



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 26, 2010

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Invasive Striped Bass Identified as Major Threat to Salmon **Overwhelming Evidence Provided by State's Own Experts**

FRESNO, CA – The [Coalition for a Sustainable Delta](#) and other water users earlier this week filed for summary judgment in their lawsuit against the California Department of Fish and Game related to the management of striped bass, an invasive species that is known to feed upon endangered salmon and delta smelt. The lawsuit was originally filed in late 2008 and is pending in the U.S. District Court in Fresno before Judge Oliver Wanger.

The California Department of Fish and Game's own experts in the case acknowledged that striped bass predation accounts for the loss of a significant number of protected, native salmon. **The Department's experts estimate the take could be as high as 25-50 percent of both the endangered Sacramento River winter-run and the threatened Central Valley spring-run Chinook salmon.** The experts also admitted under oath that:

- Striped bass sport-fishing regulations, by protecting the Delta's striped bass population, increase striped bass predation on the two federally protected salmon species, and
- Ending the enforcement of the striped bass sport-fishing regulations would benefit the federally protected species by reducing striped bass predation.

"Clearly striped bass are having a very real and significant impact on endangered salmon and the sustainability of the entire Delta estuary," said Coalition for a Sustainable Delta spokesman Michael Boccadoro. "In the long run, if we are going to protect salmon and restore the estuary, regulators must do something about predation by striped bass. State regulators can no longer ignore the problem."

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 19th century. The Department of Fish and Game has continued to protect 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 CDFG actually stocked the Delta with millions of striped bass in an attempt to further increase their population. While Fish and Game has taken these actions to protect and expand striped bass 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 two commercial salmon fishing seasons. Hundreds of thousands of acres of productive farmland has been fallowed since 2008, resulting in the loss of tens of thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in economic activity. Commercial salmon fishermen are facing another tough year that has already resulted in the loss of \$1.4 billion dollars and 23,000 lost jobs.

"It doesn't get more frustrating than this. You have state government regulators knowingly benefitting an invasive species at the expense of endangered salmon and the environment. The livelihoods of San Joaquin Valley farmers and commercial fisherman are being devastated and farm workers and fishing crews are losing their jobs, while government regulations are making the situation worse. And folks wonder why voters are angry and fed up," said Boccadoro.

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.

Despite the overwhelming evidence showing harm to the environment and salmon, the CDFG recently filed a separate, and somewhat desperate, motion to have the lawsuit dismissed for lack of standing. “CDFG and the state need to quit playing games with people’s lives and wasting scarce taxpayer dollars on attorneys and technicalities. Just fix the problem Fish and Game has already acknowledged exists. The fate of salmon, farm workers and fisherman all hang in the balance,” Boccadoro concluded.

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For more information, including a copy of the summary judgment, visit www.sustainabledelta.com