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**COMMERCE DEPARTMENT DECLARES
FISHERY FAILURE OF WEST COAST SALMON**

\$3.5 Million In Federal Aid May Buy Back Washington Salmon Permits

Commerce Secretary William M. Daley today announced that \$3.5 million in federal funds will be made available to Washington state to help restore the West Coast salmon fishery, damaged by the 1995-1997 floods in the Pacific Northwest. The aid package is contingent on congressional approval of an implementation plan to restore the fishery and prevent similar failures of commercial fisheries.

The fisheries service is working closely with the state to finalize a plan to use the funds to buy back commercial salmon permits.

"When finalized, this assistance package should get money into the hands of fishermen by buying salmon permits back from those who are looking for a way to leave an overcapitalized fishery," said Secretary of Commerce William M. Daley. "I would like to thank Senator Murray and Governor Locke for their persistence in helping develop the state plan that puts the buyback in place."

The fisheries service determined the salmon fishery failure was due to a resource disaster caused by environmental fluctuations that included flooding in the Northwest, including the Puget Sound area. In addition, the fishery was adversely impacted by manmade elements such as hydropower, agriculture and logging practices. According to state figures on the West Coast fishery, commercial landings of all species of salmon fell from a 1987-91 average of \$126 million to an all-time low of \$17 million in 1996.

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Washington Governor Gary Locke formally requested the declaration in April 1998, under Section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The proposed state permit buyback program would provide direct assistance to Washington salmon permit holders in the form of cash payments to those who surrender their permits, and would reduce competition for those choosing to remain in the fishery. A permit buyback program would help restore the fishery and help prevent a future commercial failure by reducing fishing effort in the salmon fishery.

The Commerce Department has authority to declare a commercial fishery failure under section 312 (a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, which authorizes the Secretary of Commerce to make funds available for assistance to address a commercial fishery failure caused by a fishery resource disaster of natural or undetermined causes, or man-made causes beyond the control of fishery managers to mitigate. The aid package will include a total of \$4.67 million, including \$3.5 million in federal funds and the required 25 percent match from the state, or \$1.17 million.

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