



The Honorable Diane Feinstein
United States Senate
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
United States Senate
Washington DC 20510

February 9, 2014

Re: **Drought Relief Legislation**

Dear Senators Feinstein and Boxer:

On behalf of the many coastal and inland California communities that rely on Central Valley salmon, the recreational and commercial salmon fishing industries, and myriad related businesses from restaurants to hotels and boatyards, our fishing organizations thank you for your strong opposition of H.R. 3964. As you know, that bill would result in disastrous impacts on California's billion dollar salmon fishery and the tens of thousands of working people and communities that rely on our Central Valley salmon. H.R. 3964 seeks to undermine decades of carefully crafted environmental protections, including the consensus San Joaquin River restoration agreement. It would also undermine California's own laws and water rights system.

H.R. 3964 would create chaos from which California would not recover for decades. We urge you to choose a different path.

We thank you for your commitment to developing responsible drought legislation that does not pick winners and losers. With this in mind, we urge you to focus your efforts on water management actions that can help water users without shifting more damage onto the fishing industry and the environment. We believe that this can best be done by focusing on increasing water conservation, wastewater recycling, environmentally-benign water transfers and groundwater recharge programs that can provide future dry year supplies.

We in the salmon community are doing more than our part. The damage to our salmon fishery is already creating widespread fear in the salmon industry because it will be two years before we can tally the true extent of the damage. We know we lost an estimated 40 percent of the fertilized eggs salmon laid in the upper Sacramento River last fall. These would have provided tens of thousands of salmon for the 2016 fishery, fish that will be needed. Similar losses have occurred in the Feather and American rivers, all due to water management decisions driven by drought and questionable allocation decisions in 2013. We stand to lose even more of our 2016 stocks because of extremely hostile river conditions which are killing surviving juvenile salmon.

We are currently asking hatcheries to change their release strategies to offset the drought damage in ways that don't require extra water. We're also asking state and federal agencies to consider trapping and moving wild fish to bypass drought-caused death zones in the rivers and Delta. This is a key reason why it's important to keep existing, though weak, environmental protections in place in the Delta. Weakening them more could have serious consequences on fall run and listed winter and spring run juvenile salmon struggling to survive to the sea this year. Your help could be invaluable in these efforts.

Central Valley interests have urged you to support legislation that would undermine state and federal environmental statutes and manage California's water from Capitol Hill. We urge you to resist including such provisions in your legislation. In addition to further harming the environment and the salmon fishery, such legislation would weaken the State's ability to manage its own water, harm other water users and create new impediments to progress in the Delta.

Environmental protections in the Bay-Delta system already include weaker protections in dry years. Without these minimal protections in place, the environment and the salmon fishery could suffer permanent damage.

This is not California's first drought and it will not be our last. We must seek balanced water policy that conservatively manages water supply, even in what appear to be "normal" years, in order to avoid the type of water shortage we're suffering from now. We need to do so without sacrificing our environmental laws, the Bay-Delta ecosystem, and the salmon fishery.

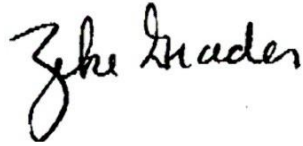
Fishermen and farmers are both food producers. We both depend on water. And we both suffer during droughts. We urge you to find drought solutions that help us both, rather than pitting us against each other.

Thank you for your commitment to developing balanced, workable solutions to address the damage drought wreaks on water users, the environment and the many Californians that depend on the salmon fishery. We stand ready to work with you.

Sincerely,



John McManus
Golden Gate Salmon Assn.



Zeke Grader
Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Assns.



Bill Jennings
California Sportfishing Protection Alliance



Dick Pool
Water 4 Fish



Roger Thomas
Golden Gate Fishermen's Association



Marc Gorelnik
Coastside Fishing Club