THE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE
Washington, D.C. 20230

November 18, 2010

Mr. Todd Staples
Commissioner
Texas Department of Agriculture
Austin, TX 78711

Dear Mr. Staples:

Thank you for your letter expressing the Texas Department of Agriculture's support for the recovery of Gulf of Mexico fishing industries from the impact of the Deepwater Horizon BP oil spill, and the importance of education campaigns about the safety of Gulf of Mexico seafood. I share your concerns and commend the significant effort the Gulf States have made toward creating and implementing these consumer education campaigns.

At the end of July 2010, President Obama signed into law H.R. 4899, the Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2010. These appropriations included $15 million for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to respond to the fishery disaster declared as a result of the Deepwater Horizon BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. This funding was required to be obligated by the end of fiscal year 2010 (September 30).

NOAA has provided this $15 million in a grant to the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission for assistance to the Gulf fishing industry through programs designed to market Gulf seafood products and provide health and safety assurances for those products. The Commission will develop and implement a 5-year outreach and marketing program to raise public awareness of the quality and safety of seafood. The grant will also help the Gulf States develop strong seafood quality assurance testing.

I appreciate your commitment to the recovery of fishing industries in the Gulf and the integrity of Gulf seafood. If you have any questions, please contact April Boyd, Assistant Secretary for Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs, at (202) 482-3663.

Sincerely,

Gary Locke

Gary Locke

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