

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Pacific Fishery Management Council (Pacific Council) staff received notice that our request for an extension to use our remaining 2014-2019 grant funds through 2021 was approved. Our planned use of those funds in 2020 were curtailed due to reduced travel costs and agenda prioritization resulting from Covid-19 measures. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has also reported their spend plan to the Council Coordination Committee (CCC), which included a small increase for the Regional Councils, as well as a specific appropriation for the Pacific Council of \$250,000 to implement our Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) and Climate and Communities Initiative (CCI). We received our first award in January of about 40 percent of our expected total for 2021.

We have cancelled our hotel contract and will conduct the June Council meeting by webinar. We have not set the dates for the June meeting yet, but they will be in the same general timeframe as originally planned (June 22-29). We are hoping that the September meeting can be held in Spokane, WA as planned. Given the remaining uncertainty in hotel and travel costs, and in consultation with the Budget Committee Chair, we are recommending the Budget Committee meet in June to adopt a final Operational Budget.

Council staff has been working with the Pacific Sablefish Transboundary Assessment Team to conduct a workshop April 27-29 to gather recommendations from West Coast, British Columbia and Alaska stakeholders and managers for fishery objectives, performance metrics for assessing the attainment of fishery objectives, and alternative management strategies to be evaluated via a Management Strategy Evaluation. We have contracted with Meisha Key to facilitate the workshop, and our IT staff will be setting up a dedicated website for materials and registration by April 1.

As a reminder, the Pacific Council is the host of this year's CCC activities. The CCC's spring meeting is scheduled for May 18-20 by webinar, and the fall meeting is being planned for October 19-21 in Monterey, CA.

The CCC is proposing to send a letter to the Departments of Interior and Commerce regarding Section 216(a) of Executive Order (EO) 14008 on Tackling The Climate Crisis At Home And Abroad, which proposes to conserve 30 percent of our Nation's lands and waters by 2030. A draft of the CCC letter is included in Agenda Item C.3, Legislative Matters, where the Council will consider approving the letter.

Section 216(c) of EO 14008 requires NMFS to collect input from fishermen, regional ocean councils, fishery management councils, scientists, and other stakeholders on how to make fisheries and protected resources more resilient to climate change, including changes in management and conservation measures, and improvements in science, monitoring, and cooperative research. NMFS has announced a 30-day public comment period to get input on how best to achieve these objectives (see Informational Report 8). Mr. Sam Rauch will be briefing the Council on this Executive Order Monday morning, March 8th.

EO 13990 has two sections of note to the Council: Section 2 requires immediate review of all agencies actions taken between 1/20/2017 and 1/20/2021. One such regulation is the revised National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) implementing regulations that went into effect September 14, 2020. The CCC has established a Subcommittee to work with NMFS in developing issues and questions for a workshop to look at potential revisions to the 2020 NEPA regulations, as well as considering an approach to potentially allow at least some of the Councils' Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) processes to be considered functionally equivalent to the NEPA process. As a result of this EO, the workshop has been postponed; however, the CCC Subcommittee is continuing work toward that objective as we believe that functional equivalency aspect can be pursued under authority of the MSA, whether the NEPA rule is rescinded or not.

Section 3 of EO 13990 requires a Department of Interior led review of Northeast Canyons & Seamounts Marine National Monument, including consideration of restoration of a commercial fishing prohibition. The CCC has sent a letter to the Department of Interior which is essentially the same as three previous letters sent to earlier administrations opposing setting fishing regulations except under MSA authority (A.3, Supplemental Attachment 1).

PFMC
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