



**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

April 24, 2018

Mr. Philip Anderson, Chair  
Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC)  
7700 NE Ambassador Place  
Portland, OR 97220

Dear Mr. Anderson:

By this letter, I am approving Amendment 4 to the Fishery Management Plan for U.S. West Coast Highly Migratory Species Fisheries (HMS FMP) (RIN 0648-BH36). Amendment 4 serves to bring descriptions of the management context for highly migratory species (HMS) fisheries up-to-date and better describe the PFMC's role in making stock status determinations, including evaluations of the best scientific information available. Amendment 4 also serves to streamline HMS management activities, including the timing of international assessments, with the PFMC's biennial management cycle. These changes should improve efficiencies in considering stock status as well as making recommendations for domestic regulations and international measures to address instances in which stocks may be considered overfished or subject to overfishing to comport with timeframes of Section 304 (e) and (i) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and guidelines for MSA National Standard 1 at 50 CFR 600.310.

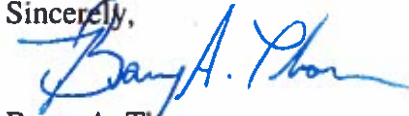
The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) published a notice of availability (NOA) of Amendment 4 to the HMS FMP on January 23, 2018 ([83 FR 3108](#)), and a proposed rule to revise regulations at 50 CFR 660.709 to implement Amendment 4 on February 27, 2018 ([83 FR 8414](#)). The public comment period on the NOA ended March 26, 2018. The public comment period on the proposed rule ended April 13, 2018. NMFS considered all comments submitted by the deadline on the NOA in making its decision to recommend approval of Amendment 4. No comments received on the proposed rule opposed the approval of Amendment 4. We expect to publish the final rule and make it effective prior to the PFMC's June 2018 meeting.

NMFS appreciates the PFMC's ongoing efforts to streamline domestic and international management activities for HMS fisheries. NMFS believes that shifting the schedule for the biennial management cycle and updating the descriptions of the Council's role in making stock status determinations will better enable the Council and NMFS to meet statutory obligations under MSA Section 304(e) and (i). NMFS looks forward to working with the PFMC and its



advisory subcommittees to provide status updates for HMS, based on status determination criteria in the HMS FMP, in advance of the September 2018 meeting.

Sincerely,



Barry A. Thom  
Regional Administrator

Cc: Administrative file: 150415WCR2017SF00271:AR