Exhibit C.6.c
Public Comment
September 2003

NRDC
THE EARTH'S BEST DEFENSE

NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL

July 7, 2003

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BY E-MAIL AND POSTAL MAIL

Donald McIsaac
Executive Director
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 200
Portland, OR 97220-1384

Dear Dr. McIsaac:

On behalf of the Natural Resources Defense Council, I am writing to provide scoping comments on the environmental impact statement ("EIS") on the 2004 Pacific Coast groundfish fishery specifications and management measures ("2004 specifications"). A notice of intent to prepare the EIS was published in the Federal Register at 68 Fed. Reg. 33,670 (June 5, 2003).

It is essential that the EIS evaluate fully all potential environmental issues relating to the 2004 specifications and present a full range of alternatives for all important choices faced by the National Marine Fisheries Service ("NMFS") in crafting the specifications. Among other crucial issues, the EIS must present a full analysis on the following issues:

- The current status of the different species managed in the Pacific groundfish fishery, especially those species known or suspected to be overfished.
- A detailed discussion of the management of overfished species over the past several years, including but not limited to a discussion of whether actual mortality levels have exceeded the optimum yields (OYs) set by NMFS in past years. If actual mortality levels have (or may have) exceeded OYs set by NMFS, the EIS must present a detailed analysis of the environmental consequences.
- A detailed discussion of the ability of current management methods to constrain actual mortality to the levels established by NMFS in its annual specifications, and a detailed analysis of alternative management measures that could offer more reliable control over the actual level of fishing harvest.
- A full discussion of bycatch issues, including but not limited to: (a) a full analysis of the amount and sources of bycatch occurring in the fishery, especially for each overfished species; (b) a full analysis of the effects of bycatch on the fishery, especially on overfished species; (c) a full analysis of the effect of current management techniques and

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methods (including allocations) on the amount and type of bycatch occurring in the fishery; and (d) an analysis, for each overfished species, that examines each potentially available bycatch reduction technique and determines whether that bycatch reduction technique is practicable for use in managing that species.

- A full discussion of efforts by NMFS and the Pacific Fishery Management Council to foster and encourage a year-round Pacific groundfish trawl fishery; the environmental consequences of this year-round fishery; and alternatives to a year-round fishery.
- A full discussion of the environmental consequences, including the contributions made to bycatch, of managing the fishery using small trip limits.
- A comprehensive discussion of rebuilding issues, including analysis of a varied range of rebuilding periods and a full discussion for each overfished species of the biological consequences of different harvest levels/rebuilding periods.
- A full discussion of the environmental impacts of different fishing gears and techniques.
- A full discussion of NMFS's ability to enforce the harvest limits it selects for the 2004 fishing season given its current fishery management techniques.
- A full discussion of the value of area closures for protecting groundfish species and their habitat, especially overfished species, and full consideration of a range of closure alternatives.
- A comprehensive discussion of cumulative impacts.
- A full discussion of the impact on Pacific groundfish of other fisheries, such as state-managed fisheries and non-groundfish fisheries prosecuted in federal waters.
- A full discussion of observer coverage issues, including a full analysis of the adequacy of coverage levels for assessing bycatch and for administering and/or enforcing management measures and catch limits.

This list of issues is not comprehensive. The EIS must discuss fully all issues relating to potential environmental impacts of the 2004 specifications and must present a full range of alternatives on all relevant issues.

Sincerely,

Drew Caputo

Drew Caputo
Attorney

Advocates for Wild, Healthy Oceans

Pacific Regional Office
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Formerly the Center for
Marine Conservation

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The Ocean Conservancy

July 7, 2003

Sent via facsimile and U.S. mail
Dr. Donald McIssac, Executive Director
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 200
Portland, OR 97220-1384

RE: 2004 Groundfish Specifications EIS

Dear Dr. McIssac:

The Ocean Conservancy is writing to provide comments on the scope of the Pacific Fishery Management Council's (PFMC) preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) analyzing proposed management measures for the groundfish fishery in 2004. Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), this EIS serves as a key decision making tool for federal officials to assess the impacts of proposed federal actions on the environment. Furthermore, it provides a vehicle for exploring alternative management approaches that can provide better avenues for restoring badly depleted populations of groundfish. We urge the PFMC to take full advantage of this process by analyzing a broad range of alternatives that will improve the condition of groundfish on the West Coast.

