

October 6, 2009

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Chairwoman
Environment and Public Works Committee
United States Senate
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable James Inhofe
Ranking Member
Environment and Public Works Committee
United States Senate
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Boxer and Senator Inhofe:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, representing millions of America's conservationists and anglers, we write in support of the National Fish Habitat Conservation Act (NFHCA; S. 1214) and request that the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee's Subcommittee on Water and Wildlife hold a legislative hearing on S. 1214 this fall.

The NFHCA is a national, bipartisan effort to protect, restore, and enhance the nation's fish and aquatic communities through partnerships that foster fish habitat conservation and improve the quality of life for the American people. Healthy waterways and robust fish populations are vital to the well-being of our society. They provide clean water and sustainable fisheries. They also are vital for less tangible reasons, as anyone who has fished wild waters or canoed a tranquil stream can attest. Unfortunately, in many waters around the country, aquatic habitats and the fish they support have been degraded. This is of huge concern to the 44 million anglers who pursue fish recreationally and countless others who depend on them for subsistence and commerce. The economic contribution of recreational fisheries alone surpassed \$125 billion in 2006.

Research has determined that many fish populations are in decline and half of our waters are impaired. As fish habitats come under increasing pressure, the current efforts to address habitat and population declines are not reversing these trends. The goal of the NFHCA is to foster landscape-scale, regional fish habitat conservation efforts.

The NFHCA will authorize \$75 million for fishery and habitat improvement, maximizing the return-on-investment by targeting much needed funding to priority on-the-ground projects. Based upon the highly successful North American Wetlands Conservation Act, the NFHCA will leverage state, local and privately raised funds to build regional partnerships aimed at fixing the nation's biggest fisheries problems. Funding will be awarded based on habitat need, strength of local and regional partnerships, and the likelihood of success. The NFHCA will put into statute the most comprehensive effort ever attempted to treat the causes of fish habitat decline, not just the symptoms.

Thank you for your support for this important legislation to protect, restore and enhance fish habitat and fish populations across the nation. We look forward to the Subcommittee's and the full Senate Environment and Public Works Committee's consideration of S. 1214 in the coming months.

Sincerely,

American Fisheries Society
American Fly Fishing Trade Association
American Rivers
American Sportfishing Association
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Bass Anglers Sportsman Society
Berkley Conservation Institute
Coastal Conservation Association
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation

Federation of Fly Fishers
Izaak Walton League of America
National Marine Manufacturers Association
Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association
Shimano Sport Fisheries Initiative
The Conservation Fund
The Nature Conservancy
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Trout Unlimited

cc: Members of the Committee