

April 7, 2006

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WASHINGTON, DC—On the heels of a decision limiting this year's salmon season and crippling local economies along the California and Oregon coast, the Bush administration has decided to challenge a court decision that would have aided in the protection of salmon and the redevelopment of their habitat on the Klamath River.

Members of Congress have learned that on Monday, April 10, the Justice Department plans on asking U.S. District Court Judge Sandra Armstrong to reconsider her ruling that stated that the Bureau of Reclamation must limit the amount of water that is diverted from the Klamath and its struggling salmon.

“This decision is nothing short of a slap in the face to fishing families and coastal communities in California and Oregon,” Congressman Mike Thompson (D-CA-1) said. “We are reeling from yesterday's decision to severely limit the season and today the Bush administration has shown complete disregard for the health of the Klamath and the livelihoods of thousands of people who live along our coast. We can't just turn our cheeks to the administration's incompetence and gross mismanagement.”

“This inexplicable decision is, sadly, in keeping with the Bush administration's mismanagement of fisheries and water projects up and down the coast. In the San Francisco Bay-Delta, where some of the fish are on the brink of extinction, the administration is signing long-term water contracts that guarantee that destructive water diversions will continue. And now on the Klamath, after repeatedly failing to help our fishing families and communities financially, the administration has decided to fight to keep water out of the river. It adds insult to injury, and all of us on the West Coast will end up the poorer for it,” Rep. George Miller (D-CA-7) said.

“Just the day after the Pacific Fishery Management Council recommended unprecedented restrictions amounting to a near closure of the salmon season, the administration is opposing the very remedy that could improve fish survival--increased water flows in the Klamath River,” Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-OR-4) said. “It seems the administration is not interested in addressing the factors that are ultimately responsible for this salmon disaster.”

“This appeal by the administration is a ridiculous attempt to avoid admitting that they've failed at managing the Klamath River! Our salmon fishermen are being treated as scapegoats

and enduring cuts to their season when the real problem lies with imbalanced Klamath water policies—and now the Administration is continuing to delay progress toward improvement," Congressman Sam Farr (D-CA-17).

"This administration has proven time and time again that science is given a back seat to politics, and today is no different," stated Congressman David Wu (D-OR-1). "Even though federal scientists agree that water management and environmental degradation are the two primary causes of salmon loss, the administration has decided to continue to stand in the way of real solutions for salmon recovery."