

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE

STATE CAPITOL
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA
95814

May 2, 2017

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown
Governor, State of California
State Capitol, First Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Request for Declaration of Disaster for California Salmon Fishery

Dear Governor Brown:

We are reaching out to you today because California's iconic salmon fishery, and the thousands of families who depend on the fishery for their livelihood, are in crisis.

California is witnessing an unprecedented collapse of our salmon populations and we are writing today to respectfully urge you to advance a federal fishery resource disaster and fishery failure request to the United States Secretary of Commerce for the California salmon fishery and allied sectors.

As you know, the drought, poor ocean conditions and federal water management policies caused high mortality and very low survival of juvenile salmon resulting in low adult numbers and devastating closures for the 2017 salmon season. The proposed closures and minimal open seasons will have significant negative impacts on thousands of California residents, and their livelihoods are now at risk.

The 2014 and 2015 spawning seasons were some of the worst on record. The Golden State experienced losses of 95-98% of juvenile Chinook salmon on the Sacramento River due to adverse water temperatures propelling endangered winter-run chinook to the brink of extinction within the next several years. In those same years, disease incidences on the Klamath River in juvenile Chinook were 80-90%. These diseased fish have much higher rates of mortality. Additionally, low flows from the drought provided very poor conditions for the surviving fish to migrate to the ocean.

Compounded by the terrible ocean conditions, the predicted adult salmon returns to the Klamath are the lowest in history with 54,000 Klamath salmon predicted in the ocean down from 1.6 million in 2012. This is a disastrous decline.

As a result of the unprecedented collapse of Klamath River salmon stocks, there will be no commercial or recreational fishing in the Klamath Management Zone in 2017 and the Klamath and Trinity River recreational salmon fisheries will be closed.

Tribal allocations are at an all-time low of just over 800 salmon, or less than one fish per ten tribal members. There will be no tribal commercial fishery this year and too few salmon to meet tribal subsistence needs. With the exception of the 2008 and 2009 closures and the near closure of 2010, **the 2017 limited season is projected to be the worst on record as a result of some of the worst environmental conditions California salmon have ever faced.**

To add insult to injury, we are coming off of an official crab disaster in 2015-16. Many salmon fishermen rely on the crab fishery during winter and spring months and have not recovered. They now face the 2017 salmon season collapse due to the state's historic drought and fishing dependent families are in crisis.

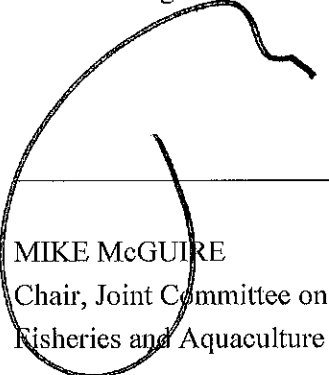
Salmon are part of this great state's heritage and our present day vitality. The Golden State's salmon fishery is a driver of our coastal economies and we have spent hundreds of millions of dollars over the past several years to protect their cold water habitats. Salmon represent a fundamental and irreplaceable part of the cultural identity of our state and the west. California salmon provide an abundant source of health attributes for consumers and they are a staple in Native American diets.

The California salmon fishery is our state's oldest fishery and supports one of the most iconic commercial, recreational and tribal fisheries in the nation. A decade ago, the fishery supported 23,000 jobs and \$1.4 billion in economic activity, while providing important trade and tourism business annually. Landings by the commercial fleet dropped from 502,110 salmon in 2004 to 55,051 in 2016, a 89% decrease. The 2017 season is predicted to be worse than last year.

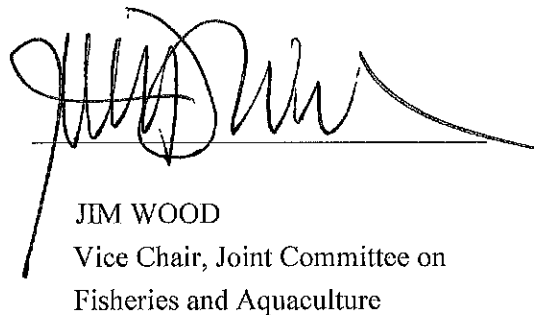
While we remain hopeful the geographically and temporally limited season will provide some economic benefit, we do not believe that disaster relief and an abbreviated season are mutually exclusive. Given the extent of closures, limited seasons and predictions of extremely low ocean abundance we believe there will be irreparable harm to the thousands who depend on a healthy salmon harvest for their living. We believe it is appropriate to request a declaration of the salmon fishery disaster and fishery failure.

We urge you to move forward with a request to the Secretary of Commerce as soon as possible. We greatly appreciate your consideration of this plea and for all of your support of the California Fishing industries.

Warmest Regards,



MIKE MCGUIRE
Chair, Joint Committee on
Fisheries and Aquaculture



JIM WOOD
Vice Chair, Joint Committee on
Fisheries and Aquaculture