



Recreational Fishing Organizations Oppose Longline Permit *Industrial harvesters try to pry into conservation zone, again*

Washington, D.C. – March 6, 2018 – Today, leading recreational fishing and boating organizations submitted public comment to the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council in opposition to an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) that would allow pelagic longline (PLL) vessels into the East Florida Coast Pelagic Longline Closed Area.

More than two decades ago, swordfish in the Western Atlantic were in serious trouble due to overfishing. The public responded forcefully to the plight of swordfish, and as a result, nursery areas were identified and closed to the United States PLL fleet in 2001. Today, anglers point to the recovery with pride as a significant conservation victory.

Ever since the fishery was deemed recovered, there have been ill-conceived attempts to reopen the closed areas to commercial harvest and expose it to the types of intense commercial fishing pressure that drove it into an overfished condition in the first place. Under the guise of research, Dr. David Kerstetter has filed his second application in less than a year for a federal exempted fishing permit to introduce longlining into the East Florida Coast PLL Closed Area – this one under the name of a company he formed in December 2017, Florida Fisheries Solutions LLC. The EFP would authorize PLL vessels owned or associated with the co-applicant, Day Boat Seafood Inc., to fish in the East Florida Coast PLL Closed Area for up to three years. Day Boat Seafood would be allowed to sell all the legal fish caught under this permit.

An unintended benefit of the East Florida Coast PLL Closed Area has been the establishment in the region of the nation’s best sailfish fishery. The direct economic benefit to coastal recreational fishing-related business is remarkable. The Kerstetter application puts at risk the amazing catch-and-release sailfish fishery off the east coast of Florida.

“We appreciate the opportunity to provide comment on this EFP and convey to

you that our organizations see no legitimate need for the proposal and have a great deal of concern on the potential impacts of the proposed research,” said the groups. “We question whether this proposal is truly about science or merely being used as a tool of convenience for a single longline operator to gain access to nearby pristine fishing grounds.”

The dead discards that could be generated by the 3,240 longline sets proposed for Kerstetter’s permit are an additional 5,199 juvenile swordfish, 1,335 blue marlin, 392 white marlin and 2,421 sailfish. These fish would be killed over and above what would take place in the PLL fishery if the EFP was not issued.

Find a copy of the letter [here](#).