GOVERNOR ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER

April 5, 2006

The Honorable Carlos M. Gutierrez
Secretary of Commerce
United States Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue Northwest
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Mr. Secretary,

As I write this letter, the Pacific Fisheries Management Council (PFMC) is considering further input on their recommendation to you on the complete closure of, or a severely restricted salmon season. This decision is based upon the potential impacts to the predicted low abundance of naturally spawning Klamath River Fall Chinook. The impacts of a closed or restricted season would be significant to the commercial and recreational fishermen, their communities and the tribes that depend on this salmon for cultural significance and subsistence. Healthy rivers and salmon populations are vital to the California economy, which is why I take great concern with any forthcoming decisions to impose restrictions.

If a closed or restricted season is imposed, I am requesting that you use your authority under Section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) to determine that there has been a commercial fishery failure due to a fishery resource disaster. It is the view of California fishery managers, that the causes of poor recruitment are associated with several significant factors including: drought, poor ocean condition, Klamath River water quality, reduced habitat and parasites. Consequently, the root causes of the disaster are beyond the ability or control of the fisheries managers to mitigate through conservation and management measures or both. My administration has been in frequent contact with members of the California and Oregon congressional delegations on Klamath issues, who share a strong interest in protecting our resources, but also to ensure that the economic disaster that may befall this industry is addressed appropriately and in a timely manner. Key to this is your determination of a commercial fishery failure, so that fishing dependent communities can receive economic disaster assistance under the MSA.

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California has invested millions of dollars to restore salmon habitats through partnerships with the federal government, local agencies and non-profits. These investments are providing significant benefits and contributing to species survival. The pending PFMC recommendations to the Commerce Department could have dire consequences on the salmon industry. California's investment in our fisheries has produced a second year of very robust Fall Chinook recruitment on the Sacramento River. However, since we must manage to the least abundant population, this run will be unavailable to commercial or ocean recreational fisherman due to the decline in Klamath salmon stocks.

Although we have seen great success through our investment in salmon restoration projects, this issue remains extremely complex. There is far more to be done that goes well beyond the purpose of this letter. To that point however, it is important to note that Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski and I, along with your department and other federal agencies signed, "The Klamath River Watershed Coordination Agreement." This agreement calls for development of a long-term management approach, common vision, and integrated planning associated with the Klamath Basin. I remain tirelessly committed to that agreement and the approach it dictates.

There are many significant challenges and issues that must be resolved in order to improve the health of the Klamath Basin and provide for the long-term sustainability of the industries that depend on the region. Should the California salmon season be closed, or the season restricted, I am requesting that you use your authority to determine that there has been a commercial fishery failure due to a fishery resource disaster.

I look forward to your favorable reply.

Sincerely,

Arnold Schwarzenegger