



Alaska State Legislature

Representative Sarah Vance

House District 6 ~ Chair House Fisheries ~ Chair House Judiciary

September 13, 2024

Governor Mike Dunleavy
120 4th Street, 3rd Floor
Juneau, AK 99801

Chief of Staff Tyson Gallagher
TRANSMIT VIA E-MAIL: tyson.gallagher@alaska.gov

Re: Request a Disaster Emergency Resulting from the Low Return of Pink Salmon in 2024 for the Prince William Sound, Kodiak, Upper Cook Inlet, Lower Cook Inlet, South Peninsula and Chignik Salmon Fisheries

Dear Governor Dunleavy,

I am writing on behalf of my constituents to urgently request that you seek a disaster emergency for the 2024 salmon fisheries in Prince William Sound, Kodiak, Upper Cook Inlet, Lower Cook Inlet, South Peninsula and Chignik. The unprecedented low return of pink salmon has left many fishermen without income, while others are burdened with significant debt from this disastrous season. For those whose livelihoods depend on the salmon harvest, this is an economic crisis with profound and far-reaching impacts.

The sharp decline in salmon returns means that countless fishermen, who rely solely on this season's harvest, are unable to pay their bills or meet basic living expenses. The economic ripple effect in our coastal communities is severe, as local businesses that depend on a robust fishing season also suffer. The 50/50 fish tax shared between the state and municipalities—a critical revenue source for local governments—will be dramatically reduced, further compounding the financial challenges these communities face.

The loss of income is particularly devastating in a year where rising costs of food, fuel, and other essentials have already strained household budgets. Immediate assistance is needed to prevent further hardship and stabilize these communities. I greatly appreciate the research efforts of your office and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) to understand the causes of these low returns, but a request for a disaster declaration from your office is urgently required to expedite a federal disaster determination. This will allow financial relief to reach the affected fishermen, families, and communities more quickly.

The commercial season for pink salmon in Prince William Sound ended with a harvest of just over 5 million fish—less than a quarter of the nearly 20.5 million forecasted. Statewide, the all-species catch stands at 95.3 million, and it is unlikely to exceed 100 million—numbers not seen

since 1987. This harvest failure has left entire communities facing one of the worst salmon seasons in recent memory.

In light of these devastating circumstances and the critical importance of the salmon industry to Alaska's coastal economies, I strongly urge you to declare a disaster emergency for the Prince William Sound, Kodiak, Upper Cook Inlet, Lower Cook Inlet, South Peninsula and Chignik salmon fisheries. Swift action is needed to help these communities recover from the financial strain and to mitigate the longer-term effects of this disaster.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this urgent matter and for your continued support of the fishermen and families across Alaska.

Respectfully,



Representative Sarah Vance

cc:

Legislative Director Laura Stidolph (laura.stidolph@alaska.gov)

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