

PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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June 23, 2005

Secretary Carlos M. Gutierrez
U.S. Department of Commerce
14th Street Between Constitution and Pennsylvania Avenues NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Gutierrez:

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Pacific Council) tasked me with informing you of an important, recent decision they believe will advance the Administration's priority on dedicated access privileges for commercial fisheries, as emphasized in the President's action plan to the U.S. Ocean Commission's report. At its just completed June 2005 meeting, the Pacific Council voted unanimously to send forward a number of trawl individual quota (TIQ) alternatives covering the harvest of West Coast groundfish, including Pacific whiting, for analysis in a draft environmental impact statement (EIS). This action was also unanimously requested by our Ad Hoc Trawl Individual Quota Committee, which includes representation of whiting and nonwhiting sectors, shoreside and at-sea processors, communities, and conservation advocacy groups.

The Pacific Council's action culminated a one-and-a-half year scoping process and substantial work by a variety of Pacific Council committees. Our Ad Hoc TIQ Committee met five times, the Ad Hoc TIQ Enforcement Group met twice, the Ad Hoc TIQ Independent Experts Panel met twice, the Ad Hoc TIQ Analytical Team met four times, and three special public hearings were held. In addition, there were numerous National Marine Fisheries Service/Pacific Council work group meetings to plan this process. The result is a series of alternatives that present an integrated approach for managing the entire trawl fishery, including the whiting fishery. The alternatives take into account the complexities of the interactions among whiting and nonwhiting segments of the trawl fishery, interactions between the trawl fishery and other segments of the groundfish fishery, and the particular needs of each of these fisheries. The analysis of these alternatives will be completed in the context of a comprehensive EIS that also takes into account regional specifics such as fish delivery patterns and distributions between states, fisheries, and ports.

These alternatives were developed in the context of existing national standards for marine fishery management and a careful review of the recommendations of the National Resources Council report "Sharing the Fish." A good-faith effort was made to take into account every consideration

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identified in this report, as well as sections of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act pertaining to factors to be considered in developing an individual fishing quota (IFQ) program.

As part of its action last week, the Pacific Council also passed a motion, in case Congress should ask, stating the Pacific Council opposes any Congressional action pre-empting the cooperative process and progress made to date or otherwise usurping in any fashion the Pacific Council's development of an IFQ program via a comprehensive EIS. The Pacific Council will strongly urge that the deliberative process it has undertaken continue in a normal course of action, accomplished at the regional level.

We appreciate the support of the U.S. Department of Commerce in the Pacific Council's work on this important matter to date. Should you or your staff have any questions about design details covered in the adopted alternatives, or any other elements of their consideration to further rationalize the West Coast commercial trawl groundfish fishery, please don't hesitate to contact me at the Pacific Council office.

Sincerely,



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

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c: Pacific Council Members
Dr. William T. Hogarth
Ad Hoc Groundfish TIQ Committee
Ad Hoc TIQ Analytical Team
Ad Hoc TIQ Enforcement Group
Ad Hoc TIQ Independent Experts Panel
Groundfish Advisory Subpanel
Groundfish Allocation Committee
Groundfish Management Team