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Office of the Governor
State of North Carolina

Roy Cooper
Governor



20301 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, N.C. 27699-0301

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S EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

November 1, 2018

Mr. Wilbur Ross, Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Ross:

Hurricane Florence struck North Carolina on September 14, 2018. The powerful storm stalled over the Wilmington area resulting in unprecedented continuous rainfall for almost four consecutive days. Some coastal areas withstood the brunt of an implausible 20 plus inches of rainfall. Coupled with a strong storm surge, the storm caused historic and widespread flooding overwhelming significant portions of the North Carolina estuarine and ocean coastline.

This was the storm of a lifetime for many coastal communities. The damaging economic impact to the state's fisheries was, and continues to be, significant. While state appropriations will begin to afford some limited initial relief, much more is needed. Federal fisheries disaster assistance can provide the means to a longer-term recovery that North Carolinian fishermen so desperately need. Therefore, I respectfully request that you declare a federal fishery resources disaster as outlined in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, 16 U.S.C. §§ 1861a and 1864, and the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act, 16 U.S.C. § 4107.

Fisheries are an essential part of local coastal markets and contribute considerably to North Carolina's economy. Behind North Carolina's fragile strand of barrier islands lie shallow waters where the land and sea gradually merge forming estuaries, brackish swamps and mud flats that serve as nursery areas for shrimp, crabs, finfish and shellfish. Traditionally ranked in the top-10 seafood producing states, North Carolina has over 4,000 miles of shoreline and 2.9 million acres of marine ocean and estuarine waters. Latest estimates show that more than 6,000 licensed commercial fishermen and 1 million licensed recreational anglers enjoy the bounty of the state's marine resources.

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The scale of harm to recreational and commercial fisheries along the North Carolina coast from Hurricane Florence is devastating and puts those fisheries at clear risk of failure. Lost income from compromised fishing grounds, damaged or destroyed gear and vessels, power outages and other infrastructure disruptions have all further combined to amplify the impact. Water quality issues resulting from record rainfall run-off compounded the devastation causing suspension of shellfish harvesting in many affected areas. Serious disruption affecting future production in the harvestable biomass is anticipated.

Local recovery efforts are underway but additional resources and funding are desperately needed. State fishery managers are evaluating landing and other data to assess estimated revenue declines and evidence of economic harm. The State of North Carolina stands ready to provide any information that you need to assist you in your determination to declare a federal fishery resources disaster. I appreciate your timely consideration to this urgent request.

With kind regards, I am

Very truly yours,



Roy Cooper

RAC/sm