



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

Mr. Dan Hull
 Chairman
 North Pacific Fishery Management Council
 605 W. 4th Avenue, Suite 306
 Anchorage, AK 99501-2252

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Dear Mr. Hull: *Dan*

Thank you for your letter regarding the trawl surveys in the Alaska region. NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) takes great pride in providing our stakeholders with the best scientific information to maintain sustainable fisheries. At the Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC), this includes the bottom trawl surveys, the midwater acoustic-trawl surveys, and the larval fish and the ecosystem surveys conducted in all five of Alaska's large marine ecosystems. Together, these surveys enable the AFSC to provide annual status and trends for multiple commercial and ecologically important species through the Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) Reports, Ecosystems Considerations Report, Ecosystem Report Cards, and Economic Status SAFE Report.

In 2017, two vessels were chartered to conduct the annual bottom trawl survey in the Bering Sea. This is typical. However, for budgetary reasons, the Gulf of Alaska bottom trawl survey was constrained to using only two charter vessels rather than the standard three charter vessels. Two-vessel surveys in the Gulf of Alaska were also conducted in 2001, 2011, and 2013, and despite having only two charter vessels for the Gulf survey, AFSC scientists took measures to ensure that the entire survey area (Island of Four Mountains to the Canadian border) and each survey stratum (shallower than 700 m) was sampled. This ensured that the data delivered to the Council's Plan Teams was appropriate to include in the SAFE time series for each species.

Despite challenges, we continue to strive to deliver the best, most accurate, and relevant data to the management process, and to give advance warning when we see signs that a population may be declining or where traditional survey effort must be reduced.

As you know Dan, maintaining our core, mission-critical activities like our fisheries surveys is of paramount importance to me, and I intend to make this a top priority.

Sincerely,

Chris Oliver

Chris Oliver

