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**CLINTON ADMINISTRATION ACTS TO HELP NORTH CAROLINA
FISHERMEN HURT BY HURRICANES FLOYD, DENNIS**
***Commerce Secretary Declares Fisheries Natural Resource Disaster
Totaling \$19 Million***

Commerce Secretary William M. Daley today determined that five fisheries in North Carolina suffered commercial fisheries failures with losses estimated by North Carolina officials at \$19 million due to damage to the coastal environment caused by Hurricane Floyd last week, and by Hurricane Dennis in early September. The declaration by Secretary Daley opens the way for Congress to appropriate funds to help North Carolina fishermen.

"We can't keep Mother Nature from disrupting commerce," Secretary Daley said. "But we can do our part to help those fishermen who face economic ruin due to her actions."

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act authorizes financial aid if the Secretary of Commerce at his discretion, or at the request of a governor, determines a commercial fishery failure has occurred due to a fishery resource disaster. If the Congress appropriates aid for North Carolina fishermen, the Act requires a 25 percent match by the state.

Effects of the two storms severely damaged or displaced the white shrimp fishery, the crab fisheries, the oyster and scallop fisheries, the inshore flounder fishery, and the snapper/grouper fishery of North Carolina. Both storms caused significant physical damage to coastal areas where these fisheries operate, along with a severe decrease in salinity and temperature in coastal waters from torrential rains.

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The declaration is based on information supplied to the Commerce Department by the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries, which relied on historic data on landings to support the finding that a commercial fishery failure caused by a fishery resource disaster has occurred. The hurricanes eroded or displaced prime oyster and scallop beds, and flooded many ocean areas with deadly amounts of fresh water, forcing salt water marine species to flee or die.

The white shrimp fishery will likely lose 4.5 million pounds due to low salinity and lower temperatures. The blue crab fishery is expected to lose about three million pounds of blue crabs due to death or displacement. In addition, approximately 80,000 crab traps valued at \$2 million were destroyed or lost due to the storms. An estimated 100,000 bushels of oysters and scallops may be lost because beds were destroyed or silted over from intense waves. The inshore flounder fishery is likely to lose up to 75,000 pounds of flounder because of displacement due to low-salinity waters. It is estimated that the commercial snapper/grouper fishery will lose 550,000 pounds of snapper and grouper due to these species moving out of coastal waters where the salinity is greatly affected. And due to the closure of numerous inlets and displacement of some species, headboat and charterboat operators will lose approximately 1,500 trips.

Hurricane Dennis lashed the North Carolina coast for several days in early September before making landfall, dumping 16 to 18 inches of rain on coastal areas. Hurricane Floyd, a strong Category 4 storm packing 135 mile an hour winds, struck North Carolina with 24 inches of rain, high winds and a strong tidal surge. The intense rainfall caused the salinity of marine waters to approach zero. Effects of the hurricanes continue as inland flooding moves to coastal areas and can be detected up to four miles off shore.

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