

RECEIVED

DEC 07 2010

PFMC



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE

1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

THE DIRECTOR

Agenda Item E.1

Attachment 1

March 2011

Donald O. McIsaac, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101
Portland, OR 97220

DEC 07 2010

Dear Dr. McIsaac: *Don*

Thank you for your letter endorsing NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) *Habitat Assessment Improvement Plan* (HAIP). The HAIP is an important initiative for improving NMFS' assessment of habitat and sustainable management of fish stocks. NMFS will be looking for opportunities to fund its implementation through the budget planning process. We are also exploring ways to better use existing habitat science with existing resources. In FY 2011 we will work on prioritizing stocks, geographic areas, and data inadequacies that should be addressed through habitat assessments, and on improving communication and coordination between habitat scientists and habitat managers. We are also planning to fund some pilot projects intended to improve stock assessments through use of habitat information.

The work you are doing on the essential fish habitat (EFH) 5-year review and the Ecosystem Fishery Management Plan underscores the important role of habitat information in fishery management decision-making and the challenges of using habitat science effectively. We look forward to working with the Pacific Council and other Councils in advancing the role of habitat science in decision-making for fisheries management.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the HAIP in detail, please contact Ms. Mary Yoklavich, Southwest Fisheries Science Center, at (858) 546-7067; Dr. Steve Brown, headquarters Office of Science and Technology, (301) 713-2367; or Ms. Susan-Marie Stedman, headquarters Office of Habitat Conservation, at (301) 713-2325.

Sincerely,

Eric C. Schwaab

