

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-2404**

July 2, 2019

The Honorable Wilbur Ross  
Secretary of Commerce  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
14<sup>th</sup> and Constitution Avenue N.W.  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Ross:

I am writing to inquire into Governor Phil Bryant's May 31, 2019 request for a federal fisheries disaster declaration for Mississippi under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Section 315 of that law authorizes you to establish a regional economic transition program to provide disaster relief assistance to fishermen, charter fishing operations, U.S. processors, and owners of fishery-related infrastructure affected by a catastrophic regional fishery disaster, subject to the availability of appropriations.

The Additional Supplemental Appropriations for Disaster Relief Act (Public Law 116-20), enacted on June 6, 2019, provides \$150 million to the Department of Commerce for fishery disaster assistance. As you develop an allocation plan for these funds, I urge you to consider the environmental damage and the threatened economic lifeblood the Mississippi Gulf Coast is facing.

This year has seen the Bonnet Carré Spillway opened longer than any year in history. As you know, the opening inundates marine environments with fresh water and decimates wildlife along the Gulf Coast. Many in coastal communities have livelihoods dependent on healthy marine environments. A fisheries disaster declaration will help the Gulf Coast through financial hardship and rebuild the progress we have made on aquaculture.

A timely fishery disaster declaration is vital for coastal communities to deal with financial hardships. Please contact me if there is anything I can do to help expediate your determination. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Steven M. Palazzo  
Member of Congress

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