



Pacific Fishery Management Council

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Herbert A. Pollard II, Chair | Charles A. Tracy, Executive Director

December 20, 2016

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Subject: Requested Pacific Fishery Management Council Comments on the West Coast Dungeness Crab Management Act

Dear Senator Cantwell:

Thank you for your request for Pacific Fishery Management Council (Pacific Council) review and comment on the West Coast Dungeness Crab Management Act, which is to be reintroduced in the 115th Congress.

In June 2015, at Congressional request, the Pacific Council expressed strong support for the West Coast Dungeness Crab Management Act and sent a letter to that effect to Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler. We reiterate those comments below.

As you know, the Pacific Council was established by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976 (MSA), and has voting members from the States of Washington, Oregon, and California, as well as the National Marine Fisheries Service and West Coast Tribes. The MSA requires the Pacific Council to develop conservation and management measures for the fisheries off the coasts of Washington, Oregon, and California. The Dungeness crab fishery is one of the region's most valuable commercial fisheries. However, for over 20 years, Section 112(d) of Public Law 104-297 (16 USC 1856) has delegated authority over the West Coast Dungeness crab fishery to the States of Washington, Oregon, and California. Through the work of the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission's Coastal Dungeness Crab Tri-State Committee, this very successful collaborative effort has resolved many complex fishery management issues, including over-capacity, and has efficiently developed regulations governing legal retention and season structure. The existing management regime has resulted in a healthy resource and an economically important and sustainable fishery.

The existing delegation of state authority for the West Coast Dungeness crab fishery sunsetted on September 30, 2016. The Pacific Council notes the considerable success of the West Coast states in their management of the Dungeness crab fishery, and is supportive of the West Coast Dungeness Crab Management Act and its continuance of the delegation of management authority indefinitely.

The loss of the statutory delegation to the West Coast states for Dungeness crab puts the Pacific Council in a position to embark on a multi-year process to develop a fishery management plan (FMP) for Dungeness crab and shift resources away from ongoing fishery management issues.

This fishery could become somewhat chaotic during the gap period between the current State authority and full Federal authority under the MSA, as occurred in a similar situation off the State of Alaska during the 1990s.

The Pacific Council believes the existing Dungeness crab fishery would be properly managed under the West Coast Dungeness Crab Management Act.

Thank you again for your request for Pacific Council review and comment. Should you or your staff have any questions about this letter, please contact me or Ms. Jennifer Gilden, the lead Staff Officer on this matter at 503-820-2280.

Sincerely,



Charles A. Tracy
Executive Director

JDG:kma

Cc: Pacific Council Members
The Honorable Jaime Herrera Beutler
The Honorable Ron Wyden
The Honorable Rick Larsen
The Honorable Derek Kilmer
The Honorable Peter DeFazio
The Honorable Kurt Schrader
The Honorable Rob Bishop
The Honorable John Thune
The Honorable Raul Grijalva
The Honorable Bill Nelson
The Honorable Jeff Merkley
The Honorable Patty Murray
The Honorable Suzanne Bonamici
Mr. Donald Hansen