

March 9, 2009

President Barack H. Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

As leaders of West Coast and national recreational and commercial fishing industry associations, and conservation organizations in California, Oregon, Washington, Alaska, Idaho and Nevada, we congratulate you on your presidency. You have entered the White House at a time when our nation faces a series of grave challenges. With that in mind, we would like to begin work immediately with you and your administration to protect and restore dwindling populations of Pacific salmon and steelhead and the tens of thousands of jobs in our states that depend upon them. We write today with a specific, urgent request for your help.

Pacific salmon and steelhead are in great peril across much of the West Coast. Recent severe salmon declines have left scores of coastal and rural communities suffering from job losses and reduced incomes. As a result of last year's ocean salmon fishing closures, fishing communities and allied businesses lost at least \$290 million, thousands of fishermen remained at the docks, and fishing-related businesses laid off additional workers. Federal regulators tell us to expect the same in 2009, worsening the already hard times in our states.

Despite the deepening salmon crisis, we do have hope. We believe that with your leadership, we can reverse this crisis - returning salmon and steelhead to our rivers, putting people back to work, and restoring an American treasure. Restoring salmon aligns perfectly with your policy to create and save jobs now, while also creating lasting value for our nation and its citizens.

We ask today that you create a new post at the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), stationed here on the West Coast, charged with coordinating and increasing all federal efforts to restore Pacific salmon and salmon-based economies. We believe active, sustained leadership from your White House is required to accomplish this job.

For the past eight years, federal leaders have consistently ignored, and even helped subvert, the scientific consensus on what salmon and steelhead need in order to recover and thrive - whether that has been more water in the Sacramento and Klamath rivers, dam removal on the Klamath and Snake rivers, or preservation of extraordinarily productive habitat in areas such as Alaska's Bristol Bay. These politically-driven salmon policies have since been ruled illegal in federal court decisions that affect every major salmon watershed. But in the meantime, salmon have lost significant ground as have tens of thousands of salmon-reliant families in scores of West Coast communities. Today, as a result of these years of failed federal salmon policies, every major West Coast salmon river system in the continental United States is currently being managed by court order.

A Salmon Director in CEQ can ensure that:

- the mistakes of the past eight years are quickly reversed, putting people and rivers back to work;
- the eloquent pledge in your inaugural address to restore scientific integrity to federal decision-making is fulfilled in West Coast salmon policy;
- salmon recovery and salmon job recovery are pursued as one integrated policy; and

- the people and governments of the Pacific salmon states have a go-to federal partner.

We also think a CEQ Salmon Director will be able to address a challenging problem that has plagued the administrations of both parties: too many federal agencies, with differing and often competing missions, have a hand in salmon policy. As a result, paralysis is a near certainty without sustained, on-the-ground leadership that can cut through this tangle with a defined strategy and clear direction.

Thank you for considering this request, made on behalf of millions of citizens and working people of the Pacific salmon states. With your leadership, and with science guiding our way, we can restore salmon to our rivers and ocean, return to work thousands who have lost their jobs in fishing-based industries, and create thousands of new sustainable, family-wage jobs in economically depressed coastal and rural communities. We pledge to assist with this endeavor in any way we can.

Sincerely,

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