



October 28, 2007

The Honorable Senator Maria Cantwell  
511 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Cantwell:

The Wild Steelhead Coalition is a not-for-profit steelhead conservation organization made up primarily of concerned, passionate, and well informed steelhead anglers that banded together in 2000 in order to promote an improved future for wild steelhead and steelhead fisheries in the Pacific Northwest. We are writing you today because of our concern for pacific coast salmon and steelhead. We are aware that you have been a long time supporter of restored salmon stocks, and recovery of the once robust fishery of the Snake River. Today, some of these species are extinct, and thirteen others are listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

We believe that the recreational and commercial fishing communities have borne the brunt of the decline in these fish, and continue to suffer reduced season lengths and reduced take limits as a result. We are also aware that over the past many years, there has been great investment of taxpayer money to attempt to recover these fish, now approximating \$600 million a year. There are many issues which could be causing the continuing decline, but one thing is for sure. What has been done in the past is not working, and these fish continue on the road to extinction. There is no longer time to waste talking, planning, and discussing the problem. If we are to save these salmon runs, we must act now.

We call on you to support hearings in the Environment and Public Works Committee to determine what should be done to stabilize these fish, and recover their numbers. Because these fish swim the waters of the Pacific from Monterey Bay to Alaska, they are a resource shared by all, and their healthy levels affect people from all the states of the west coast. Much like clean water and clean air, there is a public responsibility to maintain healthy levels, and "downstream" communities have the right to expect healthy populations. For too long, effective action has been blocked by special interests, but we feel this is inappropriate because this issue affects more than those states. It's like polluting a stream or the air, and then claiming that it's nobody's business but the

polluters. In this case, only the federal government has the legal ability to intercede on behalf of the general public, evaluate what can/should be done to recover these fish, and bring overall stability to the pacific coast salmon fishery.

We are aware that Senator Boxer, Chairwoman of the Environment and Public Works Committee, is open to holding hearings on this issue, specifically aimed at determining solutions to this ongoing decline of the fishery, as well as more effective use of taxpayer money. We call on you to message to Senator Boxer, in whatever subtle way may be appropriate, that you would support a “fact finding” hearing in EPW. The purpose of a hearing is not to advocate for any particular solution, but rather to get the scientific facts on the table, so good decision making can take place.

We know that spending additional taxpayer money on the same strategies of the past is neither wise nor likely to achieve the recovery goals needed. It is time for bold and aggressive action if these fish are to be saved. It is time to ask the tough questions, and to begin spending taxpayer money on recovery efforts that will work.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Wild Steelhead Coalition  
Rich Simms  
President