



Regional Fishery Management Council Coordination Committee

February 2, 2011



Mr. Eric Schwaab
Assistant Administrator for Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 Easy West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910



Dear Mr. Schwaab:



Thank you for Gary Reisner's presentation at the recent Interim Council Coordination Committee (CCC) meeting regarding funding for the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the Regional Fishery Management Councils (RFMC) for FY 2011 and beyond, and the subsequent discussion. In response to the unfortunate situation whereby the Federal government FY 2011 budget was still operating under Continued Resolution funding (CR), it was not possible to finalize RFMC funding allocations at that meeting. At the end of that meeting, the CCC committed to providing their perspectives and a proposal regarding the current funding dilemma; this letter serves that purpose.



On the basis of your briefing at the annual CCC meeting in Anchorage, Alaska last May, the RFMC expectation for FY 2011 has been \$30.5 M (\$28.5 M from various line items as provided in FY 2010, plus \$2 M for catch share program emphasis), plus further consideration of the \$2 M Council proposal for outreach activities including funding a major national conference. We appreciate your position that that \$30.5 M is still the preferred alternative if the total NMFS budget allows for its achievement. However, we understand the Congressional decision to not proceed with an Omnibus funding bill, the current CR providing for operations at the FY 2010 level through March 4, 2011, and the uncertainty of what might happen after March 4, complicates things.



You noted the necessity that budget planning for FY 2011 will proceed under three possible scenarios in anticipation of final budget resolution hoped to occur when the current CR terminates March 4, 2011. These three scenarios were:



1. a CR for the balance of the year at the 2010 budget level,
2. a CR or other budget resolution at the President's Request level for FY 2011, and
3. a CR for the balance of the year at a level below the President's Request level.



During your contingency planning preparatory to final budget resolution by the Legislative and Executive branches, the RFMC propose that \$30.5 M be provided the RFMC under each of the three possible scenarios for reasons described below. We presume this target is achievable under scenario 2, based on the commitments at the last two CCC meetings; we also presume it is achievable under scenario 1, as the total NMFS budget is actually higher under scenario 1 than scenario 2. Our rationale for \$30.5 M under scenario 3 includes the nature of the Council processes in CY 2011, the necessity of the RFMC process in satisfying the requirements of the Magnuson Stevens Act, and the relatively small percentage of the total NMFS budget needed by the RFMC. By the time the current CR expires, we will be approaching a quarter of the calendar year, and the small RFMC budgets do not have the kind of flexibility to adjust spending during the balance of the year that the large NMFS aggregate does, given the high proportion of fixed costs for such things as contracted meeting venues, staffing, and office space rent. Unless a reduction under scenario 3 is draconian, we presume normal Council operations and an emphasis on catch share programs will remain an administrative priority. Given that the RFMC allocation comprises only about 3 percent of the agency budget, we recommend that savings during the first half of FY2011 and flexibility in the remaining 97 percent of the budget be searched for a way to achieve the \$30.5 M target for RFMC. However, in the event that the level of a scenario 3 reduction is of such severity that \$30.5 M for the RFMC cannot be accommodated, we ask that the level of reduction be determined via discussions on March 23, 2011, as described below. Lastly, we propose further discussion about the outreach needs of the RMFC, including a national conference, at that same time.

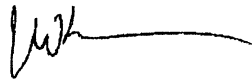
At the recent CCC meeting, we indicated we would canvass RFMC calendar commitments and recommend a date whereby the Executive Directors could meet with you and appropriate NMFS leadership to reach final resolution on the relevant FY 2011 allocations. We propose March 23, 2011 for this meeting under the presumption year-end resolution of the CR has occurred by then. We appreciate your offer to provide for webinar or other communication participation for those Executive Directors that may not be able to travel for an in-person meeting.

Lastly, we note the comments made by John Oliver towards the end of the CCC funding discussion, regarding the probability of having to look at entirely new approaches to doing business in 2012 and beyond. We take his comments seriously and anticipate more discussion of possibilities at the annual CCC meeting.

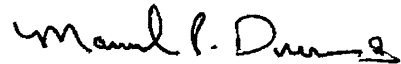
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Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Should you have any questions regarding our proposal, please contact Dr. Donald McIsaac at the Pacific Council office

Sincerely,



Mr. Mark Cedergreen
Pacific Fishery Management
Council Chair



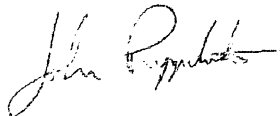
Mr. Manny Duenas
Western Pacific Fishery Management
Council Chair



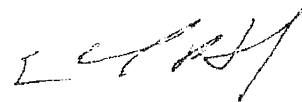
Mr. David Cupka
South Atlantic Fishery Management
Council Chair



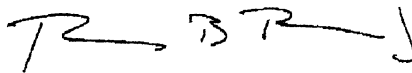
Mr. Eric Olsen
North Pacific Fishery Management
Council Chair



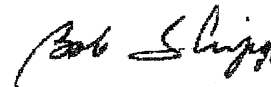
Mr. John Pappalardo
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Mr. Rick Robins
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Mr. Robert Shipp
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management
Council Chair

DOM:kam

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

