



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
1315 East-West Highway  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910  
THE DIRECTOR

OCT 15 2009

Ms. Heather Hansen  
Executive Director  
Washington Friends of Farms & Forests  
P. O. Box 7644  
Olympia, WA 98507

Dear Ms. Hansen:

Thank you for your letter to Secretary Gary Locke regarding the potential impact on agricultural communities and businesses in the States of Washington, Oregon, and California from Endangered Species Act (ESA) consultations between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).

Under section 7 of the ESA, NMFS is required to use the best scientific and commercially available data for its biological opinions. In the November 18, 2008, Biological Opinion on three organo-phosphates, NMFS used the available pesticide monitoring data associated with pesticide exposure for listed species, which included surface water monitoring data collected by the Washington Department of Agriculture and Washington Department of Ecology, as well as data from the U.S. Geological Survey's National Water-Quality Assessment Program, California's Department of Pesticide Regulation, peer-reviewed scientific literature, and unpublished government reports. Collectively, these data represented historical and recent levels of pesticides detected in the aquatic environment.

NMFS continues to work with EPA to refine the consultation process and is working toward improved interagency cooperation, ensuring listed species are adequately addressed in consultations, and ultimately streamlining the pesticide consultation process for both agencies. I appreciate your interest in this matter.

Sincerely,

James W. Balsiger, Ph.D.  
Acting Assistant Administrator  
for Fisheries

