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Governor Bill Walker
STATE OF ALASKA

November 28, 2018

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

2018 DEC -3 PM 3:23
O S EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

Re: Federal Fishery Disaster

Dear Secretary Ross:

In accordance with Section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), I am writing to request that you declare a fishery disaster for the 2018 Chignik sockeye salmon fishery. The circumstances surrounding the failed 2018 Chignik Management Area sockeye salmon fishery support a declaration, as, due to extremely low abundance, there was no commercial sockeye salmon fishery in the area in 2018. Table 1 of the enclosed season overview shows the final estimated escapement for this year's Chignik River sockeye salmon run was 34 percent below the most recent five-year average, and the lowest since statehood.

Communities in the Chignik area rely on the value of commercial fisheries, especially sockeye salmon, for their needs. In 2017, the community harvested 4.7 million pounds of salmon with estimated gross earnings of \$2.2 million. Approximately 38 percent of Chignik residents are directly engaged in the commercial fishing industry, with 39 residents holding Chignik Management Area commercial salmon fishery limited entry permits and 79 Chignik area residents licensed as crew members in 2017.

The poverty rate in the Lake and Peninsula Borough, where Chignik is located, is 21 percent. The fishery failure places an additional burden on many families in the five Chignik area communities who will be unable to meet basic needs, such as home heating fuel, electricity, groceries, and gasoline, or meet other expenses throughout the year. The impact of the failed sockeye salmon return is beyond the capacity of local governments to manage or mitigate and extends to every person in these communities, not just the 90 Chignik Management Area commercial salmon fishery limited entry permit holders and their crews.

Since the Chignik area 2018 losses were so great (100 percent decline in estimated gross earnings and harvest compared to the most recent five-year average (Table 2 of enclosure), the area far exceeds the threshold for an MSA fishery disaster declaration. Further, because the communities surrounding and within the Chignik Management Area are so reliant on fisheries as an economic

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source, I request that you move as expediently as possible to declare a federal fishery disaster for the region.

I appreciate your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Walker". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bill Walker
Governor

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, United States Senate
The Honorable Dan Sullivan, United States Senate
The Honorable Don Young, United States House of Representatives

2018 Chignik Management Area Sockeye Salmon Fishery

Table 1. Chignik Management Area Sockeye Salmon Escapement and Escapement Goals and Five-Year Average Compared to 2018 Preliminary Escapement.

| Year | Escapement Goal | |
|--|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| | Early Run (BEG) 350,000-450,000 | Late Run (SEG) 200,000-400,000 |
| 2013 | 386,782 | 369,319 |
| 2014 | 360,381 | 291,228 |
| 2015 | 534,088 | 589,810 |
| 2016 | 418,290 | 337,698 |
| 2017 | 453,257 | 339,303 |
| Five-Year Average | 430,559 | 388,908 |
| 2018 Preliminary | 263,979 | 275,718 |
| Percent Change from Five-Year Average | -39% | -29% |

Table 2. Chignik Management Area Sockeye Salmon Harvest, Estimated Nominal Gross Earnings, Pounds, Number of Fish, Five-Year Average, and Percent Change from Five-Year Average.

| Year | Estimated Gross Earnings | | |
|--|--------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| | (U.S. Dollars) | Pounds (whole) | Number of Fish |
| 2013 | \$30,215,709 | 17,070,813 | 2,399,594 |
| 2014 | \$6,963,428 | 4,120,247 | 616,822 |
| 2015 | \$7,275,105 | 8,479,027 | 1,540,310 |
| 2016 | \$9,755,160 | 8,211,690 | 1,385,673 |
| 2017 | \$7,265,365 | 5,478,561 | 893,111 |
| Five-Year Average | \$12,294,953 | 8,672,068 | 1,367,102 |
| 2018 Preliminary | \$859 | 593 | 128 |
| Percent Change from Five-Year Average | -100% | -100% | -100% |