

# MAKAH TRIBAL COUNCIL

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*The Makah Tribe is an equal opportunity employer.*



April 29, 2008

The Honorable Carlos M. Gutierrez  
Secretary of Commerce  
United States Department of Commerce  
14<sup>th</sup> and Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20230

OS EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAL  
2008 APR 30 AM 10:57

Dear Secretary Gutierrez:

The Makah tribe requests that the United States Department of Commerce declare a Commercial Fishery Failure under section 312 (a) of the *Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act* and/or a Fishery Resource Disaster under section 308 (d) of the *Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act* of 1986. A disaster declaration under either of these laws could help our fishermen and our fishing community, cope economically during this period of low salmon stock abundances.

From our home on the northwest corner of the Olympic Peninsula, the Makah Tribe has always been a fishing society. Fishing is fundamental to our culture and heritage, and it remains the primary industry supporting our economy. The revenues from the Makah Tribe's fishing industry support over 50 percent of the economy of Neah Bay.

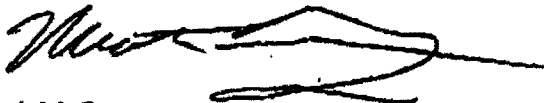
This year our salmon catch is predicted to be at its lowest level in the past 20 years. Details of this prediction are provided in Attachment A. This decline in salmon catch will have an enormous impact on our community, because salmon fisheries provide economic support, employment opportunity, and cultural balance to our community.

The reduction in salmon catches this year will worsen our already poor economic condition. Because of our remote location, our ability to develop alternative economic opportunities is very limited—we truly depend on salmon resources for our survival. The continuing decline in salmon runs has perpetuated a condition of long-term economic hardship in our community. According to the 2000 census, the median household income in Neah Bay was only about half the national average. These factors make our community especially susceptible to the economic effects of fishery declines. Disaster assistance, such as compensation, community grants, training, loans, debt refinancing, and employment on fishery related projects, could help our community survive this fishery crisis.

For these reasons, we appeal to you to declare a commercial fishery failure, to help our community through these difficult times in the west coast salmon fishery. Please use these federal programs to provide disaster relief to the people and communities that most need it in this time of severely restricted salmon fisheries.

If you have any questions, or if you would like to discuss this issue further, I would be glad to discuss it with you.

Yours Sincerely,  
MAKAH TRIBAL COUNCIL



Micah McCarty  
Chairman

Cc:

Senator Maria Cantwell  
Senator Patty Murray  
Congressman Norm Dicks  
Robert Lohm, Regional Administrator, Northwest Region, NMFS  
Steve Freese, NMFS Northwest Regional Office  
Michael Grayum, Executive Director NWIPC

**Attachment A**

This year's predicted low salmon catches are due to a combination of several factors that have caused widespread low stock abundances for salmon. The exact causes of these low abundances are still largely undetermined, but may be caused in part by poor ocean survival due to environmental conditions.

- **Coho salmon** catch in the ocean fisheries in Washington is severely restricted by very low stock abundance of Lower Columbia River coho and Oregon coast natural coho, both are listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Makah Tribe's ocean troll fishery is making a significant contribution to the conservation effort for these stocks, but to do so, we have had to set this year's coho troll quota at less than half of the average for recent years.
- **Chinook salmon** quotas this year were limited by low abundance of ESA-listed Puget Sound chinook. A large portion of our allowed Chinook catch comes from the component of our ocean troll fishery that is restricted by a low coho quota, therefore we may not be able to take the Chinook quota we have been designated.
- **Sockeye salmon** catch in the Strait of Juan de Fuca may be at or near zero this year. Total abundance of Fraser River sockeye, which drive this fishery and contribute to most of its catch, is predicted to be less than spawning escapement needs, thus leaving no harvestable surplus.
- **Pink salmon** catch will be near zero this year because pinks in Washington are predominantly an odd-year run.
- **Chum salmon** catches in the Strait have been low for several years. The average chum catch over the past five years is less than a quarter of the 20-year average.

