

JAN - 4 2012



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
THE DIRECTOR

Ms. Loretta Bullard
President
Kawerak Incorporated
P.O. Box 948
Nome, AK 99762

Dear Ms. Bullard:

Thank you for your letters requesting that the commercial fishery failure in the Yukon River Chinook salmon fishery be expanded to include salmon fisheries in the Norton Sound and Port Clarence Districts. You also requested that the Department of Commerce conduct an analysis of the Chinook salmon failure in the Shaktoolik and Unalakleet sub-districts of Norton Sound to determine whether a fishery disaster determination is warranted.

On January 15, 2010, the Secretary of Commerce determined that a fisheries resource disaster had occurred in the Yukon River Chinook salmon fishery under Section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA). On May 5, 2010, I informed you that, because the salmon fisheries in the Norton Sound and Port Clarence Districts were not included in the analysis for the Yukon River determination, we could not expand the January 15, 2010, determination and would consider your request as a new request for a disaster determination.

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Alaska Region, worked with the State of Alaska to assess whether a commercial fishery failure occurred due to a fisheries resource disaster in the commercial salmon fisheries in Norton Sound and Port Clarence Districts and in the commercial Chinook salmon fishery in the Shaktoolik and Unalakleet sub-districts of Norton Sound. After reviewing the information provided by the State, the Secretary has determined that the request does not meet the requirements for such a finding under Section 312(a) of the MSA.

The threshold for making a determination of a commercial fishery failure is based on the loss of 12-month revenue compared to the average annual revenue in the most recent five-year period. The economic information provided by the State shows that revenue for the Norton Sound commercial salmon fishery was higher in 2009 than the 5-year average and more than double the 10-year average. Revenue in 2010 was the highest on record and more than double the 5-year average. This is due to both higher returns of chum and coho salmon and record ex-vessel value paid to the fishermen. The Shaktoolik and Unalakleet sub-districts support the largest commercial salmon fisheries in Norton Sound. For these sub-districts, the revenue from the salmon fishery was higher in 2009 and 2010 than the recent 5-year average. Looking at Chinook salmon only, since the directed commercial fishery was closed during the recent 5-year period, there is no loss of revenue for salmon fishermen from the low returns of Chinook salmon compared to the most recent 5-year period.

If you have further questions, please contact Dr. James W. Balsiger, NMFS Alaska Regional Administrator, at (907) 586-7221.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric C. Schwaab", written over a circular stamp.

Eric C. Schwaab

THE ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR
FOR FISHERIES



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