

EARL L. "BUDDY" CARTER
FIRST DISTRICT OF GEORGIA

ENERGY AND COMMERCE COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
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June 14, 2018

Honorable Wilbur Ross, Secretary
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington DC 20230

Dear Secretary Ross:

We encourage you to declare a fishery disaster declaration for coastal Georgia due to a recent shrimping prohibition resulting from cold water temperatures that depleted its population. Further, we fully support the local request that was submitted on May 29, 2018 by Chatham County asking for 'direct and indirect aid authorized by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and the Inter-Jurisdictional Fisheries Act (IFA).'

In early January, the State of Georgia closed its waters to harvesting brown, pink, or white shrimp, and those waters remain closed. On January 24, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) closed federal waters to shrimping under the direction of South Atlantic Fishery Bulletin (FB18-006). Although NOAA has recently reopened federal water to shrimping, the loss of this time period for shrimping has been detrimental to the economic vitality of the industry.

With the closure of both federal and non-federal waters, shrimpers have not been able to earn income since the closures. The seafood industry in Georgia is responsible for economic activity in excess of \$1 billion, and the industry supports thousands of jobs. The University of Georgia states that a fleet of more than 500 boats along the Georgia coast annually harvests between 4.5 million and 9.5 million pounds of shrimp. This closure has caused devastating financial impacts to coastal residents both directly and indirectly involved in the coastal shrimping industry. The hardworking residents of coastal Georgia have had their livelihoods jeopardized for four months, leaving them in financially risky situations.

For these reasons, we believe this circumstance constitutes 'a commercial fishery failure, a catastrophic regional fishery disaster, a significant harm occurred, or a serious disruption affecting future production due to a fishery resource disaster arising from natural, undetermined, or in certain circumstances man-made causes,' as outlined in MSA and IFA for direct and indirect aid.

As this fishery disaster will continue to have an impact on the lives and businesses of coastal shrimpers and others for the unforeseen future, we urge you to seek relief for these coastal shrimpers.

Thank you for your consideration and efforts to respond to the impact the closure has had on the livelihood of Coastal Georgians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Earl L. 'Buddy' Carter". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "E".

Earl L. "Buddy" Carter
Member of Congress