



State of California – Natural Resources Agency  
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE  
Marine Region  
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Santa Barbara, CA 93109  
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EDMUND G. BROWN JR., Governor  
CHARLTON H. BONHAM, Director



January 19, 2016

Item 4

John Laird  
Secretary for Natural Resources  
Chair, California Ocean Protection Council  
California Natural Resources Agency  
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Support for Streamlining Analysis of Peer Review for Fishery Management Plans

Dear Secretary Laird:

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) supports the authorization of funding by the Ocean Protection Council (Council) to the California Ocean Science Trust to conduct a streamlining analysis and make written recommendations regarding peer review processes for Fishery Management Plans (FMPs).

The Department has prioritized the amendment of the Marine Life Management Act Master Plan for Fisheries (Master Plan) and has initiated informational studies with stakeholders and other state agencies to develop the basis of the amendment. The informational studies are expected to occur through the end of this year, followed by a formal drafting stage in 2017. The amended Master Plan is expected to guide the development of future FMPs and related fisheries.

The Marine Life Management Act requires the Department to establish a program for external peer review of the scientific basis of marine living resources management documents. Peer review of past FMPs has been costly and time consuming, presenting an opportunity to find efficiencies. The Department is currently developing new FMPs for red abalone and herring which can provide an opportunity to test more efficient ways to conduct peer review. The results of these tests will inform the amendment to the Master Plan.

The Council's financial support of this project will leverage Department and stakeholder investments in other components of the amended Master Plan and is expected to establish an efficient and standardized framework for peer review of future FMPs.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me at (805) 568-1246.

Sincerely,

Craig Shuman, D. Env.  
Regional Manager, Marine Region

*Conserving California's Wildlife Since 1870*



January 22, 2016

The Honorable John Laird  
Secretary of Natural Resources and Chair, California Ocean Protection Council  
California Natural Resources Agency  
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Agenda Item 4: Support for Staff Recommendation to Fund Streamlining Analysis of Peer Review for Fishery Management Plans

Dear Secretary Laird and Council Members,

We are writing in strong support of the staff recommendation for the California Ocean Protection Council (OPC) to fund the California Ocean Science Trust to conduct a streamlining analysis and make written recommendations regarding innovative ways for state Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) to undergo peer reviews. This project will include funding for the scientific peer review of the Pacific Herring and Red Abalone Fishery Management Plans piloting the new approach.

As California begins to focus more on improving fishery management, a critical challenge both for sustainable fisheries and ocean health is to figure out how to actively manage fisheries through an ecosystem-based approach. We commend the OPC's commitment to this effort, as evidenced by the November 2013 OPC resolution regarding the Advancement of Fisheries Management and Support of Fishing Communities and the July 2015 disbursement of funds to the Department of Fish and Wildlife and the California Ocean Science Trust to improve fisheries management in California.

Effective independent peer review is pivotal to ensure that California fishery management decisions are accurately informed and science-based. The staff-recommended project will develop and test more efficient and targeted approaches to obtaining such peer review in the context of two actual Fishery Management Plans, which will benefit and inform future peer reviews. Both the Pacific Herring and Red Abalone Fishery Management Plans will be testing out a variety of new, innovative approaches to better achieve the goals of the Marine Life Management Act while reducing costs and staff burdens on the Department of Fish and Wildlife. Our organizations have strongly supported the initiation of the Pacific Herring Fishery Management Plan for several years, including in obtaining the necessary funding for the FMP process. Specifically, the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation have contributed significant funds, in addition to contributions from the commercial herring fishing industry, conservation organizations, and the Department of Fish and Wildlife. Pacific herring is an incredibly important forage fish supporting ocean wildlife (i.e., humpback whales, seabirds, etc.) and multiple California fisheries (i.e., Chinook salmon, Dungeness crab, etc.). A Fishery Management Plan

will help ensure a sustainable fishery that continues to provide local seafood and jobs to Californians, while safeguarding this ecologically important species and the predators that depend on it, to the benefit of all Californians. Not only will the Fishery Management Plan reflect and promote precautionary fishing practices, but will also integrate, inform, and test several new approaches to Fishery Management Plans currently being developed through revisions to the Marine Life Management Act Master Plan for Fisheries.

The benefits of the proposed project extend far beyond these specific pilot fisheries, serving as an integral component of a broader effort to reform and improve future fishery management throughout the state, benefiting future generations of Californians for years to come. Our organizations are strongly supportive of the completion of these FMPs as well as the broader effort to improve fishery management. For these reasons, we urge you to disburse the funds to support these projects as recommended by your staff.

Thank you for your commitment to protecting our priceless ocean resources, and we look forward to continuing to support and partner with you in your endeavors.

Sincerely,



Geoffrey Shester  
Oceana



Anna Weinstein  
Audubon California



Paul Shively  
The Pew Charitable Trusts



Greg Helms  
Ocean Conservancy



Andrea Treece  
Earthjustice



Seth Atkinson  
Natural Resources Defense Council