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2016 SEP 20 AM 8:40
OS EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

September 19, 2016

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

Re: Federal Fishery Disaster

Dear Madam Secretary:

In accordance with Section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Management and Conservation Act (MSA), we are writing to request that you declare fishery disasters for the 2016 pink salmon fisheries in Prince William Sound, the Kodiak Management Area, the Chignik Management Area, and the Lower Cook Inlet Management Area. The MSA authorizes the Secretary of Commerce to determine if a commercial fishery failure has occurred, and we ask your soonest possible review of this matter due to the importance of these fisheries to the local, regional, state, and national economies.

2016 Kodiak Management Area Pink Salmon Fishery

Harvest opportunities have been significantly limited, as the majority of the Kodiak Management Area has remained closed to fishing during 70 percent of the pink salmon run. Districts across the entire area have experienced very poor escapement results, with the Kitoi Hatchery pink salmon return having the lowest survival rate on record. Only districts that achieved minimum escapement objectives have had fishing opportunity past August 1 – a total of about 16 fishing days relative to an average of 25-30.

As of September 12, the 2016 harvest was approximately 3.2 million pink salmon, which is only 28 percent of the lower bound of the preseason forecast of 11.2 million fish. The harvest is currently only 20 percent of the five year average harvest for even-year pink salmon (15.7 million fish). The preliminary value of the 2016 catch in this area is \$2.21 million, compared to the five year average value of \$14.64 million, having a significant impact on those who depend on the fishery for their livelihood.

2016 Prince William Sound Pink Salmon Fishery

As of September 12, the 2016 harvest to date on the combined natural and hatchery pink salmon is approximately 12.1 million fish, which is 46.5 percent of the lower bound of the forecast range

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estimate of 26 million fish, and 30.5 percent of the five year average harvest for even-year pink salmon (39.7 million fish, including hatchery cost recovery). Two out of three Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation (PWSAC) hatcheries are experiencing record low commercial harvests.

The preliminary value of the 2016 Prince William Sound combined natural and hatchery pink salmon harvest is approximately \$6.6 million, compared to a five year average value of \$43.87 million, having a significant impact on those who depend on the fishery for their livelihood.

Chignik Management Area Pink Salmon Harvest

While sockeye salmon are the most important salmon species for commercial fishermen in this area, pink salmon can provide significant economic benefit for permit holders and processors. The Department of Fish and Game does not complete pre-season forecasts for pink salmon in the Chignik Management Area. As of September 12, the 2016 pink salmon commercial harvest was approximately 140,000 fish, which is 19 percent of the five year average harvest for even-year pink salmon (750,000 fish). The preliminary value of the 2016 pink salmon harvest in this area is \$110,000, compared to the five-year average value of \$740,000. There were no directed pink salmon fisheries in this management area in 2016, and the pink salmon taken were during fisheries directed at sockeye salmon. Preliminary pink salmon escapement estimates for this area are poor, and roughly 50 percent of the escapement goal.

Lower Cook Inlet Management Area Pink Salmon Fishery

As of September 12, the 2016 pink salmon commercial harvest was approximately 97,000 fish, approximately 13 percent of the 750,000 pink salmon forecast and 17 percent of the five year average harvest of even-year pink salmon. The preliminary value of the 2016 Lower Cook Inlet pink salmon harvest is \$78,000, compared to the five-year average value of \$501,000.

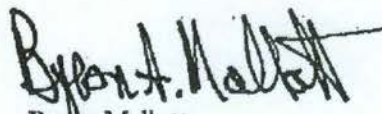
Throughout the Kodiak, Chignik, Lower Cook Inlet and Prince William Sound Management areas, impacts are being felt by commercial fishermen, fish processors, and those who sell fuel, tackle, supplies, groceries, and lodging. Local governments will feel the impact to their economic base. We believe these impacts are severe enough to warrant this request for fishery disaster declarations for both areas and have directed the Alaska Departments of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development and Fish and Game to provide National Marine Fisheries Service and your office with any additional information needed to make a determination.

We appreciate your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Bill Walker
Governor



Byron A. Mallott
Lieutenant Governor

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cc: The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, United States Senate
The Honorable Dan Sullivan, United States Senate
The Honorable Don Young, United States House of Representatives
The Honorable Sam Cotten, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
The Honorable Chris Hladick, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Commerce,
Community, and Economic Development
Craig Fleener, Director of State and Federal Relations, Office of the Governor