

MIKE THOMPSON

1ST DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

COMMITTEE:

WAYS AND MEANS



CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

May 3, 2005

DISTRICT OFFICES:
1040 MAIN STREET, SUITE 101
NAPA, CA 94559
(707) 226-9898

317 THIRD STREET, SUITE 1
EUREKA, CA 95501
(707) 269-9595

POST OFFICE BOX 2208
FORT BRAGG, CA 95437
(707) 962-0933

712 MAIN STREET, SUITE 1
WOODLAND, CA 95695
(530) 662-5272

CAPITOL OFFICE:
231 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-3311

WEB: <http://mikethompson.house.gov>

Secretary Carlos M. Gutierrez
Office of the Secretary
Room 5516
U.S. Department of Commerce
14th & Constitution Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20230

RE: Disaster Declaration for 2005 California Salmon Fisheries

Dear Secretary Gutierrez:

This year salmon fishermen from California and Oregon will experience unprecedented restrictions on their salmon fishing season due to very poor adult salmonid returns to the Klamath River. The low returns are the result of a multi-year drought and subsequent water conditions. The situation is so extreme that I am writing to urge you to declare a fishery disaster, as provided for under the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Act, to provide financial relief for the affected individuals, businesses and communities.

On April 8th 2005, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) recommended severe restrictions on the offshore ocean salmon fisheries of California and Oregon. As a result, in California, the Fish & Game Commission has imposed a drastically reduced salmon fishing season for commercial ocean and in-river fishermen and for the subsistence fishery relied on by the Yurok, Hoopa and Karuk Tribes. This will result in catastrophic economic losses for fishing families and for fishing dependent communities. The estimated loss to the California commercial fishing fleet alone could exceed \$100 million. The situation for others, including processors, port and tribal communities, related on-shore businesses, sports fishing guides and related businesses will be disastrous. Similar steps have been taken in Oregon with similar impacts on the local fishing industry and communities.

At least twice before, NOAA Fisheries declared the salmon fisheries of the West coast a disaster, once following the seven-year drought of the late 1980's and

Secretary Gutierrez
May 3, 2005
Page 2

early 1990's and an earlier one following the El Niño of 1982-83. Declaration of a fishery disaster is the first step needed to allow the affected individuals and businesses to access federal disaster relief programs called for under the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

I urge your immediate review of the situation so that the affected communities can help prepare for the impact of the new restrictions. If you have any questions regarding this request or need additional information concerning the financial impact of the restrictions please not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



MIKE THOMPSON
Member of Congress

Cc: Dr. William Hogarth, NOAA Assistant Administrator for Fisheries
Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor Ted Kulongoski
U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein
U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer
U.S. Senator Ron Wyden
U.S. Senator Gordon Smith
The Honorable Wally Herger
The Honorable Greg Walden
The Honorable John Doolittle
The Honorable Richard Pombo
The Honorable Nick Rahall
Humboldt County Board of Supervisors
Del Norte County Board of Supervisors
Mendocino County Board of Supervisors
Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen
Yurok Tribe
Hoopa Tribe
Karuk Tribe