Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

March 5, 2008

The Honorable Carlos M. Gutierrez
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
14th and Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Gutierrez:

We are very concerned about the projected low returns of fall run Chinook salmon to the Sacramento River system and request your immediate personal attention to this issue.

Preliminary reports from the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) predict returns of the 2007 class of Central Valley fall run Chinook salmon at approximately 90,000 fish—the lowest level since 1990 and the second lowest of all time.

Sacramento River salmon are caught in California, Oregon, Washington and British Columbia and are considered the 'driver' of commercial salmon fisheries off of the Pacific Coast. The implications of a precipitous decline to the Sacramento River Chinook salmon stocks would be detrimental for the commercial salmon fishing fleet and related businesses along the entire west coast of the continental United States.

It is important that the Department take immediate steps to help fishermen and local communities that depend on the commercial and recreational salmon fishing industry. Specifically, we request that you do the following:

1. Prepare to quickly declare a commercial fishery failure pursuant to Section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act in the event the 2008 salmon season is like or worse than the 2006 salmon season. This will give Congress the authority to seek emergency disaster funds for the affected communities that rely on the salmon season.

2. Work closely with the States of California, Oregon, and Washington to assess the impacts of what almost certainly is expected to be a severely limited commercial and recreational salmon season.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your response and stand ready to assist in any way.

Sincerely,

DIANNE FEINSTEIN
U.S. Senate

MIKE THOMPSON
Member of Congress

GORDON H. SMITH
U.S. Senate

PETER DeFAZIO
Member of Congress

RON WYDEN
U.S. Senate

NORMAN D. DICKS
Member of Congress

PATTY MURRAY
U.S. Senate

GEORGE MILLER
Member of Congress

BARBARA BOXER
U.S. Senate

DAVID WU
Member of Congress

MARIA CANTWELL
U.S. Senate

DARLENE HOOLEY
Member of Congress

HENRY A. WAXMAN
Member of Congress

ANNA G. ESHOO
Member of Congress

WALLY HERGER
Member of Congress

LYNN C. WOOLSEY
Member of Congress

BRIAN BAIRD
Member of Congress

EARL BLUMENAUER
Member of Congress

ADAM SMITH
Member of Congress

JAY INSLEE
Member of Congress

SAM FARR
Member of Congress

DORIS MATSUI
Member of Congress

LOIS CAPPS
Member of Congress

ELLEN O. TAUSCHER
Member of Congress

DANIEL LUNGREN
Member of Congress

JIM McDERMOTT
Member of Congress

JOHN T. DOOLITTLE
Member of Congress

RICK LARSEN
Member of Congress

BARBARA LEE
Member of Congress

ZOE LOFGREN
Member of Congress

FORTNEY "PETE" STARK
Member of Congress

HOWARD L. BERMAN
Member of Congress

SUSAN A. DAVIS
Member of Congress

GRACE F. NAPOLITANO
Member of Congress

HILDA L. SOLIS
Member of Congress

JERRY McNERNEY
Member of Congress

BRAD SHERMAN
Member of Congress

ADAM B. SCHIFF
Member of Congress

XAVIER BECERRA
Member of Congress

DIANE E. WATSON
Member of Congress

LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD
Member of Congress

MAXINE WATERS
Member of Congress

LAURA RICHARDSON
Member of Congress

LINDA SANCHEZ
Member of Congress

JOE BACA
Member of Congress

BOB FILNER
Member of Congress

MICHAEL M. HONDA
Member of Congress

LORETTA SANCHEZ
Member of Congress

JANE HARMAN
Member of Congress