



CALIFORNIA



OREGON

May 24, 2017

The Honorable Wilbur Ross
Secretary of Commerce
United States Department of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Mr. Secretary,

We request that you expedite declaration of a catastrophic regional fishery disaster 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 312a of the MSA, for the States of Oregon and California for 2016 and 2017. Ocean salmon fishery restrictions in our states in 2016 and 2017, including full closures in some areas for 2017, have severe effects on already distressed rural communities and the businesses that depend upon these fisheries. Declaring a catastrophic regional fishery disaster and commercial fishery failure will begin the process for requesting federal aid to assist these fishery-dependent communities during this difficult time.

Oregon ocean salmon fisheries in 2016 were affected by reduced allowable catches of Klamath River fall Chinook. While fishing occurred throughout the year in all Oregon waters, commercial opportunity was reduced compared to prior years, resulting in a lower economic return. Additionally, due to anomalous oceanographic conditions, commercial catches along the Oregon coast were less evenly distributed than normal; 74 percent of the Chinook salmon landed by the Oregon commercial fishery in 2016 was landed into Newport. Other ports, such as Astoria and Charleston, experienced significant declines, and fishers incurred higher travel costs in order to reach productive fishing areas. The overall Oregon commercial ex-vessel value of Chinook was

\$4.3 million compared to the 2011-2015 average of \$7.3 million. Oregon recreational catch of Chinook was 4,100 fish, compared to an expected 9,000 fish, and a 2011-2015 average of 16,400 fish.

Similarly, California's 2016 fisheries significantly under-performed expectations, noting that expectations were already pessimistic due to very low stock forecasts which suggested that statewide catch would fall well below average. By the year's end, California's 2016 commercial fisheries only caught 67 percent of what was expected, with statewide ex-vessel revenues totaling only \$5.3 million compared with revenues in 2011-2015 that averaged \$12.6 million. Meanwhile, California's 2016 recreational fisheries also fell short of expectations, with total catch falling below 40,000 fish, and amounting to only three-quarters of what was expected. By comparison, average statewide ocean recreational catch from 2011-2015 was 80,400 chinook.

On April 11, 2017, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) adopted 2017 seasons. As a result of these seasons, there will be no commercial salmon fishing in federal waters off Oregon's coast in 2017 from Florence, Oregon south to the Oregon/California border, a distance of approximately 160 miles, or about 50 percent of the Oregon coastline. There will also be no recreational salmon fishery in federal waters from Humbug Mountain south to the border - a smaller but still significant closure area. These rules will be in effect from April 15-October 31, 2017.

The 2017 seasons adopted by the PFMC for waters off California likewise offer only minimal opportunities. From the California/Oregon border south to Horse Mountain – a distance of approximately 130 miles, there will be zero ocean salmon fishing opportunity for both commercial and recreational fishery sectors. Moreover, in response to the lowest projected abundance of Klamath River fall Chinook salmon on record since forecasting began in the mid-1980s, the California Fish and Game Commission made the difficult decision to prohibit all in-river fishing for chinook salmon in the Klamath-Trinity watershed from August 15 through the end of the year, to protect the few adult fish projected to return to spawn this fall.

Oregon commercial ocean salmon fisheries are projected to result in a total ex-vessel value of \$2.7 million for the sale of 29,400 Chinook in 2017; this is 63 percent less than the 2012-16 average of \$7.3 million. Fisheries and communities in the southern half of Oregon will be hit hardest, and are expected to generate only 6% of the 2012-16 average ex-vessel value of \$479,000 through limited Oregon state managed fisheries. Oregon recreational ocean salmon fisheries are expected to catch 6,700 Chinook, 47% of the 2012-16 average of 14,300.

Commercial ocean salmon fisheries along the entire California coast in 2017 are projected to result in a total ex-vessel value of \$4.5 million for the sale of 47,600 fish – 72 percent less than the 2012-16 statewide average of 169,400 fish. Communities in the far-north are expected to be hardest hit. California's recreational ocean salmon fisheries likewise face both a lack of opportunity and low chances of success in 2017. It is projected that 35,000 Chinook will be landed in the California recreational ocean salmon fisheries statewide in 2017 – 55 percent less than the 2012-16 average of 78,000 fish.

The seasons adopted by PFMC reflect a severely diminished population of Klamath River fall Chinook salmon, following from the very low escapement in 2016. The causes of this stock's decline are multiple years of drought in California, parasites within the Klamath River Basin, and poor ocean conditions. The causes of the disaster are beyond the control of fisheries managers to mitigate through conservation and management measures, or both. This decline may also continue beyond 2017.

The PFMC has provided analyses of the economic impacts of 2017 regulations. Effects on dependent businesses associated with salmon fishing are more difficult to estimate. There will be negative effects on fish processors, fishing equipment retailers, marine repair and moorage businesses, as well as recreational fishing guides, charter boat operators, bait shops, motels, and other dependent businesses. We ask that you support assistance for all affected businesses in your review of this issue.

