

# California Sportfishing Protection Alliance

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Conserving California's Fisheries & Aquatic Habitat

6-10-08

Senator Darrell Steinberg  
Chair, Senate Natural Resources & Water Committee  
State Capitol, Room 4035  
Sacramento, CA 95814

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

Dear Chairman Steinberg & Committee Members:

The California Sportfishing Protection Alliance is a longstanding fishery conservation organization representing sportfishing interests across California including twenty affiliated sportfishing organizations. We are dedicated to the conservation and sustainable management of the public's fishery resources.

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

While this is not the only reason for the decline of the fisheries dependent on the Delta, until mitigation for these impacts are 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 States economy hundreds of millions dollars annually. The decline in our fisheries over the past forty years is estimated at \$8 billion in income not generated by the State's economy.

In addition, we now face a crisis with our fall-run salmon fishery. 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 and 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 fair share of the bill for the damages done by water export operations. Should they prevail, it will force fishing interests back to court to seek more legal remedies as was the case in the San Joaquin River litigation, the Biological Opinions on Delta smelt and winter-run salmon, and the Department of Water Resources failure to obtain the legal permit necessary to kill Delta smelt.

Our fisheries face very grave conditions in the Delta and its tributaries, but the State Water Board lacks the authority to require the projects to comply with their fishery mitigation obligations. Failure to act now will likely result in more fisheries listed under the Endangered Species Acts and more litigation with solutions that could be far more detrimental to water rights holders in the Central Valley. The result would be greater fishery declines that will cost our state and its tax payers more money and the ability of the public and commercial fishing industry to utilize our once abundant fishery resources.

We urge your "aye vote" on this measure when it's heard in Committee 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. Unfortunately, time has run out for our fisheries. Actions to help them recover are needed now.

Sincerely,

John Beuttler  
Conservation Director