



NOAA

**NATIONAL OCEANIC AND
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION**
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



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Secretary of Commerce declares disaster for Alaska King Salmon

Acting U.S. Secretary of Commerce Rebecca Blank today declared a commercial fishery failure on Alaska's Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers and in the Cook Inlet due to low Chinook salmon returns during the 2012 fishing season and previous years.

The disaster declaration makes it possible for Congress to appropriate money toward alleviating the financial hardship to fishermen caused by the fishery disaster. If money is appropriated, NOAA will work closely with Congress and the state of Alaska to develop plans to assist coastal communities.

"Some Cook Inlet salmon fisheries have experienced revenue losses of up to 90 percent of their historical average during the 2012 season, seriously hurting local economies that are dependent on fishing," said Acting Secretary Blank. "We also understand that the communities along the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers are heavily dependent on both commercial and subsistence fisheries and are particularly vulnerable to dramatic reductions in Chinook salmon. I am making a fishery failure declaration so that Congress is able to appropriate funding that will mitigate some of the economic consequences of the reduced fish stocks. The future challenges facing the men and women in this industry and in these communities are daunting, and we want to do everything we can to help them through these difficult times."

In July, Alaska Governor Sean Parnell and the Alaska Federation of Natives requested the disaster determination for the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers. The governor added Cook Inlet to the request last month.

Acting Secretary Blank is declaring the commercial fishery failure under Section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act and Section 308(b) of the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act.

"Fishing is the lifeblood of many coastal communities, providing jobs, a continuation of an historic tradition and culture, recreational opportunities for millions of anglers, and contributing to food security for the nation," said Dr. Jane Lubchenco, NOAA administrator. "Finding solutions will not be easy, but by continuing to work together, we can have healthy fish stocks, profitable fisheries, and vibrant fishing communities."

The state of Alaska manages the salmon fisheries and collects biological and economic information. NOAA Fisheries Alaska Region has undertaken a review of the status of the Yukon River, Kuskokwim River, and Cook Inlet commercial salmon fisheries based on relevant fishery and economic information provided by the state.

NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. Join us on Facebook, Twitter and our other social media channels at <http://www.noaa.gov/socialmedia/>. To learn more about NOAA Fisheries in Alaska, visit <http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov> or <http://www.afsc.noaa.gov>.