In selecting and analyzing a range of alternatives for 2004 mortality levels for managed species, it is critical that the PFMC's proposed actions comply with the requirements of the Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (FCMA) governing key elements of successful management of Pacific groundfish species including: ending overfishing, rebuilding depleted species, achieving optimum yields, accounting for and minimizing bycatch of managed and prey species, and protecting habitats essential to the well being of managed and prey species. With this in mind we request that the EIS include and analyze the following issues:

(1) for the nine identified overfished groundfish species under management, provide a range of alternatives for rebuilding time periods that are as short a period as possible;
(2) consistent with the *Technical Guidance on the Use of the Precautionary Approaches to implementing National Standard 1 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act*[1] (Technical Guidance), provide a range of alternatives for probability values associated with successfully

[1] Restrepo, V.R. (convener), et. al. 1998. *Technical Guidance on the Use of the Precautionary Approaches to implementing National Standard 1 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.* NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS-F/SPO-31, NOAA/NMFS, Washington, D.C.

rebuilding the species within the maximum allowable and target time period, including the recommended ninety percent probability level[2];

(3) include a full range of management strategies for returning depleted species to healthy levels and managing non-depleted species at optimum yield;

(4) consider management measures designed to return depleted species back to healthy levels and manage non depleted species at optimum yield including capacity reduction, total mortality caps, measures that reduce bycatch of managed and prey species, and measures that reduce fishing impacts on marine habitats;

(5) consider management measures designed to reduce bycatch of managed and prey species including capacity reduction, bycatch caps on a fleetwide, sector wide or vessel by vessel basis, the use of a network of no take marine protected areas, gear modifications, and a system for accurately counting bycatch and bycatch mortality;

(6) consider management measures designed to reduce the adverse impacts of fishing operations on essential fish habitat including the bycatch measures listed above, a network of no take marine protected areas, gear modifications or prohibitions, and area closures by gear types; and

(7) consider data collection and enforcement measures necessary to better manage the groundfish fishery.

Ending Overfishing, Achieving Optimum Yield and Rebuilding Depleted Species

The FCMA provides a comprehensive framework for defining reference points associated with the health of fish populations to meet required management goals including achieving optimum yield, ending the overexploitation of fish populations and rebuilding those species that are depleted. The FCMA requires any fishery management plan prepared by the PFMC or the Secretary of Commerce must specify criteria to determine a maximum sustainable yield (MSY) and optimum yield (OY) of each fishery and specify objective and measurable criteria for identifying when a fishery is overfished (identified as a minimum stock size threshold (MSST)) and if overfishing is occurring (identified as a maximum fishing mortality rate threshold (MFMT)).[3]

These "status determination criteria" form the basis for management of marine fish species including identifying and rebuilding overfished species to MSY, preventing overfishing and achieving OY on a continuing basis.[4] The PFMC has adopted values of forty percent of virgin biomass as a proxy for MSY and values of twenty-five percent of virgin biomass as a proxy for MSST. There are currently nine species with biomass values below the MSST, three species with biomass levels above MSST but below MSY, and twelve species with a value above MSY. The status of the remaining species has not been assessed. Accordingly, management strategies for 2004 should fall into two classes: rebuilding species with biomass values below MSST back to MSY consistent with the FCMA and its accompanying guidance; and achieving OY on a continuing basis for the remaining species.

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[2] *Id.* at 38

[3] 16 U.S.C. §1853(a); 50 CFR §600.310.

[4] 16 U.S.C. §1851(a), §1853(a), §1854(e).

Rebuilding Depleted Species

For those species identified as overfished, the FCMA requires that the PFMC prepare a fishery management plan, plan amendment or proposed regulations to rebuild the species within one year of being identified as overfished by the NMFS.[5] Rebuilding measures must meet a number of criteria including specifying a time period for ending overfishing and rebuilding the stock, rebuilding the fishery in as short a time as possible, not to exceed ten years, except in certain prescribed instances and allocate restrictions and recovery benefits fairly and equitably among sectors of the fishery.[6] In the absence of formal rebuilding plans (currently under various stages of development), the annual specifications process serves as the vehicle for rebuilding these depleted species.