According to PFMC projections, the 2017 Oregon/California salmon seasons are likely to result in:

- Commercial salmon fisheries from Cape Falcon to Humbug Mountain – which includes the closed area between Florence and Humbug Mountain – are expected to result in total ex-vessel value of \$2.7 million which is 40 percent of the 2012-2016 average of \$6.8 million for this area.
- Commercial salmon fisheries from Humbug Mountain to the Oregon border – which is closed for 2017 – will have ex-vessel value only from state-waters fisheries, and is expected to generate only \$28,000 in ex-vessel value, which is 6 percent of the 2012-2016 average of \$479,000 for this area.
- Recreational fisheries from Humbug Mountain south to the Oregon/California border are projected to result in an economic loss of 46 percent relative to the 2012-2016 average, with the only recreational fishing in this area being in limited state-waters fisheries.
- The full season closure for sport and commercial ocean salmon fisheries from the Oregon/California border south to Horse Mountain means that businesses dependent on salmon fishing in this area will earn zero revenue from salmon fishery activity in 2017. The recreational fishery has been open an average of 116 days in 2012-2016, while the commercial fishery produced an average of \$220,000 in ex-vessel revenue over this recent time period.
- In the Fort Bragg area (Horse Mountain to Point Arena), 2017 commercial salmon fishery revenues are projected to decline 93 percent compared to 2012-2016 average revenues of \$4.4 million. Meanwhile, in the San Francisco area (Point Arena to Pigeon Point), projected catch will only result in \$1.9 million in ex-vessel revenue, a 69 percent reduction from the recent average of \$6.3 million.
- The recreational fishery in the Ft. Bragg Area will be closed most of the summer – from June 1 through August 14 – the time of year when recent averages suggest the best sport fishing occurs, and when sport anglers are most likely to engage in ocean fishing activities. Given this substantial reduction in opportunity, projected catches are expected to drop from an average of 8,200 in 2012-2016 to only 1,700 fish in 2017.

Additionally, according to California Department of Fish and Wildlife projections, closure of the recreational fall-run Chinook fishery on the Klamath and Trinity rivers is expected to result in a loss of an estimated \$2.5 million in total economic output, with impacts to an estimated 42 California jobs.

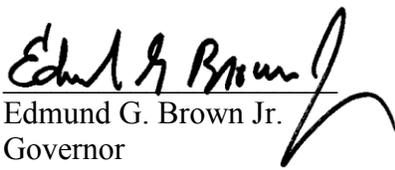
As you know, salmon are a vital component of Oregon and California's natural resources and provide significant commercial, recreational, economic, and aesthetic benefits to both states. Salmon are also highly valued by Native American tribes for culture, subsistence, and economic benefits. We are troubled that Tribal salmon fisheries will also face severe restrictions in 2017. While economic assistance will be essential to address the impacts of closures and restrictions on our salmon fisheries, it is vitally important that federal, state, tribal and local governments continue to work together to recover and restore salmon populations and develop management strategies to ensure the long-term health and sustainability of our salmon fisheries.

We have personally visited the Klamath Basin together and heard from Tribes, agencies, fishermen and women, and farmers. While this joint letter seeks assistance to respond to a salmon fishery disaster, we know that the long-term, public interest in the Klamath River requires our two states to work toward collaborative solutions with people from the headwaters to the ocean, including farmers and irrigators, Tribes, recreationalists, fishermen and women, conservation organizations, and state, federal, and local government.

Lauri Aunan has been designated as the Oregon state coordinator for this request. Ms. Aunan can be reached at 503-373-1680. Chris Kern of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife will act as alternate Oregon state coordinator and can be reached at 503 947-6209. Dr. Craig Shuman of the California Department of fish and Wildlife has been designated as the California state coordinator for this request, and can be reached at 805-568-1246. Marci Yaremko of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife will act as alternate California state coordinator and can be reached at 858-442-3004.

We greatly appreciate your anticipated support and leadership on this critical issue and look forward to a favorable reply.

Sincerely,


Edmund G. Brown Jr.
Governor
State of California


Kate Brown
Governor
State of Oregon

CC:

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
The Honorable Ron Wyden
The Honorable Jeff Merkley
The Honorable Kamala Harris
The Honorable Peter DeFazio

The Honorable Anna G. Eshoo
The Honorable Earl Blumenauer
The Honorable Mike Thompson
The Honorable Greg Walden
The Honorable Jackie Speier
The Honorable Kurt Schrader
The Honorable Suzanne Bonamici
The Honorable Jared Huffman
The Honorable Salud Carbajal
The Honorable Jimmy Panetta
Senator Jeff Kruse, Chair, Oregon Coastal Caucus
Senator Mike McGuire, Chair Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture
Assemblymember Jim Wood, Vice Chair, Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture
Chuck Bonham, California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Curt Melcher, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Valerie Termini, California Fish and Game Commission
Mike Finley, Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission