

Minister of
Fisheries and Oceans



Ministre des
Pêches et des Océans

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0E6

~~AUG~~ 2 4 1998

Mr. Alan Burger
Chair
Pacific Seabird Group
Biology Department
University of Victoria
Victoria, British Columbia
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Craig
202-778 2201

Dear Mr. Burger:

Thank you for your letter of April 2, 1998, expressing the concern of the Pacific Seabird Group over the possible interception of sea birds in Canadian gillnet fisheries. I regret the delay in responding.

My department is aware of the work that has been carried out in Washington State, and has been kept up to date on the studies and their findings. We were looking forward to assessing the results of some of the recommendations emerging from a full fledged fishery in Washington State this year and are disappointed that this will be no longer be happening. A test in a full fishery would have provided valuable information on the effectiveness of the net alteration which could have possible adaptation for other fisheries.

It is important that your group understands that Canadian gillnet fisheries are not carried out in the same waters as the U.S. fisheries. In addition, the number of vessels and the number of fishing days allocated are very much different in Canada than in the U.S.

Of perhaps greatest importance, there has been a major shift in the type and operation of our fisheries over the past few years. For example, our gillnet salmon fishery in the Strait of Juan de Fuca has been greatly curtailed for the last three years. There was no fishing time allocated in 1996 and a total of only 4 days allowed in 1997. There will be no fishing opportunity for this gear in this area in 1998 due to conservation concerns for Thompson River coho. We anticipate more changes in fishing patterns in the future.

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- 2 -

In addition, the fishery has changed significantly in Barkley Sound since 1984 and studies from that date may have little or no relevance today. Our observers on that fishery last year reported minimal sea bird contact. A similar response was provided by observers monitoring the gillnet fishery in Johnstone Strait. If there is a fishery in Johnstone Strait in 1998, it will be conducted in a very different manner than it has been in the past.

Fisheries carried out in 1998 will have on-board observers present, and one of the duties of these people will be to observe and record any sea bird encounters. This action will begin to give us a broader and more reliable data base and allow for the assessment of the extent of any impact and the need for any possible remedial action. Department of Fisheries and Oceans staff will keep your organization apprised of the results of this year's efforts.

Thank you, again, for bringing your concerns and recommendations to my attention.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Anderson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

David Anderson, P.C., M.P.