

February 17, 2010

Senator Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: **Opposition to Possible Amendments to the Jobs Bill to Block Endangered Species Act Protections in California's Bay-Delta Estuary**

Dear Senator Feinstein:

The undersigned sport and commercial fishing groups, businesses, and environmental organizations, and the more than a million Californians we represent, are all committed to addressing natural resources challenges in California through long-term solutions that restore and maintain the health of the environment on which the health of our economy and the quality of our lives depend. Toward that end, we urge you not to sponsor legislation restricting Endangered Species Act protections in California's Bay-Delta estuary. Blocking protections required under one of the nation's bedrock environmental laws would have disastrous consequences for one of the nation's most important ecosystems and California's iconic salmon fishery.

As we understand it, the proposed amendment would eliminate critically important environmental protections for salmon and many other endangered species in the San Francisco Bay-Delta estuary, the largest estuary on the West Coast of the Americas. The Bay-Delta is the lifeblood of the salmon fishery in California and much of Oregon, but over the past two years, the salmon fishery has been shut down due to the collapse of Central Valley salmon populations. This has resulted in thousands of lost jobs in California and Oregon, and hundreds of millions of dollars in lost income, each year. An amendment to waive the requirements under the federal Endangered Species Act could lead to the permanent closure of this fishery, with long-term job losses and economic damage. Such a suspension would likewise harm the Delta farmers who rely on clean Delta water to irrigate their crops.

Three consecutive years of drought have resulted in low water allocations across the State, although we expect that recent storms will increase water allocations this year. Suspending ESA protections would not end the drought, but it would have devastating effects on the Delta's native fish and wildlife, the farms, communities and jobs that depend on a healthy Delta, and the salmon fishery in California and Oregon, which is critically dependent on a healthy Delta.

The State of California is on record opposing legislative efforts to weaken, suspend, or set aside the ESA. The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California has also indicated that such legislation is unnecessary. California also recently enacted legislation to strengthen environmental protections in the Bay-Delta and to invest in water efficiency, water recycling, groundwater banking, and other sustainable water supplies in order to reduce our reliance on water exports from the Delta. We want to work with Congress and the Administration to develop complementary efforts to sustain the Delta, restore our salmon fishery, and develop sustainable water supply solutions to benefit all Californians.

The livelihoods of commercial and recreational salmon fishermen, Delta farmers, fishing guides, tackle shops, and communities across California and along the West Coast depend on the environmental protections that the proposed amendment would eliminate.

For all of these reasons, we strongly urge you not to proceed with this proposal. Instead, we urge you to focus on encouraging collaboration between state and federal agencies to design environmentally and economically sound solutions that will restore the Bay-Delta and help California meet its water needs.

Sincerely,

Cc: Senator Barbara Boxer
Secretary Ken Salazar
Speaker Nancy Pelosi
Representative George Miller
Representative Mike Thompson
Representative Doris Matsui
Representative Jerry McNerny
Representative John Garamendi

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