



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**SECRETARY BROWN ANNOUNCES \$13 MILLION IN
DISASTER ASSISTANCE FOR NORTHWEST FISHERIES**

The Commerce Department will provide an additional \$13 million in disaster assistance to help commercial fishermen and small fishery-dependent businesses that have sustained heavy losses resulting from the collapse of salmon fishery resources in the Northwest.

Commerce Secretary Ronald H. Brown will use his legislative authority to extend a disaster relief program initiated last year in the Pacific Northwest in response to the unprecedented low numbers of Pacific salmon stocks. Brown provided \$12 million in assistance to the region last October to aid fishermen who were affected by the depletion of the salmon fishery.

"The Clinton administration has consistently demonstrated its commitment to the sustainable development of commercial fisheries," Brown said. "Today's disaster assistance package also demonstrates our understanding that healthy stocks are a source of livelihood and a way of life in fishing communities around the country, and around the world. The threat to these fisheries is a threat to these communities."

The funds, issued through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Office of Sustainable Development, are designated for programs that address both fishery resource and human factors. This program began in 1994 and is achieving the twin goals of short-term assistance to fishermen and long-term benefits to the fishery resource.

"We have already taken serious management actions in the Northwest to address the concerns about the resource and of the fishing families, but we must do more," said NOAA Administrator

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D. James Baker. "Extraordinary measures are called for, both in how we manage these valuable resources and in how we respond to the needs of our fishing families."

In the Northwest \$13 million in emergency assistance will be released to the states of Washington, Oregon and California as a result of the continuing disaster due to the effects of El Niño and years of drought. These funds will augment the three-state Northwest Emergency Assistance Plan announced last year, which includes a vessel/permit buyout program and habitat restoration and data collection jobs program.

Seven million dollars will be made available in Washington state for these programs, \$5 million in Oregon and \$700,000 in Northern California.

Currently, under last year's program there are dozens of projects underway in the three states that will eventually employ more than 300 displaced fishermen at jobs paying between \$10-15 per hour. In addition, the state of Washington is in the process of permanently retiring 300 salmon fishing permits, 20 percent of the fleet.

"The program we have embarked upon in the Northwest truly represents a dynamic, proactive way of dealing with natural resource disasters," Secretary Brown said. "We are providing critical training to individuals exiting the fishing industry, and through our research and restoration efforts will accelerate the recovery of salmon stocks for those who remain."

"Working closely with the governors and the congressional delegations, we intend to continue and expand existing programs rather than create new programs, thus cutting back on the time needed to implement them and hastening the time it takes for fishermen to actually see the benefits of the assistance," added Brown.

The \$13 million for the Northwest is part of a larger \$53 million disaster assistance program initiated by Secretary Brown in response to the national crisis in fisheries in the Northeast, Northwest and Gulf states.

"We intend to work very closely with all interested parties in the three regions to ensure that appropriate remedies are applied to the different circumstances," said Brown.

Under section 308(d) of the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act, commercial fishermen who have suffered uninsured losses will be eligible for financial assistance under programs to be developed in cooperation with their state government agencies.

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**SECRETARY BROWN ANNOUNCES \$53 MILLION IN DISASTER
ASSISTANCE FOR NORTHEAST, NORTHWEST AND GULF FISHERIES**

The Commerce Department will provide \$53 million in disaster assistance to help commercial fishermen and small fishery-dependent businesses following the collapse of fishery resources in the Northeast, Northwest and Gulf states.

Commerce Secretary Ronald H. Brown will use his legislative authority to provide the relief funds, extending to the Northeast and Gulf of Mexico a disaster relief program initiated last year in the Pacific Northwest. Last year's program was in response to the unprecedented low numbers of Pacific salmon stocks in the region.

"The Clinton administration has consistently demonstrated its commitment to the sustainable development of commercial fisheries," Brown said. "Today's disaster assistance package also demonstrates our understanding that healthy stocks are a source of livelihood and a way of life in fishing communities around the country, and around the world. The threat to these fisheries is a threat to these communities."

The funds, issued through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Office of Sustainable Development, are designated for programs that address both fishery resource and human factors.

"We have already taken serious management actions in all three regions to address the concerns of the resource and the fishing families, but we must do more," said NOAA Administrator D. James Baker. "Extraordinary measures are called for, both in how we manage these valuable resources and in how we respond to needs of our fishing families."

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In the Northeast, the groundfish stocks that had long sustained a healthy commercial fishery have disappeared. The assistance program includes \$25 million for the implementation of a vessel/permit buyout program that retires fishing vessels and buys back existing permits.

In the Northwest \$13 million in emergency assistance will be released to the states of Washington, Oregon and California as a result of the continuing disaster due to the effects of El Niño and years of drought on the salmon fisheries. These funds will augment the three-state Northwest Emergency Assistance Plan announced last year, which includes a vessel/permit buyout program and habitat restoration and data collection jobs program.

In the Gulf of Mexico, the commercial fishing industry will receive \$15 million in emergency assistance to compensate for equipment lost or damaged by uncharted seabed obstructions caused by major flooding over the past two years and other natural forces.

All of these situations involve serious harm to fishery resources, which has caused substantial loss to small fishing businesses and dependent coastal communities. In all three situations, adverse environmental conditions have aggravated already depleted fisheries resources.

"We intend to work very closely with all interested parties in the three regions to ensure that appropriate remedies are applied to the different circumstances," said Brown.

Under section 308(d) of the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act, commercial fishermen who have suffered uninsured losses will be eligible for financial assistance under programs to be developed in cooperation with their state government agencies.

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