There are two key components in rebuilding overfished species with particular applicability to Pacific groundfish. The first is defining rebuilding time periods with high probabilities of success. According to the Technical Guidance, rebuilding plans for those species that cannot be rebuilt within ten years in the absence of any fishing mortality should use a timeframe that is as short as possible with a target date for rebuilding at the midpoint between the time needed to rebuild a species in the absence of fishing mortality (Tmin) and the maximum allowable timeframe pursuant to the national standard guidelines (Tmax).[7] The probability of achieving rebuilding by Tmax should be ninety percent or higher for those species whose assessments involve uncertainty, the case in groundfish stock assessments. The upper boundary of the target date should then be the midpoint of the Tmin and this computed Tmax value. The PFMC currently uses a range of probabilities of achieving rebuilding for depleted groundfish though none are at the recommended ninety percent level considering the uncertainty contained in the stock assessments. For those species with biomass values well below the MSST (less than or equal to half of MSST) the Technical Guidance recommends setting the fishing mortality rate as close to zero as possible.[8] This recommendation is particularly applicable to bocaccio, cowcod and canary rockfish.

The second issue is rebuilding depleted species in light of the magnitude and variability of future recruitment. The technical guidance speaks specifically to the issue of strong year classes within the rebuilding time period. According to the Technical Guidance it is key that a rebuilding control rule be established that guides rebuilding so that the occurrence of a strong year class does not create a management response where short term yields are increased in response to a strong recruitment event.

With FCMA requirements and guidance in mind, the proposed EIS must present a full range of rebuilding time period alternatives for depleted species that are as short as

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[5] 16 U.S.C. §1854(e)
[6] *Id.*
[7] pg. 38
[8] We note that the PFMC has adopted a policy consistent with the Technical Guidance through its use of the "40-10" rule. However, this rule was not adhered to in the 2003 specification process.

possible considering a number of factors.[9] Mortality levels (fishing and bycatch related) of zero should be considered for rebuilding cowcod, bocaccio and canary rockfish consistent with the PFMC's 40-10 policy and the Technical Guidance. A range of rebuilding strategy and probability alternatives should be presented for successfully achieving rebuilding within allowable time frames with accompanying analysis of direct, indirect and cumulative environmental impacts. The range of alternatives must include a target rebuilding time set in relation to achieving Tmax with a ninety percent probability with a target date as the mid point between the Tmin and Tmax serving as the upper bounds of the rebuilding timeframe. Analysis of the rebuilding times and strategies must include both short and long term economic and ecological implications.

Achieving OY on a Continuing Basis

The second case involves managing those species above MSST to achieve OY on a continuing basis, the management target established by the FCMA. According to the FCMA, optimum yield is defined as the amount of fish which:

(A) will provide the greatest overall benefit to the Nation, particularly with respect to food production and recreational opportunities, and taking into account the protection of marine ecosystems;
(B) is prescribed as such on the basis of the maximum sustainable yield from the fishery, as reduced by any relevant economic, social or ecological factor; and
(C) in the case of an overfished fishery provides for rebuilding to a level consistent with producing the maximum sustainable yield in such fishery.[10]

Further direction is provided by the national standard guidelines which state that:

> Target reference points, such as OY should be set safely below limit reference points, such as the catch level associated with the fishing mortality rate or level defined by the status determination criteria.

This approach is consistent with the trend in fisheries management of treating MSY as a management limit that should rarely be exceeded and using OY as a management target safely below the MSY threshold. This change in approach is based on past experiences of overfishing occurring despite MSY based management.[11]

For those groundfish species not identified as overfished via the stock assessment process, management measures must achieve OY on a continuing basis. In order to accomplish this, an OY, or process for determining an annual OY should be detailed in

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[9] 16 U.S.C. §1854(e)
[10] 16 U.S.C. §1802 (28).
[11] Goodman, et. al, 2002. *Draft Scientific Review of the Harvest Strategy Currently Used in the BSAI and GOA Groundfish Fishery Management Plans*. Report prepared for the North Pacific Fishery Management Council.

developing 2004 catch specifications. The national standard guidelines recommend expressing OY in terms of numbers or weights of fish but provide other options for determining this parameter.[12] For those groundfish species without a formal stock assessment, the Technical Guidance provides a number of proxies that can be utilized for an OY value. These include an OY of seventy-five percent of recent catch for those species above biomass at MSY; fifty percent of recent catch for those species with a biomass above MSST but below MSY and twenty-five percent of recent catch for those species below MSST.[13]

With the FCMA requirements in mind, the EIS should provide a range of options for managing these species at optimum yield with varying probabilities of success for obtaining the target. OY values and proxies recommend by the Technical Guidance should be included in the range of alternatives with accompanying analysis of both short and long term environmental and economic impacts.

