

## Pacific Fishery Management Council

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Dorothy M. Lowman, Chair | Donald O. McIsaac, Executive Director

November 26, 2014

The Honorable Jeff Merkley United States Senate 313 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20510-3705

Re: Request for restoration of Fiscal Year 2015 funding for the US Coast Guard search and rescue helicopter facility in Newport, Oregon

Dear Senator Merkley:

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Pacific Council) is deeply concerned about the US Coast Guard's (USCG) recently announced decision to close the air rescue helicopter facility in Newport, Oregon. We understand that a similar decision has been made regarding the air rescue facility in Charleston, South Carolina, but that no other closures of rescue helicopter facilities have occurred anywhere else in the nation.

The Pacific Council, which manages fisheries in Federal waters off the west coast, discussed this issue at its meeting last week as part of a six day meeting covering 32 important marine fishery management agenda items. The Pacific Council is extremely grateful for all that the USCG does to protect U.S. commercial and recreational fisheries, and we enjoy a cooperative and productive relationship with the USCG. However, we strongly disagree with this decision that compromises foundational safety at sea capabilities. While this facility is in the State of Oregon, Council members representing the governments or constituents in the states of Oregon, Washington, California and Idaho, as well as West Coast Tribal governments, all supported the motion to send this letter.

We understand the reason for this closure is the Fiscal Year 2014 budget adopted by Congress, signed by the President, and provided to the USCG Commandant Admiral Zukunft to implement. The decision to close this facility was delayed until December 15 of this year, just a few days after the December 11 expiration of the current Continuing Resolution to fund government operations for Fiscal Year 2015. As you consider your action on Fiscal Year 2015 funding finality, we ask that you add \$6 million to the Fiscal Year 2015 appropriations for the USCG budget.

There are many reasons to justify this important action. We will not list them in this letter, given the significant volume of letters you have already received on this, the obvious public outcry well reported in West Coast media, and the personal appeals of the men and women participating in West Coast commercial, sport, and Tribal fisheries. The Pacific Council strongly urges you to find a way to add \$6 million to the USCG Fiscal Year 2015 budget in an omnibus appropriations bill,

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adoption of another Continuing Funding Resolution, or other appropriations vehicle funding government operations.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter so important to those involved in West Coast marine fisheries.

Sincerely,

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

Cc: Council Members

Admiral Paul F. Zukunft

Senator Ron Wyden

Senator Patty Murray

Senator Maria Cantwell

Senator Diane Feinstein

Senator Barbara Boxer

Senator James Risch

Senator Dean Crapo

Senator Barbara Mikulski

Senator Mark Begich

Representative Suzanne Bonamici

Representative Greg Walden

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Representative Kurt Schrader

Representative Hal Rogers

Mr. Bob Mahood