

Renewed hope for salmon fisherman aid

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Senators Smith and Wyden Fighting to put \$60 Million in Emergency Bill

To aid Oregon fishermen impacted by last year's restricted salmon fishing season, U.S. Senators Gordon H. Smith (R-OR) and Ron Wyden (D-OR) are pushing for \$60.4 million in disaster assistance for West Coast salmon fishermen to be included in an emergency spending bill the Senate is drafting.

"Last year's closure was devastating to Oregon's salmon fishermen," Smith said. "We will do everything we can to secure this long-awaited funding. Struggling fishermen and businesses will use it to recover from last year's closure."

"A season without work can seem like an eternity for folks who are struggling to pay bills and put food on the table," Wyden said. "This aid is critical. It's not a matter of whether to buy a new car or get a new pair of jeans. It's a matter of survival."

In 2006, commercial salmon fishing was all but eliminated along 700 miles of Oregon and California coastline in an attempt to protect the Klamath River salmon. Last year's salmon closure was the largest in U.S. history. Over the past year the Senators have met with fisherman, owners of impacted businesses and federal and local leaders about the restricted salmon season.

In a letter to the Senate Appropriations Committee sent yesterday, Smith and Wyden urged that disaster funding be included. The Senators wrote, "We remain steadfastly committed to working a strategy that will provide for the long-term health of the Klamath River and ensure that our fisherman, farmers, and tribes do not have to suffer similar disasters again. Until the health of the ecosystem is restored, we must be prepared to help those impacted."

The House of Representativeâ€™s version of this legislation already includes \$60.4 million â€“ The Senators efforts will help ensure the funding is included in the Senateâ€™s version and in the final version.

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