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### REMARKS TO BE READ AT THE REGIONAL FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL COORDINATING COMMITTEE May 1, 2012 Mauna Lani Bay Hotel, Hawaii

**Aloha, and welcome. I am honored to have been asked to provide the opening remarks for this, the annual Regional Fishery Management Council Coordinating Committee meeting in the great state of Hawaii. Unfortunately, I am not able to be there with you in person, but am nonetheless extremely glad to have the opportunity to greet you and to offer my thanks for your efforts as well as some thoughts as to the road ahead.**

**Let me start by offering my congratulations to you for working to establish Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) for every federally managed stock as required by the Magnuson-Stevens reauthorization of 2006. When we were developing that bill, there were several improvements we viewed as critical, but among the most important was the inclusion of the ACL requirements. These provisions, together with the reliance on scientifically based assessments of stock status, are what allow the U.S. to assert that we have the best managed, and by extension the most sustainable, fisheries in the world. I note the link between management and sustainability because I believe that it is often unappreciated, or perhaps even misinterpreted. This is because sustainable does not just refer to the conservation of the stocks themselves, but also of society's ability to continue to use a shared resource and to ensure that our children may fish as we do. That is a noble challenge and one that, given human nature is not always easy to achieve. Thus, the core genius of the original Act was to deliver this challenge to a public-private partnership; one designed to take advantage of the inherent tensions between conservation and use in order to find a middle path of sustainability. The partnership I refer to is, of course, you the Councils, and the responsibility for finding that middle path is your particular charge. So it is that I am glad to welcome you here for your important work.**

**Your agenda indicates that you will be addressing many important topics and I would like to touch briefly on a few. First, I note that there will be a discussion of Stock Assessment needs. I have been fully supportive of the Administration's requests for enhanced stock assessment support and I also understand that several major stocks are for overdue for**

assessment. However, I would note that the Pacific has numerous non-major stocks with tremendous cultural import and which support several artisanal and subsistence fisheries. These should not be overlooked as resource allocations are made.

Secondly, I understand that these are perilous budget times but I would like to express my disappointment that funding for the Councils was cut in the President's Fiscal Year 2013 budget request. To speak plainly, Council activities have historically been augmented through congressionally directed spending and, over the years, NOAA has become reliant on this support to achieve key mission goals. With the current earmark ban it has become significantly harder to provide Congressional support for even these core functions without attendant support in the President's budget. That is why the Senate Appropriations Committee supports a restoration of Council funding to FY12 levels and I hope that NOAA will consider these factors as it develops future budgets.

Finally, I would like to return to the tension I mentioned earlier, between conservation and use. This tension exists not only within the confines of Magnuson-Stevens but also between it and several other important pieces of legislation such as the Endangered Species Act and Marine Mammal Protection Act. It is therefore inevitable that there will be strong differences of opinion when more than one of these mandates is invoked. However, it should always be possible to achieve a constructive outcome so long as everyone involved is truly interested in achieving a balanced solution. This means that it is incumbent on everyone involved, NOAA and the Councils, to be completely transparent with regards to the regulatory process and thoroughly honest and proactive with your constituents. The inherent policy tensions in the various mandates are designed to be constructive so long as there is trust in the process. That trust will falter absent communication, and without trust the tension in the process inevitably becomes destructive to the detriment of the public good. We must, all of us, strive to build trust if we wish to continue to achieve sustainability.

Thank you and I wish you all the best in your continued service to our nation and its future generations, who hope to benefit from the bounty of the seas as fully as ours have.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "W. H. ...", written in a cursive style.