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June 14, 2007

Admiral Conrad Lautenbacher
U.S. Department of Commerce, NOAA
14th and Constitution Ave., NW
Rm 5128
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Admiral Lautenbacher:

I am writing in regards to the recently passed Supplemental Appropriation Bill (PL 110-28), with specific attention to the \$110 million provided for disaster relief to the shrimp and fishing industries devastated by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. These significant funds will help to alleviate the negative consequences of the 2005 hurricanes on the fishing industries of the northern Gulf.

It is my understanding that in passing this appropriation, Congress intends that these funds are to be allocated according to an assessment of the impact of the 2005 hurricanes on the fishing and shrimping communities in the states most affected. It is also my understanding that Congress tasked the Department of Commerce to undertake such an assessment.

Recently, the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC) passed a motion declaring that these new disaster funds be allocated to the hurricane-affected states using the same percentages employed in the initial fishery assistance appropriation passed by Congress in June 2006. However well intended, that motion is contrary to the will of Congress as expressed in P.L. 110-28, which explicitly states that the allocation of these funds be based on need as measured from the percentage of damage experienced by each state—not on the basis of a politically-created formula.

A true damages assessment would likely take into account the proportion of production each affected state contributes in terms of annual landings, and the proportion of destroyed vessels and businesses. By this, and virtually any other measure, it becomes clear that Louisiana's fishing industry, which generates more than 74 percent of annual catch landings, contributes the majority of the seafood production for the northern Gulf Coast. Additionally, while all of the northern Gulf received significant damage from the storms, Louisiana is the only state that bore the terrible brunt of both hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the 1st and 3rd costliest storms in the nation's history. In fact, it is estimated that over \$528 million in infrastructure damages were incurred by the Louisiana fishing community. The debris remainders of

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the many lost vessels, equipment, and dockside facilities that were blown and washed into the waters continue to impede navigation and fishing operations in many waterways.

Not only were hard assets lost, the industry also lost precious market share from global competition. In 2006, the landings by the commercial sector were 34% below the pre storm 5-year average and the number of vessels contributing to those landings were less than ½ the number of vessels contributing to the 5-year pre storm average.

In addition to landings from ports and counties in the federally designated disaster counties and parish, the allocations should be based on the location of where the fishers land the catch. NOAA/NMFS tracks commercial fishery landings by species and dollar value at the port level; FEMA designates the amount and type of disaster assistance available from storms at the parish and county level. The assessment of damages, and thus need, should therefore take into account both of these critical factors. Allocations should be based on parishes and counties with federal disaster declaration identifications 1603 and 1607. Furthermore, the parish or county must be eligible for both Individual Assistance and Public Assistance, with FEMA Public assistance available for the repair and or replacement of disaster damaged facilities, category C-G work.

The additional funds provided in the Supplemental will go a long way in helping the Louisiana fishing industries to not only recover, but to build back safer, smarter, and stronger. These funds will be used to help restore the businesses, fishers and supporting industries and to continue to clear remaining debris from the waterways.

Given Louisiana's dominant role in the fisheries industries and based on the percentage of damage to the entire coast of Louisiana, I ask that NOAA follow the Guidance in PL 109-234, the Conference Report and Joint Explanatory Statement referred to in PL 109-234 and the "Allocation" language in Section 115 of Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act of 2006 to allocate these funds based on need.

Additionally, I ask NOAA to work with Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries in identifying priority areas for using the \$24,000,000 for scanning, mapping and debris removal in Louisiana's traditional fishing grounds. I also want to emphasize that removal of problematic debris, not just mapping, is critical so that the fishing grounds can be safe for our fishermen and this vitally important industry can rebound.

Thank you for your attention to this important recovery and for your continued stewardship of the Gulf Coast.

Sincerely,


Rene Cross (R.K.)

Board Member
Louisiana Recovery Authority

cc:

Mr. William Hogarth, Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA
Chairman Donald Powell, Federal Coordinator of Gulf Coast Rebuilding
The Honorable Mary Landrieu
The Honorable Richard Baker
The Honorable David Vitter
The Honorable Jim McCrery
The Honorable Bobby Jindal
The Honorable Rodney Alexander
The Honorable Charlie Melancon

The Honorable Charles Boustany
The Honorable William Jefferson
Senator Max T. Malone
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TABLE 1: LRA Proposed Alternative Funding Scenarios Based on Actual FEMA- Damage Designated Parishes & Counties

LRA - Spread based on FEMA Designated Counties & NMFS Impacted Port Areas			Spread as Recommended by GSMFC		LRA Proposed Alternative Funding Scenarios	
Gulf	Distribution by pounds	Distribution by Dollars	Distribution GSMFC	Dollars	By Port Pounds	By Port Dollars
GoM Alliance	Non-Applicable		6%	\$ 5.00	\$ 5.00	\$ 5.00
AL	2.2%	9.5%	18%	\$ 15.00	\$ 1.77	\$ 7.55
FL	1.9%	7.6%	2%	\$ 2.00	\$ 1.47	\$ 6.05
LA	75.9%	58.6%	44%	\$ 37.00	\$ 60.12	\$ 46.44
MS	16.7%	6.2%	29%	\$ 24.00	\$ 13.24	\$ 4.91
TX	3.3%	18.0%	1%	\$ 1.20	\$ 2.60	\$ 14.25
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100%	\$ 84.2	\$ 84.20	\$ 84.20

TABLE 2: 2005 Commercial Fishery Landings by NMFS Port Area and FEMA designated counties with Hurricanes Katrina and Rita Infrastructure Availability

City	State	Millions of Pounds	Millions of Dollars	Ports US Rank		Dist by pound	Dist by Dollars
Bon Secour-Gulf Shores	AL	5.1	\$ 7.9	66		0.5%	2.1%
Bayou La Batre	AL	17.3	\$ 28.4	28		1.7%	7.5%
Panama City	FL	2.8	\$ 6.5	74		0.3%	1.7%
Mayport	FL	4.7	\$ 8.1	64		0.5%	2.1%
Apalachicola	FL	4.9	\$ 8.7	60		0.5%	2.3%
Port St. Joe	FL	6.2	\$ 5.8	80		0.6%	1.5%
Delacroix-Yscloskey	LA	7.7	\$ 12.8	53		0.8%	3.4%
Cameron	LA	10.6	\$ 13.7	52		1.1%	3.6%
Morgan City-Berwick	LA		\$ 7.2	69		1.8%	1.9%

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Lafitte-Barataria	LA	23.2	\$ 25.7	33		2.3% 6.7%
Golden Meadow-Leeville	LA	24.2	\$ 32.1	25		2.4% 8.4%
Dulac-Chauvin	LA	42.6	\$ 54.6	7		4.3% 14.3%
Empire-Venice	LA	170.8	\$ 39.4	14		17.0% 10.3%
Intracoastal City	LA	464.0	\$ 37.8	16		46.3% 9.9%
Gulfport-Biloxi	MS	8.5	\$ 15.3	48		0.8% 4.0%
Pascagoula-Moss Point	MS	159.1	\$ 8.3	61		15.9% 2.2%
Galveston	TX	15.1	\$ 32.3	23		1.5% 8.5%
Port Arthur	TX	17.8	\$ 36.2	19		1.8% 9.5%
Brownsville-Port Isabel	TX	20.1	\$ 45.0	12		not eligible
Key West	FL	14.0	\$ 35.1	21		not eligible
Palacios	TX	14.5	\$ 29.3	27		not eligible
Tampa Bay-St. Petersburg	FL	10.0	\$ 17.8	43		not eligible
Fort Myers	FL	8.6	\$ 15.3	49		not eligible