

INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION

ESTABLISHED BY A CONVENTION BETWEEN CANADA
AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

DIRECTOR
BRUCE M. LEAMAN

P.O. BOX 95009
SEATTLE, WA 98145-2009

TELEPHONE
(206) 634-1838

FAX:
(206) 632-2983

COMMISSIONERS:
JAMES BALSIGER
JUNEAU, AK
RICHARD J. BEAMISH
NANAIMO, B.C.
RALPH G. HOARD
SEATTLE, WA
KATHLEEN PEARSON
SKIDEGATE, HAIDA GWAI
ANDREW SCALZI
HOMER, AK
JOHN SECORD
VANCOUVER, B.C.

February 25, 2002

FEB 28 2002

Dr. Donald O. McIsaac
Executive Director
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 200
Portland, OR 97220-1384

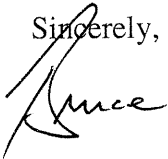
Dear Don:

Thank you for your letter concerning the Area 2A halibut bycatch mortality estimate used in the calculation of the 2002 recommended catch limits for this area. I agree that we need to ensure that we do not have the breakdown in communication seen this year. Certainly, we should have informed you of the estimate that the Commission would be using when we made the revision to the number supplied to us by NMFS. We were under considerable time pressure to get the estimate into the stock assessment process and were unable to resolve the discrepancy with NMFS staff. Prior to the meeting, when I spoke with Jim and yourself, I was not aware of the discrepancy.

Your letter indicated that this issue was primarily one of communication rather analytical. Probably you and I regard the communication issue as the one of greatest importance over the long term but, in this case, there is also an analytical issue. My understanding is that the technical staffs have met to examine this issue and identified the estimation error in the original document. This error was apparently also made for the previous year's calculations in the NMFS document. I understand the new stratified estimate of legal-sized bycatch mortality from NMFS is now close to the unstratified estimate produced by our staff from the raw data, and I am confident that our staffs can resolve the remaining discrepancy to everyone's satisfaction.

I agree with both your suggestions and those in Dr. Varanasi's letter concerning procedures to avoid such occurrences in the future. While errors can happen in the best of programs, (we have had our share!), our inter-agency communications should not contribute to them. We are developing a more formal checklist system within our shop to ensure that this year's events do not re-occur, and I believe we are all committed to that goal. I appreciate both your and Dr. Varanasi's positive approach to this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce", written over the word "Sincerely,".

Bruce M. Leaman
Executive Director

cc: Dr. Usha Varanasi
Dr. Jim Balsiger
Mr. Ralph Hoard
Ms. Yvonne de Reynier
Mr. Phil Anderson
Mr. Don Bodenmiller