

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 12, 2013

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
S-221, United States Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Republican Leader
S-230, United States Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John A. Boehner
Speaker
H-232, United States Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
H-204, United States Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Chairwoman
Appropriations Committee
S-128, United States Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Vice Chairman
Appropriations Committee
S-128, United States Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chairman
Appropriations Committee
H-305, United States Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Appropriations Committee
1016 Longworth House Office
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner, Leaders Reid, McConnell, and Pelosi, Chairwoman Mikulski, Chairman Rogers, Vice Chairman Shelby, and Ranking Member Lowey:

We write to urge you to include fisheries disaster relief in any final funding package for Fiscal Year (FY) 2014.

Since 2012, the Department of Commerce declared a number of fishery failures in the United States. Regrettably funding has not been appropriated yet to deal with the effects of these disasters, which continue to affect communities in our states and districts. Indeed, while the Senate Appropriations Committee has included \$150 million for fishery failures in the FY 2014 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies (CJS) appropriations bill, funds have not been enacted into law to address the full spectrum of disaster needs.

As you know, under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management and Interjurisdictional Fisheries Acts, the Secretary of Commerce must determine that a commercial fishery failure has occurred before funding can be provided to assist the affected fishery. The Secretary, after careful review, declared the following disasters in the areas we represent:

- Alaska Chinook – On September 12, 2012, a federal fisheries disaster was declared for Alaska Chinook salmon fisheries in the Yukon River, Kuskokwim River and Cook Inlet. Thousands of Alaskans have been affected including commercial, recreational, and subsistence fishermen. Beyond direct impacts, communities have experienced reduced work for processor employees, reduced tax revenues, and reduced income for fishery dependent businesses.
- Mississippi Oyster and Blue Crab – On September 12, 2012, a federal fisheries disaster was declared for commercial oyster and blue crab fisheries in Mississippi. Historic flooding of the lower Mississippi River required opening of the Bonnet Carre Spillway on May 9, 2011. This action released substantial amounts of freshwater into the Mississippi Sound, impacting the entire ecosystem. Mississippi's oyster and blue crab fisheries were extensively damaged, resulting in severe economic hardship for commercial fishermen still recovering from the devastating impacts of Hurricane Katrina and the BP oil spill.
- Northeast Multispecies Groundfish Fishery – On September 13, 2012, a federal fisheries disaster was declared for Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New York. Despite fishermen's strict adherence to federal management practices, reductions in the total allowable catch for certain critical groundfish stocks are having a significant impact on coastal communities, fishing families, and local economies, leaving many historic fishing communities on the brink of extinction.
- Superstorm Sandy fisheries impacts – On November 16, 2012, a federal fisheries disaster was declared for New Jersey and New York due to the damage caused by Superstorm Sandy. The effects of the storm have created severe economic losses for both commercial and recreational fishermen.
- Florida Oysters – On August 12, 2013, a federal fisheries disaster was declared for the oyster fishery along the west coast of Florida. The fishery resource disaster resulted from excessive drought conditions in Apalachicola Bay and elsewhere in the Florida panhandle during the 2012 – 2013 winter fishing season.

For the communities they affect, fisheries disasters are as devastating as other federally-declared disasters. Therefore, we request your assistance in ensuring that the \$150 million fisheries disaster mitigation funding included in the Senate-version of the CJS appropriations bill is included in any final FY 2014 funding package. These funds could be used in a variety of ways to provide fishermen vital help including support for emergency financial assistance, operational costs where necessary, economic development programs, and science initiatives to manage the fishery in a timely way that gives confidence to all stakeholders.

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Thank you for your attention and your support for improving conditions for fishermen throughout the country. We remain committed to preserving and promoting our fishing industry. We look forward to continuing to work with you to effectively address the challenges facing this critical industry.

Sincerely,

Jack Reed
United States Senator



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Thad Cochran
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Susan Collins
United States Senator

Mark Begich
United States Senator

Marco Rubio
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

Kelly Ayotte
United States Senator

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Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Roger F. Wicker
United States Senator



Bill Nelson
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

Angus King
United States Senator

Robert Menendez
United States Senator

Joe Courtney
Member of Congress

Don Young
Member of Congress

David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

Steve Southerland, II
Member of Congress