



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
West Coast Region
1201 NE Lloyd Boulevard, Suite 1100
PORTLAND, OREGON 97232-1274

February 12, 2015

Ms. Dorothy Lowman, Chair
Pacific Marine Fishery Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101
Portland, Oregon 97225

Dear Chair Lowman:

Please find attached an updated draft strategic plan for the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) West Coast Region (WCR). Thank you for providing comments on the early draft that we shared at the Pacific Fishery Management Council's (Council) November 2014 meeting. The Council's input was valuable at informing the further development of our plan, and we made several updates to the draft as a result.

This plan will identify our priorities for the next five years, from 2016 through 2020. It is broad in scope and will be used by staff to guide annual internal decision-making and resource allocation regarding specific projects and actions. It includes goals, objectives, and strategies designed to support NOAA Fisheries' core mandates:

- ensuring the productivity and sustainability of fisheries and fishing communities through science-based decision-making and compliance with regulations; and
- recovery and conservation of protected resources through the use of sound natural and social sciences.

The plan also supports the Department of Commerce goal of ensuring communities and businesses have the necessary information, products, and services to prepare for and prosper in a changing environment; and NOAA's vision of healthy ecosystems, communities, and economies that are resilient in the face of change.

Based on feedback we received on our November draft plan from the Council and its advisory bodies, we made several revisions. Notably, under our Protected Resources goal, to address comments related to growing marine mammal populations, we refined our Marine Mammal objective and strategies by adding a strategy related to our management of individual pinnipeds impacting Federally endangered and threatened salmon under section 120 of the Marine Mammal Protection Act. In addition, we expanded our strategy regarding human interactions with marine mammals to specifically call out tools to address impacts to fishing gear and catch, as well as vessels, docks, and marinas. In Section IV (formerly Section V), we added two examples of our fisheries and offshore work, i.e., the Southern California Bight and Groundfish Catch Share Program. We made various other edits and clarifications based on the comments.



We are also making this draft plan available for public comment on our website at http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/about_us/draft_strategic_plan.html. We aim to finalize our plan this spring and are accepting public comments through Monday, March 16, 2015.

I look forward to the Council's review and input on this updated draft plan. Based on insights from Mr. Chuck Tracy, I understand it will take time to compile the Council's comments after the March meeting and, therefore, request Council comments by Tuesday, April 7. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Barry A. Thom
Deputy Regional Administrator

cc: Dr. Donald McIsaac, Executive Director, PFMC
Chuck Tracy, Deputy Director, PFMC

Attachment