



California Sportfishing Protection Alliance

“An Advocate for Fisheries, Habitat and Water Quality”

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Dear Senator/Member of Congress (Name),

The California Sportfishing Protection Alliance urges your support for NOAA and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) in their implementation of the “Biological Opinion on the Operations of the Central Valley and State Water Projects” (BiOp). The opinion uses the best available science to require essential measures to protect and restore our state’s salmon and steelhead fisheries. Its findings have been peer reviewed and verified by two independent teams of scientists.

The salmon and steelhead fisheries this document seeks to restore have been found to be in jeopardy of extinction due primarily to impacts caused by the excessive pumping of Delta water by the state and federal water projects.

For the past two seasons, the state’s commercial salmon season has been closed causing 100% unemployment of the state’s thousands of commercial salmon fishermen, and severe impacts to, sometimes failed businesses in the web of manufacturers, wholesalers and retail outlets that supply them. This salmon industry recently generated billions of dollars to the state’s economy and will do so again, once healthy.

During this same period, the recreational salmon and steelhead fisheries were closed or severely restricted, depriving over half a million California anglers annually of the opportunity for recreational angling. Again, the impacts go far beyond the sport itself since the infrastructure of guides, sport boats, bait and tackle shops, wholesalers and boat and equipment manufacturers suffered severe loss of business or closed their doors.

In addition to employment and recreation, these industries and recreational pursuits produced some of the highest valued food in the form of fresh wild salmon. High protein food that was shipped throughout the nation. Millions of pounds of salmon were caught, marketed, sold and consumed by the American public on an annual basis because of the vastness and health of these fisheries.

A slick ad campaign orchestrated by a multinational ad company financed by some of the wealthiest water districts in the world would have you believe that San Joaquin Valley agriculture has collapsed and will continue to suffer catastrophic impacts due to the minor cutbacks required to support the recovery of the state’s salmon and steelhead stocks.

However, the truth is quite the opposite.

- California Department of Water Resources' Director Lester Snow has been widely quoted as observing that water exported from the south Delta will only be reduced 5% because of the NOAA BiOp.
- The 2008 Agricultural Crop and Livestock Report published by the Fresno County Department of Agriculture reveals that, in the second year of the drought, agricultural production increased 5.9% to a record 5.7 billion dollars. The previous production record was set the year before.
- According to official California Economic Development Department statistics, farm labor in the seven south-of-Delta counties in the San Joaquin Valley (i.e., Fresno, Kern, Kings, Tulare, Madera, Merced and Stanislaus counties) actually increased between 2006 and 2008 despite the drought. Indeed, between June 2008 and June 2009, farm labor in the Valley increased by some 4,000 jobs while non-farm employment hemorrhaged 31,000 jobs.
- Drought is a normal experience in California, occurring about a third of the time. The present drought is only the tenth most severe three-year drought cycle in the last one hundred years.
- California has vastly over-appropriated its water supply. Some 245 million acre-feet (MAF) of storage and diversion water rights have been issued for the 29 MAF of average unimpaired flow into to the Bay-Delta estuary. Farmers on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley, who hold contracts based upon junior water rights, understood that supplies would be diminished in times of shortage caused by drought. Fisheries suffer disproportionate reductions in flow during times of drought.
- While the state is in the third year of declared drought, most Valley farmers (i.e., East side farmers, Exchange Contractors and those dependant on the Friant-Kern canal) are receiving normal allocations of water.
- The vast majority of water delivery reductions are experienced by the industrial-scale agriculture on the west side of the Valley. Even so, the giant Westlands Water District expects to apply more than 64% of the water it normally uses due to a combination of Delta deliveries, transfers and groundwater pumping.
- Excessive water exports from the Delta have created elevated salinity levels in the south Delta that are causing Delta farmers to suffer reductions in crop yields. In fact, at this writing, salinity in south Delta channels violates water quality standards by almost 40%. In other words, Delta farmers, with senior water rights who don't depend upon subsidized water for irrigation and don't rely upon subsidies for drainage control, are being penalized. And, west side farmers with the most junior water rights who apply highly subsidized water on drainage impaired lands that, by nature of being irrigated, discharge massive quantities of selenium, boron and other toxic pollutants back to the San Joaquin River are portraying themselves as victims.

The choice is simple, support NOAA and NMFS and implementation of the recommendations of the BiOp and begin restoring the livelihoods of thousands of commercial fishermen and the sport of half a million recreational anglers. Restore the vibrant and long lived heritage of a hundred and fifty years of California native fisheries, the small mom and pop businesses that are a long suffering part of these industries, the boat and equipment manufacturers and the production of millions of pounds of fresh salmon for the nation;

Or,

Cave into the demand of a small group of wealthy agribusinesses who's professionally run campaign of falsehoods and misrepresentations of the effects that the BiOp will have on California agriculture will enrich their pockets regardless of the costs to the environment and the loss of California's commercial and recreational fishing industries and all that they encompass.

The California Sportfishing Protection Alliance is asking that your choice be to support NOAA and NMFS's efforts and in doing so, restore California's once legendary salmon fishing heritage and all of the jobs and food it provides to the state and to the nation.

Sincerely,



Bill Jennings, Executive Director,
California Sportfishing Protection Alliance

Cc: Ken Salazar, Interior Secretary, Department of the Interior
David J. Hayes, Interior Deputy Secretary, Department of the Interior
Dr. Jane Lubchenco, Administrator of NOAA and Undersecretary of Commerce
Monica Medina, Special Assistant, NOAA Fisheries
Rowan Gould, Acting Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Rod McInnis, Regional Administrator, National Marine Fisheries Service, Southwest
Regional Office

CSPA is a public benefit conservation and research organization established in 1983 for the purpose of conserving, restoring, and enhancing the state's water quality and fishery resources and their aquatic ecosystems and associated riparian habitats. CSPA has actively promoted the protection of water quality and fisheries throughout California before state and federal agencies, the State Legislature and Congress and regularly participates in administrative and judicial proceedings on behalf of its members.