

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 4, 2017

Chris Oliver
Assistant Administrator
NOAA Fisheries
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Assistant Administrator Oliver:

We would like to welcome you to your new position as Assistant Administrator for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service. We look forward to working with you to protect and enhance our nation's fisheries, which serve as a vital part of our state and national economies.

We are writing to request your urgent attention regarding fishery disaster declarations requested by Oregon Governor Kate Brown and California Governor Jerry Brown that are still pending at NOAA Fisheries. In May 2017, the Oregon and California Governors made a combined request to Secretary Ross for a catastrophic regional fishery disaster declaration and a commercial fishery failure under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), and a fishery resource disaster under the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act of 1986 for the 2016 and 2017 seasons.

As you may be aware, in April 2017, the Pacific Fishery Management Council recommended closing large swaths of the West Coast to salmon fishing due to dwindling Klamath River salmon runs, which resulted in the complete closure of nearly 200 miles of coast between Humbug Mountain, Oregon and Humboldt South Jetty, California to fishing for 2017. Additionally, significant constraints were put in place to protect Klamath stocks throughout their range, resulting in a season less than half as long as a typical year.

This commercial salmon fishing closure represents nearly 50% of Oregon's coastline, which is expected to result in total ex-vessel value decrease of 63% from the 2012-2016 average. This closure follows a dismal 2016 season for Oregon salmon, when recreational catch of Chinook was 4,100 fish, which is 75% lower than the 2011-2015 average of 16,400 fish.

In California, the closure of the fall-run Chinook fishery on the Klamath and Trinity rivers is expected to result in a loss of \$2.5 million in revenue. Again, this follows a poor 2016 season, when California's statewide Chinook salmon revenue was only \$5.3 million compared to the 2011-2015 average of \$12.5 million.

In both of our states, closed or curtailed salmon fishing seasons have resulted in severe economic hardship felt throughout the seafood supply chain. Working waterfronts have been unable to address basic repairs and upkeep. Seafood processing jobs have been lost. Fishermen have left

the industry, unable to make a living on the water. These additive effects have resulted in a weakening of the social our coastal communities which, if not provided for, may be lost.

We strongly support these disaster declaration requests, which would make salmon fisheries in Oregon and California eligible for aid to relieve some of the losses sustained during poor 2016 and 2017 salmon seasons, as well as provide job retraining, employment, and low interest loans. The disaster declaration also allows funds to go towards making fisheries more resilient through fishery data collection, resource restoration, research, and fishing capacity reduction programs to prevent or lessen the effects of future disruptions to fisheries.

We believe that a case for such a declaration is clear, and we urge you to evaluate it expeditiously with the resources at your agencies' disposal.

We urge you to act quickly and support a catastrophic regional fishery disaster declaration under the MSA, a fishery resource disaster under the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act of 1986, and a commercial fishery failure under the MSA before the end of the year to help our fishing communities and industry recover from stark losses in the 2016 and 2017 seasons.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your response and our offices stand ready to assist in any way.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator