



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
2725 Montlake Blvd. East
Seattle, WA 98112

August 4, 2003

Ms. Kimberly Dietrich
Association for Professional Observers
PO Box 30167
Seattle, WA 98103

Kim
Dear Ms. Dietrich:

We would like to formally respond to two letters received by the Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) from the Association for Professional Observers in regards to the offshore Pacific whiting fishery observer program.

In September 2000, the Management Control Review on NMFS Observer Programs and Service Delivery Models (MCR) published a list of recommendations for the offshore Pacific whiting fishery. The NWFSC assumed logistical control of this observer program in April 2001 forward. The recommendations were adopted by the Science Center and development of the regulations for the program has continued to be managed by the Northwest Regional Office (NWR).

The status of those five recommendations is:

1) Operating funds to be 'obligated consistently and on time'.

The Center has identified a source of designated funding for program staff to brief observers, manage the observers while at sea, debrief the observers and process the data. We are exploring means to create consistency for this funding.

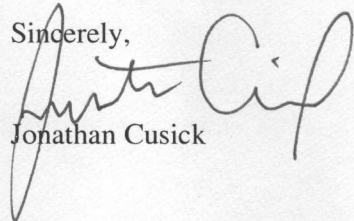
The remaining four recommendations address the need for regulations:

- 2) Mandatory two-observer coverage on motherships and catcher processors.
- 3) Design certification and decertification standards for observers.
- 4) Clarify that existing observer health and safety regulations apply to the offshore Pacific whiting fishery.
- 5) Create regulations that allow the observer to carry out their duties without interference from the vessel and to provide conditions for better sampling conditions.

Currently, the initial regulations to make the offshore Pacific Whiting observer program mandatory have been drafted. They are in an internal review process before release for public comment. The draft addresses the preceding recommendations.

If we can be of further assistance in this matter, please contact me at 206-526-6703. Thank you.

Sincerely,


Jonathan Cusick



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