



HOH INDIAN TRIBE

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OS EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

July 27, 2016

The Honorable Penny Pritzker
Secretary of Commerce
United States Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20130

Subject: 2015 Hoh River Coho Salmon Fishery Disaster for the Hoh Indian Tribe

Dear Madam Secretary Pritzker,

We, the Hoh Tribal Council request you declare an economic fishery disaster, pursuant to Section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act so disaster relief assistance can be provided to tribal fishermen who were adversely impacted by the extremely low 2015 Hoh River coho salmon run. The Hoh Tribe will appreciate a rapid response from your office to quickly mitigate this situation. Prompt efforts by the Department of Commerce are critical in helping fishermen receive the disaster relief funds and assistance to which they are entitled in a timely manner.

On July 27, 2016 the Hoh Tribal Council, governing body of the Hoh Indian Tribe declared an economic fishery disaster under the provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Act related to the extremely low abundance of coho salmon in 2015. During the 2015 coho fishery, Hoh Tribal Council issued an emergency regulation closing the Hoh Tribe's Treaty coho fishery in response to observations of extremely low abundance and low catch. Despite these in-season actions, the spawning escapement of Hoh River wild coho in 2015 was below the conservation "floor". Furthermore these coho were much smaller than normal and in poor health with diminished fecundity. The terrible 2015 coho run is due to several environmental factors including drought conditions during the summer of 2013 which killed juvenile fish and reduced available rearing habitat, resulting in extremely low coho smolt production in the spring of 2014. Also an extreme and persistent "El Nino" of above-average ocean temperatures occurred during late 2014 and 2015 resulting in poor feeding conditions and extremely low marine survival.

Hoh Tribal fishermen harvested a mere 4,172 pounds of coho in 2015. The previous five-year average was 34,006 pounds of coho harvested annually. Hoh Tribal coho harvest in 2015 was 88% below the previous 5 year average.

	2015 Hoh Tribal Coho Harvest vs. Previous 5 Year Average								
Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	5yr AVG '10-'14	Percent decrease	
Pounds Coho Harvested	33,261	36,343	26,502	41,588	32,337	4,172	34,006	88%	

The low harvest of coho and 2015 season closure has had an irreversibly negative impact on the spiritual, cultural and traditional way of life enjoyed by the Hoh Tribe. The financial impact endured by the fishermen and Hoh Tribal community has been devastating, particularly to those families for whom fishing is the primary or only form of income. It is true that these fishermen are presently unable to enjoy even a modest living and lingering negative effects from the 2015 coho crash remain in our small, isolated community.

As a sovereign and federally-recognized tribe, The Hoh Tribe has the right to request and receive disaster assistance as administered by the office of the Secretary of Commerce and Congress may appropriate these funds. With few coho for commercial harvest, few coho for subsistence and an extreme reduction in income for fishing families, the Hoh Tribal fishermen and fishing community is in despair and in need of expedited financial assistance and relief.

The Hoh People and Hoh Tribal Council thank you for consideration of our request to declare an economic fishery disaster resulting from the 2015 crash of the coho salmon population in Washington State. We appreciate your timely response to this matter of extreme importance to the Hoh Tribe.

If you have any questions, or for further information please contact:

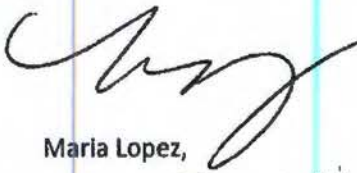
Joseph Gilbertson, Hoh Tribe Fisheries Management Biologist, 360-374-6737
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Steve Allison, Hoh Tribe Department of Natural Resources Director, 360-374-5404
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Catherine Edwards, Hoh Tribe Executive Director, 360-374-6501
catherine.edwards@hohtribe-nsn.org

Maria Lopez, Hoh Tribal Council Chairwoman, 360-374-3271
maria.lopez@hohtribe-nsn.org

Sincerely,



Maria Lopez,
Chairwoman
Hoh Tribal Council

Enclosure:

2015 Hoh Tribal Declaration of Natural Disaster and Economic Fisheries Disaster

CC: The Honorable Patty Murray, US Senator
The Honorable Maria Cantwell, US Senator
The Honorable Derek Kilmer, Congressman



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Resolution No. 07-27-2016-05

Hoh Tribal Declaration of Natural Disaster and Economic Fisheries Disaster pursuant to provisions of the Stafford Act and Magnuson-Stevens Act.

WHEREAS, the Hoh Indian Tribe is a Federally Recognized Tribe headquartered on the Hoh Indian Reservation in the State of Washington;

WHEREAS, the Hoh Tribal Business Committee is the governing body of the Hoh Indian Tribe of the Hoh Indian Reservation by authority of the Constitution of the Hoh Indian Tribe approved July 1, 1969; and

WHEREAS, the Hoh Tribal Business Committee is the governing body of the Hoh Indian Tribe, pursuant to Article IV, Section 1, the Hoh Tribal Business Committee shall have the following powers to the extent that it can legally exercise them, to administer the affairs of the Hoh Reservation subject to any limitation imposed by applicable State laws, statutes of the United States, or published regulations of the Secretary of the Interior; and

WHEREAS, the Hoh Tribal Business Committee has the power under Article IV-Powers of the Governing Body, Section 1(a) to consult, negotiate, contract, conclude agreements with Federal, State, and local governments and others, on behalf of the Tribe and to advise and consult with their representatives on all activities which may affect the Tribe;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Hoh Tribal Business Committee hereby declares that a natural disaster exists, that persistent and unusually hot weather combined with unusually warm seas in the usual and accustomed fishing areas of the Hoh Tribe as well as adjacent US and Canadian waters caused a precipitous and unexpected crash of the Coho salmon population returning to the Hoh River. The Hoh Tribe was forced to close the 2015 salmon fishery early as a response necessary to ensure the future viability of the Coho population. Such conditions justify declaration of the Hoh Tribal usual and accustomed fishing area as an Economic Fishery Resource Disaster Area under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Act; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Hoh Tribe, in a government -to-government relationship, requests the U.S. Secretary of Commerce to declare an Economic Fisheries Disaster as authorized under the Magnuson-Stevens Act and request the President of the United States to declare a Natural Disaster under the Tribal Provisions of the Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act and requests the President of the United States to grant or seek Hoh Tribal access to necessary assistance.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing Resolution was passed at a regular High Tribal Business Committee Meeting that was held on July 27, 2016 at which time a quorum was present and approved by a vote of 3 For, 0 Against, 1 Abstained.



Maria Lopez, Chair

David Hudson Sr., Treasurer

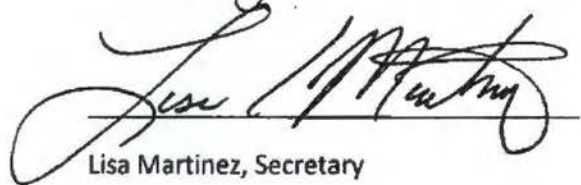
Walter Ward Jr., Council Member



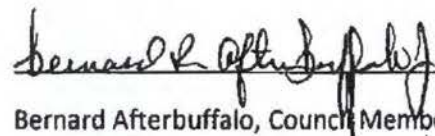
Melvinjohn Ashue, Council Member



Lisa Wright, Vice-Chair



Lisa Martinez, Secretary



Bernard Afterbuffalo, Council Member