



OPPOSE H.R. 2083: The Slaughter Seals and Sea Lions Act

H.R. 2083 (Herrera Beutler, R-WA) claims to protect salmon in the Columbia River by authorizing a massive increase in annual permits to kill California Sea Lions, Stellar Sea Lions, and Harbor Seals. Salmon recovery is important and should focus on the devastating impacts from deadbeat dams, pollutants, and climate change, not decimating sea lion populations.

Background

Thirteen populations of salmon and steelhead in the Columbia River and its tributaries in the Pacific Northwest are listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). While salmon and steelhead face many threats, deadbeat dams represent the single greatest threat to their survival. Sea lions have always preyed on salmon, but in recent years they have started to target salmon at key choke points near dams. This has resulted in a push to kill more sea lions in these areas. However, sea lion predation has not played a significant role in the overall decline of these salmon stocks and there is no conclusive evidence that sea lion culling will be successful. H.R. 2083 turns sea lions into scapegoats to avoid addressing more serious problems.

Problems with H.R. 2083

- **H.R. 2083 will not lead to the recovery of salmon populations.** Salmon recovery is economically and culturally important to the country, and recovery efforts must be rooted in science to address the most prevalent threats – deadbeat dams, pesticides, fishing pressure, interactions with hatchery fish, and habitat loss.
- **Many supporters of H.R. 2083 were unwilling to support salmon recovery earlier this year.** Just a few months ago, many supporters of H.R. 2083 supported a bill (H.R. 3144) that passed the House to block court-mandated water releases from federal dams even though there is strong scientific evidence that these releases significantly increase salmon survival.
- **H.R. 2083 is bad for sea lions.** California Sea Lion populations have increased compared to the 1970's, but in recent years, climate change, environmental stressors, and reductions in prey have caused populations to decline and an unprecedented number of starved and dehydrated baby sea lions have washed ashore. Extensive recovery efforts were required to save these sea lions.
- **H.R. 2083 provides no oversight or measures to determine success.** The bill does not require the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to scientifically analyze the impacts of sea lion kills, measure progress, or set a target for salmon recovery.
- **H.R. 2083 is unwarranted.** Current law already allows for the annual lethal taking of 92 California Sea Lions that have a "significant negative impact" on the decline or recovery of salmon. H.R. 2083 would drastically increase that number to 920 California Sea Lions, 164 Stellar Sea Lions, and an unknown number of Harbor Seals. The seals and sea lions would not need to be identified as having a "significant negative impact." Any sea lions found upstream of river mile 112 of the Columbia River and its tributaries could be killed.

Bottom Line

This is the wildlife management approach House Republicans always take: shoot first and ask questions later. Salmon recovery is a complex problem that requires a sophisticated response. Congress should tackle the scientifically-proven factors contributing to salmon population declines, instead of just trying to shoot our way out.