

14-035-392



STATE OF GEORGIA 2014 FEB 24 PM 2:33
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT
ATLANTA 30334-0900

Nathan Deal
GOVERNOR

February 10, 2014

The Honorable Penny Pritzker
United States Secretary of Commerce
Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Madame Secretary:

Based on a recommendation by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR), I ask that you declare a commercial fishery failure has occurred in Georgia's food shrimp fishery. This request is made based on a fishery resource disaster pursuant to Section 312 (a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Management and Conservation Act.

From September through December 2013, the abundance of white shrimp in Georgia's estuaries and territorial waters of the Atlantic Ocean was significantly below normal. The catch of white shrimp in the coast-wide DNR trawl survey during that period was significantly (51%) below the 36-year average for that survey.

DNR scientists believe abnormally heavy rainfall during the late spring and summer caused a white shrimp recruitment failure. Exacerbating this situation was a higher than normal occurrence of black gill syndrome in the white shrimp population during the summer and early autumn. The impacts of black gill syndrome on white shrimp abundance is unknown, but it is reasonable to assume that in years of low shrimp abundance due to poor recruitment and survival, mortality associated with black gill syndrome may result in a significant reduction in white shrimp abundance to commercial harvesters.

As expected, white shrimp catches in the food shrimp fishery were likewise below average during 2013, especially during the autumn, which typically accounts for 52% of the total annual harvest. Reported ex-vessel value for the autumn white shrimp fishery is \$1,457,844 – 72% below the five-year average (2008-2012), with harvest by volume 80% below average at 294,288 lbs. The Georgia Shrimp Association, a group of food shrimp harvesters and wholesalers, is of the opinion that the food shrimp harvesting industry has suffered a commercial fishery failure due to a fishery resource disaster. The DNR Shrimp Advisory Panel concurs. Total reported harvest of shrimp of all species to date for 2013 is 1,249,071 pounds compared to the five-year average (2008-2012) of 2,399,689 pounds (48% less).

Disaster relief funds authorized by the relevant statutes are needed to: (1) provide economic assistance to fishing communities and small businesses affected by the disaster; and (2) provide funding to investigate the causes and effects of black gill syndrome.

On behalf of Georgia's shrimp fishery, I thank you for your prompt consideration of this urgent request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nathan Deal". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "N" at the beginning.

Nathan Deal
Governor of Georgia