

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 17, 2013

The Honorable Penny Pritzker
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Pritzker,

As the federal government resumes normal operations, we write to bring your attention to an urgent request regarding the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands crab fishery. The crab season, which was scheduled to begin on October 15th, has been delayed because the National Marine Fisheries Service employees who issue the Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) and the Individual Processing Quota (IPQ) have been furloughed during the shutdown. While we recognize that your agency will be facing a significant backlog of work as a result of the government shutdown, we respectfully urge you to make this a top priority, and expedite the issuance of the IFQ and the IPQ so the fishing season can begin as soon as possible.

As you know, this fishery is worth hundreds of millions of dollars to fishermen in the Pacific Northwest, many of whom depend on the red king crab season to support their businesses and families. However, more than 80 boats remain docked in Dutch Harbor and cannot begin fishing legally without the issuance of the necessary quotas. The delay in the fishing season could potentially prevent the industry from exporting to the vital Asian holiday market when demand is at its highest and most lucrative. While the fishermen have until January 15th to catch their shares, any delay to their season means the crabs may not reach the Asian market in time, as the catch needs to be frozen, packaged, and exported by mid-November at the very latest. Missing the Asian market when it is in peak demand could result in a price decrease by as much as 20-30%, which means millions of dollars in lost value. This would be a crippling loss for the industry and to the thousands of men and women whose livelihood depends on the king crab season.

In addition to the effects on the market, fishing boats are incurring costs of roughly \$1,000 per day while sitting tied to the docks as a result of moorage fees, fuel, and food expenses to feed the crew. Processors face empty facilities and an idle labor force that still has to be housed and fed while not bringing in any revenue.

Again, we respectfully urge you to expedite, by any means possible, the issuance of the necessary quotas so that the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands crab fishing season can begin with as little a delay as possible. Thank you for your time and for your careful consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Suzan DelBene
Member of Congress



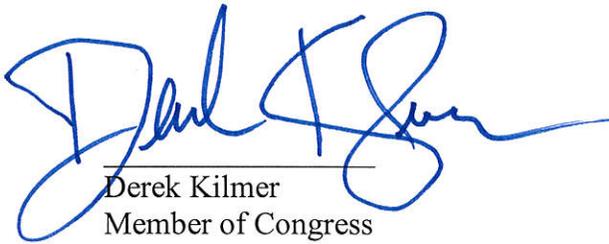
Peter DeFazio
Ranking Member,
House Natural Resources Committee



Rick Larsen
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress



Denny Heck
Member of Congress