

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 5, 2009

Secretary Gary Locke
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20230

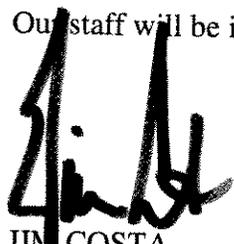
Dear Secretary Locke:

As you may know, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) finalized its biological opinion yesterday finding that the pumping operations of the Central Valley Project by the Bureau of Reclamation jeopardize long-term survival of winter and spring-run Chinook salmon, the green sturgeon, Central Valley steelhead, and Southern Resident killer whales. Regrettably, NOAA's biological opinion calls for substantial reductions in Central Valley and State Water Project water exports that are vital to agricultural water users south of the San Joaquin-Sacramento Delta.

Over the past several years, more than three million acre-feet of the Valley's federal water supply has been reallocated by judicial decisions and legislative changes to benefit fisheries and water quality in other areas of California. Yesterday's biological opinion further reduces Valley agricultural water deliveries by 330,000 acre-feet of water. It also comes on the heels of three critically dry years in the Valley. Due to drought conditions and increasingly limited water supply deliveries to users south of the Delta, hundreds of thousands of acres have been fallowed and small communities in the Valley face Depression-level unemployment numbers. Needless to say, we are deeply disappointed in the solutions recommended by NOAA's biological opinion, and fear for the future of communities in the Valley that depend on water for their survival.

NOAA's press release indicates that the agency is willing to work with federal and state partners, farmers and residents to find solutions that benefit the economy, environment and Valley families. Given the serious impact of this decision, we ask that you and the directors of NOAA and NMFS meet with us as early as next week to discuss how we might work together to find a viable solution to this crisis.

Our staff will be in touch with you to schedule a meeting.


JIM COSTA
Member of Congress

Sincerely,


DENNIS CARDOZA
Member of Congress