

04/08/00

Pacific Fishery Management Council  
2130 SW Fifth Ave. Suite 224  
Portland, Ore. 97201

APR 10 2000

Attention: Ad-Hoc Groundfish Development Committee  
Re: Groundfish Fishery, Open Access

Dear Sirs:

I have had the opportunity to speak to the council at one of the Sacramento, Ca. meetings. I am not sure you heard what I said but you did give me the time to speak and I thank you for that.

I have been asked by the Bodega Bay Marketing Association to represent them at the PCFFA meetings concerning groundfish. As you are aware PCFFA represents the west coast commercial fishing fleet, owner/operators in the small to mid-size vessel fleet, the Family fishermen. I had made the decision not to get involved in the politics of commercial fishing, to keep my mouth shut and go out with a whimper. I agreed to represent my local association and to give one last try at addressing PFMC via this letter.

My wife and I have been commercial fishing since 1980. We fish commercial salmon and rockfish. We have a 25 ft. boat and specialize in one day fish of very high quality. We receive a premium price for our fish and are very proud of our product. Due to the size of our boat we are very restricted on the number of days we can fish due to the north coast weather. Last year we fished 55 days and sold \$30,000 worth of fish. On a good day, weather permitting, fish are biting and we have minimal gear failure, we will catch 1000 lbs. of rockfish. Our by-catch was almost nothing. We fish open access because our type of fishing, hook and line and Portuguese longline were not eligible for a limited entry permit. I refer you back to amendment 6 to the FMP, 50 CFR part 663, Nov. 16, 1992. These regulations continually refer to hook and line and Portuguese longline as "exempted", "non-restricted" gear. According to Amendment 6, "trawl, longline (not Portuguese longline), and fish pot account for the vast majority (over 90 percent) of the overall fleet harvest". Perhaps I have misunderstood the intent of the Magnuson- Stevens Act.

Please believe me when I say that it is questionable that we will survive the 2000 fishing season due to the restrictions implemented by PFMC. We have an air pollution problem in California. If the environmental agencies immediately restrict

100 percent of all mopeds from our highways it may sound good but will do little to help the pollution problem.

I do not envy your job in anyway. I understand the pressure you are under from the fish processors , government representatives, fisherman and etc. Unfortunately you cannot please everyone and you must make some very unpopular decisions. If you make these decision based on what is best to improve the fishery you can walk away knowing you did your best and no one can ask for more than that. I do not begin to believe that I am as informed as the members of PFMF, however I do believe that common sense and hands on knowledge allows me some expertise regarding groundfish.

Trawl fishing, (drag boat fishing) is as obsolete and gill nets and explosives. There was a time and place which has now passed. The by-catch and damage to the habitat is no longer acceptable. As you are aware the drag boat fishery admits to a 20% wasted by-catch. This is more discarded fish in one trip than I catch in an entire season. This is where I become confused. I get started every morning about 4:00 AM. My back yard is about 100 yards from the marina where my boat and many party boats are berthed. Normally this time of year the docks are busy with sport fisherman and commercial fishermen getting ready for a day of fishing. however due to the closure implemented by PFMF for March and April the docks are abandoned . The only thing I see is a black and white drag boat , from another state, going out the jetty. What is wrong with this picture.? Does this mean that all drag boat owners should be discarded without consideration or reimbursement? No.

This means that the owners should be fairly reimbursed for their boat and fishery loss. This means that limited entry permits are not leased, transferred or continued for this type of fishing. Quotas are not extended to any remaining vessels. Limitations on exempted gear should be removed to encourage this method of fishing and open access should remain open to encourage the same.

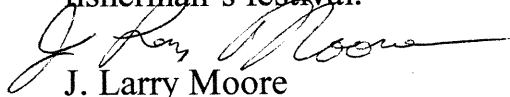
Limitations on species of fish should be based on a smaller geography area. For example, my fishing area is Cordell Bank which has a very large population of yellow tail rock-fish, Lingcod and group red rockfish. Refer to "Ecology of an Underwater Island by Robert W. Schmieder". You have allowed me to take widows and chili rockfish this year however these cannot be taken at Cordell without having, bocaccio, yellowtail and group red as a by-catch. Last year you had a closure on widows and no limit on yellows. Has the sebastes species changed that much in population in one year?

Many of my fellow fisherman with boats the size of mine have discontinued commercial fishing due to no representation and overbearing restrictions. I have been informed that 131 million dollars has been awarded by the disaster declaration

by Secretary Daley for the west coast ground-fish fisheries. I have also been informed that at the February 4th. meeting in Salem, Oregon where Central and southern California were not properly represented, that the trend was to target the funds toward our neighbors to the north with large trawl and longline vessels. As I did not attend the meeting I cannot verify this and I am sure that the funds will be equally divided among all persons participating in the commercial ground-fish fishery.

Members of the PFMC . The time is short. If your intention was to eliminate the small boat ground-fishery, you have done very well and your work is almost over. If your intent is to protect the ground-fish and the habitat perhaps you should revisit the amendments that you have passed and re-target your changes toward the problems that will make a difference.

I will leave you now and thank you in advance for taking your time to read this letter. I apologize for any grammar or format mistakes . I am a commercial fisherman and very proud of it. I will fire up the old moped and go over to the fisherman's festival.



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