



September 12, 2012

The Honorable Sean R. Parnell
Governor of Alaska
Juneau, AK 99811

Dear Governor Parnell:

Thank you for your letters from July 14 and August 16 requesting a determination of a commercial fishery failure due to a fisheries resource disaster under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976 (MSA) for certain Alaska Chinook salmon fisheries.

After reviewing the information provided by the State of Alaska, I have determined that a commercial fishery failure due to a fishery resource disaster exists for three regions of the Alaska Chinook salmon fishery under Section 308(b) of the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act of 1986 (IFA) and Section 312(a) of the MSA. Specifically, (1) a previously determined commercial fishery failure has continued in 2010, 2011, and 2012 due to a fishery resource disaster for the Yukon River, (2) a commercial fishery failure occurred in 2011 and 2012 for the Kuskokwim Rivers, and (3) a commercial fishery failure occurred in 2012 for Cook Inlet.

Exact causes for recent poor Chinook salmon returns are unknown, but may involve a variety of factors outside the control of fishery managers to mitigate, including unfavorable ocean conditions, freshwater environmental factors, disease, or other factors. "Undetermined causes" are an allowable cause under the MSA and the IFA, and the changes in these stocks are causing a significant loss of access to fishery resources with anticipated revenue declines that will greatly affect the commercial fishery.

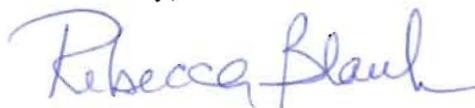
Commercial fishery failures can have cascading economic impacts on subsistence and sport fisheries. Rural communities on the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers depend on both the commercial and subsistence Chinook salmon fisheries for income and survival. In addition, the Cook Inlet Chinook salmon fishery supports an important sport fishery, which is one of the principal economic drivers for the local and regional economy.

This determination provides a basis for Congress to appropriate disaster relief funding under the MSA and the IFA, and for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to provide assistance to affected communities. If Congress appropriates disaster relief funding, NOAA will work with the State of Alaska, the Alaska Federation of Natives, and the affected communities to develop an appropriate economic spending plan that would support additional science to understand the underlying causes of this disaster, prevent a similar failure in the future, and assist the affected fishing communities. Please be aware that the MSA limits the Federal share of such activities to no more than 75 percent.

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If you have any questions, please contact Jim Stowers, Acting Assistant Secretary for
Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs at (202) 482-3663.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rebecca Blank". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Rebecca M. Blank
Acting Secretary of Commerce