

**American Rivers * California League of Conservation Voters *
Center for Biological Diversity * Clean Water Action *
Conservatives for Responsible Stewardship * Defenders of Wildlife * Earthjustice *
Endangered Species Coalition * Environmental Defense Fund * Greenpeace *
League of Conservation Voters * National Audubon Society *
Natural Resources Defense Council * Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations
* San Juan Citizens Alliance * Sierra Club * The Bay Institute *
Western Nebraska Resources Council * Wildlands Network**

PLEASE OPPOSE H.R. 2898

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write to urge you to oppose H.R. 2898 (Valadao, R-CA), a bill that would dramatically weaken protections for salmon, migratory birds, and other fish and wildlife in California's Bay-Delta estuary, and the thousands of fishing jobs in California and Oregon that depend on the health of these species. In addition, the bill includes several titles that would apply across Western states, which would reduce public and environmental reviews of new dams and water infrastructure, reduce funding for the Bureau of Reclamation, and limit the federal government's ability to manage and protect water resources. Both the White House and the State of California have opposed similar legislation in recent years, including opposition to H.R. 3964 (Valadao, R-CA) and H.R. 5781 (Valadao, R-CA) in 2014.

California's ongoing drought – not federal environmental laws protecting salmon and other native fish and wildlife – is the primary reason for low water supplies across the state. Yet H.R. 2898 would permanently override protections for salmon and other native fisheries under the Endangered Species Act, and substitute political judgment for existing scientific determinations. It could also devastate wildlife refuges that provide habitat for millions of birds that migrate along the Pacific Flyway by undermining the refuges' water rights and threatening critically important funding sources. H.R. 2898 is not a temporary response to drought, but instead would permanently amend and override the requirements of the Endangered Species Act and other federal laws. For example, under the proposed legislation, critical environmental review and public input under the National Environmental Policy Act would be either severely limited or completely eliminated for new dams and other water storage projects across the west. Moreover, several provisions of the bill would preempt state law, including a provision (section 313) which would repeal and override state and federal laws, a court order, and a binding settlement agreement to restore the San Joaquin River.

H.R. 2898 has never been subject to a single committee hearing to receive public input from the State of California, hunting organizations, sport and commercial fishermen, tribes, or conservation groups, despite the fact that the bill could greatly interfere with state water rights and cripple the ability of state and federal agencies to manage limited water resources for all

beneficial uses. The bill attempts to scapegoat environmental protections for the lack of rain and snow, and it threatens thousands of fishing jobs in California, Oregon, and beyond that depend on healthy salmon runs from the Bay-Delta. The closure of the salmon fishery in 2008 and 2009 resulted in thousands of lost jobs in these states. The livelihoods of commercial and recreational salmon fishermen, Delta farmers, fishing guides, tackle shops, and communities across California and along the West Coast depend on the environmental protections that H.R. 2898 would eliminate.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge you to oppose H.R. 2898.

Sincerely,

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