

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON ENFORCEMENT PRIORITIES

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) had opportunity for a brief discussion with Don Masters, Paul Ortiz, and Dayna Matthews—representatives from National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA) Office of Law Enforcement and Office of General Counsel for Litigation and Enforcement—on Open Comment 2 letter from NOAA Office of Law Enforcement Director Bruce Buckson (“Regarding NMFS Office of Law Enforcement Seeking Comments on Setting Annual Enforcement Priorities”). We thank them for seeking out the GMT’s input. Given our schedule at this meeting and the timing of this agenda item, we had little time for discussion.

The Open Comment 2 letter expresses NOAA’s intent to gather input on regional enforcement priorities from various groups, including stakeholders, the Council, and advisory groups such as the GMT. One piece of this input, as we understand it, relates to the views of the various groups on enforcement’s role in the fisheries management system. NOAA is seeking this input no later than December 15, 2011.

The GMT understands that our input must be provided at this Council meeting rather than through a supplemental letter at a later date. Given the GMT’s schedule at this meeting we were not able to dedicate time for a detailed discussion on specific enforcement priorities and are only able to provide our general comments relative to the key role that enforcement plays in groundfish management. We stress that state and Federal enforcement efforts are vital to the effectiveness of the Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and we think that this importance should be captured. Enforcement activities underpin key pieces of the groundfish management structure including the Rockfish Conservation Areas, fish tickets, logbooks, the at sea observer program, trip limits, and more.

PFMC
11/7/11