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Congress of the United States
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COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES
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COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE
HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT
WATER RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT
SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE
CLIMATE CRISIS

February 22, 2022

Camille Touton, Commissioner
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
1849 C Street NW
Washington DC 20240-0001

Dear Commissioner, Touton:

As you know, Northern California is likely headed into another severely dry summer with grave consequences to tribal and coastal communities and the fisheries they rely on. Without drastic measures to address overallocated flows from the Trinity River to the Central Valley Project (CVP), the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) risks depleting the cold-water threshold in the Trinity Reservoir necessary to sustain fish populations through the fall.

While early winter storms were expected to alleviate critically dry conditions on the Trinity River, limited precipitation in January or February has left Trinity Lake at only 32 percent capacity. There is currently 775,000 acre feet of water in the lake before the irrigation season even starts in the Central Valley. This is only 25,000 acre feet above the 750,000 acre feet needed to maintain temperatures in the river for salmon and steelhead according to BOR's own analyses. Without this cold water, juvenile salmonids in the Trinity River during spring and summer will suffer, and there will be no ability for BOR to augment lower Klamath River flows in the fall for adult Chinook salmon.

All efforts must be taken to preserve the remaining cold-water pool in Trinity Lake by curtailing diversions to Whiskeytown Lake through June so BOR can release cool water to the Trinity River over the summer. In fact, it may be necessary to make significant cuts to Sacramento River and San Joaquin exchange contractors to preserve cold water in Trinity Lake and its sister CVP reservoir Shasta Lake. The unprecedented drought of recent years should be considered in BOR's drought modeling in the new biological assessment of the CVP on endangered species. Lastly, as I noted in the recent U.S. Department of Interior's Klamath River stakeholders' forum, BOR must consider making significant investments in infrastructure to the Trinity River Division to improve its ability to adjust temperature of releases to the river at specific times – an item that has been raised repeatedly by the Trinity Management Council.

Conditions in the Trinity and Klamath river watershed are too dire to risk business as usual for the Central Valley Project. I ask that you quickly and carefully weigh all available options to preserve the Trinity River's cold water and the fish and communities that depend on it. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jared Huffman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

JARED HUFFMAN
Member of Congress