

JARED HUFFMAN
2ND DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES
WATER, POWER, AND OCEANS – RANKING MEMBER
FEDERAL LANDS

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE
HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT
WATER RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515–0502

August 3, 2015

WASHINGTON OFFICE
1630 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
PHONE: (202) 225-5161
FAX: (202) 225-5163
WEBSITE: huffman.house.gov

The Honorable Sally Jewell
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington D.C. 20240

Dear Ms. Jewell:

I am writing to convey my serious concerns about the potential for a massive fish kill on the lower Klamath River this summer, and to ask that you take several actions to avoid this potential catastrophe.

As you are aware, after several years of drought, water levels are low and temperatures are high in many California rivers, which threaten salmon and other valuable tribal, commercial, and sport fisheries. The Yurok Tribe has now documented a significant outbreak in the lower Klamath River of a parasite commonly known as ich affecting salmon and steelhead, a harbinger of a wide-spread fish kill like the one that killed 68,000 salmon in 2002 and crippled fisheries and the regional economy for years.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) has been working with the Yurok and Hoopa Valley tribes on planned releases of water from the Trinity River as the lower Klamath gets warmer and lower and fall-run Chinook begin to migrate in large numbers. I support the tribes' request for additional flows and insist that your agencies continue working closely with Humboldt County and the tribes when making on-the-ground decisions.

A June 90-percent exceedance prediction from USBR showed Trinity Lake at only 530,000 acre feet by September 1. I request that Interior provide me with an up-to-date prediction that also accounts for current temperature requirements on the Trinity River and the use of 50,000 acre feet of Trinity River water contractually obligated to Humboldt County.

Furthermore, USBR has been using the bypass outlet at Trinity Dam to release the coldest possible flows into the Trinity River. It will be important to continue this bypass until at least November 1 to avoid a spike in upper Trinity River water temperatures, which would threaten fish in that area.

SAN RAFAEL
999 FIFTH AVENUE, SUITE 290
SAN RAFAEL, CA 94901
PHONE: (415) 258-9657
FAX: (415) 258-9913

PETALUMA
206 G STREET, #3
PETALUMA, CA 94952
PHONE: (707) 981-8967
FAX: (415) 258-9913

UKIAH
559 LOW GAP ROAD
UKIAH, CA 95482
PHONE & FAX: (707) 671-7449

FORT BRAGG
430 NORTH FRANKLIN STREET
P.O. Box 2208
FORT BRAGG, CA 95437
PHONE: (707) 962-0933
FAX: (707) 962-0905

EUREKA
317 THIRD STREET, SUITE 1
EUREKA, CA 95501
PHONE: (707) 407-3585
FAX: (707) 407-3559

In order to conduct appropriate oversight over this important ongoing issue, I also request the following information, in the form of weekly updates to my office and to the public:

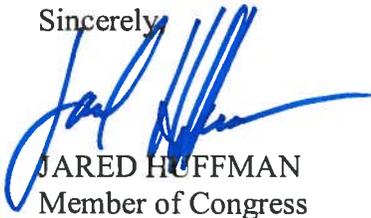
- Klamath River flow, temperature, and incidence of disease;
- Trinity River flow and temperature;
- Trinity Lake storage, and;
- The rate of ongoing diversions of Trinity River water to the Sacramento River.

To understand how flow, temperature, snowpack, storage, and disease conditions may change in coming years, I ask that you substantially increase monitoring efforts in this river system with the goal of protecting Klamath and Trinity river tribal trust resources, commercial and sport fishing, and the regional economy.

Finally, I would request that, given the highly abnormal weather patterns over the past four years, ongoing diversions to the Sacramento River be made most conservatively to prevent exhausting the already dangerously low supply of cold water in Trinity Lake. Your agencies should be planning for a worst-case scenario that may fall well outside the scope of historical conditions.

Please let me know when I can expect these weekly informational updates, as well as the other information I am requesting. Thank you for your time and immediate attention to this matter of great importance to California and the West Coast.

Sincerely,



JARED HUFFMAN
Member of Congress

CC:

Bureau of Reclamation
NOAA Fisheries
Fish & Wildlife Service