UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Secretary of Commerce
Washington, D.C. 20230

January 7, 2022

Mr. Simon Kinneen
Chair
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
1007 West Third Avenue, Suite 400
Anchorage, AK 99501

Dear Mr. Kinneen:

Thank you for your November 2021 letters regarding the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) climate research programs and low salmon numbers in Alaska. I appreciate your input on both topics.

NOAA is committed to maintaining a balanced research portfolio at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) that includes conducting surveys at sufficient geographic scope and frequency to support effective stock assessments, while also delivering climate-ready science. Through strategic resource management and a robust activity prioritization process, we will ensure that our core mission requirements are met, and that we are poised to maximize additional climate-related funding should it become available.

NOAA's involvement in salmon research at AFSC is focused on the marine phase of salmon in support of Federal groundfish fisheries management and the Pacific Salmon Treaty. Specific to the Pacific Salmon Treaty, AFSC scientists provide scientific guidance to the Pacific Salmon Commission's Yukon Panel through the Joint Technical Committee (JTC), which is used to forecast Canadian-origin Chinook salmon returns as part of planning for the Yukon River fishery. Data from AFSC marine surveys are also used by the JTC to provide scientific advice to the Yukon Panel about climate impacts on early marine ecology of fall Yukon River chum salmon and to support the State of Alaska's mission for salmon management.

Specific to the salmon concerns expressed by western Alaska communities at the October meeting of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, NOAA monitors and provides mitigation efforts to reduce bycatch of salmon in other fisheries. Bycatch strategies that AFSC implements include: (1) directed research and modeling to evaluate the abundance and distribution of bycatch species relative to target species and environmental drivers of bycatch; (2) development of fishing gear and fishing methods that minimize bycatch while maximizing target catch; and (3) analysis of the economic, social, and biological impacts of bycatch in Alaska fisheries to understand drivers of fishing behavior and human dimensions, and support prioritization of management that addresses bycatch reduction. AFSC also coordinated with Senator Murkowski's staff to participate in a "Salmon Summit" on December 8-9 to discuss community needs, science gaps, collaboration requirements with the State of Alaska, and prioritization of research needs for salmon in Alaska.

Should you have any questions, please contact Dr. Robert Foy, Science and Research Director, Alaska Fisheries Science Center, at (907) 482-0026 or robert.foy@noaa.gov.

Sincerely,

Gina M. Raimondo