The EIS Must Explore a Full Range of Management Measures Necessary to Ensure a High Probability of Successfully Rebuilding Depleted Species Within the Rebuilding Target Time

Essential to the success of any management plan is ensuring that annual mortality levels of a depleted species are consistent with target goals, that abundant levels of prey species exist and that habitats used by depleted species and their prey are protected. Thus, the issues we recommend for analysis include management measures that will rebuild depleted populations by limiting total mortality (via direct catches and bycatch) to levels consistent with proposed rebuilding targets, management measures that will achieve OY on a continuing basis for those species with a biomass level above MSST, measures that will minimize the incidental catch of a depleted species' prey species, and measures that will reduce impacts of fishing gears on the marine environment including an analysis of the past, present and reasonably foreseeable adverse impacts of fishing and non-fishing operations on habitats utilized by the depleted species.

In completing the EIS we recommend the analysis of the following management tools in meeting management goals: limiting fishing effort via capacity reduction, time and area closures, a network of no take marine protected areas, trip or bag limits, and caps on total mortality ("hard" total allowable mortality levels).

Counting and Minimizing Bycatch

Considering the depleted nature of many groundfish species and the resulting fishing management scheme utilizing depth and trip restrictions, effectively controlling regulatory discards is crucial to meeting applicable management goals. The FCMA requires that any fishery management plan amendment must establish a standardized reporting methodology to assess the amount and type of bycatch occurring in the fishery

[12] 50 CFR §600.310(f)(4).
[13] *Technical Guidance* at pg. 36.

and include measures that minimize bycatch and unavoidable bycatch mortality to the extent practicable.[14]

With these FCMA requirements in mind, the EIS should contain a range of alternatives for minimizing bycatch of both depleted species which are the subject of this amendment and prey species and other marine life through measures including, but not limited to, capacity reduction, time and area closures, a network of no take marine protected areas, trip or bag limits, caps on total mortality (bycatch caps on a fleet wide, sector wide and vessel level), and gear modifications. The EIS should also analyze current data collection systems for assessing bycatch and bycatch mortality and identify needed improvements to current data collection that will meet the requirements of the FCMA and ensure annual total mortality goals are met.

Protecting Essential Fish Habitat

Another key tenet of the FCMA is the requirement that managers minimize, to the extent practicable, the adverse impacts of fishing operations on essential fish habitat.[15] The current management regime uses a combination of trip limits and depth based measures to keep catches within annual guidelines. As a result of this management scheme, fishing effort has shifted based on the particulars of the depth based closures. The EIS should fully analyze this effort shift to determine the resulting real and potential habitat impacts and methods to reduce these impacts consistent with the FCMA.

In achieving the habitat protection requirements, we recommend analyzing a full suite of management measures. These measures may include, but are not limited to, reducing effort via capacity reduction or trip or bag limit reduction, time and area closures, a network of no take marine protected areas, gear modifications and prohibitions on fishing practices that adversely impact important habitats or prey species.

Data Collection and Enforcement Mechanisms

With the reliance on trip and depth based management measures to constrain the fishery consistent with annual catch levels, it is critically important that management tools are utilized that will ensure the effectiveness of such a strategy. Accordingly, an accounting system must be established which accurately measures appropriate catches (including landed catch and bycatch) relative to limits of all species. Additionally, a monitoring system must be established which measures the depths at which species are caught and tools must be utilized to ensure that areas closed to certain gear types or methods of fishing are adequately enforced.

There are several means by which the NMFS and the PFMC can improve data collection. First, a method currently under consideration by the PFMC is the use of vessel monitoring systems (VMS) aboard commercial vessels. The Ocean Conservancy fully endorses the use of this technology immediately in the fishery and requests that the

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14 16 U.S.C. §1853(a)(11) and 16 U.S.C. §1851(a)(9).

15 16 U.S.C. §1853.

PFMC and the NMFS require VMS systems which can provide better data on location of catches for both enforcement and data collection purposes. Second, the PFMC and NMFS should require logbook data to include not only landed fish, but discards at sea, in order to provide some measure of mortality of overfished groundfish, while acknowledging and accounting for underestimations of bycatch in logbook data (see, for instance, Sampson, David. Analysis of Data from the At-Sea Data Collection Project. Final report to the Oregon Trawl Commission. 2002.). Finally, we request that the NMFS review current sources of data for fishing related mortality in all fisheries and update the groundfish fishery management plan to specify the pertinent data necessary to identify catch types and amounts, areas where fish are caught, time of fishing and other information needed to obtain the data necessary for proper application of the proposed 2003 management regime as required by the FCMA[16].

