



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

JUN 29 2017

Mr. Dan Hull  
Chairman  
North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
605 W. 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Anchorage, AK 99501-2252

Dear Mr. Hull:

Thank you for your letter expressing concerns about how budget constraints adversely impact the quality of scientific information delivered to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council.

As you know, the Alaska Fisheries Science Center has developed and implemented a process to prioritize its funding decisions based on criteria that have been vetted by the Alaska Regional Office. Unfortunately, near-term funding pressures necessitated decisions this year to reduce the number of charter vessels used in the Alaska groundfish survey from five to four vessels due to escalating costs of labor, administration, and general inflation. The Alaska Fisheries Science Center has been dealing proactively with operational funding challenges by strictly scrutinizing all mission support costs and holding their federal labor cost constant year after year.

In FY 2017, the federal government was funded via a series of Continuing Resolutions through May 5, 2017, when the President signed the FY 2017 Omnibus into law. Our final allocations are being determined at this time. Thus, with such budget uncertainty, we have distributed funds incrementally and conservatively so as not to exceed our final unknown allocation.

I appreciate your interest in this matter, and please rest assured that we understand the critical nature of these surveys to your continued stewardship of North Pacific fisheries resources.

Sincerely,

Chris Oliver

