



CHARLIE CRIST GOVERNOR
GOVERNOR

2009 MAY 11 PM 2:36

May 6, 2009

Secretary Gary Locke
United States Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

RE: Federal Fishery Disaster Relief

Dear Secretary Locke:

The National Marine Fisheries Service is developing an emergency rule that would prohibit the use of all commercial reef fish longline gear inside of 50 fathoms in the Gulf of Mexico. The emergency action would immediately reduce the unintended catch and mortality of federally protected sea turtles until permanent regulations are implemented. The State of Florida supports quick action to protect and conserve endangered and threatened sea turtles.

Since the emergency action is likely to cause economic hardship to the commercial reef fish industry in Florida, I respectfully request that you make a determination of a fishery failure for the commercial reef fish longline industry and related seafood dealers in Florida.

In making this request we recognize that important details need to be addressed and there is still uncertainty about the length of time the emergency closure may be in effect. However, because of the immediate impact of this action once implemented, I believe an important first step is to anticipate the need and make a determination that this industry qualifies for federal fishery disaster relief. I believe aid should be provided to support the transition from longline gear to other types of reef fish gear that will not harm sea turtles and also to replace the dockside value lost from reef fish not landed.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charlie Crist".

Charlie Crist

cc: Florida Fish and Wildlife
Conservation Commission