



THE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE
Washington, D.C. 20230

April 30, 2009

The Honorable Theodore Kulongoski
Governor of Oregon
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Governor ~~Kulongoski~~ *Ted*:

Thank you for your letter requesting a declaration of a commercial fishery failure for the West Coast salmon fisheries under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

I have determined that the fishery resource disaster under Section 308(d) of the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act and the commercial fishery failure under Section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, originally determined on May 1, 2008, continue in 2009 due to continued low returns of Sacramento River fall Chinook.

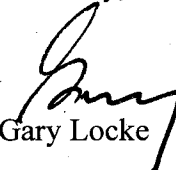
The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) carefully analyzed the West Coast salmon fisheries data and is implementing the Pacific Fishery Management Council's recommendations for extensive closures off the coasts of California and Oregon. Spawning returns of Sacramento River fall Chinook are forecast to be near record lows this year, which will have significant economic impacts for the region. Ex-vessel values for the South of Cape Falcon fisheries are projected to experience an 83 percent decline compared with the 2004-2008 average, and a 99 percent decline from the 2003-2007 average.

In March 2009, NMFS released a draft report on the causes of the collapse of Sacramento River fall Chinook in 2007 and 2008. The report concluded that unfavorable ocean conditions led to poor survival of juvenile salmon as they entered the ocean environment in 2005 and 2006. It also found that the stock was more susceptible to those poor ocean conditions because of freshwater habitat degradation. These factors underlie the low returns being forecast in 2009.

This disaster decision will ensure that the \$53 million in unspent funds from 2008 will be available to affected fishing communities in Oregon and California. We will work with the States to distribute these remaining funds based on the impacts of this continuing disaster. We would also like to work with the State of Oregon and our other partners in the region on habitat and hatchery issues that may be contributing to the difficult fishery management problems that the Sacramento River system has been experiencing.

I appreciate your concern for the fishing communities in your State, and your interest in recovery and restoration of the salmon populations along the West Coast. If you have further questions, please contact James R. Schufreider, Acting Assistant Secretary of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs, at (202) 482-3663.

Sincerely,


Gary Locke