



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
THE DIRECTOR

AUG 16 2016

Mr. Dan Hull
Chairman
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
605 W. 4th Street, Suite 306
Anchorage, AK 99501

Dear Mr. Hull:

Thank you for your letter requesting continued supplementary funding to support the North Pacific Observer Program and ongoing efforts to develop and implement electronic monitoring (EM) for your small-boat fixed-gear fleet. We also received your separate letter requesting assistance with the Department of Treasury (Treasury) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to improve the timeliness of North Pacific observer fee disbursement.

I recognize that the Council and the North Pacific fishing industry have been long and consistent partners in supporting the North Pacific Observer Program through industry-paid fees. We encourage you to continue your work to address the industry fee assessment through the Council process and we stand ready to support that effort. As you are aware, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) continues to face significant long-term challenges with the budget available to support observer programs and EM. Each year, NMFS must balance the needs for available funds among regional observer programs and regional efforts to develop and implement EM programs within our limited budget. For example, in fiscal year 2016, I am pleased that NMFS has been able to provide \$1.8 million toward your ongoing efforts to implement EM into the fixed-gear fisheries.

I understand your frustration with the timeliness of industry-fund disbursement from the special account administered by the Treasury and OMB. We will coordinate with Treasury and OMB in an effort to resolve this issue, but in the meantime we should anticipate these delays continuing and plan ahead accordingly.

I will continue to work with you and regional staff to assess and review the funding needs of the North Pacific Observer Program and the development and implementation of EM in the North Pacific. If you have any further questions, please contact Chris Rilling, Director of Fisheries Monitoring and Analysis Division, Alaska Fisheries Science Center, at (206) 526-4194.

Sincerely,



Eileen Sobeck

THE ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR
FOR FISHERIES



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