



Commerce Secretary Announces Allocation of \$300 Million in CARES Act Funding

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Interstate marine fisheries commissions, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands will disburse funds to address coronavirus-related losses.



Fishing boats in Washington State. Photo: iStock

Today, the Secretary of Commerce announced the allocation of \$300 million in fisheries assistance funding provided by Sec. 12005 of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, also called the CARES Act, to states, Tribes, and territories with coastal and marine fishery participants who have been negatively affected by COVID–19.

“This relief package will support America’s fishermen and our seafood sector’s recovery,” said U.S. Department of Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross. “Thank you President Trump, Secretary Mnuchin, and our Congressional leaders of both parties for your work to pass the historic legislation that is bringing much needed relief to America’s fishermen. This Administration stands with the men and women working to provide healthy and safe seafood during this uniquely challenging time, while our U.S. fisheries work to continue to support 1.7 million jobs and to generate \$200 billion in annual sales. The nation is grateful to our fishermen for their commitment.”

As a next step, NOAA Fisheries will use these allocations (see below) to make awards to our partners: the [Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission](#), the [Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission](#), the [Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission](#), Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. They will disburse the funds to address direct or indirect fishery-related losses as well as subsistence, cultural, or ceremonial impacts related to COVID-19.

“We are going to rely primarily on our partners at the interstate marine fishery commissions during the award process because they have a demonstrated track record of disbursing funds provided to them quickly and effectively,” said Chris Oliver, Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries.

The commissions then will work with each state, Tribe, and territory to develop spend plans consistent with the CARES Act and NOAA’s guidance. Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands will submit award applications and spend plans to the agency directly. All spend plans must describe the main categories for funding, including direct payments, fishery-related infrastructure, and fishery-related education that address direct and indirect COVID-19 impacts to commercial fishermen, charter businesses, qualified aquaculture operations, subsistence/cultural/ceremonial users, processors, and other fishery-related businesses. Once a spend plan has been approved by NOAA, the agency anticipates that the three Commissions will review applications and process payments to eligible fishery participants on behalf of the states and territories. The states will have the option to process payments themselves.

Fishery participants eligible for funding include Tribes, commercial fishing businesses, charter/for-hire fishing businesses, qualified aquaculture operations, processors, and other fishery-related businesses. They should work with their state marine fisheries management agencies, territories, or Tribe to understand the process for applying for these funds.

Also of note, for the purposes of Sec. 12005 funding, businesses farther down the supply chain—including vessel repair businesses, restaurants, or seafood retailers—are not considered “fishery-related businesses.”

Summary of Allocations*

Entity	Allocation of Sec. 12005 Funding
Alaska	\$50,000,000
Washington	\$50,000,000
Massachusetts	\$28,004,176
Florida	\$23,636,600
Maine	\$20,308,513
California	\$18,350,586
Oregon	\$15,982,827
Louisiana	\$14,785,244
New Jersey	\$11,337,797
Texas	\$9,237,949
New York	\$6,750,276
North Carolina	\$5,460,385
Federally Recognized Tribes on the West Coast	\$5,097,501
Virginia	\$4,520,475
Hawaii	\$4,337,445
Maryland	\$4,125,118
Pennsylvania	\$3,368,086
Alabama	\$3,299,821
Rhode Island	\$3,294,234
New Hampshire	\$2,732,492
American Samoa	\$2,553,194

Georgia	\$1,921,832
Connecticut	\$1,835,424
Mississippi	\$1,534,388
South Carolina	\$1,525,636
Delaware	\$1,000,000
Puerto Rico	\$1,000,000
United States Virgin Islands	\$1,000,000
Federally Recognized Tribes in Alaska	\$1,000,000
Guam	\$1,000,000
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands	\$1,000,000
Total	\$300,000,000

** Final award amounts will be different due to Hollings and other assessments.*

CARES Act Funding Questions

Q. Who should affected fishermen and communities contact about accessing this funding?

A. Fishery participants eligible for funding—including Tribes, commercial fishing businesses, charter/for-hire fishing businesses, qualified aquaculture operations, processors, and other fishery-related businesses—should work with their state marine fisheries management agencies, territories, or Tribe to understand the process for applying for these funds.

Q. Can eligible fishery participants receive direct payments?

A. Direct payments are expressly allowed under Sec. 12005 of the CARES Act. Each Commissions' grant application must meet the requirements of the CARES Act and reflect the appropriate use of funds and considerations as outlined in the Request for Applications, the Request for Applications letter and the allocation table provided.

Q. How long will it take for affected fishermen to get funding from the CARES Act?

A. It will vary, however we expect that Sec. 12005 funding will be disbursed more quickly than fishery disaster assistance funds because the CARES Act language does not require the Secretary of Commerce to declare a fishery disaster. The CARES Act also allows the funds to be awarded on a “rolling basis,” which will enable NOAA Fisheries to execute the funds more nimbly in partnership with the states, Tribes, and territories.

Q. What types of fishing-related businesses are eligible for assistance?

A. For the purposes of carrying out the provisions in Section 12005 of the CARES Act, “fishery-related businesses” should be limited to commercial fishing businesses, charter/for-hire fishing businesses, qualified aquaculture operations, processors, and dealers. Businesses farther down the supply chain—including vessel repair businesses, restaurants, or seafood retailers—are not considered “fishery-related businesses” for the purposes of this funding. States, Tribes, and territories have the discretion to determine whether bait and tackle operations and gear and vessel suppliers are eligible for Sec. 12005 assistance in their spend plans, consistent with the requirements of the CARES Act.

Q. Which Tribes are eligible for assistance?

A. The definition of “fishery participant” identified in Sec. 12005 of the CARES Act, includes Tribal fishery participants. So, Tribes in coastal states with marine or anadromous fisheries and/or marine shellfish or finfish aquaculture operations are eligible for Sec. 12005 funds. Tribes in non-coastal states with freshwater fisheries will not be eligible for Sec. 12005 funds.

Q. Which types of aquaculture operations are eligible for funding?

A. Privately owned aquaculture businesses growing products in state or federal marine waters of the United States and the hatcheries that supply them are eligible for Sec. 12005 funding. This includes all molluscan shellfish and marine algae. Non-salmonid marine finfish grown in marine waters not covered by USDA are eligible for Sec. 12005 funding.

Q. On what basis did the agency make the initial allocation decision?

A. Given the definition of “fishery participant” identified in Sec. 12005 of the CARES Act, the agency used readily available total annual revenue information from the commercial fishing, charter fishing, aquaculture, and processor/seafood sectors of coastal states, Tribes, and territories to proportionately allocate Sec. 12005 funding. NOAA Fisheries also took into consideration negative impacts to subsistence, cultural, and ceremonial fisheries during the allocation process. In addition, NOAA Fisheries established a minimum and maximum funding level (\$1 million and \$50 million, respectively).

Q. Who will be responsible for determining if fishery losses exceed the 35 percent standard and applying for assistance?

A. Given the broad range of fisheries and entities affected across multiple jurisdictions, it will be important to provide states and territories flexibility in determining how they will identify which

fishery participants meet the requirements described in Sec. 12005(b)(1)-(2). Thus, each state/Tribe/territory will be required to determine how they will verify which fishery participants meet the threshold of economic revenue losses greater than 35 percent as compared to the prior five year average or negative impacts to subsistence, cultural, or ceremonial fisheries. The spend plans will provide details on their proposed process for making these determinations.

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