October 30, 2023

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom:

Thank you for your letter requesting a determination of a commercial fishery failure due to a fishery resource disaster for the 2018 and 2019 red sea urchin fishery in California.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service evaluated information from the impacted fishery. Upon further review, I have found that the request for a commercial fishery failure due to a fishery resource disaster for the 2018 and 2019 red sea urchin fishery meets the requirements under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA).

In order to have a positive determination, there must be a commercial fishery failure due to a fishery resource disaster from an allowable cause under the MSA. The disaster was due to the impacts of a warm water event. In 2018, the red sea urchin fishery experienced an 81% commercial revenue loss; and in 2019, an 88% commercial revenue loss. I concluded that these losses qualify due to reduced kelp production (93% loss of surface kelp canopies compared to 2008 levels), a primary food source for sea urchins that created persistent starvation conditions.

This determination now makes this fishery eligible for fishery disaster assistance. In the near future, using funds Congress has already appropriated for fishery disasters, the Department of Commerce will allocate disaster assistance for these fisheries. In addition, with this determination, eligible businesses and other entities in the State of California may be able to access other loan/funding programs through other Federal relief programs (e.g., Small Business Administration loans). Programs within the Department (e.g., Economic Development Administration grants) may also be available.

Should you have any questions, please contact Susie Feliz, Assistant Secretary for Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs, at (202) 482-3663 or SFeliz@doc.gov.

Sincerely,

Gina M. Raimondo