

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 10, 2018

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
S-128 United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
S-146A United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Cochran and Vice Chairman Leahy,

As the Appropriations Committee continues its work on a supplemental disaster request to aid communities in California, Florida, Puerto Rico, Texas, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, we write to encourage you to include relief for communities affected by longstanding and ongoing fisheries disasters.

All fisheries, including commercial, recreational, charter, and fisheries of importance to American Indians and Alaska Natives are central components in the economy and culture of many coastal communities. In Pacific coastal states, fisheries support a diverse hub of commerce including shipbuilders, hotels, restaurants, and vessel support services among others. Prolonged diminished returns in fisheries have stifled economic development, threatened the financial stability of fishing families dependent upon the industry's vitality, and severely endangered Native American subsistence and ceremonial harvests.

As of January 2018, the U.S. Department of Commerce has declared a total of nine fisheries disasters in Alaska, California, and Washington state, with several other disaster declarations pending official designation. While complete economic impact is difficult to evaluate, NOAA Fisheries has estimated that the total direct losses for all outstanding declared fisheries disasters is equal to approximately \$150 Million in Alaska, \$140 Million in California, and \$117 Million in Washington state. With the knowledge that these estimates may increase with subsequent declarations, we respectfully ask that these figures be used as a point of reference during consideration of any relief appropriations.

The Senate should act swiftly to provide emergency funding to these communities whose livelihoods depend on resilient, sustainable, and healthy fisheries. Additionally, we commit to working with you and other committees of jurisdiction toward a solution that brings more immediate relief once a fisheries disaster has been declared. The longer these disasters go unaddressed, the more precarious the situation becomes for communities and families impacted.

As the Senate works to develop a robust and adequate disaster package for those affected by other natural disasters across the country, we look forward to working with you to ensure that these longstanding fisheries disasters are also included.

We appreciate your consideration of this request.

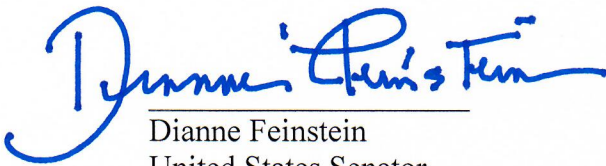
Sincerely,



Patty Murray
United States Senator



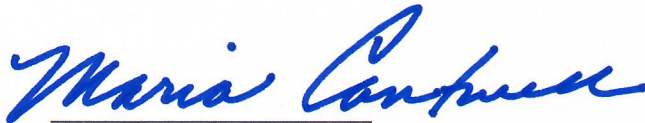
Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator



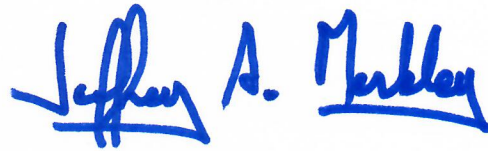
Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



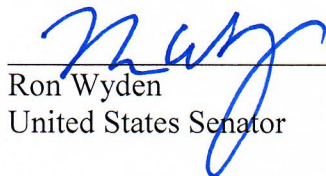
Dan Sullivan
United States Senator



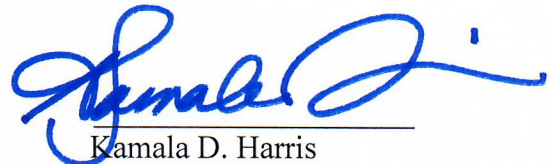
Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator