



U.S. Commerce Secretary Penny Pritzker declares fishery disaster for Fraser River Sockeye Salmon Fishery in Washington

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Today, U.S. Secretary of Commerce Penny Pritzker determined a commercial fishery failure for the Fraser River sockeye salmon fishery in Washington State. The fishery resource disaster was caused by the low return of sockeye salmon to the Fraser River which resulted in subsequent closure of the fishery for the 2013 fishing season. The closure resulted in significant revenue losses for tribal and non-tribal fishermen.

"The sockeye salmon fishery isn't just economically significant for the state of Washington – it's inextricably linked to its history and culture," said Secretary Pritzker. "Because returns of sockeye salmon were so low and caused significant losses of revenues, the fishery qualified as a resource disaster under the nation's fishing law."

Under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the Commerce Secretary can declare a fishery disaster, which makes it possible for Congress to appropriate funds to provide economic assistance to fishing businesses and communities, including fishermen, affected by the disaster and to support other activities addressing the disaster. If Congress appropriates funds to address the Fraser River disaster, the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) will work closely with members of Congress, affected tribes, and the state of Washington to develop a spending plan and distribute the funds. The spending plan would support activities that would restore the fishery or prevent a similar failure, and assist the affected fishing communities.

The U.S. sockeye fishery includes the Lummi Nation, Nooksack Tribe, Tulalip Tribes, Suquamish Tribe, Makah Tribe, Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, and Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe, as well as non-tribal commercial fishers.

The recent five-year annual average of sockeye revenues for both tribal and non-tribal fleets combined is about \$4.1 million. In 2013, these fleets earned about \$115,000 in sockeye revenues – combined figure representing tribal and non-tribal losses near 97 percent.

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