



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
7600 Sand Point Way NE  
Alaska Fisheries Science Center  
Seattle WA 98115

10/24/2006

Mr. Gary Painter  
President, Bering Sea Fisheries Research Foundation  
620 6<sup>th</sup> Street, South  
Kirkland, Washington 98033

Dear Gary,

Thank you for your recent letter expressing the concerns of the Bering Sea Fisheries Research Foundation (BSFRF) with the recent assessments and setting of TACs for Bering Sea crab. It is important to the Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) and NOAA Fisheries to maintain an open and cooperative working relationship with the BSFRF and all other members of the industry. As you know, the responsibilities for the assessment of crab stocks and management of crab fisheries in the Bering Sea are shared between the Federal Government and the State of Alaska with the State being delegated the authority to set the TACs and manage the fishery. As part of this process we provide the data and results from our annual Bering Sea bottom trawl survey to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) for use in the stock assessments that result in the setting of the TACs for the crab fisheries. Also, Lou Rugolo and Jack Turnock of the AFSC, Gretchen Harrington of NOAA Fisheries Alaska Region, and Diana Stram from the NPFMC (she was not present for this year's discussions) participate in discussions with ADF&G on the assessments and setting of the TACs.

This year, as in the previous two years, we provided the BSFRF and other members of the industry the survey data in mid-August after providing it to ADF&G. We did not provide the resulting area swept estimates of biomass to the BSFRF and industry when it was provided to ADF&G on September 5 based on consultation with ADF&G and our understanding of the process developed in previous years. I understand your concerns and frustration with the current process and I am willing to work with ADF&G and industry to change that process if appropriate.

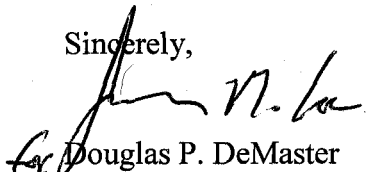
I have enclosed copies of the documents developed by ADF&G that document the assessments and recommendations for the setting of the TACs for king, Tanner, and snow crab in response to your request for information to better understand how this year's TACs were set. ADF&G deleted sections containing confidential fisheries data from the documents but these still provide you the information you were requesting. A copy of the recent snow crab assessment developed by Turnock and Rugolo that provides the model results from the most recent version of the snow crab model that was used in the setting of the snow crab TAC is also enclosed. The BSFRF and other members of the industry have already received copies of the 2006 trawl survey data and the area swept estimates of crab produced from those data by our staff. Finally, I would be happy to try



to arrange a separate meeting between staff from the AFSC and ADF&G involved in the determination of the TACs and the BSFRF and industry if you think that the recent meeting/teleconference held during the October North Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting did not satisfy that need.

Like you, I believe a cooperative partnership between industry and government is important to the management of our fisheries. I look forward to continuing the cooperative research between the AFSC and the BSFRF and industry that has taken place over the past three years. I believe our cooperative work with the BSFRF the past three years and the upcoming planned survey in 2007 demonstrate our commitment to and belief in the value of this partnership.

Sincerely,



Douglas P. DeMaster  
Science and Research Director  
Alaska Region

Enclosures

cc: F - W. Hogarth  
F/AK - J. Balsiger, D. Mecum  
ADF&G - M. Campbell, D. Lloyd  
NPFMC - S. Madsen