Conclusion

Consistent with NEPA, the EIS for 2004 management specifications for the West Coast groundfish fishery provides an important opportunity for the PFMC to adequately analyze a range of alternative management strategies that can help move the current management system towards long term sustainability. We hope that the PFMC will take full advantage of this process by assessing a full range of options to achieve the requirements of the FCMA.

We thank the PFMC for considering our comments and look forward to future work in protecting the marine life of the Pacific Ocean.

Sincerely,

Chris Dorsett
Pacific Fish Conservation Manager

[16] 16 U.S.C. §1853(a)(5).

JL Services
Jamie Swafford
866 Dean Creek Road
Reedsport, OR 97467

Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 200
Portland, OR 97220-1384

RECE
PFMC

To the Pacific Fisheries Management Council:

As a local business person I am greatly concerned about any pending recreational groundfish closures outside of the 50 fathom line.

We are located in the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area. The Oregon Dunes are a unique geological situation. The dune structure does not stop at the ocean's edge but continues for miles offshore. We do not have any coastal reefs that support groundfish. The closest reefs to Winchester Bay are beyond the 50 fathom line both North and South of the mouth of the Umpqua River.

These reefs, one offshore of Ten Mile Creek to the South and off Takenitch Creek to the North, provide our recreational fishermen opportunities to fish for groundfish. If areas outside of the 50 fathom line are closed to recreational anglers, they would not have any opportunity to fish for groundfish.

Recreational angling provides a great economic stimulus for Winchester Bay and the surrounding area. If recreational angling for groundfish were stopped, we would experience the ripple effect from the loss of fishing. We experienced this in the 80's and 90's with the closure of coho salmon fishing on the Oregon coast. Many fishing related businesses closed and we lost all our charter fishing businesses. We currently have only four charter offices that provide offshore angling opportunities for our visitors.

We do not feel that recreational angling for groundfish in the Winchester Bay area has had a detrimental effect on the groundfish population. Recent ODFW statistics show that the port of Winchester Bay have about a 1% impact on all the sport groundfish caught in Oregon.

If Winchester Bay were allowed to be able to land fish similar to the "bubble salmon fisheries" allowed for Tillamook Bay or Port Orford, it would restore some fairness in the allocation of the groundfish quota. Winchester Bay would not be handicapped because of the unique geologic conditions of the area.

We would ask that the PFMC consider the economic and geologic conditions of the port of Winchester Bay and allow this port to have a sport groundfish season.

Sincerely,

Jamie Swafford

SALMON HARBOR MARINA

A Department of Douglas County and Port of Umpqua

"SERVING OUR COMMUNITY WITH PRIDE"

August 21, 2003

RECEIVED

Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 200
Portland, OR 97467

PFMC

Dear Vice Chair Don Hansen and Council Members:

This letter is to express our great concern about any pending recreational groundfish closures outside of the 50-fathom line and to request that a sport groundfish season be allowed for Winchester Bay, Oregon.

Salmon Harbor Marina, near the mouth of the Umpqua River in Winchester Bay, Oregon, is located adjacent to the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area. The Oregon Dunes are a unique geological situation that does not stop at the ocean's edge but continues for miles offshore. The nearest reefs to Winchester Bay are beyond the 50-fathom line both north and south of the mouth of the Umpqua River.

These reefs, one offshore of Ten Mile Creek to the south and off Tahkenitch Creek to the north, provide our recreational fishermen opportunities to fish for groundfish. If areas outside of the 50-fathom line were closed to recreational anglers, they would not have any opportunity to fish for groundfish.

Recreational angling provides a great economic stimulus for Winchester Bay and the surrounding Coastal Douglas County area. If recreational angling for groundfish were stopped, we would experience the ripple effect from the loss of fishing. We experienced this in the 1980's and 1990's with the closure of coho salmon fishing on the Oregon coast. Many fishing related businesses closed and we lost all our charter-fishing businesses. Currently there are only four charter offices that provide offshore angling opportunities for our visitors.

We do not feel that recreational angling for groundfish in the Winchester Bay area has had a detrimental effect on the groundfish population. Recent Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife statistics show that Winchester Bay has only about a 1% impact on all the sport groundfish caught in Oregon.

P.O. Box 1007, Winchester Bay, Oregon 97467 - Office (541) 271-3407 • FAX (541) 271-2060

If Winchester Bay were allowed to be able to land fish similar to the "bubble salmon fisheries" allowed for Tillamook Bay or Port Orford, it would restore some fairness in the allocation of the groundfish quota. Winchester Bay would not be handicapped because of the unique geologic conditions of the area.

