



NOAA Fisheries Implements Billfish Conservation Act
Recreational Fishing Groups Laud Administration for Ensuring Billfish are Off the Menu

Washington, D.C. – October 8, 2018 – Recreational fishing organizations and conservationists are applauding NOAA Fisheries Administrator Chris Oliver and U.S. Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross for implementing the Billfish Conservation Act, signed by President Trump on August 2.

NOAA Fisheries recently published a [Billfish Conservation Act FAQ](#) document to ensure the Billfish Conservation Act is clear to those engaged in the seafood business and the general public.

“We appreciate NOAA Fisheries notifying its enforcement agents, members of the seafood supply chain, restaurateurs and the American public that marlin, sailfish and spearfish are officially off the menu in 49 states,” said Jeff Angers, president of the [Center for Sportfishing Policy](#). “The only state in which billfish can be sold is the State of Hawaii.”

The Billfish Conservation Act of 2012 banned the importation of all billfish caught by foreign fleets into the continental United States. However, questions arose over whether Congress intended the same prohibitions on foreign-caught billfish imposed by the bill also applied to billfish caught commercially in Hawaii. Conservationists were concerned that domestically caught billfish could be transported from Hawaii to the U.S. mainland, circumventing the intent of the conservation measure.

[H.R. 4528](#), introduced by Congressman Darren Soto (D-Fla.) and signed into law on August 2, clarifies that billfish landed in Hawaii can only be sold in Hawaii.

Jason Schratwieser, conservation director for the [International Game Fish Association](#) said, “For more than a decade, IGFA has worked to secure proper protections for billfish. We thank NOAA Fisheries for sending a clear directive to its enforcement agents and the public that any billfish sold in the U.S. market outside of Hawaii is illegal.”

“Fishermen and conservationists all around the country, including in Hawaii, are celebrating a law that conserves a very valuable yet vulnerable ocean resource while respecting and protecting local customs,” said Ken Hinman, president of [Wild Oceans](#). “Quite simply, it’s good for conservation, it strengthens enforcement, and it’s fair.”

Marlin, sailfish and spearfish (collectively known as billfish) are internationally revered by recreational anglers and produce significant regional economic benefits from catch-and-release fisheries, but many billfish stocks are in a depleted state. Now implemented as the Billfish Conservation Act of 2012 was originally intended, the U.S. has a greater leadership role for the international protection of billfish