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September 30, 2014

North Pacific Fishery Management Council
605 West 4th Avenue, Suite 306
Anchorage, AK 99501

RE: C-6, MRA Enforcement Period Discussion Paper

Dear Council Members,

The Petersburg Vessel Owners Association (PVOA) urges you to **move the MRA Enforcement Period Discussion Paper forward for full regulatory review.**

PVOA initially proposed this action in our May 8, 2013 letter to the Council. The concern expressed in discussion with PVOA members was that the current regulations regarding MRA enforcement at any point during a fishing trip tend to increase regulatory discards, promote wastage and “topping off”, and are difficult to enforce at-sea. In addition, our members are also worried that, with an increased number of observers being deployed on a larger number of vessels and the potential for future implementation of electronic monitoring (EM) systems, enforcement actions could result irrespective of the percent species composition at the time of delivery/offload. This situation could arise should an observer report or the EM system document the retention of species with an MRA prior to having the requisite amount of basis species on board. We believe that both of these concerns are unintended consequences and not the initial intent of the regulations.

We are pleased to note that the Discussion Paper identifies the potential positive economic impact resulting from increased retention and reduced regulatory discards from the change in MRA enforcement period. We also note that the Discussion Paper does not identify significant negative issues with enforcement associated with this action as it is only at offload when NMFS Enforcement is able to actually insure that a vessel is complying with the MRA requirement. Any enforcement issues identified are and will exist regardless of the enforcement period. Given this, we assume that OLE has expressed few or no objections to this action.

We do have some questions and confusion about the concerns expressed in Sect. IX(ii) about the risk of exceeding the ABCs and OFLs specifically for species identified in Table 18. We believe that identified problems with exceeding ABCs and OFLs as a result of this action likely exist at present. While the propose action will likely increase retention by reducing discards the actual result from this action will likely be the reduction in total mortality and an increase in biomass for the MRA species. We also believe that any change in MRA should also be the result of or include establishing DMRs for the affected species. However, we believe that that issue should be included in the full regulatory review process.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



Brian Lynch
Executive Director