

June 5, 2018

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Mr. Chris Oliver  
Assistant Administrator for Fisheries  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
1315 East-West Highway  
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3282  
Via email: CHRIS.OLIVER@NOAA.GOV

Dear Mr. Oliver:

At the Council Coordination Committee meeting in May in Sitka, Alaska, we reviewed a report from the Fishing Data Innovation Taskforce entitled "Improving Net Gains: Data-Driven Innovation for America's Fishing Future." Ms. Dorothy Lowman and Ms. Kate Wing, both members of the Taskforce, gave a presentation on the report's findings. The CCC supports the intent of the report, to highlight and find solutions to improve data collection and management, and recommends NMFS invest in measures to address this important issue. Not only will such an investment support management of our Nation's fishery resources but will bring benefits to the U.S. industry dependent on these resources.

The Councils are responsible for developing data-driven management plans that meet complex conservation, economic and social objectives. The Council process also involves strong industry and public engagement in identifying the most critical management needs. In many ways, we are uniquely positioned to bring our expertise and external input to defining the data problems and choosing what to prioritize. The CCC members see a wide array of data collection and management challenges in our work around the U.S., such as the ability to compare data sets or use applications and technological systems that are interoperable across regions. For example, there was discussion at the meeting about developing a unique trip identifier or other approaches to efficiently integrate observer data, logbook data, and landings data.

We think investing in data modernization – improving the way NMFS and its partners collect, collate, analyze, store and provide access to data – is important to our ability to effectively manage fisheries. Data modernization initiatives can also work to minimize, streamline and avoid duplicative reporting requirements for fishermen. We encourage NOAA to invest not only in fixing short-term data problems but also in long-term processes and infrastructure that will ultimately expand our capacity to manage fisheries in an efficient and sustainable manner.

The Councils want to stay involved in the conversations around this work, including discussions to develop public-private partnerships and adopt internal programs, like the FIS grants, to support modernization efforts at the regions and states. We look forward to hearing reports in the future regarding how NMFS is making progress on data modernization efforts.

Sincerely,



Dan Hull  
NPFMC Chairman, on behalf of the Council Coordination Committee

cc: Regional Fishery Management Councils and Fishing Data Innovation Task Force