February 10, 2000

Jim Lone, Chairman
Pacific Fishery Management Council
2130 SW 5th Ave
Portland, OR 97201

Dear Chairman Lone,

This past fall when gear modifications were being discussed at the Council meeting by the GMT and the GAP no one realized the ramifications that these new regulations would usher in for the new millennium. But now that we have arrived, our 20/20 hind-sight vision shows us that our vision of the changes was flawed and our oversight is causing a major problem. The new millennium’s regulations have created another new discard of specie that have never been discarded before nor have any stock assessments shown that this specie needs to stop being harvested. Everyone knows the less fish we are allowed to harvest the more discards the limitations cause. The new trawl gear modifications are causing higher discard rates and it is not just one or two fish but thousands of pounds of English sole are now being discarded. Discards may be a tool used by managers but it is a tool that fishermen hate to see come out of the toolbox. Something needs to be adjusted very soon for this shortsightedness which is now causing senseless discards.

The solution is not just adjusting the discard rates to be taken off the top of the OY. The easiest solution would be to not have any restrictions on any flatfish landings from November 1 to February 29, in other words all flatfish would have the same gear restriction time frame as Petrale sole. At the February 7 to 9, 2000 GMT meeting held in Portland, the team members were aware of this problem but said there was nothing that could be done until November because there wasn’t enough time to make the necessary changes before March 1 when regulation make the summer change-over. I know the Council and it’s entities have had emergency meetings via telephone conferences when there is a need to shut down a fishery but they can’t have similar meetings when they have acknowledged making a mistake that may give more fish to harvest. This error of gear use for flat fish will increase discards and take potential revenues from the harvesters. Are we losing sight of management goals and objectives?

We need to revisit this issue to adjust this error as soon as possible. Adjustments for this error could be implemented anytime during the summer regulation season under the emergency rule or by sheer will of the Council.

I sincerely thank you for your time in considering this situation,

Steve Bodnar

by Steve Bodnar, Executive Director, Coos Bay Trawlers’ Association, Inc.

cc: Jim Hastie
    Mark Saelens
    Jim Glock
February 25, 2000

Mr. Steve Bodnar, Executive Director  
Coos Bay Trawlers’ Association, Inc.  
PO Box 5050  
Coos Bay, OR 97420

Dear Steve:

We received your letter of February 10 to Jim Lone regarding discard of English sole in the trawl fishery for continental slope species. As you recall, the management approach for the year 2000, including the trip limit structure, was proposed by the groundfish industry during the fall 1999 management process. These measures were discussed extensively by the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel, Groundfish Management Team (GMT) and public in attendance at the November 1999 Council meeting. The Council adopted the proposals with only minor modifications.

I understand that English sole and red-banded rockfish are being caught by trawlers targeting the complex of species that inhabit the continental shelf. As you point out, there is no provision for landing “shelf” species taken incidentally by those vessels. In adopting the industry proposal, the Council intended to reduce bycatch, not increase it, and it is unfortunate if additional bycatch it occurring. The GMT has advised me it has no specific information regarding the amount of bycatch occurring, associated species, and other information that would help the Council make an appropriate adjustment at this time. I am reluctant to call an emergency Council meeting to adjust trip limits between meetings without such information. I suggest you work with others in the industry to estimate or otherwise document the amount and distribution of bycatch (specifically, target species, associated catch, location, etc.) and provide the information to the GMT and GAP at its April meeting. If these committees recommend action, the Council could plan for adjustment considerations at that time.

Thanks for alerting us to this situation, and I hope we can work together to avoid such problems in the future.

Sincerely,

D. O. McIsaac, Ph.D.
Executive Director

JWG:rdh

c: Mr. Jim Lone  
Mr. Jim Glock  
Dr. Jim Hastie  
Mr. Brian Culver
February 28, 2000

D. O. McIsaac, Ph. D.
Pacific Fishery Management Council
2130 SW Fifth Ave Suite 224
Portland, OR 97201

Dear Donald McIsaac,

Thank you for responding to the letter we sent to Jim Lone about the English sole discard situation. I know very well that the industry, GAP and GMT worked hard to come up with the proposal that the Council passed in November. However, we all failed to see how this proposal would increase discards of English sole a fish that was never discarded before.

I will agree with you that the GMT has no specific information at this time about English sole discards and our letter to Jim was to alert the Council of an outcome of a proposal they have approved that has had an effect that the Council has been trying to avoid. While I believe that landing data is insignificant to determine discards I also believe that if you would look at the landings of English sole for January and February in 1997, 1998 and 1999 and compare that to landings in 2000 it just might produce a glimpse at the possible backlash of this proposal.

You have suggested that we “work with others in the industry to estimate or otherwise document the amount and distribution of bycatch and provide the information to the GMT and GAP…” Are you asking us conduct some specific research or data gathering task for you, the Council, NMFS, ODF&G, CDF&G and WDF&G? Are you suggesting we submit a proposal to coordinate the estimation documentation so that the information will be accepted when presented in April or do you think that some “anecdotal” information from a sampling of random trawl fishers would do? Are you thinking we will gather this information for free or for a contracted amount?

We suggested to Jim Lone, “not to have any restrictions on any flatfish landings from November 1 to March 1 so that all flatfish would have the same gear restriction time frame as Petrale sole” to avoid creating English discards. If you think our observation and solution warrants a data gathering project please reaffirm. April is not that far away.

I look forward to meeting and working with you. Our association tries to keep an active role in this management process.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

by: Steve Bodnar, Executive Director,
Coos Bay Trawlers’ Association, Inc.