



Salmon and the Bay-Delta in Trouble!!

Big Problems with Politically Motivated New Federal Water Diversion Rules

On October 22 the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) released a new set of water diversion rules called a biological opinion (BO) under the federal Endangered Species Act, allowing a dramatic increase in pumping from the Bay-Delta ecosystem by the Central Valley Project (CVP) – the largest water project in the nation. Unless blocked by the courts or state agencies, the new rules will harm all Central Valley king salmon runs, Central Valley steelhead and green sturgeon. Key flaws in the BO include:

- **Threatening the Survival of Salmon Runs and the Salmon Fishing Industry:** The new NMFS BO weakens every important constraint on CVP dams, pumps and water diversions compared to existing rules in place since 2009. This is a salmon extinction plan.
- **Political Manipulation Produced the BO:** The new rules are the result of sustained political manipulation by Interior Secretary David Bernhardt, who formerly lobbied and litigated for the Westlands Water District against the more protective 2009 rules.
- **Aiming for Salmon Collapse:** The BO admits that, “reductions in the survival and productivity of all CV Chinook salmon populations (including fall-run and late fall-run Chinook salmon) are expected to occur...the greatest effects will occur during the drier water years when effects of the proposed action are most pronounced.”
- **Gutting Sacramento River Temperature Protections:** The new BO allows the federal water project to kill 100 percent of endangered upper Sacramento River winter-run salmon eggs and fry for three years running. This could authorize a repeat of the fall-run and winter-run fish kills in 2014 and 2015.
- **Eliminates Any Specific Year-to-Year Shasta Water Storage Requirement** to ensure cool water temperatures for salmon eggs and baby salmon. In other words, the BO allows draining of the state’s largest reservoir, leaving nothing in case of future drought.
- **Dramatically Weakens All Pumping Constraints in the Delta** to allow massive additional volumes of water, needed by salmon and the environment, to be diverted.
- **Phony Science:** The new BO ignores the overwhelming scientific evidence compiled by the State Water Resources Control Board, the San Francisco Estuary Institute, and others regarding the damage caused by current levels of water diversions and the need for increased – not decreased – Delta outflow.
- **Fox guarding henhouse:** Gives the Bureau of Reclamation authority to police itself and control scientific assessments of damage to salmon caused by CVP operations.

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