



**PORT GAMBLE S'KLALLAM TRIBE**  
31912 Little Boston Road NE • Kingston, WA 98346

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OS EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

June 22, 2016

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

**SUBJECT: 2015 Puget Sound Coho Fishery Disaster for the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe**

Dear Secretary Pritzker,

I, formally request that the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe be included in the economic fishery disaster, pursuant to Section 3 12(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery and Conservation and Management Act (Act), so disaster relief assistance can be provided to tribal fishermen who were adversely impacted by the extremely low 2015 Puget Sound Coho Salmon run. The Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe would appreciate your declaration of this situation as a fishery disaster. Prompt action by the Department of Commerce will be critical in helping the fishermen get the disaster relief funds and assistance they are entitled to in a timely manner.

The extremely low 2015 Puget Sound Coho Salmon run was due to multiple interrelated factors, including (and most notably) abnormally high water temperatures in Puget Sound, which were the highest ever recorded (up to 4 degree Fahrenheit higher than normal). This resulted in an increase in harmful algae blooms, lower dissolved oxygen, and unfavorable conditions for salmon and other marine species. The elevated temperatures in the Pacific Ocean known as the warm water "blob" also contributed to very poor marine survival of Puget Sound Coho Salmon. The increased sea surface temperatures and decreased coastal upwelling has resulted in reduced prey availability, higher metabolic stress, and poor body condition in the Coho Salmon that did return. When fisherman were able to harvest fish, they were noticeably smaller. In addition area hatcheries also reported smaller fish as well, and the females had much smaller eggs than normal.

The 2015 Coho fishery resulted in a 95% loss of income for the Port Gamble S'Klallam tribal fishing community. It is estimated that the Port Gamble S'Klallam fishing fleet lost just over \$200,000 dollars as a result of the low Coho returns. The net income for 2015 S'Klallam tribal Coho fishery was just under \$12k while the 2010-2014 average was \$214k, with one year reaching \$397k. These numbers do not reflect the additional cost for boat operations or gear purchase/maintenance during this period. The non-existent Port Gamble S'Klallam harvest of Puget Sound Coho in 2015 had negative impacts to our traditional way of life and our cultural and spiritual ties to Coho Salmon. These negative impacts to our culture are irreversible. The financial impact that the fishermen have endured has been equally important, and it threatens the ability of fishermen to harvest a quantity of fish sufficient to ensure a modest living as reserved for the S'Klallam Tribes through the Treaty of Point-No-Point.

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Subsistence, ceremonial and commercial fisheries are integral to the way of life for Port Gamble S'Klallam members. The 1974 federal court decision in *United States v. Washington* affirmed the Stevens Treaty tribes the treaty right to half of the harvestable salmon in Washington State and established these tribes as co-managers of Washington State fisheries. As a sovereign nation and federally-recognized tribe, the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe has the right to request and receive disaster assistance as administered under your office, and Congress may appropriate these funds. With no Coho Salmon to harvest, no Coho Salmon for families and no income for fishing families, the Port Gamble S'Klallam fishing community is in despair and in need of expedited financial assistance and relief.

If you have any questions, please contact: Jeromy Sullivan, Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe Chairman 360-297-6342 or [jeromys@pgst.nsn.us](mailto:jeromys@pgst.nsn.us)

Sincerely,

Jeromy Sullivan, Chairman  
Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe  
CC: The Honorable Patty Murray, US Senator  
The Honorable Maria Cantwell, US Senator  
The Honorable Suzan DelBenne, Congresswoman

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