

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 22, 2018

The Honorable Wilbur Ross
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Ross,

Oregon's commercial salmon fishery was devastated by poor seasons in 2016 and 2017. In May of 2017, Oregon's Governor, along with California's Governor, requested that the Department of Commerce make an expedited declaration of a fishery disaster under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act, and a commercial fishery failure under the MSA. Declaring a disaster would allow hard-hit communities that depend on fisheries revenue and jobs to seek federal assistance and begin the recovery process.

Fishing communities in Oregon have been waiting for the Department of Commerce to act for ten months. These poor salmon seasons have damaged the already distressed economies of the coastal communities that rely on the commercial fishing industry. The season failures result from reduced catches and area closures that fisheries managers put into place based on their assessment that the Chinook salmon population was diminished. Despite considerable federal and state investment in salmon recovery, many factors outside of managers' control, including drought and changing ocean conditions, continue to impede salmon populations.

In Oregon, the 2016 salmon landings were just 518,420 pounds and \$4,266,951 in value. Landings in 2017 were even worse at just 266,874 pounds, valued at \$2,129,000. Both seasons were far below economic viability, but the 2017 season in particular was a 79 percent reduction in landings and 70 percent reduction in value compared to the five-year average. These are devastating figures to the small, rural communities that rely on these fisheries. In the past, a federal disaster has been declared for comparable seasons, such as the 2006 season, which produced 499,000 pounds at a value of \$2,701,000.

In January of 2018, the Oregon Salmon Commission and the California Salmon Council again contacted the Department of Commerce seeking relief. In their letter, they wrote: "Our fishermen and the infrastructural industries they rely on are undergoing immense pressure and losses. Our salmon fishing industries in California and Oregon impact thousands of people including the fishermen, their families, the local communities and infrastructure that benefit from the income received by the fishermen."

Given the urgency of this situation for fishing families and communities, we write to request your prompt attention and your full and fair consideration of the request made in May 2017 for a


disaster declaration. The communities we represent would very much appreciate hearing from you about the timeline in which you expect the Department of Commerce to make a determination on this request.

Sincerely,


Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress


Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress


Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress


Kurt Schrader
Member of Congress

CC:

Governor Kate Brown of Oregon

Barry Thom, Regional Administrator, NOAA Fisheries West Coast Region

Nancy Fitzpatrick, Oregon Salmon Commission