



State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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June 4, 2001

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PFMC

Mr. Jim Lone, Chairman
Pacific Fishery Management Council
2130 SW Fifth, Suite 224
Portland, Oregon 97201

Dear Chairman Lone:

I would like to update the Pacific Fishery Management Council concerning actions the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has taken to address the commitment the three coastal states made to the Council last November to reduce the incidental take of canary rockfish in the coastal pink shrimp fishery to a level not to exceed 5 ½ metric tons.

WDFW met with Washington shrimp fishers prior to the beginning of the 2001 shrimp fishery and explained to them the commitment the coastal states made to the Council relative to the bycatch of canary rockfish in the pink shrimp trawl fishery. While shrimpers were quick to point out the small amount of canary taken in their fishery relative to directed groundfish fisheries, they still recognized the difficulty of achieving the canary rebuilding target the Council must achieve. They expressed a willingness to use finfish excluders to help achieve that target. They were, however, very much opposed to having differential regulations among the shrimp fleet. That is, they strongly objected to a situation in which they would be required to comply with a Washington State regulation requiring the use of finfish excluders while vessel fishing along side a vessel licensed by a different state that was not subject to a similar regulation. As you know, the West Coast shrimp fleet is highly mobile and vessels licensed by each of the three coastal states often fish the same grounds and the potential scenario the Washington shrimp fishers expressed opposition to is very likely to occur.

WDFW believes finfish excluders to be an effective and reasonable approach to reduce canary rockfish catch in the shrimp fishery and we are prepared to require excluder use consistent with the definitions of excluders developed by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW). We intend to work with the other states in an attempt to resolve the regulatory issues described above through the potential use of reciprocal regulations so that vessels would be subject to similar state regulations when fishing in the waters adjacent to each of the three states. In the interim, we are closely monitoring this fishery. Our monitoring efforts include close examination of the Washington fish ticket data relative to rockfish landings taken in this fishery, tracking the canary bycatch from the fishery recorded by the other two states, and our enforcement officers have made several at-sea boardings of vessels engaged in this fishery. If there is an indication that the coast wide bycatch of canary rockfish taken in the pink shrimp fishery will exceed 5.5 metric tons (mts), we are prepared to take immediate action to require the use of finfish excluders by all Washington licensed vessels.

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We are pleased to report that examination of our landing data indicates that the Washington shrimp fleet has taken measures to substantially reduce its catch of finfish associated with the shrimp fishery. As indicated in the table below, groundfish catch in the Washington pink shrimp fishery has been approximately 7 percent of the shrimp catch over the five years preceding 2001. This year, the groundfish bycatch is less than one-half percent of the shrimp catch, strongly indicating that shrimpers are indeed taking actions, such as voluntary use of excluders, and other actions to reduce their finfish bycatch.

Landings of shrimp and groundfish in the WA coastal pink shrimp trawl fishery (lbs) (Through May 15)							
	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	5-yr avg	2001
Shrimp	5,314,750	4,956,397	1,637,932	2,644,519	4,067,875	3,724,295	1,952,934
Yellowtail	476,541	127,805	99,313	53,378	77,369	166,881	6444
Canary	4,568	1,503	2,675	3,528	2,329	2,921	169
Total Groundfish	685,534	184,134	141,101	108,635	132,632	250,407	7,204
Canary/Shrimp Ratio	0.09%	0.03%	0.16%	0.13%	0.06%	0.1%	0.009%
Fish/Shrimp Ratio	12.9%	3.7%	8.6%	4.1%	3.3%	6.7%	0.4%

Though the amount of canary rockfish mortality eliminated in the shrimp fishery may appear small, relative to the overall mortality of canary, we fully realize that even small reductions in fishing mortality are critical to our achieving the rebuilding target.

We will continue to work closely with our shrimp industry, monitor landings, and take other actions as necessary, to do our part in assisting the Council in meeting the 2001 canary rockfish rebuilding target.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the Council with an update on our efforts to reduce canary bycatch in the pink shrimp fishery. We would be pleased to provide further information at your request.

Sincerely,



Philip Anderson, Special Assistant
Intergovernmental Policy