

# CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE

STATE CAPITOL  
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA  
95814

July 11, 2017

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Jr.  
Governor of California  
State Capitol, First Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95814

## **RE: Request for Declaration of Disaster for California Sardine and Sea Urchin Fisheries**

Dear Governor Brown:

First off, we want to thank you for your previous action to assist California's struggling crab and salmon fleet. We are truly grateful for your partnership.

As you know, ocean conditions off the California coast, over the past few years, have been unprecedented. Record warm waters have decimated some of the Golden State's top tier fisheries. And this is why we're asking for your assistance again today.

We urge you to advance a federal fishery resource disaster and fishery failure request to the United States Secretary of Commerce for the California sardine and red sea urchin fisheries and allied sectors. Both fisheries have suffered dramatic state-wide reductions in production due to poor ocean conditions that have plagued the California coast.

A declaration would enable California's historic sardine fishery and its participants to seek disaster relief to offset the fishery closure in 2015, 2016 and again in 2017. California red sea urchin fishermen are also in need of federal assistance having experienced an 80% drop of urchin within the past five years in Northern California and San Diego regions.

California sardine and red sea urchin fisheries have collapsed as a result of changing ocean conditions and a loss of their food base. The proposed closures and minimal open seasons will have significant negative impacts on thousands of California residents, and their livelihoods are now at risk.

Sardines are part of California's coastal pelagic species (CPS). CPS fisheries, including sardine, anchovy, mackerels and market squid, have cemented the foundation of California's fishing economy for close to a century. This will be the third straight year where California's historic fishery for Pacific sardine has been closed.

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Jr.  
July 11, 2017  
Page 2

The sardine fishery is the foundation of California's wet fish industry, which for decades has produced 80 percent or more of annual statewide commercial fishery landings, until recent years. While fishermen and markets may harvest and process other species in the coastal pelagic species complex, sardines have been the historic mainstay of this industry, and the loss of fishing opportunity has created severe economic impact to both fishermen and processors who rely on sardines as the bedrock of the CPS complex.

Warm water and increasing acidification of our oceans, driven by increasing levels of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere, have dramatically reduced the size of California's kelp forests the primary food source for urchins. The California Department of Fish and Game has estimated a 93% decrease in kelp leading to the downward spiral in the urchin fishery. The 2016 Northern California fishery landed less approximately 20% of the poundage of previous five year average. Fishermen must go further and deeper to find urchin increasing risk in an already dangerous profession.

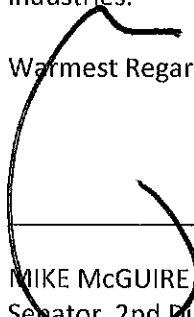
Processors also rely heavily on sardines and urchin to keep workers employed and plant doors open. In years of abundance, they processed sardine in every month of the year. During periods of "normal" seasonality, sardines and urchin filled gaps in production activity between the harvest of other species such as mackerel and squid. That activity provided income to fishermen so they could pay their crew a living wage, and gave processing crews enough hours for a steady paycheck, allowing them all to support their families. That economic activity also supported harbor infrastructure, hundreds of allied businesses up and down the coast and these funds infused vitality in harbor communities.

Sardines and sea urchins are critical to California's vitality and a driver of our coastal economies and indicators of our ocean ecosystems. They represent a fundamental and irreplaceable part of California fisheries and are an integral part of the cultural fabric of port communities.

We remain hopeful both the sardine and red sea urchin fisheries will rebound in the future but believe there will be irreparable harm to the thousands who currently depend on a healthy sardine and red sea urchin harvests for their living. We believe it is appropriate to request a declaration of the sardine and red sea urchin fisheries disaster and fisheries failure.

We urge you to move forward with a request to the Secretary of Commerce as soon as possible. We greatly appreciate your consideration of this plea and for all of your support of the California Fishing industries.

Warmest Regards,

  
MIKE MCGUIRE  
Senator, 2nd District

  
JIM WOOD  
Assemblymember, 2nd District

*Governor Brown  
Thank you for your  
previous work & great consideration.*