



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

April 11, 2024

The Honorable Gina M. Raimondo
Secretary of Commerce
United States Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW Washington, D.C. 20230

Re: State of California Federal Fishery Disaster Request

Dear Secretary Raimondo:

In accordance with section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), as Acting Governor of the State of California, I am requesting on behalf of Governor Gavin Newsom that you expedite a fishery resource disaster determination for the State of California 2024 Sacramento River Fall Chinook (SRFC) and Klamath River Fall Chinook (KRFC) salmon fisheries.

Yesterday, the Pacific Fishery Management Council recommended a full closure of California's commercial and recreational 2024 ocean salmon fisheries in response to near-historically low stock abundance forecasts for the fall Chinook runs of salmon originating from the Sacramento and Klamath rivers. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is expected to implement this closure in May. A host of factors have pushed these iconic and important fisheries to the point of collapse, including prolonged and historic drought, severe wildfires, impacts to spawning and rearing habitat, harmful algal blooms, and ocean forage shifts and associated thiamine deficiency. Extreme climate disruption is compounding these factors and is now testing the resiliency of our salmon. In addition, the life cycle of salmon makes them extremely susceptible to environmental impacts as the salmon that are returning to California's waters now were impacted by drought conditions three years ago on their initial journey out to the ocean.

These factors, culminating in the anticipated second year of closure of SRFC and KRFC commercial and recreational fisheries, will have severe and long-lasting impacts on already distressed tribal and coastal communities, and the businesses that depend upon these fisheries. These natural causes, and the regulatory restrictions that now appear certain to result from them, constitute a fishery resource disaster under section

312(a). Determining that a fishery resource disaster has occurred will begin the process for requesting federal aid to assist these fishery-dependent communities during this extremely difficult time.

The expected closure of 2024 California salmon fisheries will result in loss of 100 percent of the direct revenue generated by these fisheries. The Pacific Fishery Management Council estimates that over the past five years (2018-2022), not including the 2023 disaster year, California commercial and recreational ocean salmon fisheries generated an annual average of \$29.6 million and \$18.3 million¹, respectively, in coastal community and state personal income. As such, California projects a loss for the 2024 season of over \$47 million from the closure of the SRFC and KRFC commercial and recreational ocean fisheries. During the 2023 SRFC and KRFC fishery disaster, based on NMFS guidance and language in MSA, California requested \$35.3 million of direct revenue loss, of which NMFS approved and allocated \$20.6 million. California appreciates NMFS approval of the 2023 disaster request and the relief funding allocated to support California's communities that rely on salmon fisheries.

As you know, salmon are a vital component of California's cultural and natural resources and provide significant commercial, recreational, economic, intrinsic, and cultural benefits to the state. Based on the projected 100 percent loss of direct fishery revenue, I am requesting an expedited determination of a fishery resource disaster for California's SFRC and KRFC fisheries to enable fishing communities affected by this disaster to receive essential economic assistance. Further, because of the unique and cultural significance of the salmon to California Native American tribes, I stand ready to support any requests for federal assistance from California Native American tribes impacted by this fishery resource disaster.

Please direct questions or requests for more information to Dr. Craig Shuman, California Department of Fish and Wildlife Marine Region Manager at r7RegionalMgr@wildlife.ca.gov or (805) 568-1246.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and for your ongoing support of California's fishing communities.

Sincerely,



Eleni Kounalakis

Acting Governor of California

¹ Pacific Fishery Management Council. 2024. Review of 2023 Ocean Salmon Fisheries: Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation Document for the Pacific Coast Salmon Fishery Management Plan. Table IV-16