We respectfully request that the Pacific Fishery Management Council consider the economic and geologic conditions of the area and allow a sport groundfish season for Winchester Bay.

Yours truly,

Jeff Vander Kley

Jeff Vander Kley, Harbor Manager

C: Douglas County Board of Commissioners
Port of Umpqua Board of Commissioners
Salmon Harbor Management Committee

WINCHESTER BAY MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION
C/O COYNE
20 Eighth Street
P. O. Box 1663
Winchester Bay, Oregon 97467
541-271-2103

August 22 2003

Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 200
Portland, OR 97467 FAX Number 503-820-2299

Re: <u>Groundfish Fisheries - Winchester Bay Area</u>

Dear Sir or Madam,

This letter is written in support of a waiver of the current pending rules prohibiting fishing for goundfish inside of the 50 fathom line beacuse of its unique geological makeup. Winchester Bay is located in the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area and has some of the highest dunes in the state. The dune structure does not stop at the ocean's edge but continues for miles offshore. The area within the 50 fathom line does not have any coastal reefs which support groundfish. The closest reefs to Winchester Bay are beyond the 50 fathom line both North and South of the mouth of the Umpqua River. These reefs, one offshore of Ten Mile Creek to the South, the other off the Takenitch Creek area to the North, provide our recreational fishermen opportunities to fish for groundfish.

If areas outside of the 50 fathom line are closed to recreational anglers, we would not have any opportunity to

fish for groundfish.

Recreational angling provides a great economic stimulus for Winchester Bay and the surrounding area. If recreational angling for groundfish were stopped, we would experience the ripple effect from the another loss of fishing species. We experienced this in the 80's and 90's with the closure of coho salmon fishing along the Oregon coast. Many fishing related businesses closed and this area lost all our charter fishing businesses. We currently have only four charter offices providing offshore angling opportunities for our visitors.

Recreational angling for groundfish in the Winchester Bay area has not had a detrimental effect on the groundfish population. Recent ODFW statistics show that the port of Winchester Bay has about a 1% impact on all the sport groundfish caught in Oregon.

If Winchester Bay were allowed to be able to land fish similar to the "bubble salmon fisheries" allowed for Tillamook Bay or Port Orford, it would restore some fairness in the allocation of the groundfish quota. Winchester Bay would not be handicapped because of the unique geologic conditions of the area.

We would ask the PFMC to consider the economic and geologic conditions of the port of Winchester Bay and allow this port to have a sport groundfish season.

Sincerely,

Joe Coyne, President
Winchester Bay Merchants

PORT OF SIUSLAW 1499 Bay Street, P.O. Box 1220, Florence, OR 97439
Phone: 541-997-3426 Fax: 541-997-9407 Email: portofsiuslaw@oregonfast.net

August 22, 2003

VIA FACSIMILE

Pacific Fisheries Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 200
Portland, OR 97220-1384

RE: 2004 Oregon Recreational Groundfish Fishery

Dear Council Members:

The Port of Siuslaw, serving the Florence, Oregon area, is greatly concerned about any pending recreational groundfish closures outside of the 50 fathom line.

We are located in the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area. The Oregon Dunes are a unique geological situation. The dune structure does not stop at the ocean's edge, but continues for miles offshore. We do not have any coastal reefs that support groundfish. The closest reefs to Florence are at the Heceta Banks thirty miles offshore, far beyond the 50 fathom coastal depths.

The Heceta Banks provides our recreational fishermen opportunities to fish for groundfish, halibut and salmon. If areas outside of the 50 fathom line are closed to recreational anglers, they would not have any opportunity to fish for groundfish.

Recreational angling provides a great economic stimulus for Florence and the surrounding area. If recreational angling for groundfish were stopped, we would experience the ripple effect from the loss of fishing. We experienced this in the 80's and 90's with the closure of coho salmon fishing on the Oregon coast. Many fishing related businesses closed and we lost all our charter fishing businesses.

We do not feel that recreational angling for groundfish in the Florence area has had a detrimental effect on the groundfish population. Recent ODFW statistics show that Florence (Port of Siuslaw) and Winchester Bay (Salmon Harbor) have about a 1% impact on all the sport groundfish caught in Oregon.

We would ask that the PFMC consider the economic and geologic conditions of the Florence and Winchester Bay areas and allow these two ports to have a sport groundfish season.

Respectfully submitted,

PORT OF SIUSLAW COMMISSION

Leonard VanCurler

By: Leonard VanCurler
Commission President

LV/tw