

**COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER, OCEANS, AND WILDLIFE
HYBRID LEGISLATIVE HEARING**

March 17, 2022

1:00 p.m. ET

Legislative Hearing on H.R. 3431, H.R. 6491, H.R. 6651, H.R. 6785, and H.R. 6987

Question for the Record for Ms. Janet Coit, Assistant Administrator, National Marine Fisheries Service, Acting Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, Deputy NOAA Administrator

Questions from Rep. Jim Costa, CA

1. In watersheds with multiple endangered species, how do critical habitat designations and management of watersheds relate under the parameters of the Salmon FISH Act (H.R. 6491)? In other words, how are the management of other endangered species balanced with management of salmon? Could there be negative implications for other species? (example: conflicts between management of smelt and salmon fisheries inside of the Delta)
 - The Salmon FISH Act proposes to identify salmon conservation areas and salmon strongholds to ensure these areas receive the protection, support, and funding they need to continue to sustain the healthiest remaining salmon populations. These areas may already be designated as critical habitat for salmon or other ESA listed species. The National Marine Fisheries Service and US Fish and Wildlife Service have extensive experience collaborating to consider and balance impacts to ESA listed species with varying needs. Any projects supported under the FISH Act would be required to consider any negative impacts for other ESA listed species.
2. Could H.R. 6491 protect parts of a watershed where salmon currently do not exist?
 - The Salmon Fish ACT directs NMFS to prioritize areas that have strong and diverse populations of salmon; so, we do not anticipate that unoccupied areas would be included.
3. How would H.R. 6491 impact existing salmon and other fishery restoration efforts, such as the San Joaquin River Restoration Program (SJRRP)?
 - The legislation would provide funding opportunities for habitat improvements in important salmon watersheds. However, it is unclear if it would have any impact on the SJRRP because the program is under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) who are not considered a “relevant agency” according to the legislation. If USBR could apply for additional funding, then it would be

beneficial. If they could not apply because they are a federal agency, then the impact would be neutral.

4. The Salmon FISH Act appears to allow a much larger area to be eligible for designation as Salmon Strongholds than currently managed by the National Marine Fisheries Service. What staffing or other related capacity challenges do you anticipate your agency will need to be prepared to carry out the goals of the legislation?

- Additional resources are needed for the National Marine Fisheries Service to identify salmon strongholds and administer the grant program under this bill. However, once strongholds are designated, we do not anticipate needing additional funds to manage those areas. Below is an example of the resources that are required to accomplish a grant program comparable to the one described in the Act.

The National Marine Fisheries Service's administration of the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund provides a point of comparison for what it might take to administer the grant program under the Salmon Fish Act. The PCSRF program requires 5.0 FTE equivalents to execute the competitive grants process, administer the awarded grants, conduct project-report reviews, conduct limited site visits, administer a project-tracking database, and ensure environmental compliance under the relevant statutes (e.g., ESA, NEPA, NHPA).