

May 17, 2010

The Honorable Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor, State of California
State Capitol, First Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

The ongoing water supply crisis in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta continues to represent a threat to the ongoing health of the California economy. The State Water Project and the federal Central Valley Project remain the overwhelming focus of regulatory responses by both state and federal agencies to an environmental problem that the scientific community attributes to many factors. The National Research Council, in its recent review of Delta water supply restrictions, stated that the role of stressors other than the water projects could be “potentially large.”

Among these other stressors are non-native predator fish species, particularly striped bass, which are known predators of Endangered Species Act (ESA) protected species such as Delta smelt and spring and winter-run Chinook salmon. There are an estimated 1 million adult and 5 million subadult striped bass in the Delta. Some government and independent fishery biologists believe that 90 percent of juvenile salmon may die due to predation before making it through the Delta. In comparison, mortality caused by the federal and state water projects represents less than 3 percent of the species’ population, with some estimates at far less than 1 percent.

Management of the striped bass fishery is directly under the jurisdiction of the California Fish and Game Commission and Department of Fish and Game. In March, a representative of the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), which is responsible for protecting ESA protected salmon species spoke at a Commission meeting and requested that the Commission launch proceedings to amend management of striped bass in light of the effect of that predatory species on salmon. In April, the Fish and Game Commission essentially rejected NOAA’s request, instead directing staff to study the matter. One commission member stated that he wouldn’t mind if the study took 10 years.

This is not a serious response by the Commission to the Delta crisis. We urge you to direct the Commission to revise its management approach to striped bass in a manner that reduces the long-term loss of endangered species as part of a comprehensive approach to solving the Delta crisis. **Survival of salmon through the Delta can be immediately increased by eliminating recreational fishing restrictions for striped bass, such as bag and size limits.** Simple changes in striped bass fishing regulations will increase angler harvest of bass, thus lowering their overall

Letter to Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger
Page 2
May 17, 2010

abundance in the Delta. This simple management action will not only immediately increase salmon survival through the Delta, but it will do so at almost no cost to taxpayers.

Your leadership has given the Delta the chance to be on a future path towards recovery. Success will depend on addressing all aspects of this crisis.

Thank you for your continued leadership and considering a broader response to the stressors that are damaging the Delta.

Sincerely,



Ms. Dawn Clover
Director of Government Relations
California Cattlemen's Association



Mr. Jim Beck
General Manager
Kern County Water Agency



Ms. Valerie Nera
Policy Advocate
California Chamber of Commerce



Jeffrey Kightlinger, General Manager
Metropolitan Water District
of Southern California



Glenn Farrel
Government Affairs Manager
Friant Water Authority



Mr. Allen Short
General Manager
Modesto Irrigation District

Letter to Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger
Page 3
May 17, 2010



Mr. Steve Chedester
Executive Director
San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors
Water Authority



Mr. Dan Nelson
Executive Director
San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority



Charles Wilson, Chairman
Southern California Water Committee



Ms. Jill Duerig
General Manager
Zone 7 Water Agency, Eastern Alameda
County

Copies provided to:

John Moffatt
Chief Deputy Legislative Secretary
Office of the Governor

Lester Snow, Secretary
California Resources Agency

John McCamman, Director
Dept. of Fish and Game

Mark Cowin, Director
Dept. of Water Resources

Jim Kellogg, President
California Fish and Game Commission

Richard B. Rogers, Vice President
California Fish and Game Commission

Michael Sutton, Member
California Fish and Game Commission

Daniel W. Richards, Member
California Fish and Game Commission

Donald Benninghoven, Member
California Fish and Game Commission