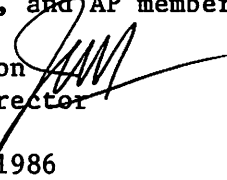


M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Council, SSC, and AP members

FROM: Jim H. Branson 
Executive Director

DATE: December 4, 1986

SUBJECT: Domestic Observer Program: Fishery funded organization for research and monitoring.

ACTION REQUIRED

Review proposed notice on public forum.

BACKGROUND

At the September 1986 meeting the Council and AP unanimously supported the convening of a public forum to discuss the formation of an industry-funded non-profit foundation for research and data gathering. A draft public notice regarding this forum is attached for your review.

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Fishing Industry

FROM: Barry Fisher, North Pacific Fishery Management Council
Advisory Panel Member and Domestic Observer Committee Member

DATE: November 28, 1986

SUBJECT: Public forum on the creation of a non-profit research foundation.

Because of the reductions in federal and state funding for fisheries research and data gathering, members of the North Pacific commercial fishing industry have decided to hold a meeting to discuss the creation of an industry-funded non-profit foundation that would amplify and compliment federal and state research and also conduct the industry's own research projects. The industry has continually supported restoration of fisheries agency research budgets but has met little success. Specific examples of needed data gathering in the North Pacific and Bering Sea that are not being funded by the federal government are research surveys of the Gulf of Alaska and eastern Bering Sea rockfish complex and the eastern Bering Sea Greenland turbot stocks. Because of severe budget cuts, the State of Alaska's Department of Fish and Game has eliminated its program of monitoring EEZ groundfish harvests landed in Alaskan ports.

With the replacement of foreign effort in the bottomfish fisheries off Alaska by domestic operations, the industry may well lose an invaluable source of fisheries information unless a source of funding is found to place observers on domestic vessels. Data collected by observers on foreign vessels has been used in cohort analysis, growth studies, and the evaluation of incidental catches. Catch and effort determinations will be extremely difficult without onboard observers.

The reduction in fisheries research and data gathering can only lead to overly conservative management by the agencies and uncertainty in the industry. Without adequate data agencies will be overly protective of the resource to

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ensure against overfishing. Unless the industry knows the status of stocks, bycatch rates, and projected harvest effort, efficient business planning will be impossible. Those situations can be very costly to the industry.

As we move toward full Americanization of the fisheries off Alaska, the need for accurate and timely information becomes more evident. With increased U.S. participation in the bottomfish fisheries we will see an increase in allocational and inter-fisheries disputes. These disputes can only be resolved with accurate and complete data.

King crab studies in the North Pacific are still not funded at an adequate level. Fishery scientists have yet to fully determine the cause of the drastic stock reductions in recent years and funds are not available for additional research.

Since it appears there is little hope of restoring or increasing fisheries agency funding, the industry should consider its responsibilities regarding fisheries research. It has been our experience in the North Pacific that when the industry comes together to tackle a problem, the proposed solution is given considerable deference by the agencies. We have seen this in recent industry efforts to address various bycatch problems.

Some of us believe that we have a responsibility to assist with the funding of fisheries research and data gathering. This can be done by the formation of a private non-profit foundation funded by the industry through an assessment based upon a percentage of our annual gross catch value. Recently, there has been considerable talk in Washington, D.C. of levying user fees on the industry because, "fish belong to all citizens". The creation of an industry-funded foundation may well preempt this argument.

Besides funding research projects, an industry foundation could also commit the industry to a format and process that would be conducive to resolving inter-fisheries problems. The foundation would be directed by a board composed of representatives from the entire spectrum of the industry. This forum would provide an excellent opportunity to tackle many problems outside the presence of management agencies.

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At the September meeting of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, the Council and its Advisory Panel unanimously supported the recommendation that a meeting be held to pursue the concept of an industry-funded non-profit organization. The Council agreed to convene the meeting and invite industry and agency representatives. The Fisheries Management Foundation headed by Dr. Keith Jefferts will provide \$10,000 to fund the meeting and the Council will provide the necessary staffing. The meeting will be held on January 18, 1987 at the Captain Cook Hotel in Anchorage to coincide with the January Council meeting. At the meeting agency representatives will present examples of research needs and costs, and industry representatives will present papers on industry-funded organizations such as the Oregon Otter Trawl Commission and the American Fishermen's Research Association. A detailed agenda will be available by the end of December.