



Regional Fishery Management Council Coordination Committee

February 3, 2011



Ms. Nancy Sutley and Dr. John P. Holdren, Co-Chairs
National Ocean Council
730 Jackson Place, NW
Washington, DC 20503



Dear Ms. Sutley and Dr. Holdren:



The purpose of this letter is to inform the National Ocean Council (NOC) of the Regional Fishery Management Councils' (RFMCs) interest in participating in the Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning (CMSP) process through the regional planning bodies being created by the NOC. Also, because of this interest, the RFMCs would like to be included to participate in the national CMSP workshop scheduled for May, 2011.



The Council Coordination Committee (CCC) recently met with NOAA Fisheries Senior staff and discussed the National Ocean Council and Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning. The CCC is the coordinating body of the RFMCs, established under Section 302(1) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. It consists of the chairs, vice chairs, and executive directors of each of the eight RFMCs.



Specifically, we are requesting that the RFMCs have an integrated role in the CMSP process, including membership in the appropriate regional planning bodies, and through other mechanisms (such as the national workshop) that will facilitate Council input in the development of CMS Plans.



We note that under the NOC priority objective for CMSP - Regional Planning Bodies it states "The members of the regional planning bodies will consist of Federal, State, and tribal authorities relevant to CMSP for that area. In addition, the regional planning bodies will provide a formal mechanism for consultation with their respective Regional Fishery Management Councils (RFMCs) on fishery related issues."



Further, the final recommendations of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force state "Some comments suggested adding a Regional Fishery Management Council (RFMC) representative to the regional planning bodies given their unique quasi-regulatory role under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act). The Task Force is interested in finding the most effective opportunity for sustained and meaningful engagement with the RFMCs as it is their statutory responsibility to develop fishery

management plans and management measures for fisheries which NOAA then reviews and, if approves, implements through regulation. While the Task Force acknowledges the relatively unique role that RFMCs play, it did not want to prescribe a particular method for how RFMCs should be included in the CMSP process without more thoughtful consideration and analysis. The recommendations describe that the regional planning bodies would provide a formal mechanism for consultation with the RFMCs across their respective regions on fishery related issues and that the NOC would further assess if representation on the regional planning bodies is the best method for this engagement.” The CCC firmly believes that the best method for engagement with the RFMCs in CMSP is for each of the regional Councils to have a dedicated seat on the appropriate regional planning body in their jurisdictions.

The RFMCs have already been engaged with regional planning bodies where they exist. We have made significant efforts to work with the states in the development of the regional governor’s ocean partnerships/alliances and other entities addressing CMSP.

The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (WPFMC) has been engaged as project partners in two funding proposals for NOAA’s FY-2011 Regional Ocean Funding Program. One of these proposals was to establish a process in Hawaii to bring together State, Federal, County, and other stakeholder groups to begin to implement CMSP. The other proposal was to establish a Pacific Regional Ocean Partnership that would include government representation from American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, and Hawaii. The WPFMC has also been in discussions with the Pacific Basin Development Council (PBDC) on their potential interest in forming a Pacific Regional Ocean Partnership. The PBDC is a non-profit organization that was established in the early 1980s by the governors of the Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and Hawaii.

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) passed a resolution expressing support for the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO), and has requested representation on the MARCO Management Board. In addition to representation on the Management Board, the Council also requested representation on the appropriate MARCO Action Teams through participation of Council technical staff. The Council Chairman briefed MARCO on Council activities at the MARCO August 2010 meeting and the Council has had presentations from MARCO representatives at both their October and December 2010 meetings. However, it is unclear whether or not MARCO will become the regional planning body established by the Executive Order.

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council has interacted with the Gulf of Mexico Governor’s Alliance through their Council Chairman. The Chairman currently serves on the Gulf of Mexico Governor’s Alliance grant review board.

