

September 24, 1999

Mr. Richard B. Lauber, Chairman
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
605 West 4th Avenue, Suite 306
Anchorage, Alaska 99501-2252

Dear Mr. Lauber:

Amendment 7 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands King and Tanner Crabs (FMP) revised the definitions of overfishing for the FMP crab species. This action was necessary for compliance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) and will advance the Council's ability to achieve, on a continuing basis, the optimum yield from fisheries under its jurisdiction.

Based on an analysis of the 1999 NMFS Eastern Bering Sea trawl survey data, we determine Bering Sea snow crab (Chionoecetes opilio) and St. Matthew blue king crab (Paralithodes platypus) to be overfished because the total spawning biomass of each stock is below the minimum stock size threshold specified in the new overfishing definitions. A copy of this analysis is attached.

This letter serves as your official notification that snow crab and St. Matthew blue king crab are overfished. Section 304(e) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act states that a council will have one year from notification of the overfished status of a stock to prepare and submit conservation and management measures to end overfishing and rebuild the affected stock. The rebuilding program must be as short as possible, but not exceed 10 years, except if the biology of the stock or other environmental conditions dictate otherwise.

Sincerely,

Steven Pennoyer,
Administrator, Alaska Region