



Mr. Gary Painter
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Mr. Edward Poulsen
President
Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers
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February 2, 2016

Dr. Ron Felthoven
Resource Assessment and Conservation Division
Alaska Fisheries Science Center / National Marine Fisheries Service
7600 Sand Point Way N.E., Building 4
Seattle, WA 98115

Dr. Anne Hollowed
Resource Assessment and Conservation Division
Alaska Fisheries Science Center / National Marine Fisheries Service
7600 Sand Point Way N.E., Building 4
Seattle, WA 98115

Dear Ron and Anne,

Representatives from the Bering Sea Fisheries Research Foundation (BSFRF) and the Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers (ABSC) recently attended the January 2016 Crab Plan Team and modeling workshop held in Anchorage. A presentation was given on the Bering Sea snow crab stock assessment that provided no clarification of critical concerns raised in September and October 2015 by members of the Plan Team, members of the SSC, and directly affected stakeholders. At the conclusion of the fall OFL-ABC-setting process, it was our understanding that a significant portion of the January 2016 CPT meeting would be specifically dedicated to addressing these concerns. As such, we were alarmed to learn that no progress had been made towards fixing the problems with workable model runs and that no available explanations were given on the impact of sequential changes between the various model runs.

Bering Sea snow crab is the most data rich stock assessment model for Alaskan crab and this vital resource supports a substantial commercial fishery accounting for approximately 50% of Alaska's gross ex-vessel revenue from all commercial crab landings. We recognize that the upcoming May 2016 CPT meeting is a critical mid-cycle period when the assessment can be reviewed and advice/recommendations for September 2016 CPT model scenarios are defined. As your cooperative research partners and key stakeholders dedicated to continued participation in the stock assessment process, we respectfully request the immediate strategy outlining the next steps the AFSC intends to take regarding the snow crab assessment. Both ABSC and BSFRF are developing strategies for current crab seasons and beyond that include detailed planning for harvesting, processing, marketing, and cooperative research particularly for snow crab assessment. The current

status and immediate future for the snow crab stock assessment is extremely uncertain. In requesting a detailed plan, we are simply asking for transparency regarding the strategy for the snow crab assessment to achieve a defensible snow crab model in May and September.

Thank you for your time and attention to this crucial issue. Given the urgency of this situation we would like to receive your response by February 15. We are available to answer any specific questions you may have regarding our concerns.

Respectfully,

Handwritten signature of Gary L. Painter in black ink, written over a horizontal line.

BSFRF President,
Gary L. Painter

Handwritten signature of Edward Poulsen in black ink, written over a horizontal line.

ABSC President,
Edward Poulsen

cc:

Doug DeMaster, AFSC
Steve Ignell, AFSC
Bob Foy, CPT
Chris Oliver, NPFMC
Dan Hull, NPFMC
Farron Wallace, SSC
BSFRF Board of Directors
ABSC Board of Directors