

19-066542



RON DESANTIS
GOVERNOR

May 24, 2019

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US EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

Secretary Wilbur Ross
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 2023

Dear Secretary Ross:

Thank you for taking the time to visit the Florida State Capitol this past March and for meeting with many of Florida's leaders. I enjoyed visiting with you on several issues important to Florida's economy and recovery from Hurricanes Michael and Irma. Today I write regarding a related issue that requires your attention, which we did not have an opportunity to discuss during your visit.

I respectfully request that you declare a federal fishery resource disaster as outlined in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, 16 U.S.C. § 1864 and U.S.C. § 1861a, and the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act, 16 U.S.C. § 4107.

As you may know, red tides occur relatively frequently in Southwest Florida and have been documented as long ago as the mid-1880s. Persistent red tides can cause significant harm to fisheries and fishing communities vital to Florida's economy. The most recent red tide event, which occurred from November 2017 through February 2019, was one of the most persistent and impactful red tides in modern history. This event followed another significant red tide that endured from October 2015 through February 2017. Millions of fish were killed during these events. Indeed, we received more than 3,000 citizen reports of fish kills from October 2015 through February 2019.

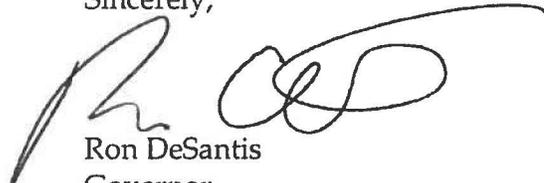
These two red tide events significantly affected Southwest Florida's commercial and charter fisheries and related tourism industry. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission estimates that the tides harmed more than 1300 licensed charter fishermen and resulted in significant reductions in catch rates.

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The commercial fishing industry – which boasts \$55 million in commercial fishing landings supporting over 1700 fishermen and 273 wholesale businesses in Southwest Florida – also experienced consequential economic impacts. Like those in the recreational fishing industry, numerous commercial fishermen and wholesale dealers reported that the recent red tides caused them to go out of business.

The State of Florida looks forward to providing any additional information you need to properly assess this situation. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Ron DeSantis
Governor

cc: Eric Sutton, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission