

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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The Honorable Don Young
Congressman for All Alaska
2314 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Young,

Pursuant to a request from your office (email from Martha Newell dated 3/8/2018) to provide comment on H.R. 2079 and H.R. 200, I am responding on behalf of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC or Council). Specifically, we were asked to comment on H.R. 200 Strengthening Fishing Communities and Increasing Flexibility in Fisheries Management Act, as amended by the House Committee on Natural Resources on December 13, 2017, and H.R. 2079 Young Fishermen's Development Act of 2017.

H.R. 2079 Young Fishermen's Development Act of 2017

This legislation will provide benefits to the long-term management of fisheries and sustainable fishing communities, in that the grant program will provide education and mentorship opportunities for young fishermen to more successfully enter and participate in the fisheries, which enhances the ability of the Council to better provide for sustainable fishing communities. Further, the flexibility for entities to tailor the grant program to meet the needs within each region, allows for more effective and focused education and training programs. The Council benefits when fishermen are better informed of the regulatory process, understand legal requirements and fishing regulations, utilize sustainable fishing practices, and receive other training opportunities provided by this bill.

In its review of H.R. 2079, the NPFMC raised the question as to how the funding for this grant program falls in the priorities of other activities funded through Section 311 (e). Specifically, does the \$2 million come off the top before the other uses of the money specified in the MSA (e.g., costs incurred in storage of seized property, rewards to whistleblowers, enforcement costs, liens on forfeited property and other claims, reimbursement to any Federal or State agency for services) are spent? The NPFMC notes that Asset Forfeiture Funds are critical to various enforcement and investigative activities of the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement, and reductions in these activities could be detrimental to the NPFMC's overall management objectives. We been advised that the Asset Forfeiture Fund carries a growing balance of about \$18 million, so funding priorities may not be a concern in the near term. The provision that funds available for grants be proportional to the areas in which they were collected would be equitable across the regions. Additional guidance on what is "a beginning commercial fisherman" and "desires to participate in commercial fisheries" would be helpful for the Council to understand who can participate in the education and training.

Magnuson Stevens Act Legislation

The North Pacific Council believes that the current MSA already provides a very successful framework for sustainable fisheries management, and major changes are not necessary at this time. Nevertheless, we also recognize the potential benefits of increased flexibility in some circumstances, and amending the Act to provide for such flexibility could provide all the regional fishery management councils additional opportunities to optimize their fishery management programs, with appropriate cautionary notes and limitations. In order for the Council to provide for the continued conservation of our resources, any changes to the law providing additional flexibility must continue to ensure that fundamental conservation and management tenets based on sound science are upheld, and should not create incentives or justifications to overlook them.

The following are our comments on issues and provisions of the H.R. 200 legislation which appear to be of relevance to the NPFMC (we are not providing comments on sections that specifically apply to other regions of the United States).

H.R. 200 Strengthening Fishing Communities and Increasing Flexibility in Fisheries Management Act

Section 103 – Amendments to Definitions. *Among other things, this section would replace the term “overfished” with the term “depleted” throughout the Act. This section would also require the Secretary when issuing the annual report on the status of fisheries note if a stock was “depleted” as a result of something other than fishing, and whether the fishery is a target of directed fishing.*

NPFMC Comments: Should a stock decline below a minimum level of abundance, the stock is deemed ‘overfished’ and a rebuilding plan is required. In the North Pacific the example of Pribilof Island Blue King Crab, a fishery for which there has been no allowable fishing for decades, and a species which is only occasionally taken as bycatch in other fisheries, highlights the need to differentiate stocks for which an “overfished” status has no relation to fishing activities.

Replacing the term “overfished” with the term “depleted” may be an effective way to more accurately reflect this important distinction. However, while the distinction makes sense, the legislation does not explicitly exempt such a situation from development of a rebuilding plan; therefore, adding such an exemption in cases where fishery management actions would not effect, or substantially affect, stock rebuilding might be considered. Such an exemption would create efficiencies for the Council in that it would allow the Council to focus efforts on development of rebuilding plans for which fisheries can be modified.

