

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

August 22, 2012

The Honorable Rebecca Blank  
Acting Secretary of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Dr. Blank,

We write in support of the State of Alaska's request for a disaster declaration to address the immediate needs of fishermen and businesses in the upper Cook Inlet region of Alaska.

Chinook salmon returns to Alaska were weak statewide this year and the State of Alaska was forced to enact burdensome conservation measures to ensure sufficient brood stock reached the spawning grounds. These severely affected commercial and recreational fisheries in the Kenai, Susitna and other upper Cook Inlet rivers. These measures, including closures and gear restrictions, were not limited to Chinook salmon, as fisheries for sockeye salmon and other species were also limited due to the probability of taking Chinook salmon incidentally.

We are concerned about the economic impact of closures on individuals and businesses dependent on salmon fisheries, including cumulative impacts of commercial and recreational fishing closures on fishing communities in the region.

As Gov. Sean Parnell stated in his August 16, 2012, letter, East Side Cook Inlet setnetters saw a nearly 90 percent decline in revenues due to closures to protect Chinook salmon. Northern District setnetters saw a reduction of nearly 50 percent.

Businesses dependent on recreational fishing are a principle driver of the economy in the Kenai and Susitna Rivers drainages and both were severely impacted by the downturn of the Chinook stocks. Fishing closures and restrictions to ensure conservation of the stocks deprived these businesses a critical source of income, and residents a traditional and important source of food for their families.

Due to these impacts, we believe all appropriate federal resources should be made available to affected communities and fisheries as quickly as possible. We respectfully request the State of Alaska's request for a fisheries disaster declaration for the Upper Cook Inlet region be acted on as quickly as possible, consistent with all relevant rules, laws, and regulations.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this request.

Sincerely,

  
Lisa Murkowski                      Mark Begich                      Don Young  
United States Senator              United States Senator              Congressman for All Alaska