



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

August 24, 2015

The Honorable Nathan Deal
Governor of Georgia
Atlanta, GA 30334-0900

Dear Governor Deal:

Thank you for your letter requesting a determination of a commercial fishery failure due to a fishery resource disaster. Your request relates to the impacts to the 2013 White Shrimp Fishery in Georgia as a result of heavy rains that impacted white shrimp recruitment and an unusually high level of black gill syndrome.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) evaluated whether a commercial fishery failure occurred due to a fisheries resource disaster. After reviewing the information provided by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, I have found that the request for a determination of a commercial fishery failure due to a fishery resource disaster for the 2013 Georgia White Shrimp Fishery does meet the requirements for such a finding under Section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA). This determination is based on two primary factors. First, excessive rain in early 2013 led to reduced salinities in Georgia white shrimp nursery grounds, impairing recruitment success and cohort abundance. Second, there was increased occurrence of black gill syndrome during 2013, and, in the fall of 2013, 43 percent of all white shrimp sampled suffered from black gill syndrome. The excessive rainfall and the increased occurrence of black gill infection constitute natural causes that led to a fishery resource disaster. These conditions resulted in a 58 percent reduction in harvest from the five-year average and the overall value of the Georgia White Shrimp Fishery was reduced by 43 percent from the preceding five-year average. I have determined that a commercial fishery failure occurred in the 2013 Georgia White Shrimp fishery.

This determination provides a basis for Congress to appropriate disaster relief funding under the MSA, Section 312(a), and for NMFS to provide assistance to the State of Georgia and affected communities. If Congress appropriates disaster relief funding, the NMFS Southeast Region will work with the State of Georgia to develop an economic spending plan to support activity that would restore the fishery or prevent a similar failure and assist the affected fishing communities. Section 312(a)(3) requires that the Federal share of the cost of any activity carried out under the authority of this subsection shall not exceed 75 percent of the cost of that activity.

If you have any further questions, please contact Jim Stowers, Acting Assistant Secretary for Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs, at (202) 482-3663.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Penny Pritzker".

Penny Pritzker