“The pleasant’st angling is to see the fish, cut with her golden oars the silver stream, and greedily devour the treacherous bait.”

-- William Shakespeare, Much Ado About Nothing

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20:24/01. WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY TURNS ATTENTION TO CLIMATE CHANGE: In a move of potentially great importance to salmon stocks and fisheries, Washington Governor Jay Inslee has ordered the Washington State Department of Ecology to formulate policies and action strategies directed towards fighting climate change in the state. Washington State is particularly vulnerable to the ravages of a changing climate: the Ecology Department noted that rising sea levels, rising temperatures and drought conditions threaten thousands of miles of coastal real estate, at-risk energy supplies from hydroelectric facilities, and most critically, food supplies, including salmon. IFR & PCFFA applaud these efforts as salmon are not only critical food species, but are deeply tied to both the traditions and the environmental health of the Pacific Northwest. Ecology Department officials plan to hold a series of public meetings over the next year, and will offer businesses a range of alternatives to comply with planned carbon reduction measures, including incentives for reducing emissions and a series of tradable carbon credits.

For more information on the Washington Department of Ecology’s proposed climate change initiatives, see the 21 September press release on the Department’s website.
20:24/02. FISHERMEN’S VOICES NEEDED TO HELP HALT STRIP MINING IN OREGON: The U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management have temporarily halted the issuance of new strip mining claims in many streams in southwest Oregon, home to critical spawning habitat for fall run salmon. PCFFA generally opposes strip mining as a threat to healthy fish populations, with industrial runoff a common culprit for fouled streams and inhospitable spawning habitats for returning runs. Several cases in the last few years have highlighted the need for prioritizing Oregon’s billion-dollar fishing industry over mining concerns, including a recent spill of acid pollution in the Umpqua river which compelled the Federal government to designate a mining facility as a toxic waste site, and degraded 13 miles of salmon and steelhead habitat.

PCFFA supports the efforts of Oregon Senators Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden as well as Congressman Peter DeFazio to implement legislation protecting Oregon’s vulnerable coastal fish habitats from additional mining. Though these top-down political efforts are pivotal in protecting the interests of fishermen and the natural environment, grassroots efforts are needed as well.

For more information on the ongoing fight to protect Oregon’s fisheries from mining, see Jim Martin’s 19 September editorial in the Eugene Register-Guard.

To get involved, email your comments to the Bureau of Land Management: blm_or_wa_withdrawals@blm.gov.

20:24/03. GROUNDFISHING INDUSTRY SUFFERS UNDER NEW REGULATIONS: An article in Hakai Magazine this week highlights the plight of west coast family fishermen, often dependent on groundfish, under catchshare schemes meant to lessen fishing impacts on stocks by reducing the number of boats on the water. Though those practices were mostly undertaken by larger, corporate fishing operations, it is in many cases the small fishermen who have suffered the most under regulations meant to prevent them. Catch shares divide the fishery into transferable units of quota, which become valuable commodities in their own right. Those units of quota can then be traded on an open market much like stock, which has the effect of consolidating the opportunity to fish in the hands of well-capitalized financiers.

Additional onerous laws require vessel monitoring systems (VMS) in federal waters and disadvantage fleet members who often moor their boats in a harbor where they do not have access to dockside electricity so as to charge their VMS units. On the state side, California regulations restrict fishing in the near-coastal zone, which prohibits hook-and-line groundfishing in many areas while leaving more environmentally rapacious trawlers unaffected. Likewise, recent changes to the state’s permitting laws create higher entry fees to new fishermen and restrict heritage operators from transferring their permits to successors.

The net result is not unlike that of restrictive regulation in other industries; larger players can afford to stay in business, while small family operations are forced out. Commercial fishing has long been one of the bastions of the independent businessperson in American life. PCFFA and IFR, with your support, aim to help the small family fisherman keep it that way. We oppose catch shares which make sharecroppers out of the skilled American workers that have developed the experience and know-how to fish groundfish sustainably, and economically efficiently.

For more information about the burden regulations impose on small fishermen see Alastair Bland’s 21 September article in Hakai Magazine.
20:24/04. PCFFA OPPOSES PROVISIONS IN FEDERAL DROUGHT BILL THAT WOULD ERADICATE BASS IN THE SACRAMENTO RIVER DELTA: California Senators Boxer and Feinstein recently introduced Senate Bill 1894, drought relief legislation specific to California. One provision of the bill which permit eradication of invasive vegetation and non-native fish species from the San Francisco Bay Delta Estuary. While we at PCFFA are mindful of the impacts on non-native species on threatened salmon and steelhead populations, we also recognize that spending valuable state and Federal resources eradicating them would be a waste when so many other factors are a much greater threat to healthy fish populations. Likewise, we are ever mindful of our allies in the recreational fishing industry, for whom sport fishing for several of these species is a mainstay.