Section 203 – Alternative Fishery Management Measures. *This section would allow Councils to use alternative fishery management measures in a recreational fishery or for the recreational component of a mixed-use fishery including the use of extraction rates, fishing mortality targets, and harvest control rules in developing fishery management plans, plan amendments, or proposed regulations.*

NPFMC Comments: Alternative management measures for recreational fisheries such as extraction rates, mortality targets, and harvest control rules could provide additional tools and flexibility to fisheries managers in all U.S. regions. It is unclear, however, whether such alternative measures are intended to be in lieu of annual catch limit (ACL) requirements, or in some other context. The NPFMC believes that accountability to management measures, harvest

levels, and scientific principles is paramount for sustainable fisheries envisioned by the MSA. Fisheries managed under alternative measures should adhere to the conservation and management provisions of the MSA, including prevention of overfishing. ACLs serve as the primary conservation measure for fish stocks in the North Pacific, and have effectively prevented overharvesting in our fisheries.

Section 204 – Modifications to the Annual Catch Limit Requirement. *This section would allow a council to maintain its current ACL for a stock where ACL is > 25% below the OFL, a peer-reviewed survey and stock assessment have not been done in the last 5 years, and the stock is not subject to overfishing. Within 2 years of receiving a notice from a council that there is such as stock, the Secretary must complete a peer-reviewed survey and stock assessment. This section would also allow Councils to establish ACLs for multi-species stock complexes and allow Councils to set ACLs for up to a three-year period.*

NPFMC Comments: We believe that authorization for multi-species stock complexes and multiyear ACLs, as well as the provisions regarding ecosystem component species, will also provide the regional fishery management councils greater flexibility to apply ACLs consistent with other aspects of management for a given species, such as to achieve OY under National Standard 1. However, the requirement for the Secretary to perform surveys and stock assessments within 2 years is unrealistic and could be extremely costly. In addition, this provision could cause a reallocation of research funds away from the Alaska region to regions where surveys are very challenging (e.g., coral reef areas) and expensive. Consequently, requiring stock assessments of all coral reef stocks may provide a lower return on investment to the conservation and management of those stocks, as compared to a high return on investment in the continued sustainability of high volume, high value fisheries off Alaska. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is currently preparing a Stock Assessment and Improvement Plan that will address many of the issues that this bill seems to identify, and take into account the cost/benefit tradeoffs implicit in determining the frequency of surveys and stock assessments.

Section 206- Study of Limited Access Privilege Programs for Mixed-Use Fisheries. *This section would require the Secretary to contract a study by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) on the use of limited access privilege programs (LAPP) for mixed-use fisheries. Additionally, there is a moratorium on the submittal and approval of such a LAPP program until the study is submitted to Congress.*

NPFMC Comments: The NPFMC notes that NAS studies incur costs to the agency (typically ~ \$1 million) that in turn, affect the councils by reducing funding for NMFS scientific and management support. Additionally, prescribing a national moratorium on LAPPs limits the ability of Councils to use proven management tools based on regional needs and determinations, to fulfill their conservation and management responsibilities.

Section 207 – Cooperative Data Collection. *This section would require the Secretary – within 1 year – to develop, in consultation with the Councils and the Marine Fisheries Commissions a report to Congress on facilitating greater incorporation of data, analysis, stock assessments and surveys from State agencies and non-governmental sources (fishermen, fishing communities, universities, and other institutions) into fishery management decisions.*

NPFMC Comments: The Council notes that although cooperative data collection can be very valuable to our management process and scientific understanding (e.g., the expanded Bering Sea crab surveys done by industry several years ago), the studies and results need to have adequate

peer review. The concern isn't specifically with other non-government data sources per se, it is the notion that they won't be adequately peer reviewed or vetted to fulfill BSIA requirements of MSA and hold up to public and legal review. The Council had suggested that in developing the report, the Secretary also identify a process for ensuring adequate scientific peer review of the data and analysis. Basing management decisions on poorly designed studies and questionable information can be highly detrimental to the conservation of our stocks and management of the fisheries.

Section 208 – Recreational Fishing Data. *This section requires the Secretary develop guidance (in cooperation with the States) that details best practices for State programs, so that the information from State programs can be determined to meet the threshold for use in conservation and management of recreational fisheries.*

NPFMC Comments: The NPFMC notes that the MSA requires a registration program for recreational fishermen who fish in the EEZ, for anadromous fisheries, or beyond the EEZ, and the Secretary can exempt from the registration program fishermen from a given State, but only if the Secretary determines the State registration and data collection program is suitable for use in conservation and management. [Alaska has been exempt from the registration program because it has a functioning program for accurately accounting for catch in recreational fisheries]. This section could enhance the Council process if the Secretary also consulted with the regional fishery management councils and their Scientific and Statistical Committees (SSCs) to provide input on what is acceptable data for conservation and management of recreational fisheries. A national level discussion among SSC representatives may also identify an appropriate path forward.

