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Governor

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September 14, 2016

The Honorable Penny Pritzker
Secretary of Commerce
United States Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, District Of Columbia 20230

Dear Secretary Pritzker:

Under the provisions of Section 312 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act and Section 308 of the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act, I respectfully request that you declare a commercial fishery failure due to a fishery resource disaster in Washington State. This request is based upon the failure of coho salmon runs returning to Washington State in 2016 due to natural causes.

Coho salmon returns to Washington watersheds in 2015 were unexpectedly low due to poor survival during the time these fish spent in marine waters of coastal Washington and the Pacific Ocean. The poor survival of coho has generally been attributed to the widespread ecological effects of the anomalous 'warm blob' of water present in the Pacific Ocean beginning in 2013. Expectations for coho returns in 2016 are very poor due to persisting poor conditions in the Pacific, and fisheries planned for 2016 were extremely curtailed to protect the small numbers of coho expected to return. Ocean fishery seasons were reduced and coho catch prohibited in all troll and most recreational fisheries off Washington's coast. Fisheries in many inland marine and freshwater fisheries in Puget Sound, the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and coastal Washington will be closed during expected times of coho migration to protect returning coho. These fishery reductions and closures have had, and will continue to have, serious economic impacts on the commercial and recreational fishing industries in coastal Washington, the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and Puget Sound.

Regulations for 2016 ocean salmon fisheries were adopted by the Pacific Fishery Management Council in April, and expected economic effects of those fisheries were compared to recent year averages as part of the Environmental Assessment completed for those regulations. For fisheries in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of Washington, that analysis showed large decreases in expected ex-vessel value for commercial fisheries, and in angler trips and coastal community economic impact from recreational fisheries due to reduced seasons and quotas implemented in response to the expected poor coho return. Preliminary post-season review of the recently-concluded ocean fisheries show that ex-vessel value and angler trips were both well below

recent-year averages, as expected. Upcoming fishery closures in inland marine and freshwater areas are expected to have similar effects on recreational fisheries, with large areas being closed to salmon fishing to protect coho.

I am requesting that you declare a commercial fishery failure for 2016 due to a fishery resource disaster under section 308(b) of the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act of 1986 and section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act for the ocean salmon troll fishery off the coast of Washington. While the language in these acts is specific to commercial fishery failures, the economic impact of this fishery resource disaster will also affect communities beyond the ocean commercial fishing industry. Also affected are charter fleets, fishing guides, resorts, tackle and equipment vendors and other businesses that depend on recreational and commercial salmon fishing throughout coastal Washington, the Strait of Juan de Fuca and Puget Sound. Declaring a fishery resource disaster will enable the businesses and communities throughout these regions affected by poor coho returns and reduced fishing opportunity to receive vital economic assistance.

For more information on 2016 Washington salmon fisheries as related to this request, 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