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**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

THE DIRECTOR

JUN - 3 2002

Mr. Tom Hafer
10400 Santa Ana Road
Atascadero, California 93422

Dear Mr. Hafer:

Thank you for your letter to President Bush regarding the management of the West Coast nearshore groundfish fishery off California.

Many species in the groundfish fishery are in severe decline. As you know, nearshore fisheries off California are currently managed under both state (California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG)) and Federal (National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)) regulations. These regulations apply to the commercial, recreational, and tribal sectors. NMFS has declared nine groundfish species as overfished (bocaccio, lingcod, Pacific Ocean perch, canary rockfish, cowcod, darkblotched rockfish, widow rockfish, yelloweye rockfish, and Pacific whiting). While these overfished species are not generally found in the nearshore waters as adults, some of them, including bocaccio and canary rockfish, enter nearshore waters during early life stages. While in nearshore waters, young overfished species are caught by both nearshore commercial and recreational fishermen. As groundfish species decline, additional management measures, such as area closures, may be necessary to protect groundfish stocks.

In response to your concern about CDFG's proposal to close the commercial nearshore fishery off California, NMFS is considering implementing area closures not only for commercial nearshore fisheries, but also for recreational groundfish fisheries and commercial shelf fisheries as well. NMFS is considering taking such action to protect declining West Coast groundfish stocks. However, NMFS is also considering other management measures that will protect declining groundfish stocks and will cause less economic harm to West Coast communities.

I hope you will continue to make your comments available to NMFS and the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council). I encourage you to remain involved in the management process by attending meetings and writing letters to your state and Federal representatives. Please contact the Council toll free at 1-866-806-7204 for information on upcoming meetings. Management decisions for the 2003 groundfish fishery will next be discussed at the June 17-21, 2002, Council meeting in San Francisco, California.

I appreciate your interest in this matter.

Sincerely,

for William T. Hogarth, Ph.D.