



**Western
Pacific
Regional
Fishery
Management
Council**

February 21, 2012

Dr. Edward Cyr
Director
Office of Science and Technology
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910

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Dear Dr. Cyr,

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council would like to express its concern regarding the outcome of the competitive request for proposals (RFPs) under the NMFS National Cooperative Research Program. The Council was updated by the Pacific Island Fisheries Science Center regarding the status of the RFPs. The Council is concerned about the lack of consultation with the Pacific Island region representative regarding the details of the proposals when the NMFS-OST decided not to consider the National Cooperative Research Working Group (CRWG) recommendation to fund the top proposals for each region. This problem stems from the lack of clarity in the guidance provided by NMFS-OST to the CRWG members resulting in confusion of the members about their role and how to evaluate the proposals. This lack of clarity in the evaluation guidelines biased the scores of the proposals. These biased scores were later used by NMFS-OST to rank the proposals despite the CRWG's decision not to utilize the scoring for the final decision. Despite a re-weighting of scores by NMFS-OST to control for inconsistencies in scoring between CRWG members, this agreed upon process was not followed; there should have been a means to consult with the Pacific Island representative to defend the proposal and answer comments and questions regarding details of the proposals. If this consultation process occurred, the issue/comment regarding not involving fishermen for the shark depredation proposal would have been clarified where in fact the proponents listed in the proposal are mostly fishermen who are members of a local fisherman cooperative. It could have changed the final outcome of the evaluation if this consultation took place.

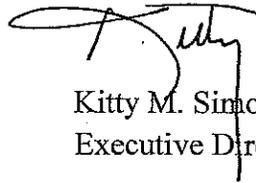
I would just like to remind NMFS-OST that the needs of the Western Pacific are distinct compared to other regions. A national competitive RFP setting will always put the Western Pacific region at a disadvantage. The cooperative research priorities in the Western Pacific

mostly support local fishery management issues and are not up-to-par with the research needs of highly prized and industrialized fisheries of other regions. Considerations should be given to the Western Pacific in the future development of the criteria or guidelines in evaluating the competitive proposals.

If you have questions related to this letter, please call me at (808) 522-8220.

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Sincerely,



Kitty M. Simonds
Executive Director

cc: Dr. Samuel Rauch III, Assistant Administrator for Fisheries
Dr. Richard Merrick, Director, Scientific Programs and Chief Science Advisor
Dr. Samuel Pooley, Director, Pacific Island Fisheries Science Center
Dr. Gerard DiNardo, Pacific Island Representative in the Cooperative Research Working Group