



UPPER SKAGIT INDIAN TRIBE

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14-068983

December 31, 2019

The Honorable Wilbur Ross, Secretary of Commerce
United States Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230
SUBJECT: 2019 Commercial Fishery Disaster for the Upper Skagit Indian Tribe

Dear Secretary Ross,

The federally recognized Upper Skagit Indian Tribe is formally requesting that an economic fishery disaster be declared under Section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery and Conservation and Management Act. This will allow fishers who were negatively affected by the complete failures of several 2019 fisheries that are relied upon by our community to be provided disaster relief.

The salmon fisheries affected by the 2019 disaster include; spring chinook, sockeye, pink, and Coho salmon fisheries in (Catch Reporting Areas 78-C-D 1-4, & 78-0). The abundance of fish returning for these stocks in 2019 was so low that Skagit terminal area pink fisheries did not open at all, while the Coho & Sockeye catches fell well short of forecasted. The Upper Skagit Indian Tribal Community urges a prompt response, which will allow our fishers to quickly obtain the disaster relief funds and support they desperately need and are entitled to.

These fisheries are culturally and economically important to sustainability of Upper Skagit treaty fishers, and the severe reduction in harvest affects the entire tribe. Harvest in these fisheries not only contributes significantly to annual fisher income, but also provides a ceremonial and subsistence food source for use by community members throughout the winter months. The Upper Skagit Tribe is a fishing tribe as a way of life, and most member households rely upon the resources provided by these fisheries. With few or no fish available to harvest because of low abundance, the entire community suffers.

As a federally recognized tribe and sovereign nation, we hereby request disaster assistance under the Department of Commerce and Congressional appropriation. We ask that under your authority and in cooperation with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries, and the Upper Skagit Indian Tribe, you coordinate with all parties to issue a Fisheries Economic Disaster Declaration as authorized under Section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery and Conservation and Management Act. Thank you for your consideration in this matter. If you have any questions please contact Doreen Maloney, General Manager at (360) 854-7090.

Sincerely,

Jennifer R. Washington, Chair

CC: The Honorable Patty Murray, US Senator
The Honorable Maria Cantwell, US Senator
The Honorable Suzan DelBene, Congresswoman