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COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

Robert F. McDonnell
Governor

September 1, 2010

The Honorable Gary Locke
U. S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 21230

Dear Secretary Locke:

I write to you today regarding a matter of urgency to the Commonwealth of Virginia. I ask that you perform a disaster assistance evaluation pertaining to Virginia's oyster industry and declare a Fishery Resource Disaster. This request is made under the authorities granted by Sections 312 and 315 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

Based upon recent analyses of the Virginia Institute of Marine Science and following consultations with Virginia Secretary of Natural Resources and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission, I have concluded that the current condition of oyster in Virginia qualifies for, and is worthy, of federal fisheries disaster relief.

The use of oysters from the Gulf states is critical to Virginia oyster processors and dealers in supplementing product not always locally available from Virginia waters. Since the Gulf oil spill, Virginia's industry has found itself unable to continue to process and distribute product critical to its established customer base. Income and cash flow derived from processing and distributing Gulf oysters has now virtually disappeared, based upon a recent survey by the Virginia Institute of Marine Science.

Economic analyses indicate a direct loss to Virginia oyster processors of between \$11-13 million, while total negative impact at each market level (processors-wholesalers-grocers-restaurants) is estimated at \$30.1 million. Likewise, decreases in employment due to the deadlines in processing, wholesaling and retailing of oyster products are significant. Federal funding made available upon declaration of a Fishery Resource Disaster is critical to off-set these impacts to Virginia's oyster industry.

All necessary information and agency support will be provided as needed to assist you with your review and determination.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this urgent matter facing Virginia's oyster industry.

Sincerely,

Robert F. McDonnell, Governor

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Cc: Virginia Congressional Delegation
Virginia Senate
Virginia House of Delegates
Doug Domenech, Secretary of Natural Resources
Steven G. Bowman, Commissioner, Virginia Marine Resources Commission