



## North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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Simon Kinneen, Chair | David Witherell, Executive Director  
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June 24, 2019

Dr. Robert Foy  
Alaska Fisheries Science Center  
7600 Sand Point Way N.E., Building 4  
Seattle, WA 98115

Dear Dr. Foy:

At our June 2019 Council meeting in Sitka, Alaska the Council reviewed recommendations stemming from an inter-agency NPFMC sponsored salmon bycatch workshop held April 16-17, 2019 at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) in Seattle, WA. We would like to thank your agency staff for the impressive genetics work and presentations both at the workshop and to the Council at our most recent meeting. We would also like to acknowledge the increased collaborative efforts by your ABL staff with agency staff at the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), the University of Washington (UW), University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) and other genetics labs. As always, the Council greatly appreciates their efforts to annually inform on the stock composition of Chinook and chum bycatch from groundfish fisheries in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska.

The Council made several recommendations for continued work and prioritization of salmon genetics research, operational efficiencies and continued inter-agency collaboration. The Council's motion from June 2019 is attached. One recommendation stemming from the Council is to the need to process a backlog of genotyped Chinook scales from the BSAI and GOA. Processing a back log of scales from Chinook salmon bycatch samples would provide data to develop a current length at age key, estimate age-specific stock composition, estimate age-specific bycatch, parameterize the adult equivalency (AEQ) model, and explore finer scale age-specific, spatio-temporal variation in bycatch in relation to covariates in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands and Gulf of Alaska. This information is of particular importance to the Council in updating the Bering Sea AEQ analysis on the Chinook bycatch from the Bering Sea pollock fishery. It is also of interest in the development of an AEQ for the Gulf of Alaska. We would therefore request that the agency prioritize aging these scales, beginning with the BSAI scales and processing either all of them starting with the most recent year and moving backwards or if funding is limited then a statistically appropriate subset which would accommodate the development of an age-length key. We would also recommend that the Auke Bay Lab continue with current efforts to find appropriate efficiencies and technological advances in order to complete genetic evaluations in the most expeditious manner possible.

Please note that while the Council recommends scale processing as a research priority, the Council's foremost concern is maintaining the high-quality surveys and stock assessments conducted by the AFSC, which serve as the foundation for sustainable fisheries management in the North Pacific. We hope you will take these recommendations into account for your budget planning for the coming year.

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We commend you and your staff for continued efforts and information provided annually which is critical to informing our ecosystem-based fishery management actions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'DW', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

David Witherell  
Executive Director

Enclosure: Council Motion on Salmon Bycatch genetics from June 2019 Council meeting