

DARY LOCKE
Governor



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OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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July 3, 2000

The Honorable William M. Daley, Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
14th Street and Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Daley:

Under the provisions of Section 312 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, 16 USC 1861a, I respectfully request that you declare a commercial fishery failure in Washington State. This request is based upon a fishery resource disaster resulting from natural causes that affected the 1999 Fraser River sockeye salmon season.

The Pacific Salmon Commission (PSC) forecast for the salmon run was 8,248,000 fish. This number was subsequently downgraded to 3,320,000 fish, leading to the cancellation of the 1999 season. The PSC has determined that these fish did not survive the conditions created by the 1997 El Nino-induced combination of warmer than normal ocean temperatures and the presence of predatory fish such as Pacific mackerel that came north with the warmer water.

The 1998 season was relatively weak, with only 522,000 fish harvested. In 1999, the number of fish harvested prior to the cancellation of the season was approximately 20,000, representing 3.8 percent of the 1998 catch. This has been an economic disaster for the fishing industry in the State of Washington.

Thousands of commercial fishers and workers in associated businesses have been severely affected. The loss to the treaty Indian and non-Indian fishing industries is estimated at more than \$9 million in direct benefits. The total impact to the state's economy, including the losses for the supporting businesses, is conservatively estimated at \$36 million, but could reach as high as \$63 million.

The sockeye salmon season is the primary source of income among most tribal fishers. For instance, the Lummi Indian Nation has about 500 licensed fishers who employ about 2,000 people. The sockeye season normally makes up 50 to 60 percent of their fishing income. Fish are also a key subsistence item for many, and an important component of tribal life. The loss of the 1999 season has left tribal members' homes without fish and community freezers empty.

According to the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife, approximately 1000 non-Indian fishing license holders were eligible to fish during the 1999 Fraser River sockeye salmon season. A similar number of Indian fishing license holders would have fished during the 1999 season.

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Every state-licensed salmon fisher received a questionnaire about the impacts of this disaster, and the eight affected Indian Tribes were also contacted. Virtually none of the tribal fishers are eligible for state unemployment assistance, and only 18 percent of the non-tribal fishers who responded to the information request are eligible for state unemployment assistance. Without the sockeye income, mortgages, moorage fees, and bills to repair homes, vehicles, and boats cannot be paid.

The Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) has declared this event to be an economic injury disaster. While SBA low interest loans are a welcome addition to many fishers and businesses, many other fishers already have loans with the SBA or other lenders and will have difficulty qualifying for additional loans without the income from the 1999 sockeye season.

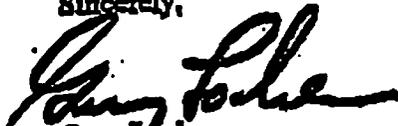
The Federal Emergency Management Agency denied my disaster request for this event.

Assistance through the Magnuson-Stevens Act would provide the opportunity for a wide variety of assistance activities. I understand that, in Alaska, coordinated federal assistance has included employment retraining, fish habitat restoration, and direct emergency aid.

I have designated Diane R. Offord of the Washington State Military Department's Emergency Management Division as the State Coordinating Officer for this request. She will work with you and other federal and state agencies to provide additional information or justification on my behalf. She can be reached at (253) 512-7061 or d.offord@emod.wa.gov.

Thank you for your favorable consideration of this request.

Sincerely,


 Gary Locke
 Governor

- cc: Washington Congressional Delegation
 James Lee Witt, Director, FEMA
 Office of Financial Management
 Office of Indian Affairs
 Legislators of Affected Counties
 Department of Fish and Wildlife
 Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development
 Affected County Commissioners
 County Emergency Management Directors