

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

March 18, 2010

Eric Schwaab  
Assistant Administrator  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW, Room 5128  
Washington, DC 20230

Rowan Gould  
Acting Director  
United States Fish and Wildlife Service  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Assistant Administrator Schwaab and Acting Director Gould:

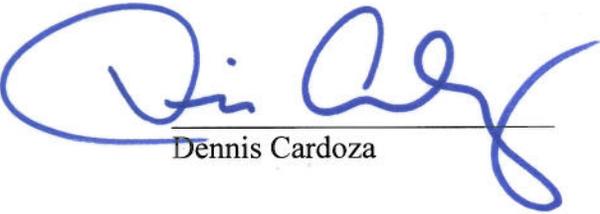
As you know, the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is in a state of crisis. Native fish populations are at record low levels and water deliveries through the Delta have been significantly reduced in an effort to protect delta smelt and salmon species with little discernible benefit. In light of the current state of affairs, it was appalling to read a recent report in the Sacramento Bee describing the extent of predation by non-native striped bass and largemouth bass on the federally-protected delta smelt, salmon, and steelhead populations in the Delta.

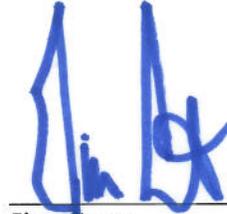
The federal and state wildlife agencies have known for years that striped bass prey on delta smelt, juvenile salmon, and steelhead. In the recently released *Draft Recovery Plan for the Evolutionarily Significant Units of Sacramento River winter run Chinook salmon, Central Valley spring run Chinook salmon, and the Distinct Population Segment of Central Valley Steelhead* (2009), the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) identifies predation as a “very high stressor” on salmon and steelhead and recommends a significant reduction of striped bass and other non-native predators to prevent extinction of these species. And, more than a decade ago, the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) identified predation as a threat to the recovery of delta smelt in its *Recovery Plan for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Native Fishes* (1996). Biologists at the California Department of Fish and Game estimate that striped bass eat 5 to 50 percent of the juvenile salmon population annually; they have also estimated that striped bass eat 20 percent or more of the delta smelt population annually.

It is apparent that the federal government has known about the predation problem for years and yet has continued to support programs and allowed actions to occur that serve to protect and maintain these sportfishing populations to the detriment of native fishes, including delta smelt, salmon, and steelhead. Specifically, the FWS has issued tens of millions of dollars of grants to the California Department of Fish and Game that support the striped bass management program. In addition, the federal government has underwritten State activities to protect the striped bass without complying with the Endangered Species Act, including, by failing to engage in consultation required by section 7(a)(2) of the Act to fully analyze and address the impacts of its funding decisions on the federally-protected fish species in the Delta.

Predation by non-native bass in the Delta and the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers is a known cause of the decline of the native fish populations. It is an issue that can and should be addressed. FWS and NMFS are required to comply with the ESA and must ensure that any action taken to maintain or protect the striped bass and largemouth bass population in the Delta be fully analyzed to be in compliance with the Endangered Species Act. Until the federal and State governments have complied with the ESA, FWS and NMFS should immediately halt any existing programs that serve to protect and enhance the non-native striped bass and largemouth bass sportfishing populations in the Delta, including any grants to the California Department of Fish and Game to support the non-native striped bass and largemouth bass.

Sincerely,

  
Dennis Cardoza

  
Jim Costa

  
George Radanovich

- cc: Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger  
Lester Snow, Director, California Natural Resources Agency  
John McCamman, Director, Department of Fish and Game  
California Fish and Game Commission  
Gary Locke, Secretary of Commerce  
Dr. Jane Lubchenco, Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans & Atmosphere &  
Administrator  
Ken Salazar, Secretary of the Interior  
Assemblymember John Pérez, Speaker of the Assembly  
Senator Darrell Steinberg, Senate President Pro Tem  
Assemblymember Martin Garrick, Assembly Minority Leader  
Senator Dennis Hollingsworth, Senate Minority Leader