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Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
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May 25, 2010

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The Honorable Gary Locke  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Ave, NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Locke:

While I welcome your determination that there has been a fishery disaster in the Gulf of Mexico as a result of the ongoing Deepwater Horizon disaster, I am troubled that Florida was not included among the three states in this declaration. Florida commercial and recreational fishermen continue to ensure the safety and quality of our seafood. But, they too have been impacted by the spill and subsequently enacted fishery closures.

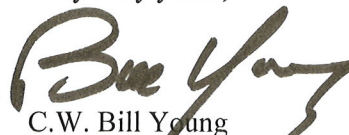
As we all know too well, for over a month, oil has been spilling into the Gulf of Mexico. Efforts continue to stop the flow of oil from the damaged well, but no quick solution has been found and an estimated 5,000 barrels of oil per day are still gushing into the ocean. As a result of the spill, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has closed almost one-quarter of the Gulf to fishing. The eastern boundary of this closure continues to expand, pushing it closer to Florida.

Although three-quarters of the Gulf of Mexico remains oil free, including the water off Florida's coast, Florida fishermen have been no less impacted by the spill. In your announcement of the fishery disaster declaration yesterday you indicated that you "are taking this action today because of the potentially significant economic hardship this spill may cause fishermen and the businesses and communities that depend on those fisheries." Many Florida fishermen worked in the now closed area and have been impacted through no fault of their own. A federal fisheries disaster declaration would enable these fishermen to receive immediate federal assistance, helping to avert disaster for commercial and recreational fishermen that contribute more than \$10 billion annually and support more than 150,000 jobs in Florida.

Florida fishermen have already been negatively impacted by previous closures, and past requests for assistance with fishery disasters in Florida have been ignored. For instance, on May 6, 2009, Florida Governor Charlie Crist asked the Department of Commerce to declare a fishery disaster after the Gulf of Mexico bottom longline reef fish fishery was closed due to turtle interactions. Many Florida fishermen lost their jobs and income due to this ruling and other closures, yet disaster requests have been continually ignored.

It is my hope that you will consider the impact that the current spill is having on Florida's commercial and recreational fishery and expand your fishery disaster declaration so that they are eligible for federal assistance. As always, I stand ready to provide any additional information. With best wishes and warmest personal regards, I am

Very truly yours,

  
C.W. Bill Young  
Member of Congress