

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

February 24, 2014

The Honorable Sally Jewell
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell:

We are writing to express serious concerns with the proposed direction of the National Fish Hatchery System (NFHS). In November, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) issued a report titled "2013 Strategic Hatchery and Workforce Planning Report" that outlines the end of over one hundred years of sport fish stocking operations across the nation.

As you know, angling has been a part of the NFHS mission since its inception, and today it plays a significant role in rural and tribal economies. Around the country, the NFHS supports roughly 68,000 jobs and has an annual economic impact of \$3.6 billion. For every tax dollar invested in the NFHS, there is a return of \$28 to our national economy—largely thanks to sport fishing.

Unfortunately, the USFWS proposed to overturn this record of success by essentially eliminating sport fish stocking and instead focusing almost entirely on stocking endangered species. Over the past few months, our respective states have experienced the initial impact of this mission shift, and the results are not benefiting the NFHS or the American people.

In Arizona and Nevada, the USFWS recently announced a decision to end a fifty-year trout stocking program at Willow Beach NFH within Lake Mead National Recreation Area. According to the Arizona Game and Fish Department, the loss of rainbow trout and striped bass could remove \$7.7 - \$11.9 million from the area's economy.

Likewise, in New Mexico, wildlife officials were abruptly notified that Hotchkiss NFH would reduce its trout stocking by 25,000 in the Navajo Reservoir, the second most heavily fished body of water in the state. It is expected that other important sport fish populations will decline as a result of this decision. This will ruin angler satisfaction, harm economic activity, and reduce the area's biological quality. Similarly, several tribal governments around the country have been notified that USFWS may soon downgrade its trust responsibility to deliver sports fish at certain tribal recreational lakes and rivers.

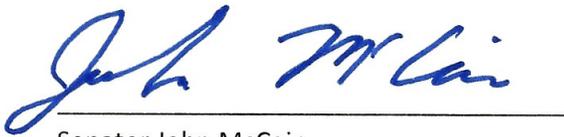
We appreciate the difficult choices federal agencies must make given the current budget climate. However, the NFHS's mission to help ensure sufficient fish stocks for sport fishing purposes is

important to the nation's economy and is vital to sustaining jobs in areas throughout the country. In support of that mission, NHFS's budget has remained steady since FY 2012 at \$46.1 million for operations and \$17.9 million for maintenance with only 10% allocated for non-native sport fish propagation. The drastic mission shift away from trout stocking and sport fish production to one that focuses solely on native fish production betrays the historical success of the NFHS in maintaining an important aspect of our economy.

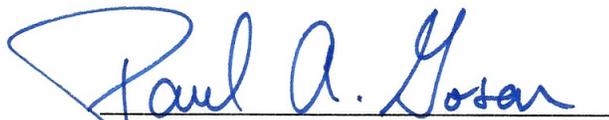
Against this backdrop, we urge you to (1) reevaluate how you propose to realign this important mission to help ensure that the negative economic impacts of the proposed alignment are mitigated as effectively as possible; (2) explain how you intend to consult and coordinate with state and tribal wildlife agencies and affected communities to ensure that the NFHS' sport fishing mission can be furthered by state and local partners wherever possible; (3) define specific targets that meet the angling public's needs for recreational fishing in a way that is mindful of its economic impact to state and local economies; and (4) explain how you intend to better utilize the resources provided to you by Congress to help ensure that the NFHS' sport fishing efforts are executed as comparably as possible to its focus on endangered species production.

We appreciate your prompt attention to this matter and look forward to your response.

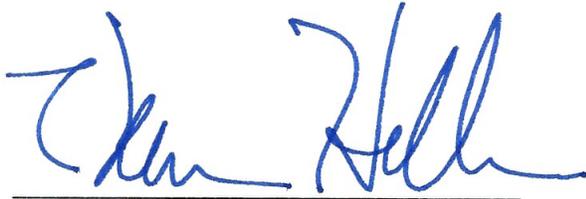
Sincerely,



Senator John McCain



Congressman Paul Gosar



Senator Dean Heller



Congressman Joe Heck



Congressman Trent Franks



Congressman Ben Lujan



Congresswoman Ann Kirkpatrick