



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Secretary of Commerce
Washington, D.C. 20230

December 6, 2023

The Honorable Kristopher K. Peters
Chairman, Squaxin Island Tribe
3110 S.E. Old Olympic Highway
Shelton, WA 98584

Dear Chairman Peters:

Thank you for your letter requesting a determination for a fishery disaster for the 2020 Puget Sound fall chum Squaxin Island Tribe Salmon fishery.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service evaluated information from the impacted fishery. Upon further review, I have found that the requests for a fishery resource disaster for the 2020 Puget Sound fall chum Squaxin Island Tribe Salmon fishery in Washington meets the requirements under section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA). The tribal fishery of the Squaxin Island Tribe traditionally provides their members with commercial fishing income and salmon for ceremonial and subsistence purposes.

In order to have a positive determination, there must be a fishery resource disaster from an allowable cause. Due to several factors such as unfavorable ocean conditions, drought, disease, unusual predation, and abnormally high-water temperatures, this fishery experienced an unexpected biomass decline and loss of access from partial closures. This is an allowable cause under the MSA. MSA 312(a) notes that commercial revenue losses greater than 80% may result in a positive determination that a fishery disaster has occurred based on the information provided or analyzed. The factors above caused this fishery to experience a 91% commercial revenue loss for 2020 compared to the previous 5-year average; based on the analysis, there was a severe negative impact to the subsistence fishery. Therefore, this fishery meets the requirements for a positive fishery disaster determination.

This determination now makes this fishery eligible for fishery disaster assistance. In the near future, the Department of Commerce will allocate disaster assistance for this fishery. In addition, with this determination, eligible businesses and other tribal entities may be able to access other loan/funding programs through other Federal relief programs (e.g., Small Business Administration loans). Programs within the Department of Commerce (e.g., Economic Development Administration grants) may also be available.

Should you have any questions, please contact Susie Feliz, Assistant Secretary for Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs, at (202) 482-3663 or SFeliz@doc.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gina Raimondo".

Gina M. Raimondo