UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 10
1200 Sixth Avenue, Suite 900
Seattle, WA 98101-3140

OFFICE OF
ECOSYSTEMS, TRIBAL AND
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

FEB 1 1 2010

Mr. Robert D. Mecum, Acting Administrator
Alaska Region, National Marine Fisheries Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
P.O. Box 21668
Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

RE: EPA Comments on NOAA Bering Sea Chinook Salmon Bycatch Management Final Environmental Impact Statement, EPA# 08-061-NOA

Dear Mr. Mecum:

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed Bering Sea Chinook Salmon Bycatch Management (CEQ# 20090428) in accordance with our responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and §309 of the Clean Air Act. The stated purpose of the final EIS is to evaluate the predicted environmental, social and economic effects of alternative measures to minimize Chinook salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea Pollock fishery. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council's decision would become Amendment #91 to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area.

EPA assigned an "EC-2" (Environmental Concerns - Insufficient Information) rating to the Bering Sea Chinook Salmon Bycatch Management Draft EIS because of our concerns regarding monitoring and enforcement of the program, a need for analysis of climate change impacts, and the need to better document the Tribal consultation process. In reviewing the Final EIS and Comment Analysis Report, it appears that our primary concerns were addressed. We are particularly pleased with the inclusion of additional information related to the potential effects of climate change on pollock and salmon, as well as a new alternative (Alternative 5-Preferred Alternative), which provides a more flexible and responsive approach to minimizing salmon bycatch than a hard cap alone. We also appreciate clarification of the adaptive management strategies that are inherent in the management plan revision process.

In future final EISs, we recommend that the Comment Analysis Report (Chapter 9) identify the commenter name and/or organization so commenters can easily identify their comments and the Council's response. We also recommend that if the Record of Decision in any way addresses the status of the State of Alaska's residue criteria, or of the Alaska Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (APDES), that this information (Section 3.4.3.5) be updated as the status of both has changed substantially since this information was initially obtained (early 2008).

Printed on Recycled Paper

Thank you for the opportunity to review this final EIS. Please contact Jennifer Curtis of my staff in Alaska at (907) 271-6324 or curtis.jennifer@epa.gov if you have any questions regarding our comments.

Sincerely,

Christine B. Reichgott

Christine B. Reichgott, Manager
Environmental Review and Sediment Management Unit

Printed on Recycled Paper