



THE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE
Washington, D.C. 20230

September 8, 2005

The Honorable Kathleen Babineaux Blanco
Governor of Louisiana
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804-9004

Dear Governor Blanco:

I am writing to inform you that the Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service is examining the effects of hurricane Katrina on the Gulf of Mexico fisheries under section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and section 308(d) of the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act (IFA).

I am making a determination that a commercial fishery failure and a fishery resource disaster within the meanings of section 312(a) of MSA and section 308(d) of IFA have begun in the Gulf of Mexico's commercial fisheries off of the Florida Keys and the north-central Gulf of Mexico, including Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana.

This declaration provides the Bush Administration with another tool to deliver disaster assistance to the Gulf region and enables us to work with you and your communities to evaluate the storm's short-term and long-term impact. Over the coming weeks and months, we will work closely with you, your marine resource agency staff, and commercial entities in your state to evaluate the impacts of Katrina on Gulf fishery stocks and your state's fishing and processing infrastructure. We will use these evaluations to assess the need for fishery disaster assistance that cannot be met through other existing federal relief programs.

The assistance available under MSA section 312(a) and IFA section 308 (d) are somewhat different. The federal share of any relief activities under MSA section 312(a) may not exceed 75 percent of their cost. There is no matching requirement under IFA section 308(d). Both provisions cover different fishery conditions, so we will use each authority as necessary to provide the most effective and timely response possible.

The Department of Commerce will continue to coordinate with you and the other affected states as appropriate and of course will keep you apprised as decisions are made. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or Nat Wienecke, Acting Assistant Secretary for Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs, at (202) 482-3663.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carlos M. Gutierrez".

Carlos M. Gutierrez