

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 22, 2011

Chairman Doc Hastings
House Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chairman Tom McClintock
Subcommittee on Water and Power
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Hastings and Chairman McClintock:

We are writing you regarding an important issue facing California's Inland Empire that could have a larger impact on flood control projects and job creation in the region. Specifically, we are requesting a field hearing on a recent U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) decision to designate more than 7,000 acres of land along the Santa Ana River as critical habitat for the Santa Ana Sucker.

Recently, USFWS announced it was revising the critical habitat designation for the Santa Ana Sucker, a small fish that lives in the Santa Ana River that has been listed as a Threatened Species under the Endangered Species Act since 2001. This revised designation dramatically expands existing habitat area for the Santa Ana Sucker to include virtually every water pipeline, treatment plant, groundwater recharge pond and flood control facility along the Santa Ana River in western Riverside and San Bernardino counties, including the congressionally approved Seven Oaks Dam. A disruption of this critical water infrastructure could translate into a loss of up to 125,800 acre feet of local water supply.

At a time when California Water Agencies are receiving fractions of their total water allocations and California communities are experiencing record job losses due, in some instances, to water shortages, we believe the federal government should be moving forward with policies that support the development of local water supplies. Instead, the USFWS has chosen to expand the critical habitat designation to include areas the USFWS previously determined were not "essential" to the preservation of the species. Sections of the Santa Ana River and surrounding areas where the Santa Ana Sucker has never been scientifically documented to exist have also been designated as critical habitat. These decisions have thrown the water supply of nearly 3 million people across multiple congressional districts into jeopardy.

Local stakeholders have attempted to address their concerns caused by the critical habitat designation first by engaging the USFWS during the rule making process and now through litigation. However, given the impact the USFWS' critical habitat designation will have on federally authorized water projects and the economic impacts of this decision, we believe this issue would benefit from Congressional oversight and a House Natural Resources Committee field hearing.

Sincerely,



KEN CALVERT
Member of Congress



JERRY LEWIS
Member of Congress