

**FISHING VESSEL OWNERS' ASSOCIATION  
INCORPORATED**

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TO: Mr. Michael Pearson  
Dr. James Balsiger  
Mr. Ralph Hoard  
Mr. Philip Lestenkof

Cc: Dr. Bruce Leaman

RE: Comments on 2012 Performance Review

Dear Commissioners:

The following are comments from the Fishing Vessel Owners' Association (FVOA) relative to the Concur Report of the IPHC processes.

**1. Transparency** – the members of the FVOA support a more open dialog of the rationale for how the Commissioners vote on harvest limits and policy decisions. The current structure of the Annual Meeting is well conceived with the scientific reviews early in the week followed by stake holder deliberations. FVOA has always been appreciative of the access to the different IPHC/NMFS and DFO personnel during the industry deliberations. No other forum provides this intimate level of rapport with the scientific and enforcement personnel. The conclusion of the IPHC meeting currently ends with actions of the Commissioners but the public has not had the privilege of hearing the rationale of the Commission's deliberative process. This part of the Annual Meeting needs to be more transparent with an open forum dialog between the Commissioners on how they reach their final recommendations.

**2. Peer Review** – FVOA supports a peer review process of the IPHC science. Our members are familiar with both the NPFMC and the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC). The PFMC has multiple levels of peer review and in particular, a forum known as their Stock Assessment Review (STAR) panel. The PFMC STAR review is more open for interaction with the public and the scientific reviews seem to have few conflicts of interest between reviewer and those being reviewed. FVOA would support a similar scientific review process for IPHC. Whether this process is needed annually or some timely periodic review should be decided by the U.S. and Canadian Commissioners.

**3. Conference Board & PAG** – The FVOA is one of the few remaining organizations that petitioned the Canadian and U.S. governments to establish international management of Pacific halibut. Our first request for this intervention is noted in our minutes in 1917. The Conference Board is not a creation of the Commission. It is actually independent of the Commission. It was designed for use by the U.S. and Canadian harvesters to participate in an open forum and review the proposals of the Commission and to provide industry feedback to the IPHC scientists as to what was occurring from the fleets' perspective.

FVOA supports a Conference Board type of format for the harvesting sectors. The Concur report suggests having a 24 member format designed similarly to the North Pacific Council's Advisory Panel. There are strengths and weaknesses with any type of structured representation. FVOA supports a restructuring of the Conference Board rules of order and admission. FVOA does not support a 24-member combined PAG and Conference Board.

The weaknesses of a 24-member board to represent harvesters, processors, 1<sup>st</sup> Nations, and other sectors is that it would be too confining. Currently, there are over 120 fishing groups including commercial, charter, 1<sup>st</sup> Nations, and processors who are welcome to participate either at the Conference Board or the PAG. They all have a place at the table. The question FVOA asks relative to the Concur report is which groups will not have a seat at the table of 24? This is a very exclusive format.

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council has a 21-member Advisory Panel. One of the drawbacks with this type of committee is over time the subcommittees, like this, begin to mimic the makeup of the appointing Council. This is a natural out growth of Council members wanting people who will protect or promote their perspective at the Advisory Panel level. In addition, these committees are not always representative nor do they ensure the issues you want to be addresses are discussed. In fact, we have seen members of the AP on the NPFMC be removed for objecting to such issues such as, the Council policies on inshore/offshore allocations, Gulf of Alaska rationalization, processor shares, etc. The appointments can become highly politicized in an advisory group that is too limited. Twenty-four representatives would not be representative for both the Canadian and U.S. halibut industry.

The Conference Board and PAG have various rules for membership. Once these rules are met no one is disallowed a seat at the table. The Conference Board requires their members to be legal harvesters of halibut. The Conference Board members peer review the validity of the applicants for the Conference Board. The Conference Board represents 95 percent of all legal halibut landed. Those approved to the Conference Board automatically are approved as members of the next Conference Board for the following year. The Conference Board has ensured all geographic regions are represented. Some regions are probably over represented and this has resulted in some awkwardness in presenting positions from the Conference Board. The Conference Board would be strengthened with a formal set of rules of order and admission. FVOA would support an industry subcommittee being set up by the Commissioners to achieve this goal.

The Conference Board and its members have been leaders in the development of many of the rules and regulations of fisheries from San Diego to Canada to the Bering Sea.

The Conference Board served as a important political forum for the 200-mile extended jurisdiction. The West Coast extended jurisdiction movement in Canada and the U.S. came significantly through the Conference Board. It was from the debate of the Conference Board that pushed the need for domestic and foreign accountability with observers and the use of electronic monitoring. The use of observer programs and the IFQ fishing formats came out of the discussions at the Conference Board with its members returning to their respective countries pursuing policies agreed to at the Conference Board. The U.S. and Canadian Commissioners took the Conference board requests back to Ottawa and Washington, D.C.

It was January 1975 when I began going to IPHC meetings. The head of the U.S. and Canadian Commissioners were from our respective national capitals, Mr. Cliff Levelton from Canada and Robert Schoning from the U.S. These gentlemen were very supportive of the IPHC and the Conference Board. They took our minutes and our respective concerns about foreign fishing back to Washington, D.C. and more recently, Commissioners took the Conference Board's request for IFQ formats and domestic observer programs to their respective governments.

FVOA is concerned that a more politically selected and confined Conference Board might not have the same impact on regional and national policy that would be beneficial for the halibut resource. The PAG and Conference Board currently provide a significant defense on behalf of the halibut resource. FVOA encourages a more structured rules of order for the Conference Board but does not support the Concur recommendation of a 24-person committee.

4. *Issues of Concern* - FVOA is concerned that of those who were interviewed, only 28% were from industry while 72% were agency representatives. If there are to be changes to the Conference Board, the stakeholders, and PAG, then FVOA would argue that those who are affected the most by the enforcement and harvest policies should be asked what format of Advisory Panel they prefer and how it should be structured. The Commission should not just adopt a NPFMC advisory group design because it is used by that Council. The design of that AP has its own deficiencies.

Thanks you for consideration of FVOA's comments.

Sincerely,

Robert D. Alverson  
Manager

RDA:cmb