

Eshoo Applauds Disaster Declaration as Important 'First Step'

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WASHINGTON — Today, Rep. Anna G. Eshoo, D-Palo Alto, applauded U.S. Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez's decision to declare a "fishery resource disaster" on the West Coast but added that this was the beginning, not the end, of the federal government's responsibility to provide disaster assistance to respond to this crisis.

The Secretary's declaration offers fishermen access to low-interest Small Business Administration Economic Injury Disaster Loans but falls short of the direct financial aid that would be provided under a "fishery failure disaster."

"While providing fishermen with access to loans may provide short-term relief, these fishermen have lost their livelihood and are unable to repay loans," Eshoo said. "More needs to be done to help them."

On June 29th, Gutierrez testified before the House Energy and Commerce Committee. "As a Member of this Committee, I pressed the Secretary about his failure to acknowledge the disastrous impact the commercial salmon fishery closure has had on fishermen and communities up and down the West Coast, and called on him to declare a fishery failure disaster," Eshoo said.

The Commerce Secretary will be dispatching high-level officials to the Klamath River communities beginning the week of July 10th to expedite the collection of economic impact data. This data will help determine whether a "fishery failure disaster" can be declared and further assistance — including direct economic assistance — can be provided.

"I intend to use this Declaration as a starting block and will continue to work closely with my colleagues in Congress to secure the necessary federal assistance that the fishermen need," Eshoo added.

Individuals seeking assistance should contact Rep. Eshoo's District Office at (650) 323-2984 or (831) 335-2020 or the SBA's Office of Disaster Assistance:

U.S. Small Business Administration

Office of Disaster Assistance

Field Operations Center - West

Post Office Box 419004

Sacramento, California 95841-9004

(800) 488-5323

(916) 735-1500

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