

MIDWATER TRAWLERS COOPERATIVE

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August 14, 2003

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

Dear Dr. McIsaac:

I am writing on behalf of MTC (Midwater Trawlers Cooperative) MTC was formed in 1982 by a handful of whiting fishermen. This organization later grew to represent over thirty vessels with the majority of them still very active in the whiting fishery. MTC has always been very active in the Council process when dealing with Pacific Whiting and other groundfish issues.

MTC has gone from foreign at-sea joint ventures to the first shore-side landings of whiting in 1990. MTC was also involved in the inshore offshore allocations stemming from the building offshore fishery by American processors thus eliminating a three way Olympic fishery (Inshore, Mothership, and Catcher Processor).

The inshore offshore allocation brought a short lived calm to the whiting fishery. In 1994 the shore-side fishery was starting to grow rapidly due to the lower trip limits in the traditional groundfish fisheries processors were beginning to turn towards whiting to continue to operate at full capacity. The at-sea whiting fleet experienced the same rapid growth as more vessels entered the fishery.

The calm we experienced the first two years of the inshore offshore allocation was short; we were once again engaged in a derby style fishery in our own sectors. The shore-side fishery grew from a handful of boats to the present day fleet of 36 trawlers. The processing sector went from two facilities to eleven, eight in Oregon, two in Washington, one in California.

The 2003 shore-side whiting fishery lasted 29 days and the mothership whiting fishery went for three weeks. The whiting fishery is once again being managed within a derby style fishery with C/Vs (Catcher Vessels) and processors rushing to harvest and process as fast as they can.

Catcher vessels represented by MTC and others believe it's now time to move towards

rationalization of the whiting fishery.

The goal is to rationalize the Pacific Whiting fishery so as to reduce continued capitalization of an overcapitalized fishery and to provide a means to facilitate Industry management of fishery issues, including bycatch.

We also understand that at this time the traditional groundfish fleet and representatives are discussing rationalization plans for the traditional Groundfish fishery (other than whiting). Representatives of the two groups have met together to discuss ways of working together to eliminate Council workload and to move forward in a manner that would facilitate both fisheries in a productive way.

The system of rationalization being discussed is a catcher vessel ITQ. At the September Council meeting, MTC will hand out their proposal for the rationalization of the whiting fishery. This document is not ready at this time; it is still being reviewed by catcher vessels owners that belong to other organizations. We are very hopeful that by September the plan we submit will be supported, in concept, by a consensus within the Catcher Vessel Whiting industry.

MTC is very aware of the Councils workload, we will keep our testimony at the September meeting short and to the point. We appreciate very much the opportunity to be part of your September agenda, if you have any questions before the Council meeting please contact the MTC office.

Sincerely,

David Jincks
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