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KAY IVEY  
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## STATE OF ALABAMA

July 10, 2019

The Honorable Wilbur Ross  
Secretary of Commerce  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
14<sup>th</sup> and Constitution Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Ross:

The fisheries of Coastal Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana have been adversely affected by the tremendous and unprecedented amounts of freshwater that have inundated the bays, bayous and estuaries in the Central Gulf Coast states this year. The Tombigbee River in Alabama reached a major flood stage in late February and March of 2019 and continued at near-record levels for many weeks, leading to salinity levels on the Cedar Point Oyster Reef in Mobile Bay of near zero part per thousand liters for the entire month of March 2019.

In addition to the local river freshwater discharge, the Bonne Carre Spillway in Louisiana was opened on February 11, 2019, and closed April 11, 2019. The spillway was reopened on May 10, 2019 and remains open to this day. The Bonne Carre Spillway empties into Lake Pontchartrain and then into Mississippi Sound. The prolonged release of the millions of gallons of freshwater has disrupted the marine ecosystem in the Mississippi Sound and has recently led to the outbreak of Harmful Algal Blooms in the Mississippi Sound. The Mississippi Sound comprises the western coastal waters of Alabama.

The biologists of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources are monitoring the impacts of this prolonged freshet on our fisheries and estuarine productivity. Extremely low salinities for prolonged periods generally have an adverse effect on the production and harvest of oysters, blue crab, and white, brown and pink shrimp. Alabama's shrimp season opened June 1, 2019, and we are in the process of evaluating the 2019 season.

Additionally, Alabama crab, shrimp and oyster processors receive most of the seafood product that they process from Louisiana and Mississippi. Any impact to fisheries in Louisiana and Mississippi has a direct and pronounced impact on the ability of Alabama processors to obtain seafood products for processing and distribution.

I am aware that Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards has requested the initiation for a fishery disaster declaration to be issued for Louisiana fisheries. I am also aware that Mississippi Governor Phil Bryant has requested the same for Mississippi fisheries.

Secretary Ross

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I join with my two distinguished colleagues and request that the U.S. Department of Commerce initiate the process to evaluate and implement a fishery disaster declaration for Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana, as outlined in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act. I further request that any declaration also consider the impact on seafood processors in Alabama in relation to the loss of production not only in Alabama waters, but in Louisiana and Mississippi waters as well.

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources will continue to monitor and document any adverse effects to the sea-life, seafood landings and other estuarine impacts related to the previous and ongoing influx of freshwater into the marine waters of Alabama.

I ask that you give every consideration to this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kay Ivey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kay Ivey  
Governor