



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
West Coast Region
7600 Sand Point Way N.E.
Seattle, Washington 98115

September 12, 2014

Ms. Dorothy Lowman, Chair
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101
Portland, Oregon 97220-1384

Dear Ms. Lowman:

By this letter, I am approving Amendment 18 to the Pacific Coast Salmon Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The purpose of Amendment 18 is to revise the description and identification of essential fish habitat (EFH) for Pacific salmon, designate habitat areas of particular concern (HAPC), modify the current information on fishing activities and potential measures to minimize their effects on EFH, and update the list of fishing and non-fishing related activities that may adversely affect EFH and potential conservation and enhancement measures to minimize those effects.

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) prepared Amendment 18 to the FMP under provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and transmitted it to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for approval by the Secretary on June 10, 2014. A notice of availability for Amendment 18 was published in the *Federal Register* on June 16, 2014. The *Federal Register* notice for the notice of availability also notified the public of the availability of the draft environmental assessment (EA) for review and comment. The public comment period on Amendment 18 and the EA closed on August 15, 2014. A proposed rule to implement Amendment 18 will be published in the *Federal Register* shortly, and will provide the public with a 30-day comment period on the implementing regulations. A final rule will publish after public comments have been considered; the final rule will amend Federal regulations at 50 CFR 660.412.

NMFS has determined that Amendment 18 is consistent with provisions of the MSA and other applicable laws.

Following transmittal of Amendment 18, Council and NMFS staff identified technical edits that would improve the readability of the Amendment. NMFS staff will work with Council staff to ensure that these edits are completed prior to the incorporation of the Amendment into the FMP.



NMFS appreciates the Council's close cooperation and assistance in completing Amendment 18 and we look forward to ongoing work with the Council to support the best possible fishery management decisions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "William W. Stelle, Jr." The signature is written in a cursive style with a light blue background behind it.

William W. Stelle, Jr.
Regional Administrator

cc: F/WCR – P. Mundy, R. Schumacher, J. Stadler
F/GCNW – S. Lynch