



**United States Senate**  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0504  
<http://feinstein.senate.gov>

Exhibit I.2.C  
Congressional comment  
March, 2003

March 10, 2003

*Supplemental*  
*<Received 3-12-03>*

Dr. Hans Radtke, Chair, and  
Members of the Pacific Fishery Management Council  
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 200  
Portland, OR 97220

Dear Dr. Radtke and Council members,

I am writing to ask the Pacific Fishery Management Council to conduct thorough research on current fish stocks and use caution before authorizing further expansion of the sardine fishery in the Pacific Northwest. In the absence of knowledge about the stocks, eliminating the existing allocation system would jeopardize the sardine resource.

Pacific sardines are an historic and cultural resource, and economically valuable to the State of California. During the 1930s and early 1940s, when sardines were the largest fishery in the western hemisphere, California landed 97 percent of the U.S. Pacific sardine harvest. When the resource declined in the 1940s and collapsed in the 1950s, California's fishing industry suffered the greatest during a fishing moratorium that extended nearly 20 years. Industry-supported research and cooperation with the Department of Fish and Game fostered better understanding of the sardine resource in California, and ultimately, led to its recovery.

California's historic fishery has since come full circle, and the industry is once again dependent on sardines. As in the traditional fishery, sardines, mackerel, and squid represent more than 80 percent of California's total commercial fishery harvest today.

Since 2000, the sardine fishery has been managed under the federal Coastal Pelagic Species Fishery Management Plan. California's fishery is managed under a limited entry program, but "open access" fisheries have emerged and expanded rapidly in Oregon and Washington. However, all of the biomass estimates and harvest guidelines are still based on research conducted off southern California. To date, the stock structure and migration rates of the sardine resource in the Pacific Northwest are largely unknown.

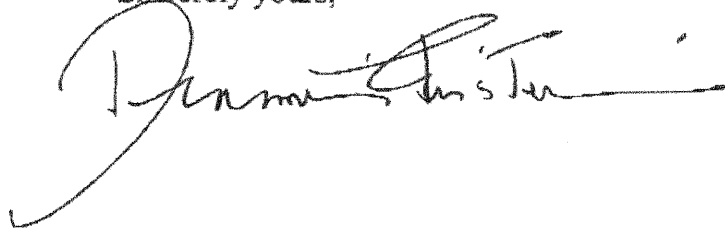
In recent years, scientists have acknowledged the uncertainties and limitations inherent in extrapolating to the Northwest stock assessments and harvest guidelines developed off California. Furthermore, they do not know the impact of increasing the harvest of the mature fish that are the target in the Pacific Northwest fishery.

The current stock assessment finds that sardine population growth appears to have leveled off. Harvest guidelines have declined for the past three years, and the ocean may have entered another cold-water cycle, causing a natural decline of the sardine resource. The historical pattern of the sardine fishery strongly suggests that this is a time to exercise caution in fishery management. This caution should be amplified by the degree of uncertainty expressed by scientists.

Please know I support the Council's recent call for a coast-wide research program on the sardine resource. Considering the facts at hand – declining harvest quotas and possibly a declining resource – I recommend that the Council obtain the necessary information about this resource before authorizing further expansion of the sardine fishery in the Pacific Northwest. In the absence of precaution, the sardine resource could crash as it did in the 1950s, and the resulting economic hardship would surely parallel the current groundfish crisis.

The sardine resource is the foundation of California's fishing industry, and it is important to learn from the lessons of the past. Thank you very much for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis J. Stier". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.