

## *Coalition for a Sustainable Delta*

June 26, 2008

The Honorable Arnold Schwarzenegger  
Governor of California  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

On behalf of the Coalition for a Sustainable Delta, I want to recognize and thank you for your continued leadership and resolve on our state's pressing water issues. Your actions demonstrate that you are clearly aware of the important need to solve the Bay-Delta crisis to sustain both the environment and economy of our great state.

It is for these reasons we want to bring to your personal attention the continuing failure of one of your agencies to address a real and significant threat to native endangered and threatened species in the Delta.

Earlier this year, our Coalition filed a legal action against the California Department of Fish and Game and the California Fish and Game Commission for adopting and enforcing regulations to maintain an artificially high population of non-native striped bass in the Bay-Delta.

Striped bass are voracious feeders and predators. Unfortunately, they prey upon a number of federally and state listed native fish species, including the delta smelt and juvenile salmon.

The California Department of Fish and Game has estimated that striped bass consume approximately 5 percent of the population of delta smelt in the Bay-Delta annually and in excess of 5 percent of the population of certain salmon species. In addition, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has concluded that striped bass predation of delta smelt could foreclose recovery of that species. The National Marine Fisheries Service concurs and recently identified striped bass predation as a threat to listed salmon and steelhead. Moreover, striped bass prey upon the native longfin smelt, which the Fish and Game Commission recently identified as a candidate for listing under the California Endangered Species Act.

The prominent role of striped bass in the decline of native Bay-Delta species has come up repeatedly during the past several weeks in hearings in front of federal district court judge Wanger regarding an interim remedy in the case regarding salmonid species and the export pumps. Recent media accounts have also chronicled the impediment that striped bass present to critical state and federal salmon restocking efforts. It is beyond

*The Coalition for a Sustainable Delta is an ad hoc group of water users who depend on the delta for a large portion of their water supplies. The Coalition is dedicated to protecting the delta and is committed to promoting a strategy to ensure its sustainability.*

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dispute that this non-native species is posing a very real and significant threat to the continued survival of a number of fish species native to the Bay-Delta.

Rather than seek to address this threat and resolve this issue through settlement, your agency and appointees have chosen to avoid the issue entirely through dilatory legal maneuverings, challenging our standing to bring this legal action. Apparently, the Commission and Department have decided that, despite the uncontroverted evidence that non-native striped bass are causing real and irreparable harm to the Bay-Delta ecosystem, the appropriate course of action is to continue to prop up populations of striped bass and other invasive sport fishes. The Department and Commission's failure on this issue is harming all Californians in three ways.

First, the native fishes of the Bay-Delta estuary – an invaluable state resource entrusted to the Commission and Department – will continue to decline and perhaps go extinct.

Second, Bay-Delta water exports – which are vital to the economy of the State – will continue to face restrictions without providing any appreciable benefit to native species due to a total failure by regulatory authorities to address striped bass predation and numerous other real causes of ecosystem decline.

Third, valuable state resources, taxpayer dollars, are being wasted to unnecessarily litigate this issue at a time when the state can least afford it.

In closing, your vision and leadership on the Bay-Delta and water issues is greatly appreciated and your personal attention to this matter greatly needed. I trust we all recognize that long-term Bay-Delta sustainability can only be achieved if and when all of the myriad of factors, or "stressors," that impact the estuary are addressed. Predation by striped bass is a well-documented stressor that can be reduced for the betterment of the environment and economy of California.

Thank you for your continued leadership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Jackson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Steve Jackson, Founding Member  
Coalition for a Sustainable Delta  
President, Hillside Orchards, Inc.  
(559) 804-1878

SJ:pt