Section 209 – Miscellaneous Amendments Relating to Fishery Management Councils. *Among other items, this section would add subsistence fishing as a qualification that could be required of Council appointees (to be individuals who are knowledgeable regarding the conservation and management of commercial, recreational, or subsistence fisheries). In addition, the amendment would amend the purposes section of the Act to add the promotion of subsistence fishing as a purpose of the Act.*

NPFMC Comments: The Council believes that providing a definition for subsistence fishing is a proper addition to the MSA to reflect the full range of marine resource uses in the EEZ. Additionally, adding subsistence as an appointment qualification for Council membership is a beneficial clarification to the MSA in that it allows additional qualified people to participate as Council members in the North Pacific, with the understanding that it would not require or direct the appointment of a subsistence representative as a Council member.

Section 301 – Healthy Fisheries Through Better Science. *This section would require the Secretary to develop a plan to conduct stock assessments for all stocks of fish under a fishery management plan. For each stock of fish for which a stock assessment has not been conducted, the plan must establish a schedule for conducting an initial stock assessment and, subject to the availability of appropriations, the Secretary would be required to complete the initial stock assessment within 3 years after the plan is published, with the first stock assessment done within 2 years of enactment of this legislation. Additional assessments or updates must be completed every 5 years.*

NPFMC Comments: Stock assessments provide the fundamental information used to successfully manage sustainable fisheries. As such, with appropriate funding to conduct these stock assessments, the NPFMC believes the requirements for the Secretary to develop plans and

schedules for stock assessment will enhance fisheries management nationally. However, the Council is concerned that this will be an expensive and unfunded mandate. As we noted in Section 204 above, the NMFS is currently developing a Stock Assessment and Improvement Plan that will address issues such as the one identified here. The Council cautions that reprogramming limited stock assessment resources away from existing assessment programs will harm the Council's ability to effectively conserve and sustainably manage the fisheries under its authority.

Section 302 – Transparency and Public Process. *This section would require that each Council, to the extent practicable, provide a Webcast, an audio recording, or a live broadcast of each Council meeting and for the Council Coordination Committee meetings. In addition, the bill would require audio, video, searchable audio or written transcript for each Council and SSC meeting on the Council's website not more than 30 days after the conclusion of the meeting.*

In addition, this section would require that each fishery management plan, plan amendment, or proposed regulation contain a comprehensive fishery impact statement that essentially mirrors the analyses currently required to meet the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Executive Order 12866, and other requirements. This section would require that a "substantially complete" fishery impact statement be available not less than 14 days before the beginning of the meeting at which the Council makes its final decision on the proposal.

This section would require the Councils, subject to the approval of the Secretary, prepare procedures for compliance with the fishery impact statement requirement that provide for timely, clear, and concise analysis that will be useful to decision makers and the public as well as reducing extraneous paperwork. These procedures may include using Council meetings to determine the scope of issues to be addressed, may include the integration of the fishery impact statement development process with preliminary and final Council decision-making, and may include providing scientific, technical, and legal advice at an early stage of development of the fishery impact statement. The section also specifies the process and timing of review and evaluation by the Secretary.

NPFMC Comments: Council meetings are currently live broadcast whenever practicable (noting that live broadcast is not possible in some remote coastal communities of Alaska), and full searchable audio transcripts are available for all meetings of the Council. Although SSC meetings are currently not live webcast or recorded, they are open to all public and very detailed meeting minutes are developed and are accessible on our website. The Council believes that requiring live webcast or full audio transcriptions of SSC meetings would impose a significant cost to the Council, with both monetary and personnel commitments, with little or no marginal benefit to the public.

The Council is very concerned with the detailed requirements for preparing a fishery impact statement.

