

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 2, 2021

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

Dear Secretary Raimondo:

We write to bring your attention to a pending request by the State of Florida for the declaration of a federal fishery resource disaster in response to severe red tide events that occurred between 2015 and 2019. We respectfully urge you to expeditiously consider the State of Florida's request, and approve the disbursement of disaster assistance to fishing and seafood businesses that were harmed by the impacts to sea life that were caused by red tide.

On May 24, 2019, the State of Florida submitted a request to the U.S. Department of Commerce to declare a federal fishery resource disaster pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation Act, 16 U.S.C. § 1861a, and the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act, 16 U.S.C. § 4107, in response to the severe red tide events that occurred in the state between 2015 and 2019. As noted in the initial request, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission estimates that 1,300 licensed charter fishermen, 1,700 commercial fishermen, and 273 wholesalers were economically harmed by the impacts of the severe red tide blooms.

Last week marked two years since the State of Florida requested this desperately needed assistance. In that time, Florida's charter fishermen and seafood producers have been impacted by the economic ramifications of the coronavirus pandemic, and although economic conditions have improved, these stakeholders are rightly concerned that impacts by harmful algal blooms could harm Southwest Florida's fishing industries this year, as current conditions closely reflect those of early 2018. It would be devastating to fishing-dependent businesses in Southwest Florida if they were subjected to struggling through harmful algal bloom impacts this year while still awaiting disaster assistance in response to red tide events dating back to 2015. As such, we respectfully urge you to expeditiously approve the State of Florida's request in order to disburse fisheries disaster assistance as soon as possible.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator



Rick Scott
U.S. Senator



W. Gregory Steube
Member of Congress



Carlos Gimenez
Member of Congress



Byron Donalds
Member of Congress



Vern Buchanan
Member of Congress