

PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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July 3, 2003

Mr. Randy Fisher, Executive Director
Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission
45 SE 82nd Drive, Suite 100
Gladstone, OR 97027-2522

Dear Randy:

At its June meeting, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) received a report from National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on the status of Mitchell Act funding. The President's Fiscal Year (FY) 2004 budget once again maintains level funding for Mitchell Act programs, which will necessitate closing of facilities or termination of programs. The Council discussed the apparency that a budget supplement for FY 2004 will be necessary to maintain Mitchell Act programs in the short-term, and the problem of chronic level funding must be addressed in order to preserve these programs in the long-term.

The Council discussed how a two-step process, occurring in the near future, might best address Mitchell Act funding problems. The first step would be to facilitate a meeting of agency technical personnel to develop a bottom up budget for Mitchell Act facilities and programs that would support full program needs. The second step would be to facilitate a meeting of state and tribal policy representatives and stakeholders to develop a consensus strategy for communicating the needs and benefits of Mitchell Act programs to Congress, Presidential advisors, and the upper level Administrators within NOAA and the Department of Commerce.

The Council also felt that the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) would be the agency with the best chance of successfully executing this strategy. Therefore, we ask that the Commission consider sponsoring these two meetings and acting as the primary facilitator in this effort. It would be advantageous to schedule the two meetings this summer so that the message conceivably might affect the FY 2004 budget. Mr. RZ Smith is coordinating budget development for NMFS and is the appropriate contact for recommending participants in the first meeting. He is aware of the possibility of such a meeting this summer and is prepared to provide the necessary materials for this meeting. The Council also recommends the Commission coordinate the participants in the second meeting, as well as provide guidance on various approaches toward achieving the goal of effectively communicating consensus recommendations. Council members from Oregon and Washington or their designees have expressed strong intent to meaningfully participate in this second meeting and the process that may emanate from it.

Dr. Randy Fisher
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Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. Please contact me or Chuck Tracy of my staff if you would like to discuss the matter further or if you have questions.

Sincerely



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

CAT: rdd

c: Council Members
Salmon Advisory Subpanel
Salmon Technical Team
Mr. Rob Jones, National Marine Fisheries Service
Mr. RZ Smith, National Marine Fisheries Service
Mr. Olney Patt Jr., Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission
Ms. Liz Hamilton, Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association
Mr. Bruce Buckmaster, Salmon for All
Dr. John Coon
Mr. Chuck Tracy
Mr. Dan Waldeck
Mr. Jim Seger
Mr. Ed Waters