

Agendum C.4.a
Attachment 2
September 2004

PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Portland, Oregon 97220-1384

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May 14, 2003

Mr. Robert Lohn, Regional Administrator
National Marine Fisheries Service, Northwest Region
7600 Sand Point Way NE
BIN C15700, Building 1
Seattle, WA 98115-0070

Dear Mr. Lohn:

During its meeting on October 31, 2002, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) adopted Amendment 17 to the Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP). Amendment 17 would change the groundfish management process to a multi-year schedule so that measures can be established for two years, rather than one. This could provide more time for the Council and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to work on other critical groundfish issues, such as strategic plan implementation. In addition, a revised management schedule would provide enough time for NMFS to publish a proposed rule in the *Federal Register* and take public comment before its final decision on whether to approve the Council recommendations.

In adopting Amendment 17, the Council selected a preferred alternative that would establish a biennial management cycle for groundfish beginning with the 2005-2006 fishing years. Under this alternative, a three Council meeting process (November-March/April-June) would be used to prepare biennial management measures. The Council also selected a preferred alternative for establishing optimum yield (OY) values. Under the preferred alternative, OY values for managed species would be established for each fishing year during the two-year management period. That is, two one-year OYs would be specified for each managed species.


To ensure the Council could respond to significant changes in a fishery, the Council also included in Amendment 17 a process for reviewing fishing levels during the multi-year management period. These checkpoints would consider whether new science or assessment information should be used to alter harvest levels. The Council tasked the Groundfish Management Team (in consultation with the Scientific and Statistical Committee and Groundfish Advisory Subpanel) to develop thresholds for determining whether mid-process changes are necessary.

In recognition of the population dynamics of Pacific whiting and its management through transboundary agreements, the Council included an option for managing whiting on an annual basis.

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The Council requests your review, approval, and implementation of Amendment 17 (provided separately from this letter). Please call upon Mr. Dan Waldeck of the Council staff for any additional assistance you may need to complete the implementation process.

Sincerely,


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

JCC:dsh

c: Ms. Eileen Cooney
Ms. Paula Evans
Mr. Rod McInnis
Mr. Bill Robinson