



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**Secretary of Commerce**  
Washington, D.C. 20230

December 11, 2024

The Honorable Kristopher Peters  
Chairman  
Squaxin Island Tribe  
3110 S.E. Billy Frank Jr. Way  
Shelton, WA 98584

Dear Chairman Peters:

Thank you for your letter requesting a determination of a fishery resource disaster for the 2023 Squaxin Island Tribe Puget Sound fall chum salmon fishery. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service evaluated information from the impacted fishery. Upon review, I have found that the request for a fishery resource disaster for the 2023 Squaxin Island Tribe Puget Sound fall chum salmon fishery meets the requirements under the Fishery Resource Disasters Improvement Act, which amended section 312(a) the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA).

In order to have a positive determination, there must be a fishery resource disaster from an allowable cause. The 2023 decline in Puget Sound chum salmon abundance is due to natural causes, including unfavorable ocean conditions and high temperatures, which impacted juvenile survival rates during the 2014-2019 warm period, leading to fewer adult returns. Therefore, there was a loss of access under the MSA in this fishery due to an allowable cause. The factors mentioned caused the 2023 Squaxin Island Tribe Puget Sound fall chum salmon fishery to experience a nearly 100 percent revenue loss for the commercial fishery, compared to the previous 5-year average with no fishery resource disaster determinations. The reduced subsistence fishery during the disaster year 2023 created a severe subsistence and cultural hardship for tribal families. Therefore, this fishery meets the requirements for a positive fishery disaster determination.

This determination now makes the 2023 Squaxin Island Tribe Puget Sound fall chum salmon fishery eligible for fishery disaster assistance. Should the Department of Commerce receive Congressional appropriations for fisheries disasters, the Department of Commerce will consider allocating disaster assistance for this fishery. In addition, eligible businesses and other tribal entities may be able to access other loan/funding programs through other Federal relief programs (e.g., Small Business Administration loans). Programs within the Department (e.g., Economic Development Administration grants) may also be available.

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Should you have any questions, please contact Susie Feliz, Assistant Secretary for  
Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs, at (202) 482-3663 or [SFeliz@doc.gov](mailto:SFeliz@doc.gov).

Sincerely,



Gina M. Raimondo