits.

 Theresa travelled to **Busan, South Korea** to participate in the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission Northern Committee meeting as a member of the United States Delegation. During the meeting, held August 28-September 1, delegates agreed upon a second rebuilding target for Pacific bluefin tuna that returns the population to 20 percent of the historic spawning levels by 2034. She spoke with delegates about the continued overfishing of north Pacific striped marlin and discussed options for conservation.

 As an advisor to the Mid-Atlantic Council's Ecosystem and Ocean Planning Committee, Pam joined the Committee in **Baltimore, Maryland** on September 12 to discuss and refine ecological, social and economic elements to include in the Council's risk assessment. Once complete, the risk assessment will enable the Council to focus its limited resources on the most vulnerable ecosystem interactions.

 From September 11-17, Theresa attended the Pacific Fishery Council Meeting in **Boise, Idaho** and provided public comment on the ecosystem and highly migratory species agenda items. The Council decided to begin work on the Fishery Ecosystem Plan Cross-Fishery Management Plan Climate Initiative. Additionally, the Council moved forward with a proposed range of alternatives for authorizing deep-set buoy gear for catching swordfish. Their advisors will present a detailed analysis at the March 2018 Council meeting, and at that time, the Council will choose a preferred path towards authorization. As part of an interim plan, the Council approved 12 new Exempted Fishing Permit applications for deep-set buoy gear. Finally, the Council expressed support for a new blueprint for managing Pacific bluefin tuna internationally and asked the U.S. Commissioners to support adoption of the measures at upcoming international meetings.

 Ken Hinman went to **Philadelphia, Pennsylvania** on October 26<sup>th</sup> as a member of the ASMFC Menhaden Advisory Panel. The panel, appointed from a broad spectrum of interests and coastal regions, met to review the management alternatives in Draft Amendment 3, consider public comments received and provide recommendations to the Menhaden Management Board, which will meet November 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> to finalize the amendment. ■



AMENDMENT TO BILLFISH CONSERVATION ACT MOVES ON TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

# Senate strengthens billfish protections



On October 2<sup>nd</sup> the U.S. Senate unanimously approved an amendment to the Billfish Conservation Act. The bill, S. 396, clarifies that the original intent of the BCA was to prohibit sales of any marlin, spearfish or sailfish in the United States, with an exemption for local markets in Hawaii and nearby U.S. territories. The bipartisan legislation, sponsored by Senators Bill Nelson (D-FL), Marco Rubio (R-FL), Joe Manchin (D-WV) and Joe Moran (R-KS), is now awaiting action by the House of Representatives.

“With passage of this bill, absolutely no sales of billfish will be allowed on the U.S. mainland, no matter where they are caught,” says *Wild*

*Oceans* president Ken Hinman. “The law’s exemption for ‘traditional’ Pacific Island fisheries requires that what’s caught in Hawaii stays in Hawaii.”

The Billfish Conservation Act of 2012 was intended to put similar prohibitions on the sale of Pacific billfish as those that have been in place for Atlantic billfish since 1990, effectively eliminating an estimated 30,000 billfish being imported to the U.S. each year from the Pacific. While the flow of foreign-caught billfish into our markets was halted, sales of Hawaiian-caught fish on the mainland continued due to the failure of the National Marine Fisheries Service to issue a rulemaking to restrict Hawaiian-caught billfish to local sales and consumption, purportedly because of a different interpretation of the exemption language.

Efforts to fulfill the conservation goals of the law by moving this BCA ‘technical amendment’ through Congress have been led by *Wild Oceans* and the International Game Fish Association, in cooperation with the Center for Sportfishing Policy. ■

Your mailing label includes your membership renewal date.

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