



RON DESANTIS
GOVERNOR

September 5, 2023

Secretary Gina Raimondo
United States Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave, NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Raimondo:

Hurricane Idalia made landfall in Keaton Beach, Florida, on August 30, 2023, as a powerful Category 3 storm and had catastrophic impacts for Florida's Nature Coast. Hurricane Idalia caused significant damage to the affected region, destroying commercial and residential infrastructure, and posing a severe threat to the lives of those in its path. The commercial and residential fishing communities of the Big Bend region were greatly affected by Hurricane Idalia. Federal fishery relief would provide much-needed assistance to get the affected fishing community back to work. Therefore, I request that you declare, under a rapid assessment, a federal fisheries disaster as outlined in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, 16 U.S.C. § 1861a, as well as clauses to trigger support from the Economic Development Administration.

Florida's Big Bend is an important cornerstone of the state's fishery. This region includes over 600 commercial fishermen, 160 fishery wholesalers and retailers, 240 aquaculture shellfish farmers, and 450 for-hire charter captains, all of which play important commercial fishery roles. Additionally, there are over 120 marinas providing commercial and recreational access to the Gulf.

Florida's fisheries are vitally important to the State's economy with our recreational saltwater fishing industry having an economic impact of \$9.2 billion and our dockside value of commercial fisheries estimated at \$244 million.

The State of Florida is prepared to provide any additional information you need to assess the situation. In addition, Public Law 117-328 included several improvements and deadlines in the fishery disaster process. The State of Florida expects the federal government to follow the law and meet the following deadlines established by Public Law 117-328:

- **20-day deadline:** No later than 20 days after receipt of a request, the United States Secretary of Commerce must provide an interim response that: (1) acknowledges receipt of the request, (2) provides a regional contact with National Oceanic and Administration (NOAA), (3) outlines the process and timeline by which a request shall be considered, and (4) requests additional information concerning the fishery resource disaster, if the original request is considered incomplete.
- **120-day deadline:** After receipt of the request for fishery disaster, the United States Secretary of Commerce must complete the review in 120 days if the fishing season applicable to the fisheries has no defined fishing season.
- **14-day deadline:** No later than 14 days after the conclusion of the review, the United States Secretary of Commerce must notify me of the determination.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ron DeSantis".

Ron DeSantis
Governor