



CALIFORNIA MARINE AFFAIRS AND NAVIGATION CONFERENCE

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April 3, 2020

The Honorable Jared Huffman
1527 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC, 20515

Dear Representative Huffman,

California's Commercial Fishing Industry and the infrastructure that supports them needs your immediate time and action.

In 2017 in California, according to the National Ocean Economic Program, over \$200 million worth of commercial fish were landed. IN your District the landings were over \$68 million.

We have heard a variety of stories from the fisherman worried about being able to hang on to their boats and crew:

"Our Key concerns are survival. A lot of the wholesale businesses that buy from us sell to restaurants. Those restaurants may never return to normalcy and will not be able to pay their suppliers. In turn, fishing boat owners, fuel and gear providers along with cold storages will suffer."

"All these boats are small family owned businesses. If they don't work they will need some help. Otherwise we'll lose the fleet. Same goes for the buyers and distribution businesses."

"These canceled travelers represent revenue that cannot be recovered even when the virus is contained. With no end in sight, we will soon have to lay off our employees. These employees are highly skilled, trained and licensed in their field and it will be devastating to our small business to lose them. In addition to our loss of crew, there is also a good chance that our extensive operating costs (insurance, berthing, licensing, maintenance, etc.) will force us to have to sell one, if not both of our boats."

You and the 116th Congress recognized the impacts to the fishing communities by authorizing the Secretary of Commerce to provide assistance and appropriating \$300 million. The Department of Commerce has in the past provided fishery disaster assistance, so they have the knowledge base.

The fishing industry in California are our partners, we need you to take action by getting the Secretary to immediately get the assistance program up, running and funds distributed as quickly as possible. The funds need to get to the industry today. We have fisherman that are worried that they will lose their boats right now without immediate relief.

The commercial fishing industry also needs your leadership in requesting that the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to provide every possible assistance to this industry. The seafood supply chain has been severely compromised by the closure of so many restaurants. These agencies could help by waiving or deferring certain fees, temporarily ceasing the requirement for at-sea observers, etc. Mr. Ryan Wulff is the Regional Director of the NMFS; Mr. Chuck Bonham is the Director of the CDFW.

As always, we are very appreciative of the efforts you have expended in support of California's system of ports and harbors.

Sincerely,

Jim Haussener
Executive Director