



April 29, 2020

Mr. Chris Oliver
Assistant Administrator for Fisheries
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1401 Constitution Avenue, Northwest, Room 5128
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Assistant Administrator Oliver:

As you know, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (P.L. 116-136), which Congress passed and the President signed into law on March 27, 2020, included \$300 million for fishery disaster assistance. The ongoing impacts of COVID-19 have created a substantial need for this assistance. Fishery stakeholders in our states are eager to understand how the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) will allocate this funding. In order to address concerns among stakeholders in our states, we urge you to establish a minimum allocation for small, coastal states.

Our constituents have expressed frustration with the pace and lack of transparency in NOAA's development of an allocation formula. As NOAA continues its process of determining how it will distribute this critical funding, we urge you to be as transparent and communicative as possible and to engage a wide range of fishery participants.

Further, we strongly urge you to consider a minimum allocation for small, coastal states. Doing so will protect struggling small fishing operations that might be underserved if funding is distributed in proportion to the value of commercial fisheries in each state without instituting a minimum allocation. We fear that any allocation to states based solely on commercial landings may not accurately reflect where our fishermen live and work. We urge NOAA to carefully consider this among the multitude of factors when making allocation determinations – not basing allocation of funds on limited landing data.

Lastly, we want to express the importance of NOAA distributing funding quickly and efficiently, particularly as fishery participants are having trouble accessing Small Business Administration (SBA) funding. Fishing operations are unique, and many fishery participants do not have the data or structure required for SBA eligibility. Additionally, just as demand for SBA funding far exceeds current needs, we anticipate the demand for NOAA fishery disaster funding

will far exceed availability. The sooner this funding is distributed, the sooner we can work together – with your agency and our fishery participants – to assess outstanding need.

We stand prepared to discuss any of these matters with you. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

/s/ Thomas R. Carper

THOMAS R. CARPER
United States Senate

/s/ Richard Blumenthal

RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate

/s/ Christopher A. Coons

CHRISTOPHER A. COONS
United States Senate

/s/ Christopher S. Murphy

CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY
United States Senate

CC: The Honorable Russell T. Vought, Acting Director, Office of Management and Budget