

Fishing Groups Applaud Return of Central Valley Restoration Funding Urge Secretary Haaland to Rescind Trump-Era Water Contracts as Well

January 3, 2023 - For Immediate Release

For information contact:

Chris Shutes, CSPA, (510) 421-2405, blancapaloma@msn.com
Glen Spain, PCFFA, (541) 689-2000, fishlifr@aol.com

Fishing organizations thank Secretary of the Interior Debra Haaland for executing a December 15, 2022 [Memorandum](#) that ensures statutory funding to protect fish and wildlife as required under the 1992 Central Valley Project Improvement Act (CVPIA). Secretary's Haaland's Memorandum voids the Orwellian declaration by the Trump Administration that restoration of fish and wildlife harmed by the federal Central Valley Project (CVP) was complete and summarily defunded.

The action by Secretary Haaland means that CVP water contractors will resume payment for projects to create and improve floodplain and other habitat for salmon, waterfowl, and other fish and wildlife. The payments are required by the CVPIA, passed in 1992 to require the CVP to put fish and wildlife protection on an equal footing with water supply.

In the January 2021 twilight days of the Trump Administration, then-Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt declared the end of restoration funding obligations for CVP contractors. The largest single beneficiary of this massive parting give-away was Mr. Bernhardt's former law client, Westlands Water District.

Chris Shutes, Acting Executive Director of the California Sportfishing Protection Alliance, said: "Politicians like Mr. Bernhardt solve problems by abolishing their official existence. We applaud Secretary Haaland's blunt rejection of Mr. Bernhardt's deception and his sneak attack on California's salmon and ducks."

At the same time that Mr. Bernhardt was canceling the debt of CVP contractors to fish and wildlife, he also canceled their debt to repay the money they owed the federal government for CVP capital obligations. This came in the form of issuing new permanent contracts for CVP water contractors. These CVP contracts were not supposed to be renewed until the CVP contractors fully paid off their original debt for the construction of the CVP dams and canals that supply them with water. But Mr. Bernhardt waived these obligations as well and oversaw the issuance of multiple new permanent CVP contracts in the waning days of the Trump Administration.

Glen Spain, Acting Executive Director of the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Association, said: "The legal basis for the prior administration's new permanent CVP contracts was as fabricated as the basis for ending mitigation and restoration funding. These contracts cheat the taxpaying public out of hundreds of millions of dollars. We implore Secretary Haaland to finish the job and void the prior administration's new permanent CVP contracts."

Regarding the new permanent contracts, Shutes added: “The Central Valley and Trinity River’s fisheries are hemorrhaging. This condition is devastating California communities in the Delta. It is devastating tribes along the Trinity and Klamath Rivers. It is devastating fishing communities up and down the west coast, from Central California to the state of Washington. That is why fishing organizations have filed [suit](#) to overturn the new permanent CVP contracts. We hope that Secretary Haaland will decide the issue herself in a follow-up action that invalidates Mr. Bernhardt’s illegal contracts.”

Fishing groups initiated a letter writing campaign opposing CVPIA mitigation defunding and the new CVP contracts in February 2021; *see* [2021 02 16 PCFFA & CSPA Haaland Water Contracts & CVPIA BERNHARDT RESCISSION REQUEST](#). Fishing groups, tribes, and environmental groups followed up with a detailed letter to Congress member Katie Porter on May 3, 2021; *see* <https://calsport.org/news/wp-content/uploads/Fixing-the-Water-Scandal-05-3-2021-PCL-PCFFA-Tribal-Groups-Request-Oversight-date-corrected.pdf>; Congress members Jared Huffman and Katie Porter urged secretarial action on May 7, 2021; *see* <https://calsport.org/news/wp-content/uploads/5-7-21-Huffman-Porter-CVPIA-Letter.pdf>.

#

#

#