

## PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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April 1, 2003

Ambassador Mary Beth West  
Deputy Assistant Secretary  
Bureau of Oceans, Environment,  
and International Scientific Cooperation  
U.S. Department of State, OES/O Room 7829  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20502

Dear Ambassador West:

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) appreciates the efforts by the Department of State to ensure conservation and sustainability of West Coast fisheries. Notably, recent efforts on U.S./Canada whiting and U.S./Canada albacore fisheries should be of great benefit to Council-managed fisheries and our constituents.

The Council recommends that similar efforts be pursued with the government of Mexico relative to coastal pelagic species (CPS) fisheries, including Pacific sardine, Pacific mackerel, and northern anchovy. The Council has long supported and requested that the U.S. seek agreement on cooperative research and management of these valuable West Coast resources. Moreover, the federal CPS fishery management plan was developed, in part, to serve as vehicle for cooperative management of these transboundary stocks.

The Council has heard compelling testimony that much is to be gained by an improved, formalized working relationship with Mexico on transboundary stocks of CPS. Recently, the Council has been advised that Mexico may be expanding its sardine fishery to a level that could result in fishing above that anticipated in the Council's Pacific sardine harvest guideline formula. Thus, the Council believes there is an urgent need for cooperative research and management to ensure that overfishing does not occur.

Specific cooperative research and management needs include:

- o Access agreements providing for cooperative research surveys in Mexican waters.
- o To improve the Pacific mackerel and sardine stock assessments –
  - Information on the portion of the coastwide biomass of these stocks in Mexico.
  - Continued reporting of Mexican fishery harvest amounts.
  - All available information on distribution of size and age classes from fishery landings (e.g., mid-1980s to present).
- o Fishery-dependent and -independent biological information from Mexico would also improve the understanding of stock composition and provide information about whether sardine in U.S. and Mexican waters are the same stock, sub-stocks, or different stocks.

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We ask that you begin to formulate the necessities to initiate formal discussions with Mexican officials on these matters. We volunteer to assist in any way we can with initial preparatory strategies and actively participate and support any international discussions that develop.

Thank you for your attention to this important matters. If you have questions or need further information, do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



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

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c: Council Members  
Mr. Rod McInnis, Acting Regional Administrator, NMFS Southwest Region  
Coastal Pelagic Species Advisory Subpanel  
Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team  
Dr. John Coon  
Mr. Dan Waldeck