March 5, 2020

The Honorable Wilbur Ross
Secretary of Commerce
United States Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

SUBJECT: 2019 Fraser River Sockeye Fishery Disaster for the Lummi Nation

Dear Mr. Secretary Ross,

I formally request you declare an economic fishery disaster, pursuant to Section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery and Conservation and Management Act (Act), so disaster relief assistance can be provided to fishermen who were adversely impacted by the lack of a 2019 Fraser River sockeye run. The Lummi Nation is urging your office to act quickly to mitigate this situation. Prompt efforts by your Department are critical in helping the fishermen get the disaster relief, funds and assistance to which they are entitled.

It is estimated that the Lummi Nation fishing fleet of over 350 fishers lost approximately $1.7 million. The health and existence of the salmon is undeniably bound to the health and wellbeing of the Lummi people. The lack of a Lummi harvest opportunity for Fraser River sockeye has had irreversible negative impacts to the Lummi way of life, cultural, spiritual and traditional practices. The financial impact that the fishermen have endured due to the lack of harvest threatens the ability of the fishermen to earn a modest living.

The importance of subsistence, ceremonial and commercial fisheries is an integral part of the way of life and identity to the Lummi Nation. Prior to European contact, the Lummi Nation survived, prospered and thrived by exercising these inherent rights. The 1974 federal court decision in United States v. Washington affirmed the Stevens Treaty tribes the treaty right to half of the harvestable salmon and established these tribes as co-managers of Washington state fisheries. As a sovereign nation and federally-recognized tribe, the Lummi Nation has the right to request and receive disaster administrated under your office and Congress may appropriate these funds. With no sockeye salmon to harvest, no sockeye fish for families and no income for fishing families, the Lummi Nation’s fishing community is in despair and in need of expedited financial assistance and relief.

For questions, please contact Tony Hillaire, Chief of Staff, by email at AnthonyH@Lummi-nsn.gov or by phone at (360)393-0890.

Sincerely,

Lawrence Solomon, Chairman
Lummi Indian Business Council

Enclosures:
2019 Lummi Declaration of Natural Disaster and an Economic Fisheries Disaster
CC: The Honorable Patty Murray, US Senator
    The Honorable Maria Cantwell, US Senator
    The Honorable Suzan DelBene, Congresswoman