

May 29, 2012



Samuel D. Rauch
Acting Assistant Administrator of Fisheries
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Springs, MD 20910



Dear Sam:

The growing demand on the Councils to end overfishing of US fisheries is becoming even more challenging with the reduced influx of scientific information to make informed management decisions. The current budget situation constrains the Science Centers' ability to produce scientific products to support fisheries management. The Council Coordination Committee (CCC) continues to be concerned about the possible reduction in the generation of scientific information for fishery management, especially with the current mandate of managing the stock under annual catch limits and catch shares.



Despite the overarching budget shortfalls, the NOAA Fisheries Stock Assessment Program still received an increase in this line item budget. The Councils have learned that much of the funding is allocated to test and use advanced technology for supporting stock assessments. The Councils are concerned about the scale of investment in advanced technologies, while funding for basic fishery-dependent data collection continues to remain level or is even decreasing. The utility of the information produced through advanced technology varies by region. Some regions can maximize the use of advance technology for their fishery-independent surveys yet some regions are still struggling to enhance their fishery-dependent data collection.



The Councils recognize the utility of advanced technology to support stock assessment. However, stock assessments still require information from basic fishery and biological data collection. The CCC requests that NMFS provide a description to the Councils of the decision process on the evaluation of whether advanced technology was required for stock assessments. Moreover, the basic data collection through fishery-dependent sampling (catch, effort, biological sampling, observer for by-catch and discards, etc.) should be adequately funded to meet the requirements for at least a level 1 or 2 stock assessment, and not suffer from the diversion of funds into advanced technological methods.



The Councils rely heavily on the Science Centers for scientific information used for fishery management. The CCC requests NMFS that funds intended for Stock Assessment Programs be **equitably** allocated across the Science Centers in order to adequately meet their stock assessments schedules, and in turn the Councils can meet their management obligations.



Thank you and we look forward to your response and action on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Manuel P. Duenas".

Manuel P. Duenas
Chairman



Fishery Management Council



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Western Pacific Council
Manuel Duenas, Chair
Kitty M. Simonds, Executive Director

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