PCFFA and its allies have instead urged the Senators to consider more stringent controls on water usage in the Central Valley, more careful management of outflows from dams and inland watercourses, and protecting the ecology of the Delta’s estuarine habitat. These measures would be a better alternative to slash-and-burn culling of fish, which, while sometimes predators of fry, are really a minor piece of the puzzle of preserving salmon species.

John Beuttler, Conservation Director of the Allied Fishing Groups stated, "prior to the building of the State and Federal water projects facilities, all the estuary’s fishery resources thrived together as did the estuary's food web. It is critical for our government to stay focused on the problems that significantly impact the estuary's fisheries and aquatic ecosystem. State and Federal government must be compelled to find the funding and the wisdom necessary to address the impacts caused by the massive export of water from the Delta by the water projects. Unfortunately, this legislation fails to provide meaningful assistance in solving the significant problems that caused the collapse of the estuary’s food web and the serious population declines to our salmon, steelhead and striped bass fisheries. Instead, it proposes to eradicate publicly owned fisheries in the Delta that still generate a huge amount of sportfishing recreation and hundreds of millions of dollars to local, state and national economies annually."

Find out more by reading the relevant provisions of Title II of the bill at Congress.gov.

To get involved: Please contact Senator Boxer’s office by phone at (202) 244-3553 or by mail at 112 Hart Senate Office Building Washington DC 20510, and Senator Feinstein’s office by phone at (202) 224-3841, or by mail at 331 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510.

20:24/05. OREGON COUNTY SEEKS TO BLOCK NESTLE’S WATER GRAB: Activists in Hood River County, Oregon have succeeded in getting an initiative on the ballot that would block Swiss mega-corporation Nestle from bottling water from a spring in the Columbia River gorge. The City Council of Cascade Locks approved the deal, but the plan requires state consent due to the water rights at issue. The Oregon Water Resources Department does not require public input for deals of this sort, but a county-level ballot measure can block it. The group known as the Local Water Alliance is spearheading the effort, while Cascade Tribes have joined the activists in opposing the deal. Leaders of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs are drafting a letter to Governor Kate Brown as well as staging hunger strikes and rallies.

PCFFA and IFR are opposed to the privatization of public resources, especially those as critical to human existence as water. It is unthinkable that scare water supplies should be distributed to the highest bidder, to be repackaged and sold at massive profits, when the west, including much of Oregon, is in the grips of the worst drought on record. We stand in solidarity with those groups standing up to Nestle as they grapple with the protection of watersheds so
crucial to fish and human health alike. Rapacious development is behind so much of what has affected coastal and inland communities in recent decades, and concerted efforts by concerned citizens is one of the most powerful tools to prevent that.

For more information about the ongoing campaign to stop Nestle from pumping the Columbia River Gorge dry see this 21 September article at oregonlive.com.

20:24/06. MAINE MAN SENTENCED TO A YEAR IN FEDERAL PRISON FOR DISTRESS CALL HOAX: Concluding a classic case of what not to do, the U.S. District Court of Maine sentenced a 23 year-old man to a year in prison and a $15,000 fine last month after he placed a phony distress call to the Coast Guard. The call, made via two-way radio, gave false coordinates and precipitated a pointless seven-hour search by the Coast Guard. Said Rear Admiral Linda Faga, Commander of the New England Coast Guard, “lives were unnecessarily put at risk.” While the year lost from the young man’s life and the heavy fine may seem stiff to some, those who earn their living from the sea know that when the need arises for real rescues, it’s anything but a laughing matter.

For more information about the prankster’s punishment see this 27 August post from the Navy Times.

20/24/07. NOAA BUDGETS $10 MILLION FOR COASTAL COMMUNITIES AND FISH STOCKS: The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) announced in September that it will make $10 million available for programs that boost fish stocks, aid coastal communities, and help maintain healthy oceans. The grants fall under the Saltonstall-Kennedy Act, signed into law by President Eisenhower, and include potential funding for aquaculture, fishery data collection, and reducing bycatch. PCFFA and IFR have long advocated for dedication of at least a portion of Saltonstall-Kennedy revenues, which are derived from imported seafood, to fund a dedicated Fisheries Trust Fund that would support fisheries research. We are pleased to see that those funds are being put to a similarly worthwhile purpose in the short term.

For more information about NOAA’s funding programs, see this 8 September post from the San Francisco Chronicle Online.

