



FEDERATION OF FLY FISHERS.

Conserving -- Restoring -- Educating through Fly Fishing

Northern California Council

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December 8, 1998

Honorable Bruce Babbitt
Secretary, Department of the Interior
1100 L Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Subject: CalFed Fails Steelhead

This is to request your assistance in reordering the CalFed agenda to protect and enhance native steelhead stocks in the San Joaquin and Sacramento river system. As previously, drafted, CalFed's draft Programmatic EIS/EIR Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan (ERP) is negligently deficient with respect to steelhead restoration. We ask that the same level of protection and restoration be extended to steelhead, which are a significant part of these rivers fishery resources, as are being proposed for chinook salmon.

Steelhead are a species of rainbow trout which live a major part of their lives in the sea. As contrasted with salmon, which move to the ocean immediately after hatching, in their natural condition steelhead stay in cool headwater streams for their first year. Without cool water in the summer and fall young steelhead don't survive. Dams and water diversion projects have brought this important sport fishery to the edge of extinction in California's Central Valley. CVPIA and CalFed have made ecosystem restoration a "focus," at least on paper. In some cases dams are not equipped to allow provision of proper quantities and quality of water to allow steelhead and their food sources to exist. In many instances only salmon are considered in scheduling water releases. The CalFed process should be providing solutions to these problems. Instead, it appears to be ignoring them.

If CalFed continues on its present course, extinction of Central Valley steelhead will likely result. This is particularly true of the San Joaquin River, where CalFed has refused to even recognize the scientific evidence of their continued existence. We therefore request the following actions:

1. The National Marine Fisheries Service upgrade its Endangered Species Act designation for Sacramento-San Joaquin river system steelhead from "Threatened" to "Endangered" (see enclosed letter to Dr. William T. Hogarth, Regional Director, NMFS).
2. As an alternative to No. 1 (above), the CalFed draft EIR/EIS Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan include adequate measures to restore, protect, and monitor Central Valley steelhead populations. We believe many of the necessary changes and

enhancements to the ERPP are contained in the American Fisheries Society letter to CalFed dated July 1, 1998 (enclosure), and in the CalFed Strategic Plan for the Ecosystem Restoration Program (dated September 30, 1998). As a supplement to those comments we ask that a goal for Sacramento-San Joaquin rivers steelhead restoration be the numbers present in the river system during the year 1967. We ask that these comments and our numerical goal be integrated into CalFed plans and work-projects.

3. We request that sport angling community representatives be included at the table where decisions are made which may effect sport fisheries such as that of the steelhead of the San Joaquin-Sacramento river system. The token representation we've been allowed at recent meetings has not been adequate.

California is a vast and complex state. To those familiar with its water history the balance scale has too often weighed in one direction. We are told that "Man shall not live by bread alone." The natural beauty of rivers which wend their way through our growing Great Central Valley cities is the stuff which feeds men's souls. The signatories to these letters represent fishermen and women from all over this state, as well as major environmental organizations. We want a place at the table, equitable treatment for California's unique fisheries and assurances that there will be steelhead in our rivers for our sons and daughters, and their children's children.

Sincerely,



Charles P. Bucaria, Sr.
Conservation Vice-President
Northern California Council,
Federation of Fly Fishers

For the following organizations:

Northern California Council, Federation of Fly Fishers
Southwest Council (Southern California), Federation of Fly Fishers
California Sport Fishing Protection Alliance
California Trout
Trout Unlimited (California)
Trout Unlimited (National)
United Anglers

Friends of the River
Sierra Club

cc: Dr. William T. Hogarth,
Regional Director, National Marine Fisheries Service

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**Mr. Lester A. Snow,
Executive Director
CalFed Bay-Delta Program
Mr. Pat Coulston, President,
California-Nevada Chapter,
American Fisheries Society**

Other Interested Parties

Enclosures