



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Governor Requests Declaration of Fishery Disaster for Upper Cook Inlet**

August 16, 2012, Juneau, Alaska - Governor Sean Parnell today urged Acting U.S. Secretary of Commerce Rebecca Blank to declare a fishery disaster for the Chinook salmon fisheries in the Cook Inlet area. Last month, the governor requested a federal disaster declaration for the 2011 and 2012 Chinook salmon seasons on the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers, and at that time he noted Cook Inlet fisheries were on a similar path.

The Magnuson-Stevens Act authorizes various forms of federal assistance through the National Marine Fisheries Service when the secretary of Commerce determines there is a commercial fishery failure due to a fishery resource disaster.

"Upper Cook Inlet salmon fisheries were severely restricted and even closed for much of the season in order to conserve Chinook salmon for escapement," said Governor Parnell. "These fisheries are economic drivers for the local and regional economy, providing direct and indirect jobs, income to families, bringing in tens of thousands of visitors, and supporting local businesses. Alaskans suffered substantial losses as a direct result of the decline of the Chinook salmon runs.

"I cannot overstate the importance of fisheries to the economy of the Upper Cook Inlet region. Throughout this area, impacts are being felt by commercial fishermen, sport guides, fish processors, and those who sell fuel, tackle, supplies, groceries, and lodging. Local governments will feel the impact of lost revenue to their economic base. The Upper Cook Inlet salmon fisheries affected by the decline of the Chinook salmon runs are crucial to the economic vitality of the region and the well-being of Alaskans."

A federal disaster declaration will not bring automatic assistance to the region as federal appropriation is necessary to provide funding.

In July, Governor Parnell announced the creation of a top-level team of fisheries scientists to conduct a systematic analysis and provide more data about why Alaska is experiencing low returns of Chinook salmon.

A copy of Governor Parnell's letter to the acting secretary is available at:  
[http://gov.alaska.gov/parnell\\_media/resources\\_files/081612\\_fishery.pdf](http://gov.alaska.gov/parnell_media/resources_files/081612_fishery.pdf)

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