

18-060141



# THE SUQUAMISH TRIBE

## OFFICE OF TRIBAL COUNCIL

LEONARD FORSMAN, CHAIRMAN

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OS EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

March 8, 2018

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

**Subject: 2015 Coho Fishery Disaster for the Suquamish Tribe**

Dear Secretary Ross:

I am writing to formally request the Suquamish Tribe be included in the economic fishery disaster, pursuant to Section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, so that disaster relief assistance can be provided to our fishermen. The Suquamish Tribe's fishermen were adversely impacted by the extremely low runs of Puget Sound Coho in 2015, and those fish that did return were much smaller than average. We urge you to respond promptly to this matter to allow our fishermen to obtain disaster relief funds and support.

The pounds of Coho landed by Suquamish fishers in 2015 was a 95% reduction from the average of the previous four years (2011-2014). A four-year average is initially presented here as the 2010 Coho return to mid Puget Sound was also very poor, particularly to the Lake Washington system (Issaquah Hatchery) which precluded the Suquamish Tribe's fishery. There were only 390 pounds of Coho landed in 2010, in contrast to 78,798 landed the previous year (2009). The 2009 landed Coho brought approximately \$98,000 to the Suquamish fishers, compared to \$2,364 total earned in 2015. The number of pounds landed in 2015 was a 96% reduction from the six-year average (2009-2014).

Coho fishing, like all salmon fishing, is extremely important to our Suquamish people and always has been. The lack of Coho impacts our entire tribe. We are fishing people—fishing and salmon are central to our culture and way of life, as well as our economy, and Coho is one of our most valued species. We have always relied on the water and our natural resources for our health and livelihoods. With very little Coho to harvest, our entire community suffered and needs financial relief to recover from this fishery collapse.

As a federally recognized Tribe and sovereign Nation, the Suquamish Tribe has 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 Suquamish Tribe that you coordinate with all parties to issue a Fisheries Economic Disaster 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,



Leonard Forsman, Chairman  
The Suquamish Tribe

cc: The Honorable Patty Murray, United States Senator  
The Honorable Maria Cantwell, United States Senator  
The Honorable Derek Kilmer, United States Congressman