



MAKAH TRIBAL COUNCIL

P.O. BOX 115 • NEAH BAY, WA 98357 • 360-645-2201

The Makah Tribe is an equal opportunity employer.



January 7, 2025

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

Re: Ocean Treaty Troll Fishery Disasters

Dear Secretary Lutnick,

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 the Ocean Treaty Troll fishery for 2020 and 2021. This will allow Makah tribal fishers who were negatively affected by reduced catch rates in the Ocean Treaty Troll fishery for the years of 2020 and 2021 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 current Usual and Accustomed Fishing Area covers approximately 1550 square miles of marine territory. The Makah People and culture have been dependent 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 Ocean Treaty Troll fishery is one of the largest and most economically significant fisheries occurring in the summer months and is very important to the Makah Tribe.

In 2020, impacts to fishermen were two-fold. Not only were many fisheries delayed and/or limited due to the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic, but salmon runs were also lower than expected preseason. Lower than anticipated run sizes for both Chinook and Coho challenged Makah Fishermen participating in these important treaty fisheries. While the Tribe did receive some CARES Act COVID relief funding to cover the impacts to our fishers and community associated with the pandemic closures, this did not account for the financial impact resulting from dramatic decreases in these runs once these fisheries were able to re-open. In 2020, the Makah Tribe caught 2,437 Chinook, which is just 7 percent of the 40,000 Chinook quota allocated during the preseason. There was a similar situation in 2021, where just 8,037 Chinook were caught, just 20 percent of the preseason quota of 40,000. Declines in catch for these

important fisheries contributed to other significant economic losses associated with COVID-19 Pandemic closures and restrictions.

The Ocean Treaty Troll fishery is extremely important to Makah fishers, and the significant decline in harvest affects the entire tribe. Ocean Treaty Troll harvest of Chinook and Coho salmon 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. 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 Ocean Treaty Troll fishery and other fisheries. With few ocean salmon 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 Fisheries Biologist, Tiffany Petersen (tiffany.petersen@makah.com) with any questions or if you need any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Timothy J. Greene Sr.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Timothy J. Greene Sr., Chairman
Makah Tribal Council

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