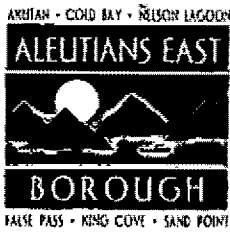


12-026902



September 7, 2012

2012 SEP 24 PM 3:15  
OS EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

The Honorable Dr. Rebecca Blank  
Acting Secretary  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Blank,

This letter is to bring to your attention an emergency situation in the Alaskan coastal village of Nelson Lagoon, in the hopes that you will declare a fishery disaster for the community based on the 2010, 2011 and 2012 salmon fishing seasons.

Nelson Lagoon is a traditional native village on the North coast of the Alaska Peninsula, a community of the Aleutians East Borough within the Bristol Bay Critical Habitat Area. Unlike other fishing communities of the region that have multiple fisheries to fall back on, Nelson Lagoon is solely dependent upon commercial and subsistence salmon fishing for survival. The fisher people of Nelson Lagoon are hard workers who understand that in fishing you must take the good with the bad, and that some years will be better than others. Unfortunately, several years of decline are taking a toll on this village, a community that experiences some of the highest costs for food, fuel and transportation in the region.

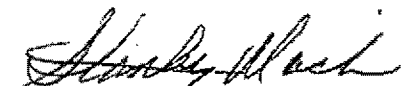
The primary salmon species caught in Nelson Lagoon is sockeye. According to the ADF&G Fishery Management Report No 12-11, the number of sockeye salmon harvested from Nelson Lagoon in 2010 was 93,715, a 65% decline from the five-year average of 265,031 for the years 2005 - 2009. In 2011, the number of sockeye harvested from Nelson Lagoon was down to 74,808, again a 65% decline from the previous five-year's 2006 - 2010 average of 216,834. The ongoing 2012 season numbers are up somewhat, yet far below the ten-year average for Nelson Lagoon. In addition, the overall North Peninsula harvest of all salmon for 2011 shows a decline of 53% from the previous five-year average, and the 2012 North Peninsula salmon harvest results look no better.

Most of the residents of this village are self-employed fishermen not eligible for unemployment benefits, and the cumulative effect of these last three poor salmon seasons has been devastating to the community. Please consider declaring a fishery disaster for the Nelson Lagoon Native village. Resolutions from the Borough Assembly and the Village Council, and other supporting documents are enclosed.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

cc: Senator Lisa Murkowski  
Senator Mark Begich  
Congressman Don Young  
Governor Sean Parnell

  
Stanley Mack, Mayor  
Aleutians East Borough

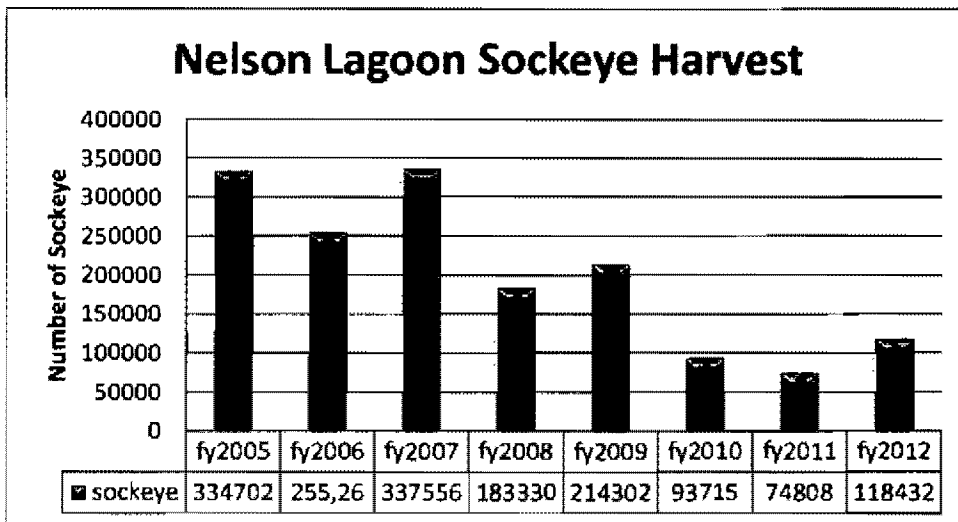
3380 C Street, Suite 205, Anchorage Alaska 99504

