

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Federal Judge To Approve Settlement In Striped Bass Predation Case**

**FRESNO, CA** – Today, in U.S. District Court, Judge Oliver Wanger indicated he will approve a settlement agreement in the case filed by the [Coalition for a Sustainable Delta](#) and other water users against the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) related to the management of striped bass, an invasive species that is known to feed upon endangered salmon and delta smelt in the Delta. Judge Wanger's written ruling will be forthcoming. Under the settlement DFG will collaborate with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to develop a joint regulatory proposal that will address the impacts of sport-fishing regulations on the population of non-native striped bass in the Delta. The lawsuit was filed in late 2008 in the U.S. District Court in Fresno before Judge Wanger.

The settlement was reached after the DFG's own experts in the case acknowledged that striped bass predation is responsible for the loss of a significant number of protected, native salmon in the Delta. The Department's experts estimate the take could be as high as 25-50 percent annually of both the endangered Sacramento River winter-run and the threatened Central Valley spring-run Chinook salmon populations within the Delta.

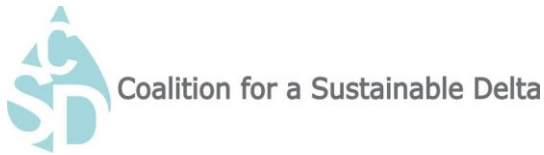
"We applaud the Department of Fish and Game for coming together with us to develop a solution to the significant negative impact striped bass have on the Delta ecosystem," said Coalition for a Sustainable Delta spokesman Michael Boccadoro. "Predation by non-native species such as the striped bass is one of the most clear-cut stressors on endangered Delta fisheries and addressing this problem is a vital step toward creating a sustainable future for the Delta estuary."

Striped bass predation has been increasingly identified as a major reason behind salmon and delta smelt fishery declines, but state regulators have repeatedly failed to address the problem. Striped bass are an invasive species that were planted in California as a sport fish in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. DFG has long been protecting the voracious predators at the expense of salmon, delta and longfin smelt, and other endangered species through the imposition of size (18 inches minimum) and bag (2 per day) limits. At one point DFG actually stocked the Delta with millions of striped bass in an attempt to further increase their population.

While DFG was taking these actions to protect and increase the striped bass population in the Delta, salmon populations have steadily declined leading to devastating government imposed water pumping restrictions for residents, farms and businesses and the closure of the last three commercial salmon fishing seasons. Hundreds of thousands of acres of productive farmland were fallowed since 2008, resulting in the loss of thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in economic activity. Commercial salmon fishermen have faced a string of tough years that have resulted an estimated loss of \$1.4 billion dollars and 23,000 lost jobs.

*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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Under the settlement, a comprehensive proposal to address striped bass predation in the Delta will be developed by state and national fishery management agencies that will include the following components:

- Appropriate changes to regulations that protect non-native striped bass at the expense of threatened and endangered native fish;
- Development of an adaptive management plan to research and monitor the overall effects on listed species; and
- Creation of a \$1 million research program focused on predation of protected species.

“This settlement means significant progress for efforts to improve the Delta. While there are a number of different stressors currently affecting the estuary, addressing striped bass predation is a promising step toward achieving long term Delta stability,” said Boccadoro. “But we must continue to address each of the multiple stressors impacting the estuary for long-term success to be achieved. This is another crucial piece in a very complex puzzle.”

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***For more information on the issue, please visit [www.sustainabledelta.com](http://www.sustainabledelta.com)***