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HENRY MCMASTER
GOVERNOR

November 16, 2018

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

Dear Secretary Ross,

I am writing to request fisheries disaster relief for the participants in an important, long standing and valuable fishery under the provision of Sections 312(a) and 315 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, and Sections 308(b) and 308(d) of the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act.

South Carolina's commercial Penaeid shrimp fishery was significantly impacted this year by the unexpected occurrence of a severe cold weather event in early January 2018. This cold weather resulted in prolonged water temperatures recorded along the coast at low levels seen only four times in the previous 68 years. The severity and persistence of these low coastal water temperatures resulted in very high mortality of overwintering white shrimp in South Carolina waters, with scientifically assessed rates of loss ranging from 99.9% in January to 94.0% in May. Overwintering white shrimp normally represent most of the state's spring commercial shrimp landings but are also critical as the spawning potential necessary to produce the on-going local shrimp population, as well as continued landings throughout the remainder of the fishing year.

For at least the past several decades wild caught shrimp has remained South Carolina's single most valuable coast-wide commercial fishery, with landings being dominated by white shrimp each year. South Carolina commercial shrimp trawl fishermen are licensed on a state fiscal year basis, and during the FY18 (July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018) fishing year commercially licensed shrimp trawlers experienced a 56% decrease in documented landings when compared to average landings for the five previous comparable years. Total ex-vessel value of FY18 Penaeid shrimp landings in South Carolina were reported at \$3,718,697, which is a 54% reduction when compared to the average value of similar landings during the five previous fishing years of \$8,017,630.

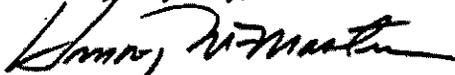
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Given the significant impacts experienced this year in South Carolina's commercial Penaeid shrimp fishery, resulting primarily from the naturally occurring cold weather event of January, 2018, I am requesting fisheries disaster relief for the participants in this important and valuable fishery under the provision of Sections 312(a) and 315 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, and Sections 308(b) and 308(d) of the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act. Such timely assistance could be critical for the continued participation in and viability of our commercial shrimp trawl fishery, and for the economic well-being of the commercial seafood industry and coastal communities in South Carolina.

I have instructed the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) to work with appropriate National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries staff to expeditiously complete the necessary review process in support of this request for assistance. The primary SCDNR point of contact is Mel Bell, Director Office of Fisheries Management (bellm@dnr.sc.gov), and the designated alternate is Amy Dukes, Marine Fisheries Statistics Section Leader (dukesa@dnr.sc.gov).

Thank you for your consideration of this very important issue.

Yours very truly,



Henry McMaster

HDM/tw