

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

Dan Hull, Chairman
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December 15, 2017

Ambassador David A. Balton
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Fisheries
U.S. Department of State
Via Email: BaltonDA@state.gov

Dear Ambassador Balton,

It is with pleasure that I offer our congratulations for successfully negotiating the draft *Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean*. This historic agreement is an essential step to improving the understanding and management of the Arctic Ocean ecosystems.

As you are aware, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council completed and published the Fishery Management Plan for Fish Resources of the Arctic Management Area in 2009. This Fishery Management Plan prohibited commercial harvests of all fish resources of the Arctic Management Area until sufficient information is available to support the sustainable management of a commercial fishery. We are pleased that the international waters of the Central Arctic Ocean will be managed in alignment with U.S. policies for fishery management in the Arctic EEZ, operationalized through the Council's Arctic FMP.

We are aware that numerous details must be addressed before the Agreement is implemented. Accordingly, we look forward to learning more about the formal structure to affect the Agreement, and who will represent the United States in that organization. The North Pacific Management Council remains interested in the continuing discussions and we offer our expertise and experience in any of those discussions, where appropriate. For example, the Council staff is currently preparing a discussion paper that describes best practices for exploratory fishing to inform a precautionary approach to opening commercial fisheries in the Arctic EEZ.

We look forward to hearing more about the legal and technical reviews of the Agreement, as well as formation of the Joint Program of Scientific Research and Monitoring.

Again, please accept our congratulations on this historic agreement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dan Hull". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dan Hull, Chairman

cc:
Bill Gibbons-Fly
Senator Lisa Murkowski
Senator Dan Sullivan
Representative Don Young