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COUNTY OF MENDOCINO
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
501 Low Gap Road • Room 1090
Ukiah, California 95482

May 10, 2005

Secretary Carlos M. Gutierrez
Office of the Secretary
Room 5516
U.S. Department of Commerce
14th & Constitution Ave. NW
Washington DC 20230

RE: Disaster Declaration for 2005 California Salmon Fisheries

Dear Secretary Gutierrez:

This year salmon fishermen from California and Oregon will experience unprecedented restrictions on their salmon fishing season due to very poor adult salmonid returns to the Klamath River. The low returns are the result of a multi-year drought and subsequent water conditions. The situation is so extreme that we are writing to urge you to declare a fishery disaster, as provided for under the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Act, to provide financial relief for the affected individuals, businesses, and communities.

On April 8, 2005, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) recommended severe restrictions on the offshore ocean salmon fisheries of California and Oregon. As a result, in California, the Fish and Game Commission has imposed a drastically reduced salmon fishing season for commercial ocean and in-river fishermen and for the subsistence fishery relied on by the Yurok, Hoopa, and Karuk Tribes. This will result in catastrophic economic losses for fishing families and for fishing dependent communities. The estimated loss to the California commercial fishing fleet alone could exceed \$100 million. The situation for others, including processors, port and tribal communities, related on-shore businesses, sports fishing guides and related businesses will be disastrous. Similar steps have been taken in Oregon with similar impacts on the local fishing industry and communities.

At least twice before, NOAA Fisheries declared the salmon fisheries of the West coast a disaster, once following the seven-year drought of the late 1980's and secretary Gutierrez early 1990's and an earlier one following the El Niño of 1982-83. Declaration of a fishery disaster is the first step needed to allow the affected individuals and businesses to access federal disaster relief programs called for under the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

The Mendocino County Board of Supervisors urges your immediate review of the situation so that the affected communities can help prepare for the impact of the new restrictions. If you have any questions regarding this request or need additional information concerning the financial impact of the restrictions, please do not hesitate to contact our Representative, Congressman Mike Thompson, 1st District.

Sincerely,


Michael Delbar, Chairman
Mendocino County Board of Supervisors

cc: Congressman Mike Thompson
Senator Barbara Boxer
Senator Dianne Feinstein
Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger
Senator Wesley Chesbro
Assemblymember Patty Berg

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