

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1806

April 2, 2020

The Honorable Wilbur Ross
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Ross:

Thank you for your leadership and continued efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. The virus has challenged all of us in unthinkable ways, and I appreciate the work you're doing to provide certainty to Americans' jobs and our small businesses. However, we sometimes overlook the devastating effects our water resources can have on our economy and the environment. As I write this letter, the United States Army Corps of Engineers is preparing to open the Bonnie Carre Spillway as soon as tomorrow, April 3, 2020. As you know, depending on volumes and duration this decision will likely exacerbate the impact commercial and recreational fishers experienced from the record 2019 high water. Once again, this requires your attention and assistance.

Each time the Bonnet Carre Spillway is opened, hundreds of thousands of cubic feet of freshwater surge into Lake Pontchartrain, a brackish water ecosystem. The opening of the spillway is an emergency action and does not release specified volumes based upon salinity targets or ecological production. To the contrary, the Bonnet Carre Spillway prevents drainage from 30 states and two Canadian provinces from flooding homes, businesses – our communities. This is the nation's water – not from Louisiana – impacting our citizens and economy. There are environmental impacts and economic disruptions caused in Louisiana and Mississippi. As I said in my February 27th letter, our seafood industry is still suffering from the impacts of last year's Bonnet Carre Spillway opening. As we continue to wait for the Department of Commerce to allocate the remaining \$100 million in disaster relief, we find ourselves bracing for another spillway opening. Given the fact that we're still recovering from the effects of last year, you must

remain committed to allocating the remaining \$100 million to assist Louisianans for last year's opening and begin working to collect relevant data for the upcoming April 2020 opening.

Louisiana fisheries are vital not only to the state's economy but also to the nation. As the largest producer of domestic seafood in the contiguous United States and one of the nation's top recreational fishing destinations, significant investments in South Louisiana's fishing industry are necessary to ensure sustainable domestic seafood production—making Louisiana's fisheries, fishery infrastructure, and the habitats that make up our unique ecosystem more resilient than ever.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Garret Graves', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Garret Graves

Member of Congress