

Draft Language for a Board generated letter to NOAA Fisheries

RC 96

RE: Annual Stock Assessment Survey

Submitted By

Kodiak Advisory Committee

Vice Chair Julie Kavanaugh

Mr. Chris Oliver  
Assistant Administrator  
NOAA Fisheries  
1315 East-West Highway  
Silver Spring, MD 20910 VIA email: [chris.w.oliver@noaa.gov](mailto:chris.w.oliver@noaa.gov)

Re: Annual Stock Assessment Survey for Gulf of Alaska

Mr. Oliver:

2019 saw unprecedented loss of sea ice, rising ocean temperatures, seabird die-offs and marine mammal deaths in the North Pacific. Based on NMFS bottom trawl survey results in 2019, all directed federal Pacific cod fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska are closed for 2020, the first time this has ever happened. As well, environmental conditions in the Bering Sea appears to have caused major changes in the distribution of pollock and Pacific cod.

NMFS at-sea survey capacity in our region continues to decline despite being our most critical data source for stock modeling and biomass assessments. Recent and rapid climate change and its impact on fishery resources emphasizes even more how critical annual stock surveys are to Alaska's fishery resources. Without annual surveys, the connections between anomalous observations in ecosystem (early warning signs of fishery collapse) could pass unobserved which affects the ability to manage our fish stocks sustainably.

Standardized annual surveys provide baseline information from which scientists and managers can respond to changes in species abundance and distribution in a timely fashion, and potentially avert a more serious crisis. Historically, there have been three charter boats for Gulf bottom trawl survey which takes place every other year. We encourage NOAA Fisheries to conduct their GOA bottom trawl survey on an annual rather than biennial basis with the normal 3-vessel contingent which would help capture ecosystem changes in time to adjust models and quotas prior to a fishery collapse.

We thank you for your commitment to maintaining funding for these essential stock surveys necessary for Alaska's commercial fisheries to thrive.

Sincerely,

Reed Morisky  
Chairman, Board of Fisheries

cc:

Dr. Robert Foy, AFSC  
U.S. Senator Dan Sullivan  
U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski  
U.S. Representative Don Young