



County of Del Norte
Board of Supervisors
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October 10, 2023

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Request for Federal Disaster Declaration for Groundfish Fishery

Dear Governor Newsom:

The Del Norte County Board of Supervisors is respectfully requesting that you, acting in your authority as the Governor of the State of California, request that the Secretary of the United States Department of Commerce make a declaration of a fishery resources disaster pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, due to the 2023 closure of the nearshore groundfish fishery in California.

On August 7, 2023 CDFW took in-season action to prohibit the retention of quillback rockfish within the Northern Groundfish Management Area (GMA) *due to the most recent quillback rockfish stock assessment indicating a population in severe decline*. CDFW then took more drastic steps and closed the groundfish season for all nearshore species within the 50-fathom boundary (i.e. "off-shore only rules") within the Northern, Mendocino, San Francisco, and Central GMA's on August 21, 2023. In the Southern GMA, encompassing the rest of the California coastline, these same off-shore only rules for groundfish retention went into effect on September 16, 2023, as previously planned by CDFW.

As a rural coastal community, many residents of Del Norte County are reliant on the local marine fishery for their livelihood such as charter boat owners, fishing supply stores, and seafood restaurants. Sport ocean fishing is a major attractant for visitors to our community and many sectors of our economy rely on this tourism such as grocery stores, gas stations, motels, RV parks, restaurants, etc. The effect on the individual fisherpeople and small business owners has been and will continue to be devastating, particularly when coupled with the concomitant 2023 commercial and sport salmon season closure, as well as our community's recovery from this summer's 94,693-acre Smith River Complex Fires. We are presently gathering data to inform exactly how much economic damage has been caused by the groundfish fishery closure and we anticipate the economic damage will be substantial. We encourage the Department to support economic relief efforts for Del Norte and our other coastal communities by swiftly working with the Governor to declare a fisheries disaster

declaration for groundfish to provide relief for people who's livelihoods depend on this fishery. As you are aware, the estimated \$450 million loss to the States salmon fishery is a drop in the bucket compared to the states commercial and recreational groundfish fishery, with an nearly US\$200 million in ex-vessel value in 2018 (NMFS [2021](#)) and overall commercial and recreational fishing activity which is responsible for \$25 billion in economic activity and the creation of 142,000 jobs in California (Miller et al. 2017).

As such, the Board of Supervisors respectfully requests your attention to this matter in order for our local community to receive essential economic assistance. Your involvement and leadership in response to this critical issue is very much appreciated.

Respectfully,

Darrin Short
Chairman

Cc: Honorable Alex Padilla, Member of United States Senate
Honorable Jared Huffman, Member of United States House of Representatives
Honorable Mike McGuire, Member of California State Senate
Honorable Jim Wood, Member of California State Assembly
Charlton H. Bonham, Director, California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Melissa Miller-Henson, Executive Director, California Fish and Game Commission

References:

² [NMFS](#) (National Marine Fisheries Service). 2021. Fisheries of the United States, 2019. National Marine Fisheries Service, Current Fishery Statistics No. 2019, Silversprings, Maryland. Available from: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/sustainable-fisheries.fisheries-united-states> (March 2022).

³Miller, R.R., J. Field, J. Santora, Monk, M.H., R. Kosaka, C. Thomson. 2017. Spatial valuation of California marine fisheries as an ecosystem service. Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences. doi.org/10.1139/cjfas-2016-0228