First, the amended H.R. 200 took out the paragraph that actions taken to prepare fishery impact statements were deemed to fulfill the requirements of NEPA. Rather than replacing the NEPA analysis with an expanded fishery impact analysis, staff would now have to prepare two separate analyses, with no apparent benefit of doing so since they essentially evaluate the same potential impacts. The Council believes that as currently written, this section would require the Council to complete a Fishery Impact Statement that is separate from, but essentially redundant to, the NEPA analysis. Such a duplicative process will further slow the approval process for FMPs, amendments, and regulations.

Second, the Council believes that the additional requirement for a comprehensive Fishery Impact Statement could complicate our regulatory process and associated legal processes. Councils, subject to approval by the Secretary, will be required to “prepare procedures” to comply with the new requirements, which means development of potentially complex, controversial, interpretive regulations, or at least ‘guidelines’, which would be subject to approval by NMFS and NOAA GC. Currently, NMFS has the ultimate responsibility for complying with NEPA even though our current process attempts to incorporate most of that within the Council process. As proposed by this section, all the onus for compliance with Fishery Impact Statements will lie with the Councils under the MSA process, except for NMFS’ final review and approval authority. Shifting this responsibility could require substantial realignment of resources.

Lastly, the Council notes that we have become quite proficient at the NEPA process (albeit cumbersome), and we have an established track record regarding litigation of fisheries actions under NEPA. The addition of a requirement for a comprehensive Fishery Impact Statement could create grounds for a new body of litigation and case law on fisheries management actions, based on an as-yet-unwritten set of implementing regulations or attempts to extend previous NEPA case law to the new MSA process without any obvious benefits to fishery management over the current analytical process. For example, the term “substantially complete”, in reference to a draft fishery impact statement, will likely be a subjective determination unless further defined.

Section 303 – Flexibility in Rebuilding Fish Stocks. *This section would remove the term “possible” and replace it with “practicable” in the requirement in section 304 of the Act that a rebuilding period “be as short as possible”. This section would remove the language requiring a 10-year period for rebuilding overfished/depleted fisheries and replace it with a requirement that the rebuilding timeframe be the time it would take for the fishery to rebuild without any fishing occurring plus one mean generation time (with listed exceptions). This section would also modify rebuilding plan requirements.*

NPFMC Comments: Regarding potential changes and increased flexibility for stock rebuilding plans, the NPFMC believes that further flexibility would appropriately increase the ability to maximize harvest opportunities while still effecting rebuilding of fish stocks. The arbitrary 10-year requirement can constrain the Councils management flexibility with overly restrictive management measures, with unnecessary, negative economic impacts, with little or no conservation gain. Allowing for rebuilding to occur in as short a time as “practicable”, as opposed to as short a time as “possible”, appears to be an appropriate mechanism that would be beneficial to the conservation and management goals of the Councils. The use of alternative rebuilding strategies such as harvest control rules and fishing mortality targets is consistent with this increased flexibility if accountability remains.

Section 304 – Exempted Fishing Permits. *This section would require the Secretary, prior to an exempted fishing permit (EFP) to be approved or issued, to: direct a joint peer review of the EFP application by the appropriate regional fisheries science center and State marine fisheries commission; certify that the Council or federal agency has determined that the fishing activity to be conducted under the EFP will not negatively impact any conservation or management objectives in existing FMPs; certify the Council or federal agency has determined that the social and economic impacts and loss of fishing opportunities on all participants in each sector of the fishery will be minimal; certify the Council or federal agency has determined that the information collected under the EFP will have a positive and direct impact on conservation and management; and certify that the Council or federal agency has*

determined the Governor of each coastal state potentially impacted by the EFP has been consulted on the fishing activity to be conducted under the EFP.

NPFMC Comments: Our fisheries management program has greatly benefited from the use of EFPs, including multi-year EFPs, to test (under field conditions) solutions to management problems. In recent years, for example, fishermen have successfully tested different trawl gear configurations to allow escapement of salmon in the pollock fishery, tested and quantified reductions in mortality of halibut sorted on deck and discarded alive from vessels trawling for flatfish, and tested the efficiency and effectiveness of different electronic monitoring devices on longline vessels. Each EFP proposal undergoes scientific peer review by the Alaska Fisheries Science Center and the Council's SSC to ensure that it is scientifically sound, and each EFP proposal is also evaluated by the Council prior to approval by NMFS.

