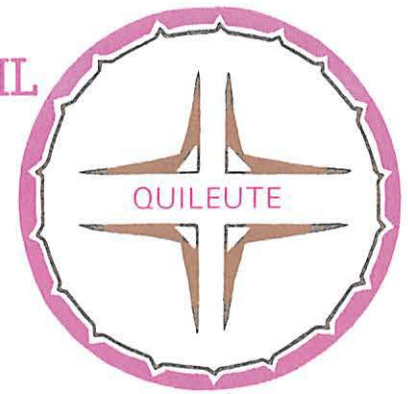




QUILEUTE TRIBAL COUNCIL

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May 4, 2017

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

Dear Secretary Ross;

I am writing to you in my capacity as an elected official of the “affected fishing community”, the Quileute Tribe, a sovereign treaty tribe located in the village of La Push, in the state of Washington. The Quileute Tribe manages both freshwater and marine fisheries, under the Treaty of Olympia with the United States. Our community is a small, rural community located on the Pacific Coast in Clallam County. Since time immemorial, our ability to conduct commercial, ceremonial and subsistence fisheries has been and continues to be the very fabric that holds our community together, culturally and economically. In 2016 our community faced an economic crisis when according to our models it was predicted that if we conducted a fall Coho fishery we could jeopardize the wild fall Coho population needs. We believe that this is in part due to changing ocean conditions or otherwise undetermined causes. This letter is our formal request that Department of Commerce declare a fishery resource economic disaster under Section 308 (d) of the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act of 1986 (U.S.C. § 4107 (d)), and a commercial fishery failure under Section 312(a) of the Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976 (16 U.S.C. §1861 a (a)) for our **2016 fall Coho treaty fishery**.

Early in 2016, in response to the low rate of returning Coho in 2015 and the low projected returns for the 2016, Quileute tribe fishery management implemented numerous reductions in fishing day opportunities for its in-river fishery. By fall of 2016, updated models inclusive of changing ocean conditions were forecasting that the number of returning Coho salmon would not meet the escapement needs of the population (fish returning to spawning grounds) for the second consecutive year. In response, the Quileute Tribal Council decided to close its fall in-river fishery for seven weeks. The local economic impact of this reduction in our fishery for the benefit to the Coho population was profound. At this time it is estimated that the direct financial impact was approximately **\$413,000.00**.

Quileute Tribal Fisheries-Quillayute River System 12 year average landings (pounds):

Species	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
coho	778,276	143,436	106,182	213,906	392,684	344,338	240,092	108,203	120,425	299,859	49,454	7,800

Quileute Tribal Fishery-Estimated economic loss using 10 year price average:

2016	10 year	% of ave	Difference	Price	Loss
	201,858	0.038641	194,058	\$2.13	\$413,290.38

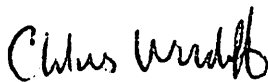
Unlike state (non-treaty) fishers, Quileute tribal fisherman are limited geographically by their treaty as to where they may fish. Under the treaty our fisherman cannot leave their treaty area to harvest fish on more robust populations. Instead our fishery management structure implements measures necessary to protect the fish populations in our treaty area, such as the reduction of effort described above. As the result of this experience Quileute Tribal Council and our staff is now compiling information around whether this is a cycle of nature, an indication of changing ocean conditions such as ocean acidification, or a new norm. If this is becoming a new norm then we likely need to explore what this means from a natural resource management perspective (need for improved resource management information) and a community perspective such as the development of economic alternatives (job creation and training).

Rural communities such as La Push have few alternative economic opportunities: Government Services remains the primary source of income followed by the Fishing Industry and Tribal Enterprises.

Quileute Tribal Council considers this estimate of impact to date as significant and we look forward to discussing the particulars with you and your staff further. Your finding that a disaster should be declared for these fisheries will greatly assist our ability to recover from this event as well as provide for some planning into the future. We are seeking compensation for the lost fishery revenue as well a funding to protect the resource to prevent loss (in as far as possible), in the future. We will appreciate your earliest possible formal action on our request.

If I can be of further assistance, please contact me at (360) 374-6163 or chas.woodruff@quileutetribe.com or have a member of your staff contact our Natural Resources Deputy Director, Frank Geyer, at (360) 374-2027, Frank.geyer@quileutetribe.com.

Sincerely,



Charles Woodruff, Chairman
Quileute Tribal Council

Cc: The Honorable Patty Murray, US Senator
The Honorable Maria Cantwell, US Senator
The Honorable Derek Kilmer, US Congressman