

Assistance is significant first step in federal disaster aid

June 28, 2006

Press Release | Contact: Danielle Langone (202) 225-6416

WASHINGTON, DC—West Coast members of Congress today hailed a significant step in the fight for disaster assistance for salmon fishers. Representatives Peter DeFazio, Darlene Hooley and others attempted to offer an amendment that would provide \$81 million in salmon disaster relief to the Science, State, Justice, Commerce and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2007. The Republican majority refused to allow a vote on the amendment.

After several hours of procedural motions by Oregon Representatives Peter DeFazio, Darlene Hooley, and David Wu, and California Representatives Mike Thompson and George Miller, the majority relented and agreed to insert \$2 million in disaster aid into the bill. This assistance is a placeholder for the conference committee where House members hope to work with the Oregon and California senators to significantly increase this amount. The amendment was approved by the House on a voice vote.

“This is nowhere near the amount of funds necessary, but getting funding for disaster assistance included in this bill is a significant victory for our coastal communities,” DeFazio said. “I appreciate Chairman Wolf and my colleagues for recognizing that fishing communities in Oregon and California vitally need our help. We'll be fighting to get more assistance in the Senate and the conference committee.”

This move by DeFazio and others was initiated after a meeting yesterday with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) officials. In the meeting, NOAA officials acknowledged to the members that the West Coast salmon fishing season has been a disaster. However, the Department of Commerce still refuses to declare a disaster and say they will not be able to make a decision on a disaster declaration until at least February 2007.

