



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

October 17, 2014

Contact: Heather Handyside  
(907) 350-4846

### **Begich Applauds First Installment of Fish Disaster Assistance**

U.S. Senator Mark Begich welcomed today's release of \$7.5 million in federal disaster assistance for commercial fishermen affected by the 2012 failure of Chinook salmon in the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers and Cook Inlet. As a member of the Senate Appropriations committee Begich fought for the \$20.8 million in assistance for Alaskans hurt by the run failure.

“This initial assistance targets those most directly affected, the commercial fishermen whose fisheries were closed in the Yukon, Kuskokwim and Cook Inlet to allow the chinook to get to the spawning grounds,” Begich said. “This assistance is a long time coming but should help compensate fishermen for their past financial losses suffered to ensure the long term survival of the king salmon.”

Review is underway on the spending plans for the remaining \$13.3 million available under the federal appropriation. Begich supports recommendations for assistance from the affected regions including research in the fishery failure, help for affected small businesses, gear replacement, and village outreach and education efforts. It is hoped the remaining funds will be available before the end of the year.

Unlike other federal disaster programs, there is no set program for fishery failures and any funding is subject to Congressional appropriation. The Alaska assistance was part of \$75 million appropriated for fishery disasters nationwide, less than half the amount originally requested. The checks are being distributed by the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission based in Portland, Oregon. Individual assistance levels will vary by region and documented economic losses.