



Statement by Senator Dianne Feinstein
On West Coast Fishery Disaster Declaration

July 6, 2006

Washington, DC – In the wake of calls by top federal and state elected officials from California and Oregon to provide relief to salmon fishermen, U.S. Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez tonight declared a fishery resource disaster in the salmon fisheries off the states' coasts.

The following is a statement by Senator Feinstein, who organized tonight's conference call and a previous call on Monday:

“Earlier tonight in a conference call with the two Governors, four Senators and several Representatives from impacted areas of California and Oregon, Secretary Gutierrez notified us that he is declaring a fishery resource disaster to help provide relief to salmon fishermen who have been economically devastated by the near complete closure of the salmon fishing season along the West Coast.

This was an important step forward in securing assistance for those most in need, which includes not only the fishermen, but other affected businesses in the area. I am pleased that the Secretary has recognized the magnitude of this problem and has declared a disaster. He has also pledged to work with me and my colleagues in lobbying the Appropriations Committee for funds.

The Secretary said the fishery resource disaster would immediately enable those in need to apply for low interest loans from the Small Business Administration.

He also announced that he is sending an evaluation team headed by Bill Hogarth, director of NOAA's Fisheries Service, to the West Coast on Monday to begin the process leading up to a determination of a commercial fishery failure – a more comprehensive declaration than that made tonight.

And the agency will be working with the Governors of both states to hire local fishermen to expedite the collection of data necessary for the commercial fishery failure declaration.

Additionally, he said, the impacted communities will be given priority for grants to assist in economic development.

I am deeply concerned about the families and businesses hurt by this near complete closure of the salmon fishing season. I understand how devastating this can be. And I will continue to work with my colleagues to bring much needed assistance.”

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