

17-054365



MUCKLESHOOT TRIBAL COUNCIL

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April 4, 2017

The Honorable Wilbur Ross
Secretary of Commerce
United States Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

2017 APR 11 PM 2:47
OS EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

Subject: 2015 Coho Fishery and Pink Disaster for Muckleshoot Indian Tribe

Dear Secretary Ross:

I am writing to formally request that you declare an economic fishery disaster under Section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act so that disaster relief assistance can be provided to our fishermen. Muckleshoot fishermen were adversely impacted by the extremely low runs of coho in 2015, and those fish that did return were much smaller than average. For example, the 2015 Lake Washington commercial coho catch was only 3.25% of the most recent seven-year average, and the 2015 commercial Green River/Duwamish River coho catch was only 2.75% of the most recent seven-year average. Similarly, the 2015 pink fishery, an odd-year only fishery, was only 2.59% of the previous two-year average. On September 25, 2015, the Muckleshoot Tribal Council declared a disaster with respect to the 2015 pink and coho fisheries as shown in the attached resolution. We urge you to respond promptly to this matter to allow our fishermen to obtain disaster relief funds and support.

Coho and pink fishing, like all salmon, is extremely important to our Muckleshoot people and always has been. The lack of coho and pink impacted our entire tribe. We are fishing people—it is central to our culture and way of life, as well as our economy. We have always relied on the water and our natural resources for our health and livelihoods. With very little coho or pink to harvest, our entire community suffered and needs financial relief to get through these difficult times.

As a federally recognized tribe and sovereign nation, we have the right to request and receive disaster relief under the Department of Commerce and Congressional appropriation. We ask that under your authority, and in cooperation with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries and the Muckleshoot Tribe, that you coordinate with all parties to issue a Fisheries Economic Disaster

Hon. Wilbur Ross, Secretary of Commerce
2015 Coho Fishery and Pink Disaster for Muckleshoot Indian Tribe
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Declaration as authorized under Section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



Virginia Cross
Chairperson
Muckleshoot Indian Tribe

cc: The Honorable Patty Murray, US Senator
The Honorable Maria Cantwell, US Senator
The Honorable David G. Reichert, Congressman

Attachment



MUCKLESHOOT TRIBAL COUNCIL

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RESOLUTION 15-213

RESOLUTION DECLARING A FISHERY RESOURCE DISASTER FOR THE TRIBE'S 2015 PINK SALMON AND COHO SALMON COMMERCIAL FISHERIES AND AUTHORIZING A REQUEST TO THE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE FOR A DECLARATION OF FISHERY RESOURCE DISASTER AND FOR ECONOMIC RELIEF

WHEREAS, the Muckleshoot Indian Tribal Council is the duly constituted governing body for the Muckleshoot Indian Reservation by authority of and is herein acting solely pursuant to its constitution and bylaws approved May 13, 1936, by the Secretary of the Interior, and as amended June 28, 1977, and not pursuant to its Indian Reorganization Act Corporate Charter ratified October 31, 1936; and,

WHEREAS, due to such factors as unusually warm freshwater and ocean temperatures, a drought in the State of Washington, and very low snowpack in the mountains, Tribal treaty fisheries including but not limited to those for pink and coho salmon have suffered precipitous and unprecedented declines in 2015;

WHEREAS, based on the data from the first two weeks of the fishery, the Tribe's Green River coho fishery appears to be down 98% from the previous seven-year average;

WHEREAS, based on the data from the first two weeks of the fishery, the Tribe's Lake Washington coho fishery is down 94% from the previous seven-year average;

WHEREAS, based on the data collected to date for the Tribe's pink fishery, which began in 2011, that odd-year-only fishery is down approximately 97% from the previous two-year average of the fisheries in 2011 and 2013;

WHEREAS, these extreme declines and other fishery declines are creating dire economic crises for the Tribe's members who are commercial fishers and for the Tribally-owned fish buying company, Muckleshoot Seafood Products;

WHEREAS, the Secretary of Commerce is authorized to declare a fishery resource disaster under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act and to provide economic assistance to the affected fishing community provided monies are appropriated by Congress;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Muckleshoot Tribal Council:

1. declares a fishery resource disaster for the above-referenced 2015 pink and coho fisheries; and
2. authorizes The Chairperson of the Tribe, or in her absence, the Vice-Chairman to request that the Secretary of Commerce declare a fishery resource disaster relating to said fishery resource failures and/or failures for other species as warranted by the data and to request that Congress and/or the Secretary of Commerce provide economic assistance to aid affected Muckleshoot commercial fishers and Muckleshoot Seafood Products and/or to fund projects that are designed to restore the affected fisheries and/or prevent similar failures in the future and/or to otherwise assist the affected commercial fishers and/or ameliorate the economic and social effects of the above-referenced commercial fishery failures.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Chairperson of the Tribal Council or, in her absence, the Vice-Chairman, is hereby authorized to sign all letters and sign, execute and negotiate all contracts, agreements and amendments thereto and on behalf of the Tribe without further adoption of a resolution in the securing and performance of this activity throughout its duration provided that such authorization does not exceed the specific intent and terms of the aforementioned document and/or activity, and is executed in compliance with all applicable Tribal, federal and other ordinances, laws, regulations, policies and procedures.

CERTIFICATION

As Secretary of the Muckleshoot Indian Tribal Council, I hereby certify that the above Resolution was duly adopted at regular meeting of the Tribal Council on the 25 day of September, 2015, held on the Muckleshoot Indian Reservation, Auburn Washington, at which a quorum was present by a vote of 8 for and 0 against and 0 abstentions.

Charlotte Williams
Charlotte Williams
Tribal Council Secretary

Virginia Cross
Virginia Cross
Tribal Council Chair