



June 23, 2025

The Honorable Howard Lutnick
Secretary of Commerce
United States Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Eugenio Piñeiro Soler
Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries
NOAA Fisheries Directorate
1315 East-West Highway
14th Floor
Silver Spring MD 20910

Re: Urgent Request for Update and Action on California Federal Fishery Disaster Funding,
and Russian Uni Entering the United States through Japan

Dear Secretary Lutnick and Assistant Administrator Soler,

Congratulations to you both on your appointments. On behalf of the hard working men and women sea urchin divers of California we look forward to working with to ensure the long-term health and stability our nation's fisheries and the communities that depend on them.

We are writing regarding the 2018-2019 California Red Sea Urchin Fishery Disaster that was determined October 30, 2023 by Gina M. Raimondo, and \$1.6 million was allocated on January 29, 2024. A Spend Plan was submitted to the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) on April 23, 2024 by Charlton H. Bonham, Director California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Congress has funded the disaster allocation. However, despite the critical steps having been completed, we understand that the contract and fund transfer to PSMFC remains pending at NOAA Fisheries, with no clear timeline when this may occur. This delay is causing continued uncertainty and economic hardship for affected fishing communities, businesses, and workers all whom were counting on relief funds to stabilize their operations and recover from the disaster which occurred over six years ago, and which continues today with the recent request for the 2023 and 2024 fishery failure sent on May 2, 2025 by California Governor Gavin Newsom.

In addition to the Red Sea Urchin Fishery Failures in Northern California, our State Fishery continues to experience economic hardships with illegal imports of Russian Uni

reabeled in Japan's Toyosu and Hokkaido markets and exported to Seattle and Los Angeles ports. The Russian Uni bearing Japanese labels are heavily discounted which unfairly competes with California harvested uni in the marketplace. We have photographs showing some products that still retain the Russian source on the imported product. Our fishery is economically hurt by limited production due to fishery disasters, and now further depressed due to imported dumping of illegal product.

We respectfully request:

1. A formal status update on the current stage of the PSMFC contact and fund release.
2. The name and contact information of the NOAA official responsible for overseeing the execution of this contract.
3. As estimated timeline for when the funds will be transferred to PSMFC so that relief payments can begin reaching the affected parties, and that plans can be set to consider mitigation funding.

We understand that leadership transitions can bring many competing priorities, but we urge you to make this pending disaster funding and illegal dumping of Russian seafood a top priority. The men and women who depend on these fisheries have been waiting a very long time, and every additional delay threatens their stability and the broader resilience of the fishery sector.

Thank you for your prompt and kind attention to these matters. We look forward to your response and stand ready to assist in any way to help move these requests forward.

Sincerely,



David J. Goldenberg
Executive Director
California Sea Urchin Commission

cc: Congressman Tom McClintock

Barry Thom, Executive Director, Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission
David Rudie, Chairman, California Sea Urchin Commission