JAY INSLEE
Governor

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September 14, 2016

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

Dear Secretary Pritzker:

Under the provisions of Section 312 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, I respectfully request that you declare a commercial fishery failure in Washington State. This request is based upon the failure of coho salmon runs returning to Washington State in 2015 due to natural causes.

Returns of coho salmon were well below expectations for most Washington watersheds in 2015, with the number of fish returning to major watersheds like the Columbia River and Grays Harbor being less than one-third of what was predicted before the fishing season. In addition to the small number of fish returning, the coho that did return were significantly smaller than normal. The smaller size and fewer numbers of coho were likely the result of unusual environmental conditions that persisted off the Washington and British Columbia coasts for most of the year. The anomalous conditions included the "warm blob" of water in the Pacific, with surface water temperatures up to seven degrees warmer than normal, and likely caused food chain disruptions that led to the poor survival and growth of coho salmon.

Salmon fisheries throughout Washington were affected by the poor return of coho in 2015, with statewide commercial coho catch being less than 20 percent of the recent five-year average, and ex-vessel value being less than 15 percent of the recent five-year average. Two Washington commercial salmon fisheries typically depend on coho for more than 50 percent of their catch by ex-vessel value, and therefore were affected disproportionately to the other fisheries by the failure of the coho return. The Grays Harbor and Willapa Bay commercial fisheries experienced a total ex-vessel value for coho that was just 7.7 percent of the recent five-year average. Total value of salmon landed in these two fisheries was less than 20 percent of the recent five-year average.

Based on the catch and economic value data presented above, I am requesting a commercial fishery failure declaration for the 2015 Grays Harbor and Willapa Bay non-treaty commercial salmon fisheries. Although other non-treaty commercial salmon fisheries in Washington were

affected by the poor coho return, those fisheries typically depend more heavily on other salmon species, and were less affected economically. Although the poor return of coho in 2015 was unexpected, poor coho returns are now expected for 2016. Negative economic impacts on Washington salmon fisheries are likely to continue in 2016. These impacts may extend to salmon fisheries in other parts of Washington due to the limitations imposed on fisheries for other species based on the need to limit interceptions of coho returning at critically low levels. Thus, additional declaration requests covering non-treaty Washington State fisheries impacted in 2016 may follow this request for a 2015 declaration.

For more information or questions on Washington's 2015 fisheries, please contact Kyle Adicks with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife at (360) 902-2664, or JT Austin with the Governor's Office at (360) 628-7440.

Thank you for your attention to this request.

Very truly yours,

Jay Inslee
Governor