



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
Northwest Region  
7600 Sand Point Way N.E., Bldg. 1  
Seattle, WA 98115

December 16, 2005

Don Kowal  
Executive Secretary  
Pacific Salmon Commission  
600-1155 Robson Street  
Vancouver, BC V6E 1B5  
Canada

Dear Mr. Kowal

Thank you for sending us the Expert Panel's final report on the future of the coastwide coded wire tagging program. NOAA Fisheries greatly appreciates the Pacific Salmon Commission's leadership in addressing this issue, as it is critical that a scientifically credible approach to monitoring fishery impacts and the status of salmon stocks be coordinated among the many jurisdictions involved in managing this precious resource.

This is an especially challenging undertaking given the advent of mass marking, mark selective fisheries, and the requirement of fishery management to address the biological requirements of depressed, threatened and endangered salmon populations.

As the U.S. government agency responsible for administering the Endangered Species Act (ESA) for listed salmon and steelhead species, NOAA Fisheries recently issued federal regulations that exempt ESA listed hatchery fish with an adipose fin clip from the take prohibitions promulgated under the ESA. This regulation reflects our interest in supporting sustainable fisheries while providing a means to limit fishery impacts on listed natural origin fish. We anticipate that this regulation will be in effect for some time, which underscores the need for a coordinated approach to mitigating the effect of mass marking and mark selective fisheries on our collective monitoring programs.

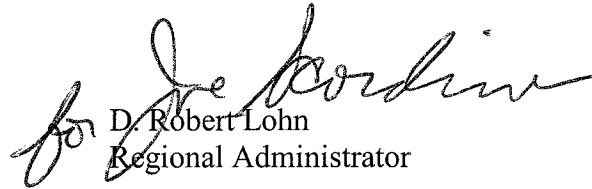
Rather than provide specific comments on the substance of the report at this time, NOAA Fisheries will provide its comments and inputs as discussions and actions occur on potential implementation of the findings and recommendations. The ESA requires NOAA Fisheries to consult on any action that may adversely affect ESA listed salmon and steelhead, and we will undertake that responsibility as proposals are developed to implement the recommendations in the Expert Panel report. In addition, NOAA Fisheries is undertaking a renewed review of salmon harvest exploitation rates relative to recovery needs of ESA listed salmon and steelhead populations. We will be looking in particular at harvest standards for consistency with Recovery Plans. As you may know,



NOAA Fisheries recently approved a proposed Recovery Plan for Puget Sound Chinook, and we expect to have proposed recovery plans in place for all other ESA listed salmon in the very near future.

Again, thank you and the Commission for taking on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Robert Lohn". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D" and "R".

D. Robert Lohn  
Regional Administrator