

Agenda Item 15



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Rockville, Maryland 20852

MAR 3 1977

Mr. Elmer Rasmuson
Chairman, North Pacific
Fishery Management Council
P.O. Box 3136 DT
Anchorage, Alaska 99510

Dear Elmer:

This is in further response to your letter of December 23, 1976, to the National Marine Fisheries Service in which you requested that \$670,000 be made available to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council for certain fisheries development activities. Director Schoning's reply of January 24, 1977, indicated that your request had legal and policy implications that required exploration, in addition to the question of funding.

I share your optimism about the potential for Alaska's fishery resources and welcome the Council's interest in their development. However, I believe that it is more appropriate at present that the implementation of fishery development programs remain the responsibility of NOAA. As you know, such programs have been conducted by NMFS for many years under the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 and the Saltonstall-Kennedy Act and are continually reviewed for their applicability to the needs of industry. Moreover, the Department has committed itself in "A Marine Fisheries Program for the Nation" to strengthening these programs and increasing regional participation and guidance in their planning.

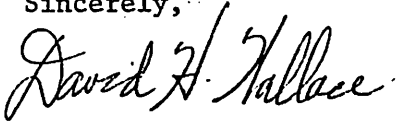
Our General Counsel has reviewed the Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976 and concluded that while it is clearly a purpose of the Act to encourage the development of unutilized and underutilized fisheries, it does not authorize the Councils on their own initiative to undertake or to fund fishery development, market research, and product promotion. In light of the above, I cannot approve your request for fishery development funds. Nevertheless, I hope that the Councils will play an active part in fishery development by identifying which fishery resources are capable of development and participating with NMFS in the planning and continuing review of the programs. I believe this combination of Council guidance and Federal Government action could provide a highly effective base for the development of fishery resources in Alaska and elsewhere.

MAR 4 1977



We apologize for the delay in responding to your letter, but as I am sure you can appreciate, we are continually being confronted with difficult legal and policy questions as implementation of Public Law 94-265 proceeds.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David H. Wallace". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

David H. Wallace
Associate Administrator
for Marine Resources