

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 29, 2019

The Honorable Wilbur Ross
Secretary of Commerce
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 as a result of recent significant and persistent red tide events off Southwest Florida's coast. Southwest Florida's economy is strongly tied to the state of its coastal waters and fisheries. Residents and tourists alike contribute to the economic bounty of the region's waters through chartered fishing trips and the enjoyment of fresh-caught seafood and locally-harvested aquaculture products.

Unfortunately, successive red tide events in recent years have destroyed valuable fisheries stocks and depressed interest in guided angling and charter fishing opportunities. In particular, stone crab harvests – a Southwest Florida specialty – have seen some of the worst years in recent memory. As a result, many commercial and charter fishermen have suffered substantial economic losses and have had to radically change their business practices just to survive.

Southwest Florida's coasts have provided an important source of opportunity for generations of families who have built their livelihoods on these productive waters. To best support these working families in their time of need following the recent significant and persistent red tide events, we ask for your assistance in promptly fulfilling the State of Florida's request for a federal fishery resource disaster declaration. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator



Rick Scott
U.S. Senator