



**Western
Pacific
Regional
Fishery
Management
Council**

May 19, 2006

Dr. William T. Hogarth
Assistant Administrator for Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA
1315 East West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Bill:

In December of 2002, Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) were hit by Super Typhoon Pongsona, with extensive damage reported to fishing harbors, vessels, gear and shoreside facilities. Subsequently the Governors of Guam and CNMI transmitted assessment reports to the Secretary of Commerce documenting this damage and associated loss of revenues, and requesting federal assistance under the terms of Section 312 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the Inter-jurisdictional Fisheries Act and other Acts of Congress.

To date we can find no record of any response to either of the Governors' requests, and it is unclear who is in charge of this program nationally, as well as locally. We would like to understand what happened to these requests as it was clearly the intent of Congress that assistance be provided to fishery participants and associated community members following natural disasters such as Super Typhoon Pongsona. In addition, significant time, effort and resources were spent in preparing the damage assessments. Could you please assist the Council in determining whether the requested relief funds are available and if so what further information or actions are needed to release them?

To fail to even respond to the governors for more than three years sends the unfortunate message that there is no interest in such requests from these island areas. We do not believe that this was the intent and we look forward to this matter being resolved, as well as an examination and, if necessary, revision of the current procedures that led to this lapse. Although the Western Pacific region has been spared fishery disasters on the scale of Hurricane Katrina, hopefully we have all learned a lesson regarding the need for response planning, preparation and follow-through.

Sincerely,

Kitty M. Simonds
Executive Director