



January 2009 Newsletter

More 2009 Salmon Season Bad News

Most of the fall run salmon return data is now available and the news is not good. It appears there can be no salmon fishing season in 2009. In 2007, 90,000 fall run fish returned to the Central Valley system to spawn. The fishing season was closed because a minimum of 121,000 returns are needed for the species to survive long term. In 2008, the returns are estimated to be only 60,000 fish, a 23% drop from 2007 and the 2008 fishing season was completely closed. The disaster deepens. Stakeholder groups are asking for another year of trucking hatchery fish around the delta to avoid the low water and delta problems. DFG, NMFS, and The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will truck again in 2009 but the levels are yet to be established.

Other Salmon Bad News

The Mokelumne salmon hatchery is in deep trouble for 2009. In September and October when the peak of the fall run salmon were trying to reach the hatchery, flows in the Mokelumne River were cut to 20 cfs by a combination of water diversions taken by East Bay Mud the Woodbridge Irrigation District. The result was that less than 250 adult salmon reached the hatchery. This is the second largest hatchery in the state and normally produces 6 million smolts. It also supplies the Tyee club and other key pen projects with smolts. Now it only has 270,000 eggs which will only produce about 154,000 smolts. In 2007, 2.5 million eggs were moved from Nimbus hatchery to Mokelumne. We are disappointed no eggs were moved this year. This is another terrible example of how water policies and mismanagement are destroying California's salmon fisheries.

High Powered Panel to Discuss the Salmon and Steelhead Crisis at the Sacramento International Sportsmen's Show

A panel of fishing, biological, and environmental experts will discuss the uncertain outlook for salmon and steelhead in California at the Sacramento ISE Sportsmen's show at Cal Expo on January 17th. The future of these fish stands at a crossroad. Will the runs be recovered or will the current government policies assure their extinction? The panel will discuss these issues and reveal the steps that must be taken if extinction is to be avoided. The panel includes Dr. Joshua Israel of the UC Davis Salmon and Steelhead Research team discussing the mounting evidence on potential extinctions. Assemblyman Jared Huffman will provide comments from the legislature. Other speakers include Barry Nelson from NRDC, Zeke Grader from the PCFFA, Michael Jackson, the attorney who just filed a Public Trust suit against three agencies for CSPA, and Dick Pool, Administrator for Water4Fish.org. The event at 1:00 PM promises to be exciting and very revealing. Water4Fish will have a booth #3572 at the same show. Stop in and get the latest info. If you can help in the booth, we still need volunteers. For more info on the show, log onto: <http://www.sportsexpos.com/promo.cfm?LNK=587>

Cal Trout Releases Study on Potential Extinctions of Salmon, Trout and Steelhead

In November, Cal Trout released its two year study on the future of salmon trout and steelhead in California. The report was shocking. It indicated that unless water and habitat conditions are changed in the rivers, streams and estuaries, two thirds of the current 31 separate species of these fish are headed for extinction. The research was performed by Dr. Peter Moyle and Dr. Joshua Israel of UC Davis and their highly regarded "State of the Salmon Team". The report titled "SOS: California's Native Fish Crisis" can be seen in its entirety at CalTrout.org. Congratulations and thanks to Cal Trout for bringing this critical subject to public attention.

Stakeholders Meet with The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

On November 24th a group of coalition stakeholders met with the State leaders of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Sacramento. The purpose of the meeting was to review the concerns of fishermen and discuss the role of the Service in recovering the salmon runs. Stakeholders were represented by commercial trollers, conservation groups, environmental groups, charter operators, guides, equipment manufacturers and retailers. The meeting started with reports by the Service on fall run salmon returns to the upper Sacramento River and to Coleman hatchery. As of November 16th 14,514 salmon had entered Battle Creek. This compares to 21,000 during the same period last year. The Service believes the total fall run count for 2008 will approximate 60,000 salmon. This is down substantially from the 90,000 returns in 2007 in spite of the fact that the 2008 salmon fishing season was completely closed. As recently as 2002, 780,000 salmon returned to the Central Valley. On the good news side, Coleman hatchery reached its egg goal for production of 12 million fall run smolts. These smolts will be released in April and May of 2009. Jack counts are a good indicator of future run sizes. Unfortunately, only 460 jacks reached Coleman in 2008. There were 450 last year but historically there were thousands returning.

The stakeholders left the Service with several requests which included the following:

1. First and foremost, step up to the plate and protect the fish. Stakeholders feel the Service has been seriously compromised in its traditional role of steadfast dedication to the interests of the fisheries.
2. Aggressively implement the requirements of federal law to operate the Central Valley Project to double the populations of salmon from their historical levels.
3. Get more involved in the water quality issues of the delta and the rivers to protect salmon and other game and non-game species.
4. Work to remove spawning and rearing barriers in the upper river particularly the Red Bluff dam.
5. Continue to implement the San Joaquin River Settlement to return salmon to the river by 2014.
6. Lean hard on trucking and other short-term strategies that can restore fishing seasons in this period of the collapsed delta and non fish friendly water storage, temperature and river flow conditions.

The meeting ended on a positive note. The Service indicated that it would do its best to be more responsive, and the stakeholders appreciated the openness and responsiveness of the agency.

Forward this Newsletter to your Associates

Ask your associates to log onto Water4Fish.org and send letters to their political leaders. At the end of November we had 64,000 supporters signed up but we need lots more.

Thanks for your continuing support

Dick Pool - Editor

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