



February 17, 2011

Dear House of Representatives Member:

On behalf of the recreational fishing industry and the broader recreational fishing community, I urge you to resolve several components of H.R. 1, the Continuing Resolution Appropriations Bill for FY 2011. The bill will undercut invaluable fisheries management and conservation projects that are vital to sustaining recreational fishing on our nation's waterways. While the sportfishing community understands the necessity of fiscal responsibility and budget cuts to address the budget deficit, we believe that all programs should shoulder a fair and proportional burden of the federal budget reductions. H.R. 1 focuses on programs that are essential to the effective management of our nation's fisheries. It contains several funding cuts that will severely limit recreational fishing opportunity and seriously damage the sportfishing industry that depends on healthy and accessible fishery resources. Sportfishing in the U.S. supports over one million jobs and pays more than \$16 billion in federal, state and local taxes.

The American Sportfishing Association (ASA) is the nation's recreational fishing industry trade association. ASA represents sportfishing manufacturers, retailers and angler advocacy groups, as well as the interests of America's 60 million recreational anglers. ASA also safeguards and promotes the social, economic, and conservation values of sportfishing in America, which has a \$125 billion per year impact on our nation's economy.

With the many reductions in H.R. 1, fisheries management in the U.S. would be severely impacted, undermining recent management successes and conservation achievements, not to mention the potential negative economic impacts. ASA believes that the following reductions will significantly harm essential fishery conservation and management and will be detrimental to the sportfishing community, and respectfully requests that you work to address them prior to passage of H.R. 1.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA): Reductions are proposed for the agency's Operations, Research and Funding account (ORF), which funds most of NOAA's programs including collection of fisheries data. The budget cuts proposed under H.R. 1 will severely reduce the agency's ability to collect fisheries data and will amplify the unnecessary closures of important recreational fisheries. Some of these fisheries are already suffering significant closures because NOAA has failed to make the appropriate investment in data to meet current statutes. Significant reductions of NOAA's budget will only take the public off the water, damage businesses and adversely impact the national economy. *We urge you to oppose any amendment to the CR that excessively cuts programs upon which the saltwater angling community is dependent.*

National Fish Habitat Program: The National Fish Habitat Action Plan (NFHAP) is one of the best landscape scale fisheries habitat conservation programs in the federal government. The NFHAP aims to better protect, restore and enhance fish habitat through partnerships that foster conservation and outdoor opportunities for the American public. This grant program maximizes the return-on-investment by targeting much needed funding to priority on-the-ground projects. Any reduction in

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funding at the federal level will be multiplied at the local level, undermining the long term investment that the recreational fishing community has made in the future of fisheries and the industry. H.R. 1 would cut NFHAP funding by 28 percent. *We urge you to oppose any amendment to the CR that will significantly decrease federal funding of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, or CR provisions designed to de-fund the program.*

North American Wetlands Conservation Fund: The precursor to the NFHAP, the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund is one of our nation's most successful landscape-scale, partnership driven efforts. H.R. 1 would eliminate program funding. Wetlands not only provide waterfowl habitat but also essential production areas for sport fish. We urge you to provide funding for this important and proven program

Waters of the U.S. rider (Section 1747): This section would stop efforts by the Army Corps of Engineers and the EPA to reform field guidance and conduct a rulemaking to partially restore Clean Water Act protection for some wetlands and streams which were curtailed by two harmful and confusing Supreme Court decisions, Rapanos (2006) and SWANCC (2001). Taken together, these decisions and existing agency guidance have removed protections for at least 20 million acres of wetlands and put thousands of miles of intermittent and headwater streams – many of which are critical fish habitat, as well as the source of much our drinking water supplies – at risk. ASA and others in the sporting community seek to engage Congress and the Administration to restore these protections, and to provide clarity to landowners, conservationists, and the regulated community, through statute and/or regulation changes. The Section 1747 appropriations rider precludes the open and transparent public debate and comment necessary to achieve this important end. *We urge you to eliminate Section 1747.*

San Joaquin River Restoration (Section 1475(b)): This section of the CR proposes to de-fund the San Joaquin River Restoration Settlement Act. Support for San Joaquin River restoration is broad and bipartisan, and includes water users, farmers, the State of California, federal and state agencies and conservation groups. Without this restoration, California's farmers and agricultural and urban water agencies will be exposed to continued litigation risk, and the goals of healthier salmon runs and a vibrant recreational and commercial fishing industry will not be achieved. In the long run, Section 1475(b) would cost the federal government more money by putting the river, and the many business and industries that rely on the river's health, back into regulatory uncertainty. *We urge you to eliminate Section 1475(b), which will de-fund the San Joaquin River Restoration.*

Klamath River Restoration: The CR should not block funds that were previously provided to complete the review of proposed activities in Section 3001(a). The Klamath River has become synonymous for continual crisis, decimated salmon runs, water curtailments and financial hardships for local communities. A coalition of states, diverse organizations and the federal government worked hard to end this cycle of conflict. A public, fair, transparent and objective science-based process is underway to guide decision-making on possible outcomes, including dam removal. Oregon's Public Utility Commission has already found through public proceedings that the settlement approach to the Klamath hydroelectric project is in the best interest of the utility's ratepayers and is the least expensive alternative for the company. *We urge you to oppose any amendment to the CR which will impair the Klamath River restoration, or CR provisions designed to de-fund the on-going review process.*

Biological Opinions in California (Section 1475(a)): Section 1475(a) of the CR will also set back efforts in California's Central Valley to find consensus solutions to the state's Bay-Delta conflicts. The health of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay Delta is at a delicate balance, with fisheries and ecosystem functions in collapse; the future of California's vitally important agricultural industry and its water supply for over twenty million people is at risk. Serious efforts are underway between agricultural and urban water users, conservationists, environmental groups, the federal and state governments, and others to once-and-for-all create a durable and comprehensive package to address these many problems. The future of recreational fishing in the region depends on this effort. Section 1475(a) will set back and potentially derail this important effort. *We urge you to eliminate Section 1475(a).*

In addition to the aforementioned concerns, the significant cuts to several other conservation programs, including the Land and Water Conservation Fund, Farm Bill Conservation Programs, Forest Legacy and the elimination of federal funding for the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, represent disproportionate setbacks to America's conservation heritage, specifically as it affects the recreational fishing community.

Healthy waterways and robust fish populations are vital to the well-being of our society and economy providing recreational enjoyment for millions and supporting many local communities, their tax base and jobs. Unfortunately, H.R. 1 proposes several budget cuts that will have a negative impact on many fishable waters around the country and the recreational opportunities that come with it. This is a significant concern for the 60 million anglers who enjoy recreational fishing and the millions of others who depend on them for subsistence and commerce.

On behalf of the sportfishing industry and the nation's 60 million anglers, I respectfully request that you work to alter the aforementioned cuts to reflect a proportional share of the necessary budget reductions prior to the passage of H.R. 1.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,



Gordon Robertson
Vice President