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PORT GAMBLE S'KLALLAM TRIBE
31912 Little Boston Rd. NE – Kingston, WA 98346

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February 24, 2021

The Honorable Wilbur Ross
Secretary of Commerce
United States Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

SUBJECT: 2020 Fraser River Sockeye Fishery and Puget Sound Fall Chum Disaster for the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe

Dear Secretary Ross,

I, formally request the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe be included in the economic fishery disaster, pursuant to Section 3 12(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery and Conservation and Management Act (Act), so disaster relief assistance can be provided to fishermen who were adversely impacted by the failed 2020 Fraser River sockeye and Puget Sound Fall Chum runs. The Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe also experienced a 100% loss during the Fraser River sockeye fishery and a 65% loss of income during the 2020 Puget Sound Fall Chum fishery. The Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe appreciates your disaster declaration for these fisheries. Prompt efforts by your Department are critical in helping our fishermen get the disaster relief funds and assistance they are entitled to in a timely manner.

The 2020 Fraser River sockeye run experienced the lowest return numbers on record. In effort to conserve the resource, the fishery was never opened. The 2020 Puget Sound Fall Chum fishery was closed early due to poor returns and in effort to make sure enough broodstock returned to their respective hatcheries. It is assumed that warm ocean conditions and climate change are contributing to these poor returns.

It is estimated that the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe's fishing fleet harvested just over 22,500 pounds of sockeye with a total income of just under \$51,500 between 2015 and 2019. The total closure in 2020 resulted in a 100% loss of income when compared to the previous five-year period.

The Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe's fishing fleet on average harvest around 252,000 pounds (min 138k to max 346k) with an average income of \$198,000 between 2015 and 2019. This past year, only 86,726 pounds were harvested. This resulted in a 65% loss of income when compared to the previous five year period.

The non-existent Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe's harvest for Fraser River sockeye and severely reduced harvest of Puget Sound Fall Chum has had negative impacts to the way of life, cultural, spiritual and traditional ties to the sockeye and chum salmon. These negative impacts are irreversible. The financial impact our commercial fishermen have endured is



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NATURAL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT
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equally important and threatens their ability to harvest a reasonable quantity of fish sufficient to ensure a modest living.

The importance of subsistence, ceremonial and commercial fisheries is an integral part of the way of life for Port Gamble S'Klallam tribal members. The 1974 federal court decision in *United States v. Washington* affirmed that the Stevens Treaty Tribes held a treaty right to half of the harvestable salmon and established these tribes as co-managers of Washington state fisheries. As a sovereign nation and federally recognized tribe, the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe has the right to request and receive disaster assistance as administered under your office and Congress may appropriate these funds. With no sockeye salmon to harvest, no sockeye fish for families, limited chum harvest and extremely reduced income for fishing families, the Port Gamble S'Klallam fishing community is in despair and in need of expedited financial assistance and relief.

If you have any questions, please contact: Jeromy Sullivan, Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe Chairman 360-297-6342 or jeromys@pgst.nsn.us.

Sincerely,

Jeromy Sullivan, Chairman
Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe

CC: The Honorable Patty Murray, US Senator
The Honorable Maria Cantwell, US Senator
The Honorable Suzan DelBenne, Congresswoman