



GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT

February 14, 2018

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

Dear Secretary Ross:

As Texans remain dedicated to rebuilding following Hurricane Harvey, we continue to work with our federal partners to ensure that those industries devastated in the storm's wake are not forgotten. Commercial and recreational fisheries along the Texas coast from Nueces County to Jefferson County suffered overwhelming property losses as a result of damaging winds and torrential rainfall. The inability of businesses to open or conduct operations further compounded the economic losses of this region, as many individuals were without employment in the months following the storm. An assessment provided by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, completed in conjunction with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries after the storm, estimated that damages to business and property exceeded \$58 million. With a recent appropriation set aside for Federal Fisheries Disaster relief, the opportunity now exists to provide the Texas Gulf Coast with the resources necessary for the economic recovery that is so desperately needed. Therefore, I respectfully request that you declare a federal fishery resources disaster as outlined in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, 16 U.S.C. §§ 1861a and 1864, and the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act, 16 U.S.C. § 4107.

The magnitude of Hurricane Harvey's impact on recreational and commercial fisheries in Texas has been devastating. Fishing in Texas is vital to our economy and is important to both residents and tourists alike. According to the National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife Associated Recreation conducted in 2011, Texas is second only to Florida in the number of saltwater anglers, with 1.6 million participants visiting our coast annually. Recreational angling activity supports more than 29,000 jobs, resulting in \$2.1 billion in sales and \$1 billion in salaries and wages each year. Storm damage to bait shops, marinas and hotels in the region has significantly impacted this industry. In addition, businesses that rely on tourism revenues have been affected due to anglers being unable to travel to the coast. Texas hunting and fishing

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license sales were initially down 20 percent following the storm and are still down 4.5 percent as of January 2018.

The storm also severely impacted the state's commercial fishery operations, which contribute significantly to the Texas economy. Robust commercial fisheries for shrimp, oysters, crabs and finfish have an annual economic impact of over \$492 million. These enterprises have lost significant income due to infrastructure damage, lost gear and vessels, displacement due to loss of housing, and cancellation of charter fishing trips. Oyster harvesting in particular was impacted by the closure of large areas due to water quality issues and direct oyster mortality caused by the extensive freshening of bay waters as a result of over a foot of rainfall in certain areas.

Since the storm, Texans have worked together tirelessly to rebuild businesses and repair damaged marinas and vessels, but a disaster the scale of Hurricane Harvey requires a large influx of resources and targeted funding. Therefore, I request that you recognize a federal fishery resources disaster so that the process of rebuilding the commercial and recreational fishing industry can continue along the Texas Gulf Coast.

I appreciate your timely attention to the urgent needs of Texans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Abbott". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Greg" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Abbott".

Greg Abbott  
Governor

GA:jfk