

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 27, 2018

Wilbur Ross, Secretary  
United States Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Ross:

After our initial request nine months ago, we are again 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 the Department of Commerce. In May 2017, the Oregon and California Governors made a combined request 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, and suspended all salmon fishing on the two hundred miles of coastline between Humbug Mountain, Oregon and Humboldt South Jetty, California. Additionally, significant constraints were put in place to protect Klamath stocks throughout their range, and temporal measures drastically shortened the length of the fishing season.

The 2017 Pacific Fishery Management Council review of the salmon season states, "the 2017 ex-vessel value of the Oregon commercial troll harvest (\$2.1million) was 51 percent below last year's level of \$4.3 million, 72 percent below the \$7.6 million recorded in 2015, and 73 percent below the 2012-2016 average of \$8 million (all values adjusted for inflation). Oregon's 2017 commercial troll harvest value was 89 percent below the 1979-1990 average of \$19.1 million, and the lowest recorded since \$0.4 million in 2009." Unfortunately, the 2018 preseason prognosis anticipates that the salmon season will be worse than in 2017.

Salmon fishermen often participate in other commercial fisheries to offset the financial risk that accompanies a down salmon season. In 2017, commercial fishing was poor in three of the four major fisheries in Oregon. Albacore catch was reduced by 50 percent in 2017 – total landings were the lowest in at least 20 years. The Dungeness Crab season opened late the past three years, limiting fishing opportunities up to a month and a half in a single season. Groundfish is the only successful major fishery, but participants are plagued by a heavy administrative burden. The bottom line is that fisheries are bringing home less money on the Oregon coast, which is hurting these communities.

Congress has acted to provide \$20 million to mitigate the effects of commercial fishery failures and fishery resource disasters, but our Oregon communities need your agency to finalize the disaster declarations before they can begin to recover. Therefore, we urge you to act

expeditiously 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 as soon as possible in order to help our fishing communities and industries recover from stark losses in the 2016 and 2017 seasons.

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

Sincerely,



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Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



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Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator