

## PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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April 2, 2002

Ambassador Mary Beth West  
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Fisheries  
Room 7831  
U.S. Department of State  
Washington, DC 20520-7818

Dr. William T. Hogarth  
Assistant Administrator for Fisheries  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
Building SSMC3, F  
1315 East-West Hwy, Rm 14555  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: U.S./Canada Catch Sharing of Pacific Whiting

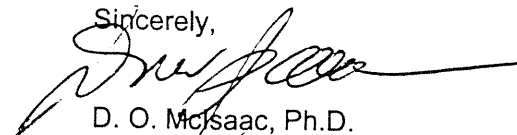
Dear Ambassador West and Dr. Hogarth:

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) met on March 13, 2002 to adopt harvest specifications for Pacific whiting for 2002 West Coast groundfish fisheries. The Council and its advisory bodies reviewed the 2001 Pacific whiting stock assessment and joint U.S./Canada assessment review report. Evidence of a long-term decline in Pacific whiting abundance, including the observation of a record low abundance level in the year 2001, was presented in the stock assessment.

The joint U.S./Canada assessment review panel highlighted the increased exploitation rate on Pacific whiting in the last three years as one of the factors leading to this decline. Two factors are responsible for increased exploitation of Pacific whiting during this period: overestimated biomass in the last (1998) assessment and the setting of the coastwide total allowable biological catch (ABC) above the management target (80% of the coastwide ABC scheduled for U.S. fisheries and 30% scheduled for Canadian fisheries, for a total of 110%). The latter circumstance is primarily due to the U.S. and Canada impasse on international catch sharing of Pacific whiting. The Council urges you to re-initiate negotiations with Canadian representatives to come to agreement on a biologically-based allocation of the coastwide Pacific whiting resource. The fishing economies of both nations will measurably suffer with the collective international overharvest of Pacific whiting since this is one of the more valuable groundfish sectors on the West Coast.

Please do not hesitate to call on the resources of the Pacific Fishery Management Council for aid in developing this important international catch sharing plan for Pacific whiting.

Sincerely,



D. O. McIsaac, Ph.D.  
Executive Director