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Governor Mike Dunleavy  
STATE OF ALASKA

November 4, 2024

The Honorable Gina Raimondo  
Secretary  
United States Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Raimondo,

In accordance with Section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), I am writing to request a fishery resource disaster determination for the 2024 Kotzebue District salmon fishery.

In 2024, there was an unexpected large decrease in the harvest of chum salmon in the Kotzebue District salmon fishery. The harvest of 5,392 chum salmon was the poorest harvest on record and well below the projected harvest of 200,000 to 300,000 chum salmon. Preliminary data estimates the value of the 2024 Kotzebue salmon fishery at \$25,085 which is 98 percent below the recent five-year average of \$1.06 million. The Kotzebue District salmon fishery is in the Arctic/Yukon/Kuskokwim (AYK) region where several salmon stocks collapsed beginning in 2020, as indicated by positive fishery resource disaster determinations for the 2020 through 2022 Norton Sound, Yukon, and Kuskokwim salmon fisheries. Declines in the 2024 Kotzebue chum salmon runs may represent the beginning of a similar collapse of chum salmon stocks in the area. The cause of the 2024 Kotzebue Sound chum salmon fishery disaster may be due to natural causes that have been associated with changes in freshwater and marine ecosystems and competition in the ocean, similar to findings for recent AYK fishery resource disasters. The declines in chum salmon run abundance may also be due to an undetermined cause.

Ninety percent of the 148 Kotzebue District salmon permit holders live in Kotzebue or rural villages in the region. Fishery losses for participants who reside in Kotzebue and other rural areas in the region were likely severe and resulted in adverse impacts because residents rely on the commercial salmon fishery for income and have very limited economic opportunities outside of the fishery.

Subsistence salmon harvest is not assessed annually but staff from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) contacted residents of the Kotzebue District in late August/early

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September to gauge subsistence fishermen's success in obtaining chum salmon to meet their needs. Some fishermen reported their needs were being met while others indicated that fishing was slow and that their needs may not be met this season. The 2024 Kotzebue District subsistence fishery was also hampered by several periods of heavy rain that caused some river systems to experience high water levels and flooding in specific areas.

Based on available information in the attached memo, the 2024 Kotzebue District salmon fishery likely meets the criteria for a fishery disaster determination. I appreciate your consideration of this request and have asked the ADF&G to provide the National Marine Fisheries Service and your office with any additional information needed to make fishery disaster determinations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Dunleavy", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Mike Dunleavy  
Governor

cc: The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, United States Senate  
The Honorable Dan Sullivan, United States Senate  
The Honorable Mary Peltola, United States House of Representatives  
The Honorable Doug Vincent-Lang, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish & Game