

PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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May 3, 2005

Mr. Stetson Tinkham
Office of Marine Conservation
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St. NW, Suite 7820
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Tinkham:

Since the cessation of foreign directed and joint-venture fisheries in the early 1990s, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Pacific Council) has focused almost exclusively on domestic fisheries concerns. For this reason, there has been a lesser need for the State Department representative to participate as actively in Pacific Council meetings. However, with adoption of the Council's Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for U.S. West Coast Fisheries for Highly Migratory Species (HMS), our need for active advice and input from the State Department has reemerged.

As you know, on behalf of the Secretary of Commerce, on December 15, 2004, NMFS informed the Pacific Council that overfishing is occurring on bigeye tuna, a fishery management unit species under the HMS FMP. As required by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management (Magnuson-Stevens Act), the Pacific Council is expected to respond with measures to end overfishing and rebuild the stock. We are also aware of a draft resolution on albacore tuna jointly formulated by the State Department and NMFS for presentation to the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC). It calls on the Contracting Parties, cooperating non-Parties, fishing entities, and regional economic integration organizations to implement measures to not exceed fishing effort on albacore tuna beyond current levels. This draft resolution responds to a recent stock assessment by International Scientific Committee (ISC) for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific, which indicates that overfishing may be also occurring on this species. It is clear that any Council response to the bigeye tuna overfishing declaration, and any future overfishing declarations of HMS species under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, will involve the Pacific Council channeling recommendations to multilateral organizations such as the IATTC. Since the State Department assumes a lead role in representations of United States Government policy to foreign countries and multilateral organizations, your seat on the Council is an important asset for the development of any strategy to address HMS concerns by the Pacific Council.

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At the April 2005 meeting, Council members tasked me with extending a specific request for a State Department representative to attend the June 2005 Council meeting in Foster City, California in order to respond to specific questions the Pacific Council may have about the United States position on HMS matters in the international arena. Council members are especially interested in the aforementioned draft resolution on albacore tuna.

According to the draft agenda for the June Council meeting, HMS matters are scheduled to come before the Council on Tuesday, June 14, so this would be the most opportune day for you to attend. Even if you are unable to attend the meeting as a Council member, the Council strongly urges you to send a member of your staff to the meeting in order to help the Council address these complex issues.

Sincerely,

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

CRD:rdd

c: Mr. William Gibbons-Fly
Mr. Rod McInnis