



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC)  
Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC)  
Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC)

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TO: Ms. Dorothy Lowman, Chair PFMC  
Chuck Tracy, Acting Executive Director, PFMC

FROM: Dr. Doug DeMaster, Director AFSC  
Dr. John Stein, Director, NWFSC  
Dr. Cisco Werner, Director, SWFSC

### Request

The three NMFS “West Coast” Science Centers (i.e., the Alaska Fisheries Science Center, Northwest Fisheries Science Center, and the Southwest Fisheries Science Center – the AFSC, NWFSC and SWFSC respectively), in reviewing their research mandates and cross-Center coordination and collaborations, propose to revisit the historical practice of the AFSC’s membership on the PFMC’s SSC. The AFSC’s membership was initiated several decades ago based on the need to provide stock assessment expertise that only the AFSC could provide at the time, but which is no longer reflective of current NWFSC and SWFSC’s capacities and the AFSC’s priorities. As such, given emerging needs and priorities that need to be met in the AFSC, and present capabilities of the NWFSC and SWFSC, the three SCs propose that the traditional seat on the PFMC SSC held by the AFSC be vacated.

### Background and Rationale

When the Pacific Fishery Management Council’s (PFMC) Operating Procedures (COP) were formulated in the mid-80’s, the NWFSC and the AFSC were still one Science Center (i.e., a single Northwest and Alaska Fisheries Science Center). The COP was revised after the NWFSC and the AFSC became two independent Centers in the late 1980s. We believe that because the groundfish assessment capacity at the NWFSC at that time was not extensive, and to “ensure that SSC membership reflects the range of expertise needed for all Council FMPs”<sup>1</sup>, a fourth position on the PFMC’s SSC was assigned to the AFSC. [Note that through at least 2003 there were only four NMFS Science Center positions on the SSC<sup>2</sup>: two from the NWFSC and one each from the SWFSC and the AFSC and that at some subsequent point in time, a second SWFSC position was added to the SSC raising the number of NMFS Science Center positions to its present number of five.]

Currently, there is a full complement of scientists at the NWFSC and SWFSC focused on stock assessment and ecology of groundfish and actively engaged in providing the PFMC scientific advice on fishery management. In addition, there are increasing demands for staff capacity on issues in the Gulf of Alaska, Bering Sea and High Arctic that are of high priority for the AFSC and NMFS.

As such, the three “West Coast” Science Centers would like to propose that the traditional seat on the PFMC SSC held by the AFSC be vacated. The rationale supporting this proposal is: (1) there are other non-AFSC NMFS scientists available for meeting Council needs, and (2) sustaining this position is outweighed by other pressing needs of the AFSC’s mission. If the vacated seat were not filled, the SSC would decrease from 17 to 16 members and NMFS’ membership from five to four. The NWFSC and SWFSC are fully committed to meeting the information needs of the PFMC, and strongly believe that this move will in no way lessen the credibility of the scientific advice provided to the PFMC.

We seek support from the PFMC regarding this change in its COP, and request advice from the Council on implementation procedures. We respectfully request consideration for the proposed change to take place sometime between 1 October and 31 December 2016.

<sup>1</sup> COP’s SSC Composition taken from [http://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Current\\_COP\\_December\\_2015.pdf](http://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Current_COP_December_2015.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.pcouncil.org/bb/2003/0903/Ex\\_B6\\_Att2\\_Sept2003BB.pdf](http://www.pcouncil.org/bb/2003/0903/Ex_B6_Att2_Sept2003BB.pdf)