The NPFMC is concerned that language requiring EFP applications to provide information on the economic effects of the EFP "in dollars" and in terms of lost fishing opportunities for all sectors would elevate the analysis to a full Environmental Analysis just to examine the effects on all sectors. These onerous analytical requirements would greatly reduce the industry's and Council's ability to get EFPs developed and approved in a timely manner. The Council also notes that the requirement that the proposed EFP "...will have a positive and direct impact..." presumes the results of the EFP fishery. The purpose of EFPs is often to determine empirically if it will have a positive impact on conservation and management of the fishery. Lastly, the NPFMC also notes that a representative from each State sits on the council, so the need to consult with a Governor is duplicative and adds yet another hurdle to the EFP approval process.

In sum, the current EFP process is working well for the NPFMC, with a minimum of paperwork and process requirements, and the NPFMC does not see a need for changes or new requirements. If there are problems with the current EFP process in specific regions of the country, then proposed legislation should be applicable only to those regions. A review of how EFPs are used across regions may also be warranted as a first step, given that there are differences between the Councils regarding the purpose of and process for approving EFPs.

Section 305 – Cooperative Research and Management Program. *This section would require the Secretary, within one year of the enactment of this Act and after consulting with the Councils, to publish a plan for implementing and conducting a cooperative research and management program. This section would require that the plan identify and describe critical regional fishery management and research needs, possible projects to address the identified needs, and the estimated costs for such projects. This section would give priority to projects that use fishing vessels or acoustic or other marine technology, expand the use of electronic catch reporting programs and technology, and improve monitoring and observer coverage through the expanded use of electronic monitoring devices.*

NPFMC Comments: The Council believes that an explicit plan for cooperative research will benefit both the industry and the management process in more effectively managing our fisheries. In the current budget climate, with reduced stock assessment surveys already being planned by NMFS, such cooperative research will be even more critical. We also note that prioritization of the expanded use of electronic monitoring (EM) is consistent with efforts already well underway in the North Pacific, and identifying this priority may provide the Council with additional information for management and monitoring of the fisheries.

Section 307 – Ensuring Consistent Management for Fisheries Throughout Their Range. *This section would clarify that the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act would be the controlling fishery management authority in the case of any conflict within a national marine sanctuary or an area designated under the Antiquities Act of 1906. This section would require that if any restrictions on the management of fish in the exclusive economic zone are required to implement a recovery plan under the Endangered Species Act, the restrictions would be implemented under the authorities, processes, and timelines of the MSA.*

NPFMC Comments: The Council agrees with the intent of this section, in that it prioritizes the authority of the MSA relative to those other statutes in the case of conflict. In more recent years, many fisheries regulations stemming from section 7 ESA consultations have been implemented through the MSA (Steller sea lion protective measures for example), thus providing the opportunity for those knowledgeable about the fisheries to develop the fishery rules. Better decision-making will result from using the public, transparent process of the Councils to develop whatever fishery regulations that may be necessary.

Sections 401 and 402 – Cost of Recovery and Deadline on Actions from Fishery Resource Disasters. *Section 401 would require the Secretary to publish the estimated cost of recovery from a fishery resource disaster within 30 days from the time the Secretary makes the disaster determination. Section 402 would require the Secretary of Commerce to make a decision regarding a disaster assistance request - submitted under the provisions of section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act - within 90 days of receiving an estimate of the economic impact of the fishery resource disaster from the entity seeking the disaster declaration.*

NPFMC Comments: The Council believes that these sections provide useful clarification of the resource disaster declaration process.

Section 403 – North Pacific Fishery Management Clarification. *This section would remove a specific date that is currently in the Act regarding State management of vessels in the North Pacific region.*

NPFMC Comments: Section 306(a)(3)(C) contains provisions related to State jurisdiction to manage fishing activity in the absence of a federal fishery management plan. Removal of the August 1, 1996 date in this paragraph would provide the Council with additional flexibility in determining whether a fishery requires conservation and management and remove the possibility of unregulated fishing in EEZ areas off Alaska by vessels not registered with the State of Alaska. The Council strongly believes this change, which would thereby allow regulation of fishing in these areas by the State of Alaska, is essential to the responsible and effective management and enforcement of these fisheries.

