

November 17, 2022

The Honorable Gina Raimondo
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Raimondo,

We write to request that the Department of Commerce immediately declare a federal fishery disaster for the 2022-2023 Bering Sea snow crab, the 2022-2023 Bristol Bay red king crab, and the 2021-2022 Bristol Bay red king crab fisheries. The State of Alaska requested a disaster under the under Section 312 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. §1861a) and Section 308 of the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act (16 U.S.C. 4101 et seq) on October 21. While there is still a disaster request pending for the 2021-2022 Bering Sea snow crab and Tanner crab fisheries, the aforementioned disasters deserve immediate consideration due to the fact that no harvest occurred.

Many of these fishermen and businesses hail from both Alaska and Washington, and the impacts of these fishery disasters extend far beyond our states to consumers across the United States and the world. The State of Alaska estimates the ex-vessel losses from the Bristol Bay red king crab and Bering Sea snow crab fisheries for the 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 seasons to be \$287.7 million. The economic impact to downstream businesses such as seafood processors, gear suppliers, shipyards, and other downstream businesses will be even greater. Red king crab and snow crab are highly valued commodities traded internationally and relied upon by businesses that advertise these specialty foods at their restaurants and shops. Yet, the longer the disaster declaration and funding process takes, the greater the impact on our fishermen who are already facing incredibly difficult decisions that could include closing their businesses or filing for bankruptcy this year.

Declaring a fishery disaster for the Bering Sea snow crab and Bristol Bay red king crab fisheries as quickly as possible is critical to support these fishery stakeholders and their communities. The disaster declaration is a key step needed before the Congress can secure funding for aid to impacted communities. These historic closures require the Department to take immediate and decisive action to ensure fishing families and the businesses and communities that depend on them secure assistance they need as soon as possible. Thank you for the opportunity to bring this issue to your attention and for your consideration.

Sincerely,

CC: OMB

