

June 2008

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

National Ocean Service

Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

1305 East West Highway

SSMC-4, N/ORM62

Silver Spring, MD 20910

Phone (301) 713-7274 Fax (301) 713-0404

May 21, 2008

Dr. Donald McIsaac
Executive Director
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place
Suite 101
Portland, OR 97220-1364

Dear Dr. McIsaac:

First allow me to thank you and the other members of the Pacific Fisheries Management Council (PFMC) for taking the time to review and comment on the 2008 Condition Report prepared by the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary (OCNMS). We found the PFMC comments, and those provided by the individual advisory bodies and committees that reviewed the report very helpful.

Having had the opportunity to work with the PFMC on the OCNMS report, the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) recognizes the value of bringing the PFMC and other regional councils into the early stages of review of condition reports for other national marine sanctuaries as well. The remarks of individual members of the three PFMC committees that commented on the report clearly reflected agreement on this point. We fully intend to do our best to see that this happens in the future.

Following our April 11 meeting, I assessed the status for each of the condition reports currently being prepared by the 13 national marine sanctuaries and the marine national monument. Three have been completed, three have been peer reviewed and are being formatted, one has been peer reviewed and is in revision, and one is currently being peer reviewed. The remaining six are in various draft stages.

For the west coast marine sanctuaries, two condition reports (Monterey Bay and Cordell Bank) have already passed through peer review. For these reports, it would not be appropriate to ask for further review during this round of report preparation. Olympic Coast's report, as you know, was considered by the PFMC at the April 2008 meeting. While there was not time for a full review, we were able to obtain valuable comments from three advisory committees to the PFMC, as well as independent reviews following the meeting by several advisory committee members. We very much appreciate the willingness of these members to offer their services as experts in fisheries science and management. All input is currently being incorporated into the OCNMS Condition Report.

ONMS has committed to the completion of condition reports for the remaining two west coast sanctuaries, Gulf of the Farallones and Channel Islands, by the end of the fiscal year. And while these reports have not yet been peer reviewed, they are scheduled milestones. Given my understanding of the time periods needed for consideration by the PFMC and its advisory committees, it will not be possible at this late date to submit them to the PFMC for review and still meet the scheduled completion dates for these reports. As with previous reports, however, we will be obtaining reviews by scientists from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) when the draft reports are completed this summer. Both the Cordell Bank and Monterey Bay reports have already been reviewed by NMFS. In addition, one scientist from the Science and Statistical Committee of the PFMC (Steve Ralston) provided input and reviewed on the Monterey Bay report.

As we discussed at the PFMC meeting in Seattle last month, we plan to prepare condition reports for each national marine sanctuary every five years. During the next round of preparation, we will plan adequate time to meet your requirements for requesting invited reviews by the appropriate advisory committees of the PFMC.

Again, thank you for the valuable input provided by the PFMC and its members. We look forward to working closely with the PFMC on future matters involving our shared conservation goals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen R. Gittings', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Stephen R. Gittings, Science Coordinator

Cc: Daniel J. Basta, NOS/ONMS
William Douros, NOS/ONMS, West Coast Region
Reed Bohne, NOS/ONMS, Atlantic and Great Lakes Region
Billy D. Causey, NOS/ONMS, Southeast, Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Region
Allen Tom, NOS/ONMS, Pacific Islands Region
Carol Bernthal, NOS/ONMS, Olympic Coast NMS
Emily Menashes, NMFS/OSF
Bob Lohn, NMFS/NW Region
Frank Lockhart, NMFS/NW Region
Rod McInnis, NMFS, SW Region
Mark Helvey, NMFS, SW Region