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**PACIFIC COAST FEDERATION**

**of FISHERMEN’S ASSOCIATIONS**

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**Fishermen Go to Court to Defend Trinity River Flows and Protect Salmon**Lawsuit filed by Big Ag threatens repeat of 2002 Klamath fish kill disaster

FRESNO - The Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations, represented by Earthjustice, filed papers today in the U.S. District Court in Fresno defending the planned release of Trinity River water needed to keep salmon alive.

Read the document: Opposition to Motion for Temporary Restraining Order:

<http://earthjustice.org/sites/default/files/files/TrinityTROoppositionPCFFA8-13-13.pdf>

This action is in response to a lawsuit filed last week by the Westland Water District and others in California’s Central Valley, demanding this water for their future crops, *regardless* of impacts on salmon or coastal fishing communities depending on those salmon runs for their livelihoods.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation water release plan would help prevent another disaster like the Klamath River Fish Kill of 2002. That year very low flows and high temperatures contributed to a massive die-off of adult Chinook salmon that is considered one of the single worst adult fish kills in U.S. history.

More than 78,000 adult spawners died in that 2002 Klamath fish kill disaster before they could lay their eggs, according to official estimates by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Fewer eggs meant that fewer juvenile fish emerged and too few were later available to return as adults in 2006 to allow a normal commercial fishery. This in turn led to nearly coast-wide closures of ocean salmon fisheries in 2006, thousands of lost fishing jobs and a declared fisheries disaster by the U.S. Department of Commerce that resulted in estimated economic losses of up to $200 million.

View video of 2002 Klamath fish kill here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WaHwESoaRAw>

Due to the current drought, another 2002-like fish kill is likely without emergency increased water releases from Trinity River dams. If another similar fish kill is allowed to happen, a major fisheries economic disaster four years later, in 2017, could be the result.

“These emergency cold water releases will help salmon survive this drought,” said Glen Spain, Northwest Regional Director Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations (PCFFA). “Why should Central Valley corporate farmers get all the water they demand while coastal fishing-dependent communities get dead fish and dry rivers?”

Nearly half of the total flows from the Trinity River are already diverted from northern California to the Central Valley for irrigation needs. Westlands’ demand for even more would take it from Trinity-Klamath River fish.

The salmon and steelhead in the Klamath Basin help provide a living for commercial fishermen, sport fishing guides, native Tribal members, and coastal communities from Ft. Bragg, California to southern Oregon. Another major Klamath-driven fisheries closure like what occurred in 2006 could close ocean salmon fishing down from Monterey, CA to well into central Washington – more than 700 miles of coastline – causing devastating economic damages.

“The fishing community – commercial, recreational and Tribal – has sacrificed a great deal to ensure there are ample returning spawning salmon, including total closures of our seasons and loss of our livelihoods in recent years. It has been painful, but we have done this as an investment in our future,” said Eureka commercial fisherman Dave Bitts, President of the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen’s Associations (PCFFA). “All of this sacrifice will be for nothing if San Joaquin Valley agribusiness gets its way and steals the salmon’s water.”

Attorney Jan Hasselman of Earthjustice said, “Healthy salmon runs are the sustainable lifeblood of Northern California coastal communities. Salmon runs can provide jobs forever if managed correctly. But without enough water in the river for salmon and steelhead to survive, these resources will disappear.”

Other documents filed with the court:

Intervention Memo

<http://earthjustice.org/documents/legal-document/pdf/trinity-water-intervention-memo>

PCFFA Declaration

<http://earthjustice.org/documents/legal-document/pdf/trinity-water-intervention-pcffa-declaration>

For recent news and more background on this story visit:  
<http://www.c-win.org/content/westlands-sues-halt-higher-trinity-flows-prevent-repeat-2002-lower-klamath-fish-kill.html>

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