



"The New Voice of Salmon"

December 6, 2016

Re: **OPPOSE – Anti-Salmon Provisions in WRDA**

Dear Congressional Leaders

I write from the Golden Gate Salmon Association asking that you oppose the California drought language in the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) bill.

This language calls for severe weakening of existing protections for salmon in California's Central Valley. Although those protections are designed primarily to aid ESA-listed winter and spring run salmon and steelhead, they also provide great benefit to unlisted fall run salmon which supplies the west coast fishery.

Tens of thousands of fishing jobs in both California, and Oregon hang in the balance.

The existing protections are based on the best available science, which has been affirmed in multiple court cases up to the Ninth US Court of Appeals as well as through an outside scientific review by the National Research Council requested by Senator Feinstein. The proposed language orders science-based measures to balance water for agriculture, municipal, industrial and fishing industry be tossed out and replaced with a political prescription aimed at rewarding a small group in the western San Joaquin Valley and points south.

California salmon fishermen, both sport and commercial, have suffered from very poor fishing seasons over the last two years. This is primarily due to the effects of drought and poor water management, which have undercut the ability of salmon to reproduce and survive in Central Valley rivers. Now is the time to help these salmon runs recover, not tear them down more.

The economic value of salmon derives not only from commercially caught fish, but also from the hundreds of millions of dollars sport fishermen spend annually to pursue salmon. These dollars breathe life into the not only the California coastal economy, but also inland river communities where recreational salmon fishing is big.

Commercial fishermen have suffered after not only back to back poor salmon seasons but also disruption in their other main income source, the Dungeness crab fishery. Adding more injury is not right especially when there are other, more sustainable ways to address California's water future. The drought bill language would allow far more diversion of northern California water to the massive pumps that send it south, especially at the sensitive time of year when baby salmon are trying to migrate to the ocean. As water is diverted from its natural course, so too are baby salmon which mostly die along the way to the pumps. Those that survive to the pumps usually die shortly thereafter.

The National Marine Fisheries Service, which authored the salmon protections currently in place, has tacitly acknowledged the need to strengthen, not weaken them, by calling for both amending the existing biological opinion as well as formally reinitiating consultation on the opinion. The last thing we need now is political interference in a process best left to fishery scientists and biologists.

Adoption of the Feinstein/McCarthy drought bill language into law would undo some of the progress we've made restoring our salmon runs since 2009, when the existing biop replaced a prior one found to be illegally un-protective of salmon. Under that prior, weak set of regulations, we saw our salmon runs decline to the point where the ocean fishery was shut for the first time in history in 2008 and 2009. The language being considered now would send us back to a similar desperate situation rapidly. It would almost certainly lead to another steep collapse of Central Valley salmon runs.

Please do what you can to stop this drought proposal from becoming law, including opposing cloture in the Senate. We have new and much better ways to address our water future in California that some old thinkers simply refuse to consider.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John McManus".

John McManus, Executive Director
Golden Gate Salmon Association