

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

April 5, 2024

The Honorable Gina Raimondo
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Raimondo,

I am writing to express my concerns about the three groups of fishery disaster funds, totaling \$347,604,643, that remain stuck at various stages in NOAA and cannot proceed due to problems with NOAA's new accounting software, Business Applications Solution (BAS), adopted October 1, 2023. Below is a summary of the three groups of funds:

1. The 2019 Norton Sound red king crab, 2019/20 Bering Sea Tanner crab, and 2020 "Statewide salmon" (and 2021 Yukon) fishery disaster grants (**\$70.297 million**) have approved spend plans. OMB has released the funds, and the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) has applied for the grant funds. However, NOAA has not yet approved the grant because of BAS. Since grants work on a reimbursement basis, NOAA cannot allow a grant program to begin without being able to reimburse expenses incurred.
2. Similarly, the 2020 GOA Pacific cod, 2018 Copper River/2020 PWS salmon, and 2018 East Side Setnet and 2020 Upper Cook Inlet salmon disasters (**\$61.503 million**) have approved spend plans. OMB has released the funds; however, NOAA has not yet approved the grant because of BAS.
3. The 2021 Chignik salmon, 2021/22 Bering Sea crab, 2022/23 Bering Sea crab, 2021 Norton Sound salmon, 2021 Kuskokwim River salmon, 2020/2021 Norton Sound red king crab, and 2020 PWS pink and coho salmon disasters (**\$215.903 million**) have final spend plans that the state has sent to PSMFC. However, the new system has prevented PSMFC from formally applying for those grants – NOAA needs to provide an "opportunity number" so PSMFC can submit those grant applications. PSMFC has sent NOAA the grants in a Word.doc so they can get started on the review, but they haven't officially been able to apply yet.

The ongoing financial crises in Alaska fisheries and seafood markets puts great urgency on finding a solution for processing and releasing these funds. I hope you will recognize how vital these funds are to our fishermen and fishing communities. I ask that you prioritize either fixing BAS or if that cannot be done in a timely manner, direct NOAA to find a different approach to release these funds. Thank you for your attention to this critical matter, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Mary Sattler Peltola
Representative for All Alaska