



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
MARINE FISHERIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Silver Spring, MD 20910

JUL 22 2003

Honorable Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr.
Vice-Admiral, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
Under Secretary of Commerce for
Oceans and Atmosphere
U.S. Department of Commerce
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Vice Admiral Lautenbacher:

I am writing to submit to you the summary report for the May 2003 meeting of the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC) held in San Diego, California (enclosed and posted on the web at www.nmfs.noaa.gov/mafac.htm). At the May meeting the Committee completed work on a number of key projects requested of MAFAC by the Administrator for Fisheries, Dr. William Hogarth. These include recommendations on ecosystem-based management and a technical guidance document sponsored by MAFAC's Ecosystem Task Force. Also of key importance is the Committee's review and recommendations of the "National Offshore Aquaculture Act of 2003", and recommendations to address the continuing controversy over the annual "Status of Stocks" report to Congress.

Briefly, with regard to ecosystem-based management of fisheries the Committee strongly cautions the Administration against legislative mandates. As witnessed in the reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (1996), mandates often result in unintended consequences that undermine the objectives of intent. Rather, the Committee strongly supports approaching fisheries management from an ecosystem perspective. Much of what is currently known about managing marine ecosystems has been premised on the advancements made in marine fisheries management and science. This has been a dynamic and evolutionary process, which should be supported but left unfettered by measures and mandates that prove unworkable (*see Attachment-C*).


With regard to the "National Offshore Aquaculture Act of 2003", the Act implies aquaculture is a legitimate use of the Exclusive Economic Zone. While the Committee acknowledges this, there was a great deal of discussion concerning the need to emphasize the need for consistency within the EEZ and coordination states over aquaculture activities within a state's coastal zone management area. The report details a brief list of recommended changes to address these concerns, and recommends strategic steps for NOAA to take a more active lead in developing a successful and publically supported aquaculture policy (*see Attachment-D in the report*).



Lastly, the Committee spent a great deal of time discussing the annual "Status of Stocks" report to Congress and the mis perception that the agency knows and does little in the way of managing the nation's fisheries. This mis perception is created by the inclusion of all species in the EEZ regardless of whether they are the target of harvesting activities. By necessity, resources are prioritized to measure and monitor those fisheries targeted for harvesting (major) and not on species who have little to no harvesting (minor). However, because stocks of minor species outnumber major stocks the report is frequently mis interpreted as depicting the agency and fisheries management in general as a failure. The Committee believes this mis perception is unnecessary and has served to undermine the agency's credibility. The report builds on previous recommendations for the agency to invest into public education mediums and reformatting of the report (*see Attachment-E*).

In closing, I hope your attendance at the first meeting of the Marine Protected Area (MPA) Advisory Committee in Washington, D.C. was productive. As you know, MPAs are of critical interest to the membership of MAFAC, which has one representative member, Mel Moon, serving on the MPA Committee. I hope you will be able to also attend a MAFAC meeting to discuss the issues of interest and concern you may want the Committee to address. Our next meeting will be held in New York, December 8-10, 2003. On behalf of MAFAC, we look forward to having an opportunity to meet you and discuss the issues influencing the success of NOAA and the nation's fisheries.

Sincerely,


Alvin Osterback
Industry Vice Chair

Enclosures (2)

cc: Secretary Donald Evans, U.S. Department of Commerce
Dr. William Hogarth, Administrator for Fisheries
Laurel G. Bryant, Designated Federal Official