

Federal fishery resource disaster declared

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The U.S. Department of Commerce has approved Gov. Chris Christie's request for a declaration of a federal fishery resource disaster as a result of the devastation to the commercial and recreational fishing industries caused by Hurricane Sandy.

"I sincerely thank Acting Commerce Secretary Rebecca Blank for acting swiftly to respond to my request for help for New Jersey's fishing industries, which sustained serious losses during the storm," said Christie. "My administration will be working closely with federal officials in assessing the extent of the storm's economic impacts and in developing a response that will help the fishing industry in this time of great hardship."

Sandy resulted in significant losses for the industry in New Jersey, damaging or destroying vessels, ports, facilities, and equipment. It also left coastal areas that the industry needs severely damaged or inaccessible. The Commerce Department's declaration also applies to New York's fishing industries, which also sustained heavy losses during the storm.

A federal fishery disaster declaration triggers a federal economic transition program to provide disaster relief for impacted aspects of the industry, including commercial fishing operations, charter fishing operators, processors and owners of related fishery infrastructure affected by the disaster.

The state Department of Environmental Protection has already begun preliminary work to assess economic impacts of the storm to the industry and will soon be teaming up with officials from the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to visit commercial and recreation fishing operations that were affected. They will also be assessing the cascading impacts of storm had on other parts of the state's economy that support the commercial and recreational fishing industries.

"We are taking action because of the storm's devastating impact on the people who live and work in coastal communities that were hit hard by Sandy," said Blank. "This disaster declaration is part of a coordinated federal effort to help the region rebuild. The Obama administration is committed to bringing all available resources to bear to support state and local partners as well as affected communities as recovery continues."

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In 2011, New Jersey's commercial fishing industry landed roughly 175 million pounds of seafood, generating over \$1.3 billion in economic activity. The economic impact of recreational fishing also supports approximately 8,500 jobs and \$1.4 billion in annual sales.