August 8, 2016

Re: **Opposition to Legislation Weakening Protections for Salmon**

Dear Senator Feinstein and Congressman Valadao:

On behalf of 39 leading Bay Area chefs, restaurant owners and food community leaders, we are writing in support of one of California’s iconic local food sources, Chinook salmon.

As a result of the drought, California’s Chinook salmon runs have fallen to dangerously low levels. This is particularly true for the fall run in the San Francisco Bay-Delta ecosystem - the backbone of the salmon fishing industry from central California to northern Oregon. In light of the status of this treasured part of our natural heritage, we are disturbed by efforts in Congress to weaken salmon protections. In particular, we are writing to express our opposition to legislation that would weaken existing legal protections for salmon in the Bay-Delta ecosystem, including H.R. 2898 and S. 2533.

California is blessed with a cornucopia of local, sustainable and healthy foods. The Bay Area is a global leader in showing how food can be a transformative part of our lives, encouraging environmental health, social justice, a thriving economy and a healthy lifestyle – along with one of the world’s most delicious culinary traditions. Chinook salmon is one of California’s most historic and iconic local food sources.

As you know, the San Francisco Bay-Delta estuary and the tributaries that feed it represent the most significant salmon producing system south of the Columbia River. Every year, the return of salmon is eagerly anticipated by California restaurants and the public. Crab and salmon are the twin stars around which the California seafood calendar revolves.

Tragically, today California’s salmon face major challenges. During the past two drought years, nearly all of the wild salmon in some of our rivers have been killed by high water temperatures. Surviving salmon face additional threats in the Delta. As a result, the fishermen at Fisherman’s Wharf and dozens of other ports on the California coast face severe fishing restrictions. Careful regulation allows us to have some local salmon in our markets and on our menus, but it’s scarce and expensive this year.

Unfortunately, some California water interests hope to take advantage of the drought, seeking to weaken existing protections for salmon in order to squeeze
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more water from our vulnerable salmon rivers. We need to choose, they claim, between fish and people.

Those of us in the food community know that’s a false choice. California salmon is among the world’s most delicious and most perfect foods. Salmon are also critically important to the families, businesses and communities that depend on this fishery. Before the drought, Bay-Delta salmon supported a $1.4 billion fishing industry with 23,000 jobs. Salmon is a highly prized fish that shows the vital connections among a healthy environment, a healthy economy and healthy people. Yet today, salmon fishermen and restaurants fear a repeat of the disastrous 2008-2009 closure of the California salmon fishery. Salmon show how a healthy environment benefits Californians and our economy.

Unfortunately, S. 2533 would mandate maximized water diversions from the Delta, threatening salmon runs, and would authorize or even mandate weaker protections for these runs. H.R. 2898 would go even farther, by shutting down the broadly supported effort to restore salmon on the San Joaquin River and undermining the State of California’s ability to take action protecting salmon under state law. S. 2533 does include some positive conservation, water recycling and other provisions, however, they do not outweigh the damage that the bill could cause to salmon and the environment. The potential impact of these bills on salmon is highlighted in critical analyses by the Pacific Fisheries Management Council.

We can have healthy rivers, strong salmon runs, a thriving fishing industry and a precious local, sustainable food source. This is a critical time for state and federal agencies to launch an ambitious effort to rebuild our salmon runs, particularly in the Central Valley. Weakening salmon protections, on the other hand, could be disastrous.

During the drought, we must remember that salmon don’t have the choices we have. Farmers can install drip irrigation and plant less water intensive crops. Urban residents can replace our lawns and shorten our showers. Our water agencies can reclaim wastewater and capture stormwater. But salmon survive on the water we leave in our rivers and in the habitat we restore for them. We urge you to focus your legislative efforts on proactive water solutions that don’t threaten our environment and salmon runs.

Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

Patty Unterman
Chef and Owner
Hayes Street Grill

Alice Waters
Chef and Owner, Chez Panisse

Founder, Edible Schoolyard Project
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position/Owner/Role</th>
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<td>Mourad Lahlou</td>
<td>Chef and Owner</td>
<td>Aziza and Mourad</td>
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Iso Rabins
Owner
forageSF

Paul Johnson
President and Founder
Monterey Fish Market

Melissa Perello
Chef and Owner
Octavia and Frances

Peter Quartaroli
Managing Partner
Sam’s Grill

Shelley Lindgren
Owner and Wine Director
A16 and SPQR

Joyce Goldstein
Author and Culinary Consultant

Jay Foster
Chef and Owner
Farmer Brown

Ari Weiswasser
Chef and Proprietor
Glen Ellen Star

Bruce Hill
Owner
Picco and Fog City

Adolfo Veronese
Chef and Owner
Aventine Glen Ellen

Doug Biederbeck
Owner
Bix, Market Bar and Florio

Ted Wilson
Owner
Fine and Rare

Adam Keough
Executive Chef
Absinthe

Matthew Homyak
Founder
Stag Dining

Tom Worthington
Co-owner
Monterey Fish Company

Cc: Senator Barbara Boxer
Senator Lisa Murkowski
Senator Maria Cantwell
Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi
Congressman Jared Huffman
Congressman Mike Thompson
Secretary Sally Jewell
Secretary Penny Pritzker