

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 9, 2017

The Honorable Wilbur Ross
Secretary, US Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Ross:

We are writing in support of Oregon Governor Kate Brown's and California Governor Jerry Brown's request for a catastrophic regional fishery disaster declaration under section 315 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), a fishery resource disaster under section 308 (b) and (d) of the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act of 1986, and a commercial fishery failure under section 312 (a) of the MSA, for the states of Oregon and California for 2016 and 2017.

Salmon fishing is an important industry in Oregon and northern California, playing an integral role in our coastal communities by providing jobs, generating local revenue, and driving tourism. During previous coastal salmon closures, it became very clear how much the loss of salmon impacted not only the fishermen and their families, but ancillary industries including retailers, boat repair facilities, and many others. Many coastal communities are still hurting from the decline in salmon landings in 2016. We have been contacted by fishermen, coastal community leaders, subsidiary businesses, and stakeholders asking about assistance options and describing the negative impacts of a salmon closure.

The West Coast Commercial Salmon industry has been hit hard in the previous decade. Oregon had four disaster declarations between 2006 and 2016 while California has had five in the same timeframe. These disasters resulted in major hardships for the salmon fisherman and their communities.

In the years following the four disaster declarations, salmon landings were significantly lower than the average catch for the years preceding 2006. This decline was due to a variety of compounding factors. In the current decade, catches have declined consistently apart from one marginally good year in 2014. More importantly, because of changing ocean conditions, salmon catch was less evenly distributed than normal in 2016. Fourteen of the fifteen traditional landing ports on the Oregon coast had a noticeable decline in salmon landings. Also, in 2016, Oregon recreational catch of Chinook was down by 75% (4100 fish compared to the expected 9,000 fish with an annual average of 16,400).

Although there will be a limited 2017 commercial salmon season in Oregon, the fishable area is greatly reduced. The 2017 commercial salmon fishing closure affects nearly 50% of coastal

Oregon. These closures are expected to result in total ex-vessel value decrease of 63% from the 2012-2016 average.

In California, commercial salmon fishermen caught just 67% of what was expected last year. This represents revenue of just \$5.3 million - down substantially from the \$12.6 million averaged during previous seasons. The outlook for California's salmon fishery in 2017 is equally discouraging, prompting the Pacific Fishery Management Council to cancel commercial and recreational fishing seasons along some 130 miles of coastline.

In addition to well-documented commercial impacts, the closure will also impact recreational fishing. Recreational salmon fishing is closed on a smaller but still substantial portion of the southern Oregon and northern California coasts. The effects will be felt across coastal communities and a wide-range of industries, from gas stations to hotels to retailers.

Salmon are a vital part of our region's history, economy and culture. This disaster declaration will provide a much needed safety net to keep fishermen in business, communities afloat, and the industry open for business until salmon stocks are restored.

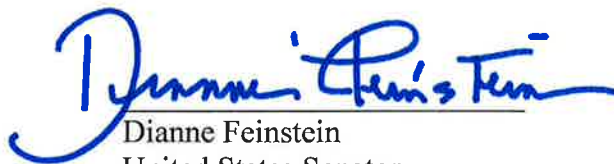
Accordingly, we ask that you quickly declare a commercial fishery resource disaster pursuant to section 315 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), a fishery resource disaster under section 308 (b) and (d) of the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act of 1986, and a commercial fishery failure under section 312 (a) of the MSA, for the states of Oregon and California for 2016 and 2017

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

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator