



Pacific Fishery Management Council

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

November 26, 2014

Admiral Paul F. Zukunft
Commandant CG-00
U.S. Coast Guard
Headquarters
2100 2nd St. SW Stop 7000
Washington, D.C. 20593-7000

Dear Admiral Zukunft:

At its November 14-19 meeting in Costa Mesa, California, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Pacific Council) discussed the Coast Guard's recently announced decision to close the rescue helicopter air facility in Newport, Oregon. The Pacific Council is deeply concerned about the inconsistency of this decision with a high priority of safety at sea, in accordance with Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) National Standard 10, the US Coast Guard (USCG) commitment to enhancing safety, and the expectations of those who fish off the West Coast. While this proposed closure is in the State of Oregon, the Pacific Council wishes to convey its deep concern from all corners of its West Coast jurisdiction.

The Pacific Council is extremely grateful for all that the USCG does for Pacific fisheries – including in particular rescuing fishermen in duress at sea. There is no way to overestimate the positive public reaction that comes from a successful at-sea rescue by the USCG. We have always been proud of our cooperative and productive relationship with the Coast Guard. It is in that collaborative spirit that we express strong disagreement with this decision.

As you know, the Pacific Council manages fisheries in the Federal waters off the west coast. The Council operates under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, which includes ten National Standards for fisheries management. The tenth National Standard deals with safety of human life at sea, which has certain foundational assumptions about the abilities of the USCG. Reducing USCG rescue at sea capabilities is inconsistent with achieving this important standard under the MSA.

We note that search and rescue is the oldest among the 11 official missions of the Coast Guard. The USCG website states “minimizing the loss of life, injury, property damage or loss by rendering aid to persons in distress and property in the maritime environment has always been a Coast Guard priority.” It is also the most appreciated of the 11 missions, in the eyes of those involved in West Coast marine fishing. We believe that the decision to remove the Coast Guard helicopter from Newport is inconsistent with this mission.

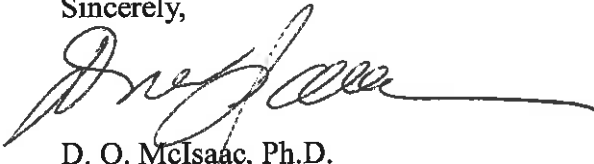
We understand a basis for this decision is related to the Fiscal Year 2014 budget adopted by Congress and signed by the President, which you have been asked to implement. You will receive

a copy of a letter from the Pacific Council asking that the \$6 million in funding that has been associated with this closure be restored in the Fiscal Year 2015 budget. However, in the event this funding is not restored, we ask that you reduce activities in non-safety related areas so as to provide for the continued operation of this important facility, as you have done during Fiscal Year 2014.

Without going into the many reasons we feel reversal of this decision is reasonable, or what competing priorities we feel should compensate for this ending shortfall, we volunteer to interact further on matters of prioritization if that would be of value to you.

In closing, we strongly urge you to find a way to reverse the decision.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. O. McIsaac", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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

Cc: Council Members
Senator Ron Wyden
Senator Jeff Merkley
Senator Patty Murray
Senator Maria Cantwell
Senator Diane Feinstein
Senator Barbara Boxer
Senator James Risch
Senator Dean Crapo
Representative Suzanne Bonamici
Representative Greg Walden
Representative Earl Blumenauer
Representative Peter DeFazio
Representative Kurt Schrader
Mr. Bob Mahood