



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

Department of Fish and Game

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Agenda Item D.5.a
Supplemental ADFG Report
April 2015

April 13, 2015

Mr. Robert Turner, Assistant Regional Administrator
National Marine Fisheries Service
West Coast Region
Sustainable Fisheries Division
510 Desmond Drive SE, Suite 103
Lacey, Washington 98503

Dear Mr. Turner:

I am writing in response to your letter to me dated April 9, 2015, raising concerns about the request by several members of the Chinook Technical Committee (CTC) for more time to conduct a technical review of draft abundance indices for Chinook salmon derived from Calibration 1503 (CLB1503).

CLB1503 and abundance indices were presented to the CTC on March 31 and are a draft only; it is not accurate to refer to them as "recommended." Nor is it correct to assert that Alaska is proposing any changes to the methodology or procedures for deriving abundance indices. The Chinook fishing regime, Annex 4, Ch. 3, and accompanying Appendix A, (in particular paragraphs (3) and (4)), make clear that the CTC should strive to improve the accuracy and precision of preseason forecasts. Scientific debate regarding data sets for CTC model inputs and assumptions needed to calibrate the model so that it produces reliable abundance indices is a normal part of the CTC process. In 2013, for instance, CTC members questioned the accuracy of forecasts for the WCVI fishery, and ended up recommending that they not be used. The questions raised concerning CLB1503 are no different.

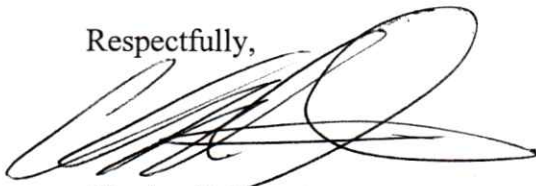
The real issue here is timing. Although the CTC has an informal goal of reaching agreement on abundance indices by April 1 of each year, in time for the Pacific Fishery Management Council's April meeting, the ability to meet this goal is dependent on analysis by the Analytical Working Group (AWG), which in turn is dependent on receiving timely data from all of the parties. The CTC has typically allowed its members a period of approximately two weeks to review the AWG's analysis before considering whether to accept a calibration and its draft abundance indices. The problem this year is that due to delays in receiving some data sets (the CTC still does not have the background data for the Canadian WCVI forecast), the AWG was not able to complete its work and did not provide the material associated with CLB1503 to the CTC as a whole until March 31. A memo from the U.S. Co-Chair identifying concerns with CLB1503 was

also distributed. CLB1503 and this memo were discussed in a bilateral teleconference meeting of the CTC on April 7. Because of the limited time for review of these materials, several members of the CTC articulated they could not concur with the calibration and draft abundance indices, but needed additional time to conduct a technical review. They suggested a period of two weeks, which is consistent with the normal schedule. No member of the CTC at that meeting objected to affording this additional time for scientific review of the CLB1503.

The CTC is currently scheduled to meet again in bilateral session the last week of April, with the goal of reaching consensus on the calibration and abundance indices to be recommended to the Commission in determining harvest levels this year. I understand your frustration that the results of this process will not be known in time for the PFMC meeting, but this is not unprecedented. In 2000, the CTC did not reach consensus on the abundance index and report its recommendation to the Commission until June 23. We trust that all CTC members will work diligently and in good faith to validate the model inputs and examine the required assumptions for CLB1503. Assuming the CTC is able to achieve consensus on the calibration, Alaska has every intention, presently and moving forward, of fully complying with the Chinook regime and implementing the harvest levels derived for the SEAK fishery.

I am prepared to discuss this issue with you at greater length, and remain open to any suggestions you have for improving the process.

Respectfully,



Charles O. Swanton
Deputy Commissioner

cc: Ron Allen, U.S. Section Chair
Phil Anderson, Commissioner
William Auger, Alternate Commissioner
Mike Clark, Alternate Commissioner
McCoy Oatman, Alternate Commissioner
Chris Kern, Acting Alternate Commissioner
Dr. Donald McIsaac, Executive Director, PMFC
Ms. Lorraine Loomis, Chair, NWIFC
Mr. Carlos Smith, Chair, CRIFC