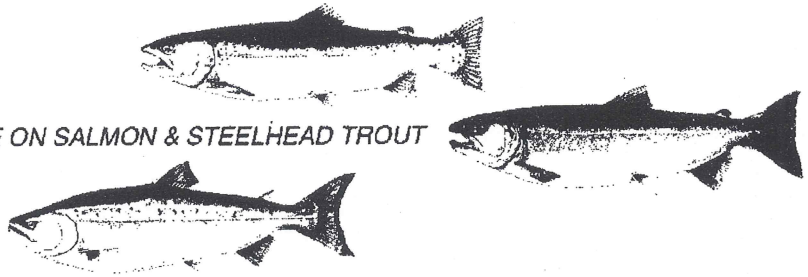


CALIFORNIA ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SALMON & STEELHEAD TROUT



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October 27, 2017

The Honorable Senator Mike McGuire, Chair
Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture
State Capitol Building, Room 5064
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: 2017 Cessation of Public Review and Recommendation Committee's
Participation in Fisheries Restoration Grant Program**

Dear Senator Mike McGuire:

The California Advisory Committee on Salmon and Steelhead Trout (CAC) would like to bring our concern to the Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture over the cessation of the public member *Peer Review Committee's* opportunity to review habitat restoration proposals submitted to the Department of Fish and Wildlife's *Fisheries Restoration Grant Program* (FRGP) and to make recommendations to the Director of the Department of Fish and Wildlife on funding priorities for the 2017 restoration program.

The inability of the *Peer Review Committee* to perform its role in the 2017 is due to the interpretation of advisory committee "conflict of interest" language attached to the receipt of Federal (NOAA's Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund) funding into the State's FRGP program. The CAC does not believe there was clarity provided on the language which prevented the *Peer Review Committee* from completing its responsibilities.

A public member *Peer Review Committee* has been a formal part of the proposal review process since 1997, when then State Senator Mike Thompson's SB 271 created the Salmon and Steelhead Restoration Account and established controlling language for expenditures through the Public Resources Code. The intent of the Legislature to have this public review process was reaffirmed in 2002 when Senator Sher's SB 1771 expanded the make-up of the public review committee and further clarified their role in the program, including adding a specific "conflict of interest" section to the Public Resources Code.

The California Advisory Committee on Salmon and Steelhead Trout (CAC) is a public committee authorized in 1983 by the California Legislature to provide recommendations to the Legislature's Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture, and the Director of the California Department of Fish and Game (now Wildlife) on matters related to the State's salmon and steelhead resources. The CAC has a long history of involvement in and support for the public's participation in and development of the highly successful Fisheries Restoration Grant Program (FRGP) administered by the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

As the CAC does not believe there was clarity provided on the language that sparked such a departure from an established "public review" process, we are asking the Jt. Committee assistance in resolving this issue. The Director of the Department of Fish and Wildlife has expressed his willingness to address outstanding FRGP issues with the CAC. However it may require either the State Legislature to change PRC language or engagement with our Congressional Representatives to resolve conflicting statutes. At this point we are merely bringing what we consider a significant issue to the Jt. Committee's attention and requesting your assistance in resolving the problem. The CAC greatly appreciate the opportunity to present this today before your committee.

Sincerely,



Mitch Farro, CAC Chair

Cc. Mr. Charles Bonham, Director CA Department of Fish and Wildlife, Sacramento
Hon. Jarred Huffman, Congressional Representative, Eureka
Hon. Mike Thompson, Congressional Representative, Santa Rosa
Mr. Barry Thom, NOAA West Coast Regional Administrator, Seattle