



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

THE DIRECTOR

MAY 14 2003

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Governor
State of Georgia
203 State Capitol
Atlanta, GA 30334-0900

Dear Governor Perdue:

This is a follow-up to the January 6, 2003, letter from Secretary Evans regarding the request from the governor's office for a determination of a commercial fishery failure of Georgia's blue crab fishery, pursuant to Section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act). A letter to the previous governor was inadvertently sent on May 8, 2003 and I regret any problem this may have caused.

On behalf of the Secretary, the National Marine Fisheries Service has reviewed the information you provided and other data on the unprecedented declines in the abundance of blue crabs in Georgia waters and the significant loss of income to commercial fishermen. Our analysis has led us to determine that the blue crab fishery has experienced a commercial fishery failure due to a fishery resource disaster of, most likely, natural (otherwise undetermined) causes, as defined by Section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

Assistance to address the commercial fishery failure will depend on an appropriation from Congress. If appropriated, funds could be used under Section 312(a) for activities to assess the economic and social effects of the commercial failure, or to restore the fishery or prevent a similar failure in the future and to assist the affected fishing community. However, any such activity must not expand the size or scope of the commercial failure in the blue crab fishery or into other fisheries or geographic regions. Furthermore, the Federal share of the cost of the activity is limited to 75 percent of the total cost.

I appreciate your interest in this important issue.

Sincerely,

William T. Hogarth, Ph.D.

