



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE

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August 15, 2018

Mr. Chuck Tracy
Executive Director
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 200
Portland, OR 97220

Dear Mr. Tracy,

I am writing to inform you that Dr. Andi Stephens will no longer serve as a representative of the Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) to the Council's Groundfish Management Team (GMT). Dr. Stephens has filled more than a full three-year term on the GMT, and we believe it is appropriate to have her step down to focus on research and assessment work. Due to staffing issues, the upcoming assessment cycle, and budget limitations, we do not intend to nominate another stock assessment or other scientist to serve on the GMT at this time. Dr. Kayleigh Somers will continue to serve as the NWFSC's representative to the GMT.

We understand the GMT's need, especially during the early part of the biennial specifications process, to have ready access to a stock assessment scientist who can help interpret the results of stock assessments. We would like to work with you to develop a strategy that will meet the needs of both the GMT and our stock assessment program. One model that we believe can be very successful is one that was employed by the observer program for many years to provide the GMT with data, analysis, and interpretation. Specifically, we propose identifying an individual, an assessment point of contact (POC), to attend a limited number of GMT meetings at which stock assessments are a key issue, and be available to respond to email questions and participate in phone or internet conferences with GMT members. Given our resource limitations, our assessment and research needs can best be met through allowing a POC to serve as an outside advisor, rather as a GMT member. While it is especially difficult for a stock assessor to participate in the GMT process during the March, April, and June meetings of odd years, when stock assessments are being conducted, we anticipate that the assessment POC could attend portions of the subsequent September and November meetings, when assessments are a key items of discussion. If needed, the assessment POC could also attend portions of the GMT's usual mid-winter meeting and the March Council meeting. We look forward to crafting an arrangement with you that will meet the needs of both the GMT and our stock assessment program.

Sincerely,

Michelle McClure, Ph.D.
Director, Fishery Resource Analysis and Monitoring Division
Northwest Fisheries Science Center