

16-049639



SQUAXIN ISLAND TRIBE

May 3rd, 2016

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

Subject: 2015 South Puget Sound Coho Fishery Disaster for the Squaxin Island Tribe

Dear Ms. Secretary Pritzker,

I am formally requesting that you declare an economic fishery disaster under Section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery and Conservation and Management Act, so disaster relief assistance can be provided to fishermen who were adversely impacted by the extremely low 2015 South Puget Sound coho run that resulted in an insignificant harvesting opportunity. Not only was the 2015 South Puget Sound coho run low, coho were also significantly smaller than average. The Squaxin Island Tribe urges a prompt response, which will allow our fishers to quickly obtain the disaster relief funds and support.

The south Puget Sound coho fishery is extremely important to the Squaxin Island people and recent poor coho returns affect the entire tribe. The Squaxin Island Tribe is a fishing tribe, "People of the Water", maritime people who live and prosper along the shores of deep south Puget Sound. Squaxin people rely on the benefits of the natural resources that the Puget Sound provides. The importance of subsistence, ceremonial and commercial fisheries is an integral part of the way of life and identity to the Squaxin Island Tribe. With very little coho available to harvest, the entire Squaxin Island community suffers and needs financial relief to get through this challenging time.

As a federally recognized tribe and sovereign nation, we have the right to request and receive disaster assistance under the Department of Commerce and Congressional appropriation. We ask that under your authority and in cooperation with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries, and the Squaxin Island Tribe, you coordinate with all parties to issue a Fisheries Economic Disaster Declaration as authorized under Section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery and Conservation and Management Act.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Joseph C. Peters
Natural Resources Policy Representative
Squaxin Island Tribe

CC: The Honorable Patty Murray, US Senator
The Honorable Maria Cantwell, US Senator
The Honorable Denny Heck, Congressman
The Honorable Derek Kilmer, Congressman

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