



NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Howard W. Lutnick
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20230
Via Email: thesec@doc.gov, laura.grimm@noaa.gov

Dear Secretary Lutnick:

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) recommends management measures and regulations to the Secretary of Commerce for federal fisheries off Alaska and is proud of its role in providing the majority of the Nation's domestic seafood supply. We were pleased to see our work is directly aligned with a stated goal of the recent Executive Order (*Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness*, April 17, 2025) to promote the productive harvest of our U.S. seafood resources. Our region also leads the Nation in the part of the executive order relative to modernizing data collection and analytical practices, including support for new and less expensive technologies to monitor and assess fish stocks, use of exempted fishing permits, and use of cooperative research programs reliant on fishing industry collaboration. We are ready to work with you on fulfilling these goals.

The North Pacific Council has a successful record of science-based, sustainable fisheries management which facilitates long-term production of our Nation's fisheries resources. Since 1976, the harvest of groundfish in the federal waters of the North Pacific has totaled 4 to 5 billion pounds annually. These harvests account for approximately 60% of the total U.S. catch and are critical to ensuring the viability of the U.S. seafood supply chain and food security for the Nation due to both the size and the stability of the annual yield. Across state and federal fisheries in Alaska, over \$5 billion worth of seafood products are produced by Alaska processors annually, and almost 50,000 people are directly employed in Alaska. U.S. economic output related to Alaska's seafood industry totals \$15.8 billion including all direct and multiplier impacts and supports an estimated 81,100 FTE jobs annually in the U.S. (on average 2021/2022). Workers in these jobs earn an estimated \$5.8 billion in total annual labor income.

Our ability to maintain and further production of the Nation's seafood resources, as described in the April 17 Executive Order, is critically dependent on the NOAA workforce and Federal marine surveys and research. Federal employees at the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Alaska Region open and close fisheries in-season, issue permits or fishing privileges required to support management programs recommended by the Council to promote maximum sustainable yield and implement fisheries monitoring to ensure thousands of fishermen can access the resource each year. The NOAA Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) conducts critical research to estimate fish volume and abundance, determine maximum acceptable biological harvest rates, and monitor ecosystem changes, all of which is necessary to ensure sustainable, maximum long-term production for the Nation. The National Weather Service

provides weather prediction services that fishermen rely on for safety at sea, as well as ensuring the well-being of our coastal communities with significant marine infrastructure. Maintaining domestic seafood harvesting and processing opportunities and providing revenue and jobs for support businesses and communities depends on maintaining sufficient staff resources at these Federal agencies.

We wholly rely on NOAA's marine surveys and the associated research that flows from those surveys to determine optimum yield for each fish and crab species, as required by the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Without these surveys, scientists would be required to account for substantially increased uncertainty by lowering catch limits for U.S. fishermen, which lowers U.S. seafood production. The majority of surveys in the North Pacific are conducted as charters with private commercial vessels, but some of our most important surveys can currently only be conducted with the NOAA ship (*Oscar Dyson*). Even missing one of our core surveys creates immediate impacts for the following year's harvests.

Recently, we have been focusing our work with NOAA on modernizing our survey methods, as well as partnering with industry on exempted fishing permits and cooperative research, to improve the responsiveness of fisheries management to real-time ocean conditions and use more efficient and effective tools, such as electronic monitoring. NOAA's survey modernization project is underway with the explicit goals of greater efficiency, flexibility, and cost effectiveness. We hope to work with you to ensure this project's completion as a key step in meeting the mandate of the recent Presidential E.O. We are highly dependent on the Alaska Fisheries Science Center staff and funding to complete this critical work.

The regional fishery management process is unique in that it is largely directed by fishery participants, and our regulated community is essential in identifying ways to improve management and increase access to fisheries and economic opportunities. Adequate funding for the regional fishery management councils is necessary to support this collaborative public process and promote effective and streamlined management. Costs for the councils (including personnel, health care, meeting, and travel costs) have increased relative to annual funding obligations. Combined with the mandatory requirements the councils must complete, the ability of the councils to manage for optimum yields, provide effective management, and react to changes in ocean conditions is greatly reduced without sufficient funding. In response to rising costs, we have recently reduced our operations by decreasing the number of meetings, reducing the number of staff, and eliminating all but mission critical travel and expenses.

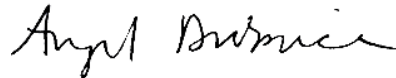
Federal funding for fisheries research and management brings an enormous return on investment for the Nation. In 2022, for example, the U.S. spent about \$700 million on Sustainable Fisheries Science, Management, and Enforcement through NOAA Fisheries, and about \$30 million on the Regional Fishery Management Councils. In turn, this investment in U.S. commercial and recreational fisheries management supported 2.3 million jobs, generated \$321 billion in sales impacts, and generated \$149 billion in value-added impacts.¹ Sustained federal funding is

¹ Fisheries Economics of the United States 2022. NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS-F/SPO-248B.
<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/document/fisheries-economics-united-states-reports>

critical to the revenue and jobs provided by U.S. seafood industry, food security for the Nation, and conservation and management of recreational fisheries.

In sum, fisheries off Alaska represent the majority of U.S. seafood harvest and production, and ensuring the Federal staff and resources necessary to their continued management provides immense benefits to the Nation. We look forward to working with you to ensure the long-term productivity of our Nation's federal fisheries and to increase America's seafood competitiveness.

Sincerely,



Angel Drobnica
Chair, North Pacific Fishery Management Council

Cc:

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