

NEWS

Congressman George Miller, California's 7th District

For Immediate Release: Thursday July 24, 2008
(202) 225-2095

BAY-DELTA DEMOCRATS RESPOND TO NEW REPORTS, EMPHASIZE NEED FOR PROTECTIONS

WASHINGTON, DC – A spate of reports on the Bay-Delta prompted five Democratic members of Congress to reiterate their calls for prompt and aggressive steps to protect the health of the Bay-Delta ecosystem, restore the state's salmon fisheries, and avoid being sidetracked by the politically divisive peripheral canal proposal advocated in one recent report.

Last week, a controversial report released by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) reignited the peripheral canal debate, while two other reports and a federal judicial ruling made clear that immediate steps must be taken to restore Bay-Delta health and the state's salmon fisheries.

The five lawmakers -- Democratic Reps. George Miller, Ellen Tauscher, Doris Matsui, Mike Thompson, and Jerry McNerney -- represent areas of California from as far north as the Trinity River to the Sacramento River watershed and many Delta communities. They issued the following comments.

Rep. George Miller (D-Martinez), former chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee: “Last century’s water fights are old news. It's past time for us to develop a sustainable water policy for all Californians. Any water plan that focuses on exports and excludes the protection of the Bay-Delta is a non-starter, as it has been for the last thirty years. The Bay-Delta estuary is vital to our region's economy, our fishermen, farmers, and cities. The PPIC report should not be used to ignore the many things that can be done today to restore Delta health, including providing necessary fish flows, undertaking critical ecosystem restoration projects, and making major investments in water recycling and improved conservation measures.”

Rep. Ellen Tauscher (D-Alamo): “The solution to the Delta’s problems will not come from new plumbing alone – we must reduce the amount of water we divert from the Delta, invest in alternative water supplies, and reform the management of our water supply systems. We need a careful analysis of the project proposed by this new PPIC report before moving forward. Congress and the federal government must do their part to ensure that the Central Valley Project is managed to restore the state’s fisheries and

reduce unsustainable water allocations. This new report from the PPIC should not be used as a reason to short-circuit the planning processes already underway.”

Rep. Doris Matsui (D-Sacramento): “Those of us who represent the Delta region and its watershed know that the peripheral canal is not likely to solve our challenges, from the disappearance of our state’s iconic salmon fishery to the repair and management of the fragile levees that support our communities. The bottom line is that we need to come up with solutions for California that don’t rely on taking more and more water out of the Delta and the Sacramento River.”

Rep. Mike Thompson (D-St. Helena): “Fishing families have paid an extremely high price for the Bush Administration’s illegal water policies. These policies killed over 80,000 salmon on the Klamath River and brought the Sacramento River king salmon stocks – considered the “driver” of all Pacific Northwest salmon – to the lowest levels on record, shutting down the entire fishing season for California and Oregon. The State of California estimates that the total economic impact of these closures to its fishing communities is more than \$240 million. Now the State is considering a peripheral canal, which the PPIC report states could have ‘major (negative) effects on salmon?’ This is ridiculous. We are only now starting to right the wrongs of the Bush Administration’s illegal water plans. The debate about the peripheral canal is adding insult to injury to California’s fishing communities.”

Rep. Jerry McNerney (D-Tracy): “As our state’s population continues to grow, so do our water needs. We have to figure out a way that makes sense to ensure the health of the Delta and provide water for agricultural, industrial, and residential uses. But California voters rejected a peripheral canal in 1982 and proposing the same conveyance is the wrong solution. I do not support such a proposal.”

Last month, the five legislators [strongly cautioned](#) the Bush Administration against weakening protections for California’s Bay-Delta region. The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is the most valuable estuary ecosystem on the west coast of North or South America and provides fresh water to more than a third of all Californians.

The two studies released this week recommend actions to state and federal policymakers so that California's salmon fishery can be revived and the Bay-Delta estuary restored to health, without threatening the state's water supply:

- "Water: Finding the Balance" by the Environmental Defense Fund:
<http://www.edf.org/article.cfm?contentID=8112>
- "Fish Out of Water" by the Natural Resources Defense Fund, the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations, and Water 4 Fish:
<http://www.nrdc.org/water/conservation/salmon/contents.asp>

#