

# California Sportfishing Protection Alliance

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“Conserving California’s Fishery & Aquatic Resources”

5-27-08

Members of the California Legislature  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Sent by Electronic Communication

Re: AB 1806 (Wolk) - Fish Rescue Plans & Mitigation

Dear Members of the Assembly:

The California Sportfishing Protection Alliance is a fishery conservation organization representing the public’s sportfishing interests across California and dedicated to the conservation of the state’s fishery resources. In addition to our general membership, we represent some twenty sportfishing organizations state-wide.

We ardently support AB 1806 and the requirement of full fishery mitigation by both the Federal and State Water Projects. This is absolutely essential if we are to stop the horrendous collapse of the fishery resources dependent on the delta and its tributaries. The facts are straightforward, neither of the projects completely mitigate for the losses of the fish killed or entrained by their delta export operations.

Until mitigation for both the direct and indirect impacts is accomplished, we will continue to see the estuary’s fisheries fail to recover and become self-sustaining. This, in combination with other factors involved in the fisheries decline, cost the state’s economy hundreds of millions dollars annually. The decline in our fisheries over the past forty years is estimated at \$8 billion dollars in income lost to the State’s economy. This year’s salmon closure is estimated to cost some \$250 million and the closure is likely to be extended next year. These are very grim economic facts. Unless we make a mid-course correction now, this situation will only become worse.

The largest opposition to resolving this problem comes from the water

districts that don't want to pay their share of the bill for the damages done by their water export operations. Should they prevail, it will force sport and commercial interests to go back to court and seek more remedies such as those we've prevailed in regarding the San Joaquin River, the biological opinions on Delta smelt and winter-run salmon to mention just a few important cases.

Remediation would bring far better results if worked out the by State Water Resources Control Board in consultation with the fishery agencies and those who hold the water contracts for Delta export. Unfortunately the Board currently lacks the authority to require the projects to comply with complete fishery mitigation. We believe litigation doesn't always provide equitable solutions in these matters, but if it's the only viable tool available to us, then we have no choice but to let the courts decide these pressing issues.

Failure to act now will result in more fisheries listed under the Endangered Species Acts and will result in more litigation with solutions that could be far more detrimental to water rights holders and water districts. The state will end up with more delay and far greater costs to our government and its taxpayers.

We urge your "aye vote" on this measure when its heard on the Assembly floor so expeditious actions can be taken to help resolve one of the most critical problems faced by the fisheries of the delta and its tributaries. Given the collapse of most of the estuary's fisheries, including its salmon runs, time has run out for our fisheries. Actions to bring about a recovery are needed now.

Sincerely,

John Beuttler  
Conservation Director