



North Pacific Fishery Management Council

Simon Kinneen, Chair | David Witherell, Executive Director
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April 22, 2019

Liz Chilton
National Observer Program
NMFS Office of Science and Technology
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Ms. Chilton:

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) writes to you today to heartily thank NOAA Fisheries and the National Observer Program (NOP) for providing funding to support additional analytical staff at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) Fisheries Monitoring and Analysis (FMA) Division. The two staff made possible by this additional funding to date have provided significant progress on our Council's analytical products related to the North Pacific Observer Program. We sincerely hope that you will consider and approve continued funding for at least two staff to continue working with FMA in future years.

The Alaska region has a good record concerning monitoring research, development, and deployment. We host the largest observer program in the Nation and have a robust record of maintaining and enhancing our monitoring program through observers and electronic monitoring (EM) over time. We recognize the contribution that supplemental funding from the NOP has had in these successes.

At our most recent meeting during April 2019, we received a presentation from Mr. Geoff Mayhew, one of the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission analysts supported by NOP funding, about the partial coverage observer fee analysis. We found the work to be very timely, as it addressed a major information need that had been consistently identified by stakeholders and by the Council, and was high quality and well presented.

The Council appreciates that funding to support two additional analytical staff at FMA has doubled the analytical capacity in FMA this year. This has allowed the entire FMA Division to be more responsive to our Council's analytical questions and requests. The new analysts are tackling critical monitoring projects, including Annual Reports and Annual Deployment Plans for observers in our region, as well as analytic priorities like the partial coverage fee analysis and work on discard mortality rates (DMRs) for Pacific Halibut (*Hippoglossus stenolepis*).

The critical work being done by these additional analytical staff has made it possible for other FMA staff to focus on long-term projects, like documenting sample designs and contributing to the halibut decksorting analysis.¹

While many sources of supplemental funding have dried up, temporary funding for extra analytic capacity at FMA remains of critical importance to the success of our North Pacific Observer Program today and into future.

¹ <http://meetings.npfmc.org/CommentReview/DownloadFile?p=756d1adc-8cb6-44a2-bfb9-586c7613d67d.pdf&fileName=%20B8%20EFP%20PRESENTATION.pdf>

Again, we thank and commend NOAA Fisheries and the National Observer Program for your decision to provide funding for additional analytical staff at the AFSC FMA Division these past two years. We sincerely hope that you will continue to fund these staff going forward, as they are proving to be a critical part of the success of the North Pacific Observer Program.

Sincerely,



Simon Kinneen
Chair, NPFMC

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cc: Mr. Dennis Hansford (Observer Safety Lead)
Mr. Lee Banaka (Bycatch Lead)
Mr. Brett Alger (Electronic Technologies Coordinator)
Ms. Jane DiCosimo (Fisheries Science Branch Chief)