

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0908

December 21, 2023

Ms. Janet Coit
Assistant Administrator for Fisheries
NOAA Fisheries
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Assistant Administrator Coit:

We write regarding the implementation of the *Fishery Resource Disasters Improvement Act* (FREDI). This law, if it is implemented properly, has the potential to improve the fishery disaster assistance process at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Marine Fisheries Service by creating deadlines for decisions and data submission, restoring stakeholder confidence and faith in the fishery disaster assistance process.

Prior to the enactment of FREDI, the fishery disaster assistance process had been met with a high degree of frustration from stakeholders and policymakers. It was impossible to track the progress of a disaster assistance request through NOAA's online system. Under FREDI, NOAA now has clear deadlines to make timely decisions for determinations and approval of spending plans, which stakeholders in our states are desperately waiting for.

We believe it is important for stakeholders to understand and track the step-by-step process for a fishery disaster request. This tracking would allow stakeholders to follow the process from submission of data to decisions made by NOAA and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Stakeholders would be able to follow the status of their request as each division of NOAA examines the data, just like consumers track packages through the shipping process from a vendor to delivery.

To facilitate this tracking, we ask NOAA to update its website so stakeholders can track the process as a disaster request moves through each division of NOAA and OMB.

- a. In the absence of the ability to update and maintain a public-facing webpage, we ask NOAA to provide a substantive reply to all inquiries from applicants/stakeholders that consists of the following information:
 - i. What is the current status of the request?
 - ii. Which division of NOAA is currently reviewing the request and who is the best point of contact?

Ms. Janet Coit
December 21, 2023
Page Two

- iii. What is the expected review time for that stage of the process?
- iv. What is the next step in the review process and who is the best point of contact?
- v. What is the average time for an applicant to receive a decision from NOAA from application start to end?

Separately, we request the following documents be transmitted to all signatories within 30 days of receipt of this letter:

- a. A flow chart and memorandum, or other relevant information, of the disaster assistance request review process under FREDI. These documents should include each office or division at NOAA that is involved, the expected timeline for each office's review, its role in the disaster assistance review process and the best point of contact.

Thank you, and we look forward to receiving this information.

Sincerely,



Rick Scott
United States Senator



Roger Wicker
United States Senator



Marco Rubio
United States Senator



Bill Cassidy, M.D.
United States Senator