



NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S SECOND SENATE DISTRICT

SENATOR MIKE MCGUIRE

MEDIA



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Coastal legislators request crab season disaster declaration

Letter urges Governor Brown to advance disaster declaration for California crab fishery and allied sectors

Sacramento, CA – Today, a bi-partisan coalition of state legislators requested that Governor Jerry Brown declare a fishery disaster due to the devastating impacts of the delayed California crab season.

“The delayed crab season is unprecedented in duration and magnitude and California crabbers need our help now more than ever. For the past three months, we have all been hopeful that we could kick off the harvest, but as the holidays came and went and acid levels remained too high, the statewide impact has been catastrophic,” said Senator Mike McGuire, Chairman of the Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture. **“Crabbers are experiencing devastating losses that can’t be recouped due to the collapse of the fall salmon season and the unprecedented delay in the crab harvest.”**

When levels of domoic acid in California crab were deemed unsafe for public consumption in early November, working collaboratively with the multimillion dollar California crab industry, the Department of Fish and Wildlife and Department of Public Health took emergency action to delay the crab season opener. Many were hopeful the domoic acid levels would subside, but they have persisted and we have now missed the peak of the season: Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years and Chinese New Year. These holiday celebrations have historically represented the time when the most California crab is consumed and the thousands of crab feeds that take place across the Golden State throughout the winter are now sourcing their supply from the Northwest, repurposing their events or cancelling all together.

Assemblyman Jim Wood, Vice Chair of the Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture said, “The ongoing postponement of crab season is another huge blow in what has been an incredibly difficult year for the fishing industry from start to finish. Formally declaring a disaster allows us to go after federal resources that would help our fisherman keep their families financially afloat.”

In their letter to Governor Brown requesting the disaster declaration, the coastal legislators outlined the many severe impacts the closure has had on the industry, as well as on local fishing families.

“The continued delays have created unprecedented damage to the crab market, and irreparable harm to the thousands who depend on a healthy harvest for their living. We believe it’s time to declare a fishery disaster,” the letter stated.

To add insult to injury, California is coming off of a disastrous salmon season as well. Crabbers turn to salmon for their livelihood in the summer and fall months and having both the fall salmon season collapse due to the state's historic drought and now this unprecedented crab season delay taking hold, families are in crisis. The California Dungeness and Rock crab fishery is in the top tier of California's commercial fisheries. Values have exceeded \$95 million per year and long-term averages of nearly \$60 million.

“California’s crab fishers are in dire straits,” said Senator Jerry Hill (D-San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties). “It’s imperative that all levels of government come together to aid our coastal communities and local economies that depend on this industry. A disaster declaration by the governor would be a strong step toward getting our crab fishers aid.”

The unforeseen disaster has forced crab fishermen to sell equipment and assets, further mortgage their future and seek low wage employment to put food on the table. The delay has been devastating to crabbers, fishery-dependent businesses and the coastal economy.

“Families tied to our fishing industry are struggling and need help,” said Assemblymember Phil Ting (D-San Francisco). “They have weathered many tough seasons and are now stretched to the breaking point. Without them, there will be no crab to eat once ocean conditions improve.”

A copy of the letter to Governor Brown is attached. Video and Sound On Tape of Senator McGuire discussing the crab disaster is available.

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