



## OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

February 28, 2019

The Honorable Wilbur Ross  
Secretary, U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Ave NW  
Washington, District of Columbia 20230

Dear Secretary Ross:

California is experiencing an economic disaster to our Red Sea Urchin fishing industry and communities due to oceanic conditions that have affected the kelp forest ecosystems.

Persistent warm ocean conditions that began in 2014 and the resulting trophic cascade of ecological impacts has affected the fishery in the Northern Management Zone. The warm water event devastated kelp production (93% loss of surface kelp canopies compared to 2008 levels), a primary food source for urchins that created persistent starvation conditions. Starvation has led to reductions in the food value of the urchins targeted by the fishery in northern California. In addition, a population explosion of the less marketable purple sea urchin continues to overgraze the recovering kelp beds, adding further stress to the fishery.

The California Red Sea Urchin Fishery is managed under two distinct Management Zones. Take in the Northern Zone (north of Monterey/San Luis Obispo County Line) largely occurs north of San Francisco Bay. Take in the Southern Zone (south of Monterey/San Luis Obispo County Line) largely occurs at the Channel Islands and along the mainland coast south of Point Conception. Commercial take in the two zones is differentiated by a distinct size limit and season structure. In addition, a stock assessment completed in 2009, analyzed northern and southern fisheries separately due to differences in catch histories and life history parameters.

In 2016 and 2017, ex-vessel revenue in the Northern Management Zone fell by 76% and 78%, respectively compared to the previous 5-year average (2011-2015) of \$2,577,105 (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparison of ex-vessel revenue in 2016 and 2017 to average ex-vessel revenue from 2011 to 2015 in the Northern Management Zone.

<b>Average Revenue 2011-2015</b>	<b>\$2,577,105</b>
<b>2016 Revenue</b>	<b>\$607,611</b>
<b>% Difference from Average</b>	<b>-76%</b>
<b>2017 Revenue</b>	<b>\$577,254</b>
<b>% Difference from Average</b>	<b>-78%</b>

These estimated impacts are based on ex-vessel value of commercial landings and do not account for additional impacts to fish processors or to other businesses that rely on the fishery.

Given the significant impacts, I request you declare a fishery resource disaster for the fishery in the Northern Management Zone under section 308(d) of the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act of 1986 (16 U.S.C. § 4107(d)), and a commercial fishery failure under section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976 (16 U.S.C. § 1861a(a)).

As you know, declaring a commercial failure will enable the affected fishing communities to receive essential economic assistance, which will be critical for the well-being of our fishing industry and our state. Red sea urchin is a vital component of California's natural resources and provides significant commercial, cultural, and economic benefits to our state. I also ask National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries to work directly with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to expeditiously complete the required review process.

The CDFW contact is Dr. Craig Shuman ([Craig.Shuman@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:Craig.Shuman@wildlife.ca.gov)), and the designated alternate is Sonke Mastrup ([Sonke.Mastrup@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:Sonke.Mastrup@wildlife.ca.gov)).

Thank you for your consideration of this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Governor Gavin Newsom

cc: The Honorable Diane Feinstein  
The Honorable Kamala Harris  
The Honorable Jared Huffman  
The Honorable Jackie Speier  
The Honorable Jimmy Panetta  
The Honorable Salud Carbajal  
The Honorable Anna G. Eshoo  
The Honorable Mike Thompson  
The Honorable Mike McGuire, Chair  
Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture  
California State Senate

The Honorable Jim Wood, Vice Chair  
Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture  
California State Assembly  
Charlton H. Bonham, Director  
California Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Melissa Miller-Henson, Acting Executive Director  
California Fish and Game Commission