



## SQUAXIN ISLAND TRIBE

July 13, 2021

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

2021 JUL 21 PM 12:36  
 O S EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

**Subject: 2020 Puget Sound Fall Chum Fishery Disaster for the Squaxin Island Tribe**

Dear Secretary Raimondo:

The Squaxin Island Tribe is formally requesting that an economic fishery disaster be declared under Section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. §1861a). This will allow Squaxin Island tribal fishers who were negatively affected by the complete failure of 2019 Puget Sound fall chum salmon fisheries that are relied upon by our community to be provided disaster relief. The Squaxin Island tribal fisheries affected were the marine area 13D (Pickering Passage, Dana Passage, & Southern Case Inlet), 13H (Totten Inlet), and 13G (Eld Inlet) Puget Sound fall chum salmon fisheries targeting deep south Puget Sound chum runs. The abundance of 2020 Puget Sound fall chum was so low that it resulted in closures for conservation of Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Puget Sound State commercial fisheries. Squaxin Island Tribe and other Puget Sound tribal fisheries were adversely impacted by the extremely low abundance of chum salmon in 2020. Of those fish that did return to our usual and accustom fishing grounds, the majority were left for escapement into watersheds to ensure sustainability of the resource. Secretary Raimondo, we urge you to respond promptly to this matter to allow our fishermen the opportunity to obtain disaster relief funds and support.

These chum salmon fisheries, like all salmon fisheries, are extremely important to our Squaxin Island tribal community and always have been. The low returns of chum impacted our entire tribe. We are fishing people—it is central to our culture and way of life, as well as our economy. Harvest in these fisheries not only contributes significantly to annual fisher income, but also provides a ceremonial and subsistence food source for use by community members throughout the winter months. We have always relied on the water and our natural resources for our health and livelihoods. With very few chum salmon to harvest, our entire community suffered and needs financial relief to get through these difficult times. We have determined that compared to previous recent year chum harvest data (2014-2018 fishing years, declaration of disaster for Squaxin Island 2019 chum fishery \*pending\*) for the year 2020 we have an economic loss of 95.30 percent in our chum fishery.

As a federally recognized tribes and sovereign nation, we have the right to request and receive disaster relief under the Department of Commerce and Congressional appropriation. We ask that under your authority and in cooperation with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries and

the Squaxin Island Tribe, that you coordinate with all parties to issue a Fisheries Economic Disaster Declaration as authorized under Section 312 (a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Thank you for your consideration in this matter. If you have any questions, please contact *Ray Peters, Squaxin Island Tribe Intergovernmental & Tribal Council Liaison* by phone: 360-432-3900 or email: [rpeters@squaxin.us](mailto:rpeters@squaxin.us).

Sincerely,

*Kristopher K. Peters*  
Kristopher K. Peters (Jul 13, 2021 08:13 PDT)

Kristopher Peters, Chairman  
Squaxin Island Tribe

Cc: The Honorable Patty Murray, US Senator  
The Honorable Maria Cantwell, US Senator  
The Honorable Derrick Kilmer, Congressman  
The Honorable Marilyn Strickland, Congressman