Golden Gate Salmon Association
Humboldt Fishermen’s Marketing Association
West Marine • Crab Boat Owners Association
California Sportfishing Protection Alliance
Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen’s Associations
Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association
Fishermen’s Association of Moss Landing
Port Orford Ocean Resource Team • Water 4 Fish
Fishermen’s Marketing Association of Bodega Bay
Ilwaco Charter Association • Monterey Fish Market
Small Boat Commercial Salmon Fishermen’s Association
Golden Gate Fishermen’s Association
Hudson Fish Company • Coastside Fishing Club
Port San Luis Commercial Fishermen’s Association
Pacific Rival Fisheries • Coast Marine & Industrial Supply
Save The California Delta Alliance • Mission Peak Fly Anglers
Institute for Fisheries Resources
Northern California Council, International Federation of Fly Fishers
Half Moon Bay Seafood Marketing Association
And
Individual Fishing Vessel Captains
May 19, 2014

Dear Senators Feinstein, Boxer, Reid, and Merkley:

RE: Opposition to S. 2198

We are writing as members of the California and Oregon salmon fishing community to express our opposition to the current version of the Emergency Drought Relief Act of 2014 (S. 2198). As currently written this measure could decimate California’s salmon industry and seriously harm Oregon’s ocean salmon fishery.

As you know, Central Valley (Sacramento-San Joaquin Rivers and their tributaries) salmon constitute the second largest population of these fish in the lower 48 – only the Columbia River system is larger. Central Valley salmon – principally the fall-run chinook (king salmon) – are the backbone of our fishery accounting for approximately 90 percent of California’s production and upwards of 60 percent of Oregon’s ocean salmon catch. Our Central Valley salmon stocks support an industry that employs an estimated 23,000 workers in California and half that many in Oregon. Many of our coastal, and inland fishing communities, depend on salmon production to stay afloat.

We appreciate the stated goal of the bill - to expedite drought relief actions that are consistent with state and federal environmental laws and to bring people together to address this crisis. We agree that Californians should come together to help water-strapped cities, farming communities, and our natural environment during these very challenging times. However several provisions of S.2198 would seriously weaken the 2009 salmon biological opinion which has greatly helped not only listed winter and spring run chinook salmon stocks, but also the economically valuable fall run that our fishery depends on.

The 2009 biological opinion has greatly improved salmon stocks and delivered us from the extremely low population numbers created by conditions before the BiOp. Those low years caused the complete shutdown of the ocean salmon fishery in 2008 and 2009 – the first time in history - something we never want to experience again.

Our specific concerns include:

- **Section 103(b)(4)** would lock in a 1:1 ratio of inflow to exports, affecting the amount of the San Joaquin River’s flow that can be diverted by massive pumps in April and May, when salmon and steelhead are migrating down the river to the ocean. In a critically dry year like this one, existing protections allow the pumps to divert all of the water flowing down the San
Joaquin River (a 1:1 ratio of inflow to exports). However, the ratio increases to better protect migrating salmon from being pulled into the pumps as hydrology improves; for example, the ratio is 2:1 in a “dry” year as opposed to a “critically dry” year. As written, this high 1:1 export ratio – very harmful to all juvenile salmon attempting to escape the massive pull of the diversion pumps in April and May – could continue despite a significant increase in precipitation, either this year or in future years while the Governor’s drought declaration is in effect. This concern is not hypothetical, as the last drought declaration, issued in 2008, was not lifted until 2011, long after the drought was over.

State and federal fisheries agencies have exercised significant discretion this year in implementing the BiOps, with regard to the requirements addressed in this legislation. In fact, we are concerned that they have been so responsive to the concerns of water users that they may have significantly harmed the environment and the salmon fishery. Simply put, such provisions to increase water deliveries this year are moot and, in light of the actions of state and federal agencies, unnecessary.

Finally, we are very concerned that passage of S. 2198 could lead to additional rollbacks of environmental protections in negotiations with the sponsors of H.R. 3964 (Valadao (R-CA). This radical House legislation would override state and federal environmental protections in the California Bay-Delta ecosystem and likely lead to the shutdown of our salmon fishery and California’s San Joaquin River Restoration Program.

The drought was not caused by the limitations in the BiOps. Relaxing environmental protections will not eliminate the significant water shortages experienced by some farmers and cities. It could, however, result in lasting damage to our community. Rather than focusing on weakening environmental protections, we urge you to focus on pro-active solutions, such as the measures included in Congressman Huffman’s H.R. 4239, Senator Boxer’s draft drought bill and the State of California’s drought funding legislation.

We look forward to working with you to respond to the impacts of the drought on California, including impacts on the environment, the salmon fishery and our communities. Thank you for your consideration of our coastal and inland communities that depend on the salmon fishery.

Sincerely

John McManus, Executive Director
Golden Gate Salmon Association

Bill Jennings, Executive Director
California Sportfishing Protection Alliance

Randy Repass, President
West Marine

Larry Collins, President
Crab Boat Owner’s Association

Zeke Grader, Executive Director
Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen’s Associations

Liz Hamilton, Executive Director
Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association

Leesa Cobb
Port Orford Ocean Resource Team

Richard Pool, President
Water 4 Fish
Aaron Newman, President
Humboldt Fishermen’s Association
Roger Thomas, President
Golden Gate Fishermen’s Association
Chuck Cappotto, President
Fishermen’s Marketing Association of Bodega Bay
Butch Smith, President
Ilwaco Charter Association
Paul Johnson, President
Monterey Fish Market
Kathleen Fosmark, President
Fishermen’s Association of Moss Landing

Marc Gorelnik, Chair
Coastside Fishing Club
Butch Powers, President
Port San Luis Commercial Fishermen’s Association
Mike and Yvette Hudson
Hudson Fish Company
Frank Gee
Small Boat Commercial Salmon Fishermen’s Assn.
Chad Dahlberg, President
Pacific Rival Fisheries
Steve Schramm, Chair
Mission Peak Fly Anglers
Pietro Parravano, President
Institute for Fisheries Resources
Jan McCleery
Save The California Delta Alliance
Dr. C. Mark Rockwell
Northern California Chapter
International Federation of Fly Fishers
Benjamin Platt
Half Moon Bay Seafood Marketing Association
Aaron Longton, F/V Goldeneye
David Bitts, F/V Elmarue
Barbara Emley, F/V Autumn Gale
Duncan MacLean, F/V Major Steppen Stone
Mark Davis, F/V Billie Kaye
Al Ritter, F/V Mickey

cc: Pacific Fishery Management Council