MEMORANDUM

TO:

Council Members, Scientific and Statistical Committee,

and Advisory Panel

FROM:

Jim H. Branson

Executive Direct

DATE:

July 18, 1986

SUBJECT: Status of Contracts 77-5 "An Observer Program for the Domestic Groundfish Fishery in the Gulf of Alaska (and in the Bering Sea/ Aleutian Island Area)" and 78-5 "Assessment of Spawning Herring Capelin Stocks at Selected Coastal Areas in the Eastern Bering

Sea."

ACTION REQUIRED

Council approval of final reports.

BACKGROUND

Contract No. 77-5 with ADF&G will expire on September 30, 1980. The draft final report for the Gulf of Alaska section of the program was submitted in April to the SSC and certain members of the AP. The SSC is reviewing the draft at this meeting and will report to the Council. Given SSC concurrence, the Council may approve the report. The report on the Bering Sea/Aleutian Island program is due 1 August 1980 and should be available for SSC review in August and Council review in September.

The final report for Contract No. 78-5 (except for the infra-red photography section) was reviewed by the SSC and we anticipate their approval at this meeting. Given the SSC's concurrence, the Council may approve the report for final payment and distribution. The infra-red photography section is due in September, 1980.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE Northwest and Alaska Fisheries Center Resource Ecology and Fisheries Management

2725 Montlake Blvd. East Seattle, WA 98112

July 7, 1980

F/NWC2:HAL

Mr. Jim Branson, Executive Director North Pacific Fishery Management Council P. O. Box 3136 DT Anchorage, AK 99510

Subject: Draft Report "An observer program for the domestic groundfish fishery

in the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands area."

Dear Jim:

The draft report is a comprehensive review of the domestic observer program to date, with emphasis placed on an examination of methods for estimating catches of prohibited species. Considering the sporadic and limited nature of the domestic fishery, the present observer effort constitutes a good beginning towards understanding the fishery and the problems to be concerned with in an observer program.

Presumably techniques have been worked out for estimating total halibut (or other prohibited species) removals by time and area, although the estimates are not presented in the draft report. Such estimates by time and area could, when appropriate, be compared with estimated removals by foreign vessels. Similarly, collection of biological data of certain species on domestic vessels would supplement that collected on foreign vessels.

Recommendations in the report include the points that the domestic observer program should be continued and be conducted by ADF&G; I agree and suggest continued consultation and cooperation between the ADF&G program and that of the NWAFC foreign fishery observer program so that data are collected in a comparable manner by the two programs. ADF&G rather strongly recommends against the use of observers as enforcement agents. I also agree with this view, particularly in light of the fact that the domestic observer program is voluntary; cooperation by fishermen would not be abetted if the observer they allow aboard is responsible for initiating enforcement action against them.

With specific regard to the conclusions stated on page 36, number two has resulted from the analysis of 32 domestic observer trips. Bob Francis (at NWAFC) has analyzed domestic catch records off Washington to California and his work suggests that the opposite is true: incidental catch per unit of landed fish results in the most precise estimates. The Blackburn and Rigby results may have occurred because of very little variation in the size or fishing power of the observed domestic vessels. Perhaps some flexibility can be maintained in the event that future observations find catch per trip to be more variable than currently is the case.

1970-1980 **10TH ANNIVERSARY**

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

A young agency with a historic tradition of service to the Nation Conclusion number 4 should emphasize that each stratus must have this "number of trips sampled." This is pointed out in the text, but the impression left by the conclusion page is that "n" trips will be adequate regardless of the level of expansion of the domestic fleet. This would be accurate only if the expanded fleet fished a homogeneous population.

Sincerely,

H. A. Larkins

Division Director