

**February 18, 2010**

WASHINGTON, DC – Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-OR) today fought for Oregon fishing families when he joined with congressional colleagues in a letter to Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), urging her to drop her highly controversial legislation to accelerate water withdrawals out of the Sacramento River. This action would devastate salmon runs along the South Coast of Oregon. It is clear from reports that excessive water pumping has already caused the Sacramento River salmon population to plummet to its lowest level in recorded history. The letter expresses the concern that, should Feinstein's legislation pass, it would mean the extinction of Sacramento River salmon and the tens of thousands of fishing dependent jobs in Oregon, California and Washington.

"Commercial and recreational fishing fleets have been moored at the dock the past three years due to historically low salmon runs," said Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-OR). "Diverting more water to California farmers at the expense of Oregon fishing families and businesses is short-sighted and adds further injury to hardworking families in my district."

Salmon runs of the Sacramento River systems have been decimated in recent years, leading to unprecedented closures of the fishing season with significant effects on the fishing industry and related businesses along the West Coast. Estimates of the job losses from the salmon fishery closure range as high as 23,000.

Despite the announcements about the salmon population, Sen. Feinstein recently announced her intention to legislatively override salmon protections to divert additional water from the Sacramento River regardless of the impact on the devastated salmon population. According to recent media reports, the Feinstein proposal would allow corporate agribusinesses to increase their diversions of water to a rate twice as high as if the current fish protections were totally eliminated.

Joining DeFazio on the letter to Sen. Feinstein were Reps. George Miller (D-CA), Mike Thompson (D-CA), Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), David Wu (D-OR), Norm Dicks (D-WA), Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), Lynn Woolsey (D-CA), Kurt Schrader (D-OR), Doris Matsui (D-CA) and John Garamendi (D-CA).

"Pushing salmon and steelhead populations closer to extinction, which is a certain consequence of legislatively undermining federal protections without any scientific basis, would only exacerbate this economic pain," the lawmakers wrote.