

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 10, 2017

The Honorable Wilbur Ross
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Ross:

We write in full support of the State of Florida's request for a federal fishery resource disaster declaration due to Hurricane Irma's devastation across Florida and its waters. As you know, Florida's coastal geography and abundant natural resources provide a haven for residents and tourists alike to recreationally fish and to enjoy fresh-caught seafood and locally-harvested aquaculture products. As a result, fisheries have an enormously positive impact on the state's economy, with income and employment effects extending far beyond the dock.

Unfortunately, Hurricane Irma's unusually large size combined with its intensity as a category four storm left nearly all of the state's coastal and interior waters directly impacted over the period from September 9-11, 2017. Fishermen, aquaculturists, and harvesters have suffered extensive damage or outright destruction of vessels, facilities, equipment, traps, and gear, and these losses are compounded by the decline in tourism and sales in the immediate aftermath of the storm. Florida's waters have provided family-owned businesses with income for generations, but these businesses and the people who depend on them are now at risk.

As you consider the state's request for a federal fishery resource disaster declaration and Economic Development Agency assistance in this time of recovery and rebuilding, we hope you will consider the full and diverse suite of people and industries that rely on our shores and waters. We stand ready to work with you.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator



Bill Nelson
U.S. Senator