Section 404 – Limitation on Harvest in North Pacific Directed Pollock Fishery. *This section would allow the North Pacific Council to change the harvest limitation under the American Fisheries Act for entities engaged in the directed pollock fishery as long as that percentage does not exceed 24 percent.*

NPFMC Comments: This section would authorize the NPFMC to change the pollock harvest cap as stipulated in the American Fisheries Act (currently 17.5%), but not to exceed 24%. NMFS has raised the issue of whether the NPFMC or NMFS might already have the authority under the American Fisheries Act to revisit the harvest cap. The NPFMC has taken no position on this provision at this time, but may in the future upon a better understanding of the intent, need, and potential impacts of such action.

Section 405 – Arctic Community Development Quota. *This section would require the North Pacific Fishery Management Council to set aside no less than 10 percent of the total allowable catch for a community development quota for coastal villages located north and east of the Bering Strait, if the Council issues a fishery management plan for the EEZ in the Arctic Ocean or an amendment to the Fishery Management Plan for Fish Resources of the Arctic Management Area that makes fish available to commercial fishing and establishes a sustainable harvest level for any part of that zone.*

NPFMC Comments: The Council does not have a position on this provision, but notes that it may be useful to the Council if Congress provided more specificity with regard to identifying eligible villages, as this would enhance the Council's ability to develop such a program. It could also be beneficial to villages that would have an interest in equitable distributions of total allowable catch among potential CDQ groups. The provision provides no details on the mechanics of the allocation, or the oversight and management of this allocation. The Council suggests that it would be beneficial to the Council with respect to public process for Congress to consider guidance for the allocation of such quota.

Section 406 – Reallocation of Certain Unused Harvest Allocation. *This section requires that, if the Aleut Corporation (the pollock allocation holder named in section 803 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2004) will not harvest some or all its Aleutian Islands pollock allocation, the NMFS regional administrator shall reallocate this amount to the Bering Sea for harvest by the Aleut Corporation for purposes of economic development of Adak, beginning in 2018. The Aleut Corporation retains control over the allocation, and presumably can harvest that amount itself, or lease the allocation for harvest by "other vessels" with written permission. The provision requires the Council to modify the regulations to comply, and NMFS to manage to ensure compliance.*

NPFMC Comments: The Council notes that under this provision, with the allocation and leasing of Bering Sea pollock quota, Adak appears to become a de-facto CDQ group. Congress gave some thought to the oversight for all CDQ groups and may, in this case, want to consider that for Adak. It is not clear what the impacts of this provision would be to other sectors, including existing CDQ groups, and it would be helpful to understand more clearly how this provision would affect management. Additionally, the provision provides no details on the mechanics of the allocation, or the oversight and management of this allocation. The Council notes that other sectors besides American Fisheries Act vessels may be interested in participating in the harvest of the Adak pollock allocation.

Other Items

The Council noted that a section requiring a report on fees was dropped from the original draft of H.R. 200. Requiring the Secretary to report annually, to both Congress and the Councils, on the amount collected from each fishery subject to fees, is consistent with information requests previously made by the NPFMC to NMFS. This information would greatly assist the Councils, and NMFS, with information to effectively and fairly develop, implement, and review fee programs in the future.

General comments

I would like to reiterate some general thoughts regarding the reauthorization process. These represent some general tenets which we believe would improve the ability of the regional councils to develop

appropriate conservation and management measures, and should be considered relative to any change in the MSA:

- Avoid across the board mandates which could negatively affect one region in order to address a problem in another region. Make provisions region-specific where necessary, or couch them as optional tools in the management toolbox rather than mandates.
- Legislation should allow for flexibility in achieving conservation objectives, but be specific enough to avoid lengthy, complex implementing regulations or 'guidelines'.
- Legislation should be in the form of intended outcomes, rather than prescriptive management or scientific parameters.
- Legislation should avoid unrealistic/expensive analytical mandates relative to implementing fishery closures or other management actions.
- Legislation should avoid constraints that limit the flexibility of Councils and NMFS to respond to changing climates and shifting ecosystems.
- Avoid unfunded mandates, and/or ensure that Councils and NMFS have the resources to respond to provisions of legislation.
- Preservation and enhancement of stock assessments and surveys should be among the highest priorities when considering any changes to the Act.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to review these pieces of legislation, and to provide these comments to you on behalf of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council. We look forward to our continued dialogue on these critically important issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dan Hull".

Dan Hull
Chairman

CC:

Alaska Congressional Delegation
Washington Congressional Delegation
Oregon Congressional Delegation
Chris Oliver, AA NOAA Fisheries
Regional Fishery Management Councils