



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Secretary of Commerce
Washington, D.C. 20230

April 8, 2024

The Honorable Amber Caldera
Chairwoman – Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe
31912 Little Boston Road NE
Kingston, WA 98346

Dear Chairwoman Caldera:

I am writing in response to Chairman Jeromy Sullivan’s letter requesting a determination for a fishery disaster for the 2021 Puget Sound fall chum and Puget Sound coho salmon fisheries for the Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) evaluated information from the impacted fishery. Upon review, I have found that the request for a fishery resource disaster for the 2021 Puget Sound coho and fall chum salmon fisheries in Washington meets the requirements under the recently enacted Fishery Resource Disasters Improvement Act, which amended section 312(a) the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

In order to have a positive determination, there must be a fishery resource disaster from an allowable cause. Due to a combination of natural causes including El Niño Southern Oscillation variability and warmer ocean temperatures – resulting in increased metabolic rates, reduced prey, and poor prey quality, which are allowable causes – these fisheries experienced an unexpected biomass decline. These factors caused the 2021 Puget Sound fall chum and coho salmon fisheries to experience a 36-percent and 54-percent revenue loss, respectively, compared to the previous 5-year average with no fishery resource disaster determination. For revenue losses between 35 and 80 percent, NMFS must determine whether the economic impacts are severe. NMFS analyzed the available data to determine whether economic impacts were severe, using factors such as revenue fluctuations and the ability to offset losses from other fisheries. Given the inability to access other fisheries, impacts to the coho fishery and fall chum fishery were determined to be severe and meet the requirements for a positive fishery disaster determination. The reduced subsistence fishery during the disaster year 2021 created a direct economic and cultural hardship for tribal families.

This determination now makes the 2021 Puget Sound fall chum and coho fishery eligible for fishery disaster assistance. In the near future, the Department of Commerce will allocate disaster assistance for these fisheries. In addition, eligible businesses and other tribal entities may be able to access other loan/funding programs through other Federal relief programs (e.g., Small Business Administration loans). Programs within the Department (e.g., Economic Development Administration grants) may also be available.

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Should you have any questions, please contact Susie Feliz, Assistant Secretary for
Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs, at (202) 482-3663 or SFeliz@doc.gov.

Sincerely,



Gina M. Raimondo