

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 20, 2012

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Norm Dicks
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Wolf
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chaka Fattah
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Wolf and Ranking Member Fattah:

We are writing to request that you include federal fisheries disaster funding in any supplemental appropriations bill that is prepared in response to Superstorm Sandy. Under the authority granted to the Secretary of Commerce, federal fishery disasters declarations have been made in nine states that have all been subject to natural events that have caused severe hardship to recreational and commercial fishermen and the related industries.

As representatives from states which are subject to a federal fisheries disaster declarations, we strongly believe that inclusion of this funding will help fishing communities respond and recover from these disasters and help mitigate the effects of future disasters. The Department of Commerce, under Section 308(d) of the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act and Section 315 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, may proceed with assistance programs once funds have been appropriated by Congress. Once appropriated these funds may be used to alleviate harm resulting from natural disaster.

While the needs of our constituents are diverse, they commonly need federal assistance to help recover from disaster and help contribute to their local economies. We request that you appropriate federal fishery disaster funds for declarations resulting from four specific events. We believe that it is appropriate and most efficient that the assistance for these declarations be included in one package and as part of any supplemental appropriations bill that is being developed.

New Jersey and New York received federal fishery disaster declarations on November 16, 2012 as a result of Superstorm Sandy. Damage was caused by the storm to boats, marinas,

commercial fishing businesses, coastal infrastructure, fish processors, bait and tackle stores and other aspects of the recreational and commercial fishing operations in both states. As individuals and families work to recover from the devastation that Sandy has left in its wake, it is critically important that they have federal assistance to rebuild and recover.

Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut and New York received federal fishery disaster declarations for the multispecies groundfish fishery on September 13, 2012. Despite compliance with strict management measures, the fishery has failed to recover. Commercial fishermen continue to suffer while local communities that rely on a robust fishing industry are harmed as well.

Alaska received a federal fishery disaster declaration on September 12, 2012 for the Alaska Chinook salmon fisheries in the Yukon River, Kuskokwim River, and Cook Inlet. The Chinook salmon catch levels have decreased significantly and the underlying reasoning is still unclear. This has an impact on the outdoor community, fishermen and subsistence fishing which is an important element in the region.

Mississippi received a federal fishery disaster declaration on September 12, 2012 for oyster and blue crab fisheries. Flooding in the lower Mississippi River and the impact of massive quantities of freshwater have created substantial loss of access to important resources. The losses in revenue and its impact on the commercial fishing industry have been felt hard and federal assistance is needed to help provide relief.

The losses that these disasters have caused for the recreational and commercial fishing industries as well as by the communities that rely on them as economic engines have been devastating. The need for disaster assistance is urgent and we therefore ask for your support providing disaster assistance to these communities. We urge you to include this assistance as part of any comprehensive disaster appropriations bill that the committee considers.

Sincerely,


FRANK PALLONE, JR.
Member of Congress


MICHAEL GRIMM
Member of Congress


EDWARD J. MARKEY
Member of Congress


DON YOUNG
Member of Congress



TIMOTHY H. BISHOP
Member of Congress



PETER T. KING
Member of Congress



RUSH HOLT
Member of Congress



FRANK C. GUINTA
Member of Congress



MAURICE HINCHEY
Member of Congress



ROSA L. DELAURO
Member of Congress



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MICHAEL H. MICHAUD
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JOHN F. TIERNEY
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WILLIAM R. KEATING
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STEPHEN F. LYNCH
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JOE COURTNEY
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NIKI TSONGAS
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DAVID N. CICILLINE
Member of Congress



JAMES R. LANGEVIN
Member of Congress