20/24/08. WESTLANDS WATER DEAL A BACKROOM BOONDOGGLE, SAYS LA TIMES: In an op-ed published last week, the Los Angeles Times called out the Westlands Water District deal reached in conjunction with the US Department of Justice (DOJ) as a textbook example of undemocratic backroom dealing. This echoes the position of PCFFA, which we expressed in a scathing editorial in last week’s Sublegals. The deal relieves Westlands of a $350 million debt, and affords them a permanent contract for delivery of water that would otherwise be subject to review every two years. In return, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation would cede responsibility for managing toxic drainage of Westlands agricultural operations to Westlands itself, raising the question of whether Westlands has the capability and expertise required to handle a water treatment programs of that magnitude.

The Times piece points out that legislators from both Northern California and other water districts in the San Joaquin Valley were excluded from participating in the negotiations finalizing the arrangement with DOJ. What’s more, the Times rightly excoriates the new deal for being permanent and nonreviewable, essentially eliminating for all time any opportunity to alter the conditions of San Joaquin Valley water rights at the expense of some of the state’s most ecologically vulnerable watersheds.
PCFFA joins such advocates of equitable water rights and fishermen’s interests as California Representatives Jared Huffman and Jerry McNerney in opposing the deal, and hope we can count on the advocacy of all our supporters in defeating the draft legislation that could seal this sweetheart deal.

Learn more about the Westlands water deal in Sublegals 20:23, and read the 18 September LA Times editorial on their website.

20:24/09. ENVIRONMENTAL GOUPS URGE SECRETARY OF INTERIOR TO REJECT DELTA WATER TUNNELS: A coalition of environmental groups including water rights advocates, central California Tribes, and fisheries groups like PCFFA, implored Sally Jewell, the Secretary of the Interior, this week to stop the rush towards building the California Water Fix (CWF), popularly known as the Bay Delta Conservation Plan.

Governor Brown and the Obama Administration have ben pushing the CWF in spite of a range of legal and ecological problems the project presents. Among several other issues, the tunnels would divert fresh water from both upstream sources feeding the San Francisco Bay Delta Estuary and the Trinity River watershed, threatening fish populations in both river systems. Advocates such as PCFFA also maintain that the tunnels could potentially wipe out the Sacramento River Chinook salmon population entirely by radically changing the ecological rearing waters in the Delta and beyond.

Several agencies within the Federal government have likewise registered opposition to the CWF, with the Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, and the Environmental Protection Agency citing “serious and potentially catastrophic issues with the proposed project.”

PCFFA and IFR likewise urge our supporters to add their names to the petitions and public comments opposing the CWF before the comment period ends October 30. The page for public comments and adding your name to the petition can be found at Restore the Delta’s website here.

For more information about the coalition to stop this end run around environmental justice and fishermen’s rights, see this 21 September post by Dailykos.

20:24/10. GULF FISHING INDUSTRY PROPOSES SNAPPER DATA GATHERING SYSTEM: An alliance of fishermen, restaurants, and charter boat operators have come together in Florida to support legislation that will set aside $10 million in funding for the creation of a system of data gathering on red snapper and other reef species in the Gulf of Mexico. Advocates say the system will lead to less guesswork and more solid science in the harvesting and maintenance of reef fish stocks in the Gulf, resulting in more sustainable practices without threatening the livelihoods of those who depend on fish.

The myriad of groups supporting the bill point out that it is an industry driven solution to problems with which fishermen and fish buyers alike are intimately familiar. Similarly, advocates say that relying on those who live their lives on the water for reliable data is eminently sensible and could provide models for data gathering in other fisheries applications.

For more information about the proposed legislation, see this 21 September press release from the Gulf Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders’ Alliance.
YOUR NEWS, COMMENTS, CORRECTIONS: Submit your news items, comments or any corrections to Editor at: tsloane@ifrfish.org, or call the IFR/PCFFA office with the news and a source at either: (415) 561-FISH (Southwest Office) or (541) 689-2000 (Northwest Office). If you have any trouble subscribing or unsubscribing, contact IFR/PCFFA directly at: tsloane@ifrfish.org. Sublegals is a weekly fisheries news bulletin service of Fishlink. “Fishlink” and “Sublegals” are registered trademarks of the Institute for Fisheries Resources. All rights to the use of these trademarks are reserved to IFR. All photos are by IFR unless otherwise accredited. This publication, however, may be freely reproduced and circulated without copyright restriction. Articles taken from Fishlink Sublegals may be freely reposted or reprinted with attribution to “Fishlink Sublegals.” If you are receiving this as a subscriber, please feel free to pass it on to your colleagues.

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