



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Sustainable Fisheries Division
7600 Sand Point Way N.E., Bldg. #1
Seattle, Washington 98115-0070

SEP 07 2000

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Don McIsaac, Executive Director
Pacific Fishery Management Council
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Portland, OR 97201

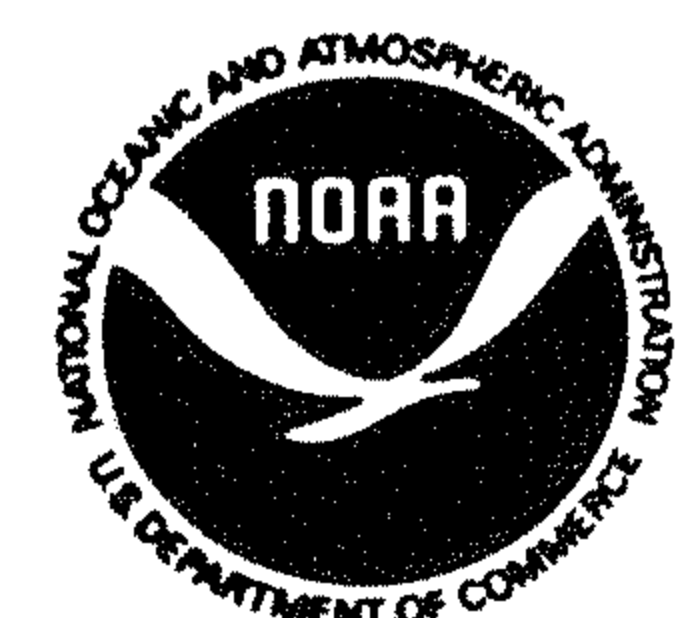
Dear Don:

Each year, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) determines the needs of the domestic processing and fishing industries regarding the use of underutilized species managed under the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP). Underutilized species are those species that have not been fully utilized by the domestic processing industry and which potentially could be made available to joint venture or foreign fishing. Since jack mackerel (north of 39° N. lat.) was removed from the groundfish FMP in 1999, only shortbelly rockfish is considered for potential foreign operations.

NMFS also determines whether the limited entry fleet will use the entire harvest guideline for Pacific whiting, jack mackerel, and shortbelly rockfish. Designated species B permits may be issued if the limited entry fleet will not fully utilize these species.

These determinations seem to have outlived their usefulness. The whiting fishery has been fully utilized for years by the limited entry fleet, and jack mackerel are no longer covered by the groundfish FMP. Shortbelly rockfish are taken predominantly with groundfish trawl gear, which may be used only in the limited entry fishery. Even so, the open access fleet is not, and has not been, prohibited from taking shortbelly rockfish. For these reasons, the Council included in Amendment 12 to the FMP: (1) deletion of shortbelly rockfish from the list of underutilized species (so that no underutilized species exist in the groundfish fishery off Washington, Oregon, and California, until otherwise determined), and (2) removal of designated species B permits which never have been issued and are no longer needed.

Amendment 12 has not yet been approved by NMFS, although it is scheduled to be approved/disapproved before the end of the year.



Consequently, the following preliminary determinations are made under current regulations in effect during September 2000:

1. Joint Venture or Foreign Fishing: As in 2000, shortbelly rockfish is expected to be fully utilized by domestic harvesting and processing operations, and therefore there is no surplus available for joint venture or foreign fishing in 2001.
2. Designated Species B Permits: No Designated Species B permits have been issued, and no applications were received at the time this letter was written. NMFS preliminarily has determined that there will be no Designated Species B permits issued for Pacific whiting and shortbelly rockfish in 2001.

This letter constitutes consultation with the Council and requests comments from both the Council and the public on the 2001 determinations of: (1) full domestic utilization of shortbelly rockfish, so that none are available for foreign or joint venture fishing; and (2) designation of available amounts of whiting and shortbelly rockfish for the limited entry fleet, so that there is no surplus available for a target fishery under Designated Species B permits. These preliminary determinations are consistent with the Council's recommendations incorporated in Amendment 12 of the FMP.

Sincerely,



William L. Robinson
Assistant Regional Administrator
for Sustainable Fisheries

cc: F/SWR-Fougner
F/NWR-King(2)