



\$10 Million Approved for Disaster Relief for West Coast Fishing Communities

July 13, 2006

Washington, DC – The U.S. Appropriations Committee today approved \$10 million in aid for communities hard hit by the fishery resource disaster off the Western U.S. coastline, the four Senators from California and Oregon announced

In a joint news release, Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), Ron Wyden (R-Ore.), and Gordon Smith (D-Ore.) thanked Senators Thad Cochran (R-Miss.) and Robert Byrd (D-W.V.), chairman and ranking member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, and Senators Richard Shelby (R-Ala.) and Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.), the chairman and ranking member of the Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations Subcommittee for supporting the disaster assistance.

“This is an important step forward in our efforts to help the families and businesses hurt by the nearly complete closure of the salmon fishing season,” Senator Feinstein said. **“I greatly appreciate the efforts by the Appropriations Committee leadership to assist us in this effort. But much more needs to be done and I am determined to work closely with my colleagues to bring additional assistance to the area.”**

“We have a down payment,” Senator Smith said. **“These funds will go directly to our fishermen and local businesses impacted by the restricted season. The fishermen have tough months ahead of them. We need to continue to work toward a basin wide solution that improves the situation. As long as there are problems with the Klamath, our fishermen will need our help.”**

“This is the beginning, not the end, of our work to get direct assistance for our fishermen and coastal communities,” Senator Wyden said. **“Earlier this week we asked the Committee to help our fishermen with direct aid, and this is a good start. We will keep working to get the additional funding our coastal communities so desperately need.”**

“We need to be clear: hundreds of California families' livelihoods are at stake,” Senator Boxer said. **“While I am pleased we were able to get these initial funds, our work is far from over. Now we will take this fight to the Senate floor to ensure our fishing communities quickly receive additional disaster relief.”**

Last week, Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez declared the salmon fishing season, in the states of California and Oregon, a fishery resource disaster. He did this after hearing from the four Senators, local Congress members and the two Governors about the urgent need for help in the wake of a federal government decision on April 28 to severely limit commercial salmon fishing at Point Falcon in Oregon to south of the Monterey Bay in California.

For the third consecutive year, the number of naturally spawning Klamath River Chinook salmon is expected to fall below the conservation floor called for in the fishery management plan for salmon. As a result, the Pacific Fishery Management Council closed commercial salmon fishing this season along more than 400 nautical miles, stretching from Florence, Oregon to Pigeon Point, California.

This is the largest fishery closure ever on the West Coast and is already having a devastating impact on rural, coastal economies in California, Oregon and Washington.

Over the last month, there have been repeated accounts from coastal communities of businesses closing and people missing mortgage, lease and electricity payments. There are 1042 salmon trollers in the affected area, and thousands of fishermen whose livelihoods have been taken away from them.

The Governors of Oregon and California estimate that the impact to Oregon's and California's coastal communities will be \$81 million. The States are contributing their own resources to help, \$5 million in grants from the State of California and \$3.2 million from the State of Oregon.

Last month, the Senate passed legislation (Sec. 114(c) of S.2012) that makes salmon fishermen and supporting businesses in the affected area eligible for direct assistance. This is an important step toward bringing relief, but funding is still needed.

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