The New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) contacted the Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC), requesting a seat on their regional planning body. The NROC has invited the NEFMC to participate in all future NROC meetings and conference calls. The NROC has also verbally assured the NEFMC that they will support NEFMC membership on the regional planning body. However, as is the case with MARCO in the

Mid Atlantic, it is unclear whether or not NROC will become the regional planning body established under the NOC.

Currently no regional planning bodies exist in the Alaska Region; however, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) has been engaged in numerous activities related to CMSP. Over 673,000 square nautical miles of the EEZ (over half of the area under the Council's jurisdiction) have been closed to various forms of fishing, or in some cases to all fishing, to conserve habitat or to minimize impacts of fishing on vulnerable species. The Council has established fishery management plans for the Arctic region, the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands, as well as, a Fishery Ecosystem Plan for the Aleutian Islands area, which is an ecologically and historically unique ecosystem area. In 2005, in response to the U.S. Ocean Action Plan, the Council initiated the establishment of the Alaska Marine Ecosystem Forum, comprised of major State and Federal agencies involved in various aspects of resource management. While not designed as a 'Regional Ocean Partnership' at the time, this body currently functions in much the same manner as that envisioned for regional planning bodies under the Executive Order.

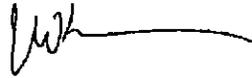
The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council has been involved in the development of the Governor's South Atlantic Alliance through participation of its state agency Council members and the Council staff. Council members and staff serve on the Executive Planning Team that developed the South Atlantic Alliance Action Plan. This has been an ongoing endeavour over the past several years.

At its September 2010 meeting, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) formally considered Executive Order 13547 regarding marine spatial planning in United States territorial waters in an open, public meeting. The PFMC received a presentation from the West Coast Governors Agreement on Ocean Health (WCGA) Executive Committee members. They described the current status and activities of the WCGA, and emphasized the many areas of common interest with the Pacific Council. They also requested that the Pacific Council assign a point of contact with regard to participation in the marine spatial planning process, especially as it evolves into regional implementation led by regional planning bodies. As you know, the Pacific Council has also officially requested a dedicated seat on the West Coast regional planning body for a representative of the Pacific Council, something that has drawn broad support in general. Discussions are currently underway between the Pacific Council and the WCGA regarding a proposed organizational structure for a West Coast regional planning body, including the optimal role for the Pacific Council.

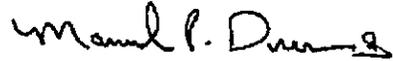
Since 1976, the RFMC model has proved to be an excellent operational design for regional governance. We believe the experience gained by the Councils', coupled with our successful science-based process, existing infrastructure and public interface processes will make us effective partners for implementing marine spatial planning in the future.

We look forward to working with the NOC and appreciate your thoughtful consideration of our request.

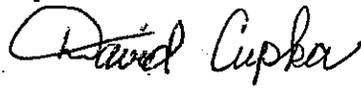
Sincerely,



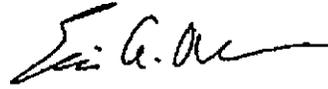
Mr. Mark Cedergreen
Pacific Fishery Management
Council Chair



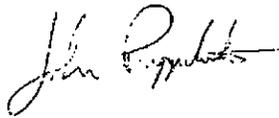
Mr. Manny Duenas
Western Pacific Fishery Management
Council Chair



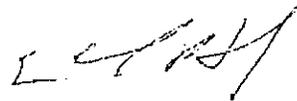
Mr. David Cupka
South Atlantic Fishery Management
Council Chair



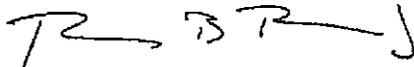
Mr. Eric Olsen
North Pacific Fishery Management
Council Chair



Mr. John Pappalardo
New England Fishery Management
Council Chair



Mr. Eugenio Poleiro-Soler
Caribbean Fishery Management
Council Chair



Mr. Rick Robins
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management
Council Chair



Mr. Robert Shipp
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management
Council Chair

Cc: Regional Fishery Management Council Executive Directors
Mr. John Oliver
Mr. Sam Rauch
Mr. Gary Reisner