



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Marine Fisheries Service
P.O. Box 21668
Juneau, AK 99802-1668

October 2, 2023

Mr. Douglas Vincent-Lang
Commissioner
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
PO Box 115526
Juneau, Alaska 99811-5526

Dear Commissioner Vincent-Lang:

The National Marine Fisheries Service, in consultation with the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) has recently begun planning for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and implementing regulations, for minimizing chum salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery.

We request the participation of the State of Alaska Department of Fish and Game (State) as a cooperating agency on this project (40 C.F.R. §§ 1501.8 & 1508.1(e)). We make this request because of the State's jurisdiction and special expertise with respect to the project.

This project will analyze issues related to minimizing chum salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery. This action would modify the Council's existing salmon bycatch management program established under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act). In April 2023, the Council stated that its intent with this action is to minimize Western Alaska chum salmon bycatch while balancing the Magnuson-Stevens Act's National Standards and maintaining the objectives of existing salmon bycatch management measures established within the existing program. The State has jurisdiction over the management of salmon fisheries in State marine waters (within 3 nautical miles seaward of shore) and inland rivers. The State also has special expertise regarding the impacts of salmon bycatch on salmon-dependent communities in Western Alaska.

Congress has set a statutory timeline of two years for completion of EISs. The July 11, 2023 publication in the Federal Register of the Notice of Intent to develop this EIS began the two-year timeframe for this project, which will end with signing of the Record of Decision for this action. This will entail a tight schedule working with the Council's process.

If the State agrees to become a cooperating agency for this EIS, we would like to meet with you to develop an interagency agreement consistent with Council's existing workplan for this project. We will reach out to schedule a meeting.



Our lead contact for this process will be Bridget Mansfield. Please reach out to her at Bridget.Mansfield@noaa.gov if you have any questions or need additional information in order to make a decision. We look forward to receiving your response.

Sincerely,

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Gretchen Harrington
Assistant Regional Administrator
for Sustainable Fisheries

Attachments:

Council on Environmental Quality Implementing Regulations for Cooperating Agencies (40 C.F.R. § 1501.8)