



January 17, 2012

## *News Release*

AFDF has received letters from eight major primary salmon processors advising AFDF they are phasing out their financial support for the Marine Stewardship Council salmon certification program. Collectively these processors account for approximately 72% of the Alaska salmon harvest. They have given us notice they will support the MSC program for Alaska salmon only through October of 2012, when the current certificate expires. The eight processors include Trident Seafoods, Icicle Seafoods, Ocean Beauty Seafoods, Peter Pan Seafoods, Alaska General Seafoods, E & E Foods, Kwikpak Fisheries and North Pacific Seafoods.

The current MSC certificate is valid through October 29, 2012. It's important to note that all Alaska salmon harvested during the 2012 fishing season will remain eligible to carry the MSC logo and be sold as certified as long as the participating entities maintain valid MSC Chain of Custody certification. However, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Recertification that AFDF just initiated with Intertek Moody Marine (IMM) would need to be completed in order to continue the MSC certification beyond October 29, 2012.

AFDF was asked to take over the clientship for MSC certification of Alaska salmon in December 2009, after Alaska Department of Fish and Game announced in July of 2008 that they would no longer carry out the duties required of the client. The Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute considered picking up the clientship for a time, but voted in December 2009 to delay a final decision by their Board of Directors. At industry's request, AFDF investigated the level of support on the part of the primary salmon processors and found virtually unanimous industry support for retention of MSC certification for Alaska salmon, and AFDF became the client in February 2010.

Clearly the level of industry support for MSC certification has changed substantially since 2010. After receiving letters from the aforementioned eight Alaska Salmon Processors, the AFDF Board of Directors met January 16 to consider its best course of action. Lacking substantial industry support for continuing MSC salmon certification beyond October 29, 2012, the Board was compelled to comply with the requests of its major clientship sponsors and instructed AFDF Executive Director, Jim Browning, to proceed only with those actions necessary to maintain the MSC certification of Alaska Salmon through October 29, 2012.

We understand the course change by Alaska Salmon processors and the subsequent vote by the AFDF Board may come as a surprise to other Alaska salmon processors and members of the Alaska-North Pacific commercial fishing industry. However, the message from major sponsors was clear, and swift Board action was necessary to resolve the issue and quell speculation and confusion in the salmon market.

While individual companies requested their letters be held confidential, their reasons for announcing their phased pullout note that MSC certification has been welcome and valuable for more than a decade. MSC has offered independent affirmation of what the Alaska industry and fishery managers have held since statehood: that Alaska salmon fisheries are sustainably managed. However, the majority of these processors now feel it is time to redirect their resources toward a broader marketing message.

AFDF passes no judgment on the rationale expressed by individual processors. The board of AFDF voted in favor of taking on the clientship for Alaska salmon based on the strong mandate of a broad cross-section of the Alaska salmon industry. With the present erosion of that mandate the Foundation will not maintain MSC salmon certification beyond October 29, 2012.

Therefore, AFDF will continue its work as MSC salmon client only to the extent that it meets the obligations necessary to ensure that the 2012 Alaska Salmon harvest remains eligible to carry the MSC logo. This will allow Alaska salmon processors and Alaska salmon customers who maintain their Chain of Custody certificates adequate time to transition their packaging and marketing messages to reflect the absence of MSC certification in the future.

It is important to emphasize that the transition away from MSC certification of Alaska Salmon IN NO WAY affects the ongoing MSC certification of Pacific Cod in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands or the Gulf of Alaska. As fishery client of record for those Pacific Cod fisheries, AFDF will continue to represent its industry sponsors and take all action necessary to maintain certification and recertification of the Pacific Cod fisheries without restriction.

Please do not hesitate to call me directly if you have further questions about MSC certification of Alaska Salmon or Pacific Cod.

Yours truly,

James Browning, Executive Director – AFDF • 907 276-7315