Enclosures

fax 907 276-7569

The argument for a disaster declaration for the Nelson Lagoon salmon fishery  
 AEB Natural Resources Department September 5, 2012

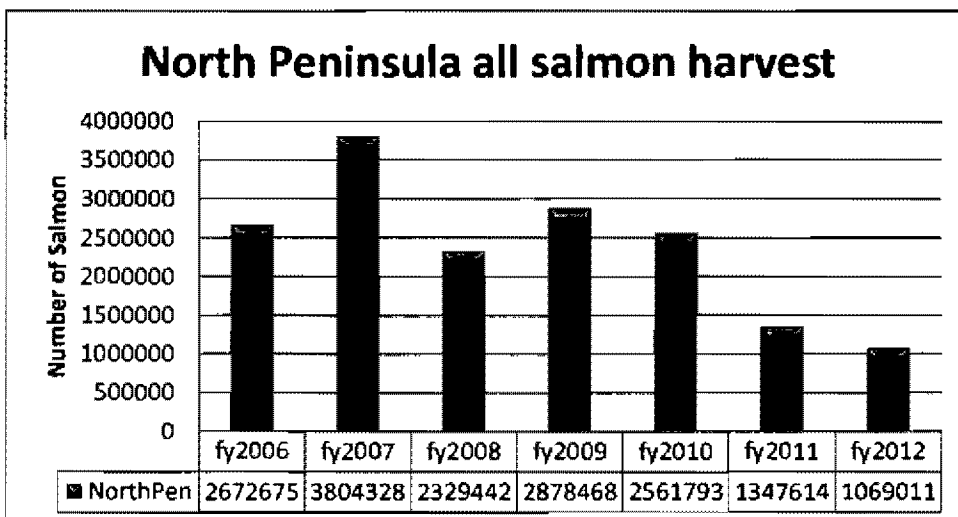
According to the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community & Economic Development, federal guidelines state that the impact of a fishery decline between 35% and 80% may result in a disaster declaration. Declines of 80% or more, compared to the previous 5 years annual activity, will result in an automatic disaster declaration. The primary salmon species caught in Nelson Lagoon is sockeye. The number of sockeye salmon harvested from Nelson Lagoon in 2010 was 93,715, a 65% decline from the five-year average of 265,031 for the years 2005 - 2009. In 2011, the number of sockeye harvested from Nelson Lagoon was down to 74,808, again a 65% decline from the previous five year average, 2006 – 2010 of 216,834. The ongoing 2012 season numbers are up somewhat, only a 34% decline over the five previous year average, 2007 - 2011. Part of the reason for a lower decline percentage is the integration of the 'new normal' lower harvest levels; as compared to the earlier years 2005-2009 average, 2012 harvest would be declared a 53% decrease.



**Nelson Lagoon Sockeye Harvest decline compared to previous 5 years**

2010 65%  
 2011 65%  
 2012 34%

In addition, the overall North Peninsula harvest of all salmon for 2011 shows a decline of 53% from the previous five-year average, and the 2012 North Peninsula salmon harvest shows a decline of 54%.



**North Peninsula Salmon Harvest decline compared to previous 5 years**

2011 53%  
 2012 54%

Few Nelson Lagoon fisherman who have larger vessels may venture outside of Nelson Lagoon to fish in the larger North Peninsula fishery, but most are not able to fish outside of the Lagoon.

In addition, the whole Area M 2012 total salmon catch as of September 4<sup>th</sup> is only 4,439,479, compared to previous 5 year average of 13,209,111, a decline of 66%. However, other Area M communities have other fisheries throughout the year. Nelson Lagoon is completely dependent on the sockeye salmon fishery and unfortunately, may qualify for federal disaster assistance.

Source documents:

Fishery Management Report No. 12-11, North Alaska Peninsula Commercial Salmon Management Report, 2011, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, April 2012.

Daily in-season harvest estimate, Area M Salmon Harvest Summary, ADF&G, 9/5/2012.

Memo fr. Glenn Haight, July 14, 2012, to Commissioner Susan Bell, Alaska Department of Commerce, Community & Economic Development.

[http://gov.alaska.gov/parnell\\_media/press/federal\\_fisheries\\_disaster.pdf](http://gov.alaska.gov/parnell_media/press/federal_fisheries_disaster.pdf)