

Agenda Item C.2  
Attachment 4  
September 2015  
Tim Sloane  
*Executive Director*  
Glen H. Spain  
*Northwest Regional Director*  
Vivian Helliwell  
*Watershed Conservation Director*  
**In Memoriam:**  
Nathaniel S. Bingham  
Harold C. Christensen

David Bitts  
*President*  
Larry Collins  
*Vice-President*  
Duncan MacLean  
*Secretary*  
Mike Stiller  
*Treasurer*

**PACIFIC COAST FEDERATION  
of FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATIONS**



**Please Respond to:**

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Dr. Donald McIsaac, Executive Director  
Pacific Fisheries Management Council  
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101  
Portland, Oregon 97220-1384

7 August 2015  
Via Email PDF

Dear Dr. McIsaac:

As you know, three bills are now pending in Congress to deal with the ongoing drought in California. If any of these bills becomes law, it could have very significant effects on the future survival of, especially, all runs of Chinook salmon originating in the Central Valley. Sacramento fall-run Chinook are, of course, the bread and butter of ocean salmon fisheries off both California and Oregon, while protective measures required under the ESA listing of Sacramento winter-run Chinook can severely constrain or close fisheries south of Pt. Arena regardless of the abundance of fall-run.

For these reasons PCFFA urges the PFMC to draft and send a letter to the appropriate Committee Chairs laying out the potential consequences of any drought bill for salmon fisheries and explaining our – all salmon fishermen and associated businesses – stake in the issue.

Normally such a letter would be brought to the Council by the SAS or Habitat Committee or both, but neither is scheduled to meet at the September Council meeting, and if the letter isn't approved and sent at the September 2015 meeting (or very soon thereafter), it will be too late for

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this Congressional Session; thus PCFFA is asking for a somewhat more direct and expedited process.

Attached is a draft text which contains some talking points the Council may or may not want to include in such a PFMC letter. We will ask Butch Smith to distribute the letter to SAS members by email for comments, additions, etc., and would hope to have the results available by the third week of August. We hope the Council's operating procedures will be flexible enough to accommodate urgent consideration of this letter.

If at all possible, please put consideration of this draft letter regarding the potential impacts of the various drought bills in Congress on council-managed salmon fisheries on the agenda for the September, 2015 PFMC meeting. Thanks!

Sincerely,

*David Bitts*

Dave Bitts  
President, PCFFA

Suggested Draft Letter Attached

The Honorable -----, Chair  
Appropriate Committee  
Washington, DC

Dear Chairwoman -----:

The PFMC manages ocean salmon fisheries in federal waters off California, Oregon, and Washington. Collectively these fisheries generate hundreds of millions of dollars per year in personal income to small business owners in all three states. They also provide access to these fish for the public, which has invested billions of dollars in protecting and restoring freshwater habitat so that salmon may thrive.

We would ask that any bill brought before your Committee to deal with the effects of the ongoing drought in California, whose Central Valley and San Francisco Bay Delta ecosystem provides a *huge* proportion of the salmon caught in Council-managed waters, particularly in California and Oregon, be crafted so as to include the maximum degree of protection for freshwater salmon habitat (which includes adequate freshwater flows themselves) and salmon fishing jobs, consistent with the emergency conditions caused by the drought. We would suggest the following general guidelines to accomplish this objective:

- 1) Biologically supportive minimum in-stream flows sufficient to support a healthy SF Bay Delta freshwater ecosystem *must be maintained at all times*. In normal water years only about half of all California's freshwater stays in the rivers for the benefit of fish and wildlife, including salmon; the remainder is used by people, primarily for agriculture and secondarily for municipal and industrial purposes, including household drinking water. In a severe drought year like 2015, much less water than normally flows through the Delta is available, threatening toxic salt water intrusions that could destroy freshwater salmon nurseries, pollute hundreds of thousands of acres of prime Delta agricultural croplands, and damage or destroy the freshwater drinking supply of at least 12 million people whose water systems draw from the Bay Delta. Also, if drastically lowered flows cause the failure of any year's salmon run (as we have already seen happen in 2014), it only takes three consecutive such years to eradicate that run, probably forever.
- 2) Maximize incentives to develop alternative water sources other than the SF Bay Delta, which is already overstressed by water extraction (see NMFS Biological Opinion on

Delta operations, 2009). These sources might principally include water conservation, recycling (as is now done by Las Vegas and the LA Metropolitan Water District among others), and large-scale desalination. Funding should be made available for R&D and for subsidizing startups in all these fields. Absent such measures, California's future growth will be stunted by the limited amount of water available from the Bay Delta.

- 3) It is inappropriate, as well as terrible public policy generally, for Congress to try to micro-manage what is arguably the most complex and interconnected water system in the world, i.e., the California Central Valley. Congressionally mandated Delta E/I ratios, mandated minimum irrigation deliveries regardless of consequences to other water users, mandated decisions that must follow scientifically obsolete or superseded Biological Opinions (BiOps) and efforts to second-guess, preempt or overturn California's long-standing State water agency authorities and water rights systems are far more likely to do major harms than any good. Nor is it good policy to establish by legislative *fiat* what science can, or cannot, be used in developing future water policy decisions. Science-based decision-making requires that scientific decisions must be left to the agencies with the appropriate scientific expertise.

If California's economy and population are to continue to grow, we cannot continue to take water for granted. We are well into the stage where we have to think long and hard about how we use this already over-appropriated public resource; if we fail to do that, all sectors of California's economy that rely on fresh water, including its valuable salmon runs, will suffer a major collapse, and soon. We think the principles above reflect a basic, common-sense approach to California's future.

Sincerely,

[Again, the above is intended as a guideline or suggestion for the letter we hope PFMC will endorse and send.]