



MAKAH TRIBAL COUNCIL

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The Makah Tribe is an equal opportunity employer.



September 10, 2024

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

Re: The Makah Tribe's Request for 2023 Fraser River Sockeye Disaster

Dear Secretary Raimondo,

On behalf of the Makah Tribal Council, I am formally requesting that an economic fishery disaster be declared under Section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery and Conservation and Management Act for Fraser River sockeye fisheries in 2023. This declaration will allow Makah tribal fishers who were impacted by the closure of this sockeye fishery to receive economic relief.

The Makah Tribe is a federally recognized tribe indigenous to the northwestern portion of the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State. The Makah Tribe's Usual and Accustomed Fishing Area covers approximately 1,550 square miles of ocean waters. The Makah people and culture have depended on resources from the ocean since time immemorial. This inextricable relationship with the ocean continues today, in part through our robust and valuable treaty fisheries. Makah treaty fisheries support over 50% of our economy (much higher in season) and the financial and nutritional security of most households within our community. The Fraser sockeye fishery is of particular economic and cultural importance to us.

Fraser River sockeye runs have been severely diminished in recent years with complete fishery closures in four out of the most recent five years. Fraser River sockeye runs have been severely impacted by systematic changes such as poor ocean conditions and increasing competition for prey and also by massive landslides in-river. The landslides, one which occurred in 2020 and another in 2024, impede fish passage and have degraded stream conditions for migrating sockeye, further decreasing their survival and reproductive success.

The 2019 and 2020 Fraser sockeye returns were some of the lowest ever recorded for this watershed in over 100 years in which fisheries data is available. Before the season, these run sizes were predicted to be low but actual returns were even lower than originally expected. Poor returns have also been observed in 2021 and in 2023. As a result of the drastically low observed run sizes, the Makah Tribe was unable to conduct any fisheries for sockeye in 2019, 2020, 2021,

nor 2023. The Makah Tribal Community urges a prompt response, which will allow our fishers to quickly obtain the disaster relief funds and support they are entitled to.

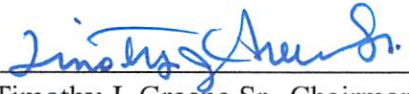
The Fraser sockeye fishery is extremely important to Makah fishers, and the complete cessation in sockeye harvest affects the entire tribe. Commercial Fraser sockeye harvest not only contributes significantly to annual fisher income, but also provides a ceremonial and subsistence food source for use by community members throughout the year, but especially for ceremonial use and in preservation for the winter months and is central to the annual Makah Days celebration.

The Makah Tribe is a fishing tribe, fishing is a way of life, and every member and family relies on the benefits provided by the Fraser sockeye fishery and other fisheries. With no Fraser sockeye available to harvest, the entire community suffers and needs financial relief to endure this challenging time.

As a federally recognized tribe and sovereign nation, we have the right to request and receive disaster assistance under the Department of Commerce and Congressional appropriation. We ask that under your authority and in cooperation with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries, and the Makah Indian Tribal Community, you coordinate with all parties to issue a Fisheries Economic Disaster Declaration as authorized under Section 312(a) of the Magnuson Stevens Fishery and Conservation and Management Act.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter. Please contact Chief of Staff, Christopher Martinez (cos@makah.com or (360) 645-2080) or Fisheries Biologist, Tiffany Petersen (tiffany.petersen@makah.com) with any questions or if you need any additional information.

Sincerely,



Timothy J. Greene Sr., Chairman
Makah Tribal Council

CC: The Honorable Patty Murray, US Senator
The Honorable Maria Cantwell, US Senator