

April 11, 2014

Mr. Dan Hull  
Council Members  
North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
605 West 4<sup>th</sup> Ave, Suite 306  
Anchorage, AK 99501-2252

**RE: E1 – Staff Tasking**

Dear Chairman Hull and members of the Council,

At your next meeting you will receive the final report from the Alaska Fishery Science Center (AFSC) on the coral research conducted along the Bering Sea shelf-break last summer. Last April the Council initiated a purpose and need statement to consider protections for coral habitat in Pribilof Canyon, the area that stood out as having the highest value habitat in the science center's model of predicted coral habitat in the Bering Sea. At the same time, the Council said they would wait for the results of the new research, designed to validate the model, before developing alternatives.

The preliminary results of the AFSC camera-drop survey are starting to come in and have been reported out by Dr. Chris Rooper. So far, the results have largely validated the AFSC model. As predicted, Pribilof Canyon remains the largest identified hot spot for coral habitat, likely containing roughly a third of all coral in the Bering Sea. Additional independent analysis and publication is in the works that further supporting these findings.

Together with the Council, we look forward to hearing the full analysis of this new data at your June meeting in Sitka. As the Council's April motion indicated, this new data will be useful in refining alternatives developed in response to the Council's purpose and need. Greenpeace and other conservation groups have contributed to workshops, scoping hearings and the Council process as this issue has moved through the process. We have additionally shared data with the science center and contributed to relevant scientific literature that informs this issue.

Understanding that the Council intended with this issue to identify the lowest hanging fruit with regard to coral habitat to consider for protection in the Bering Sea, we look forward to the development of alternatives and their analysis following the report in June. We are actively engaging with the science center in order to incorporate the new science into an alternative that we would like to see included in the Council's analysis going forward.

In order to keep this issue moving forward in a timely manner **we request that you consider tentatively scheduling time on your October agenda for the SSC and the Council to receive alternatives for consideration on this issue.** This timing will allow for the final analysis of the latest science, and its availability to be incorporated into the development of alternatives for your consideration.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Jackie Dragon  
Greenpeace

