



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Northwest Region
7600 Sand Point Way N.E., Bldg. 1
Seattle, WA 98115

JUN 18 2008

Mr. Donald Hansen, Chair
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place
Portland, OR 97220

Dear ^{Don} Mr. Hansen:

By this letter, I am approving Amendment 15 to the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP). As you know, the purpose of Amendment 15 is to limit participation in the Pacific whiting fishery within the U.S. West Coast Exclusive Economic Zone until a trawl rationalization program is implemented for in the Pacific whiting fishery. The Council prepared Amendment 15 to the FMP under the provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Act and submitted it for review by the Secretary on March 12, 2008. A notice of availability for Amendment 15 was published in the Federal Register on March 18, 2008 announcing a public comment period, this comment period closed on May 19, 2008.

Amendment 15 restricts future participation in the non-tribal whiting sectors as follows: catcher vessels participating in the shore-based sector would be required to have made sector-specific whiting landings in any one calendar year during the period of January 1, 1994 through January 1, 2007; vessels participating in either the catcher/processor or mothership sector would be required to have either caught and processed whiting (catcher/processor sector,) caught and delivered whiting (catcher vessels in mothership sector,) or processed whiting (motherships) in any one calendar year during the period of January 1, 1997 through January 1, 2007. Proposed regulations supporting Amendment 15 are currently under review and would require vessels that wish to participate in the non-tribal whiting fishery to qualify for an additional whiting vessel license limitation program in addition to being registered for use with groundfish limited entry permits. This includes a new permit requirement for mothership vessels that process, but do not harvest, at sea. We expect to have the final rule implementing the provisions of Amendment 15 effective for the 2009 fishing season.

Thank you for your time and care on this issue.

Sincerely,

D. Robert Lohn
Regional Administrator

cc: GCNW (Eileen Cooney, Mariam McCall), F/NWR2 (Becky Renko, Robert Schumacher, Maryann Nickerson), F/NWR (Barry Thom)

