



# FISH • TALES

NEWSLETTER OF THE GGSA • JANUARY 2017



***The gates of doom.** When the Delta Cross Channel Gates are open, as seen here, baby salmon in the Sacramento River die after getting sucked in headed to the diversion pumps. New federal legislation passed in December 2016 orders these gates to be opened more.*

## **FEINSTEIN/MCCARTHY ANTI-SALMON BILL BECOMES LAW, GGSA SPRINGS INTO ACTION**

**A** new federal law passed in December makes it easier for water managers to divert and pump more Delta/salmon water to the San Joaquin Valley and points south, which kills salmon. GGSA is working to get the state to stop this from happening. Failure will likely put us back to the early 2000's when record high water diversions crashed our salmon runs, leading to the first ever shutdown of the ocean fishery in 2008 and 2009. This is why we can't fail.

As soon as Congress convened the 2017 session, San Joaquin Congressionals introduced a bill to divert even more water and get rid of rules protecting Central Valley salmon. Among its provisions, a section trying to strip California of its authority to protect and regulate state waters and instead hand that authority to the federal government.

Congressional leaders in the House of Representatives have also said they'll act to weaken the federal Endangered Species Act, one of the only laws that have helped keep California salmon and the Delta alive.

State government officials tell

GGSA they have researched legal ways to defend California's natural resources, including salmon, using state law. However, Governor Jerry Brown's administration stood by and did nothing to stop the recently passed anti-salmon federal law. Will he allow his agencies to step up and keep the worst provisions from being implemented? Only time will tell. One thing we can say with certainty is GGSA is pushing the Brown administration and his agency heads to act to protect salmon, which are facing the biggest threats we've seen in a long time. ■

**MAKE A TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATION TO SUPPORT MORE SALMON! TO DONATE,  
PLEASE CALL (855) 251-GGSA OR VISIT [GOLDENGATESALMON.ORG](http://GOLDENGATESALMON.ORG)**

## DELTA TWIN TUNNELS MOVES ONE STEP CLOSER

The proposal to build twin 40' diameter tunnels running 35 miles around the Delta to carry water is moving both forwards and backwards. Forwards, because the state has cleared some key, required environmental documents which must be done before permits can be had. Backwards because, well, for a number of reasons including the

fact that one of the governor's key outside policy groups recently started pushing for a smaller, single tunnel project. Additionally, there's still no agreement between the big San Joaquin Valley ag water users and the urban water agency that serves southern California about who's going to pay for what. To top it all off, a new federal law promises to give both San Joaquin Valley growers and southern California urban areas more water using the existing system that won't

cost them dime, so why would they want to sign up for a \$20 billion project that threatens to reduce their water? ■



*This tunnel is 57.5' in diameter, a little bigger than the two 40' tunnels planned to deliver the Sacramento River, but you get the idea.*

## EARLY GUESSING ABOUT A 2017 SEASON

The best guess as of now is that the 2017 ocean salmon fishing season is likely to look a whole lot like the 2016 in terms of time and areas open. Another year of poor returns of salmon to the Klamath natural areas could again spell trouble for access above Pt. Arena as it did in 2016, especially for commercial trollers. Last season sport salmon fishermen in the Klamath Management Zone north of Horse Mountain got a late start and then a two weeks on, two weeks off, season. We don't yet know if we'll see that again in 2017.

Winter run concerns could also lead to a repeat of the 2016 restrictions which mostly affected areas south of Pigeon Point in southern San Mateo County.

Anecdotal information suggests we had poor but acceptable returns to the Central Valley, including the Sacramento River.

Reportedly, all hatcheries, including Coleman, got the number of eggs needed to make the next generation of salmon. ■



*Commercial boats in Arena Cove during 2016 fishing season*

## EGGS ARE COOKING AWAY IN FEATHER RIVER, FINGERS CROSSED

CDFW and GGSA are watching a study site in the Feather River closely to see if lessons learned from 2015 will lead to a solid crop of baby salmon emerging from a test plot in Feather River. Although injection of sockeye and coho salmon eggs has successfully been done elsewhere, the CDFW specialists, working with GGSA contract biologist Dave Vogel, are discovering that techniques used for coho or sockeye don't work as well in king salmon waters.

Bigger gravel and faster and deeper water require a unique approach for getting injected king eggs to survive and hatch. In nature 10 percent or less of the eggs laid by a salmon will eventually hatch. Injected pink and chum salmon eggs have reportedly enjoyed up to a 90 percent hatch rate.

The real value to California will be having egg injection as a tool to deal with future droughts. With injection, eggs can be harvested and fertilized in controlled settings (like a hatchery) until river temperatures cool enough to allow injection. This technique could also prove quite valuable for recolonizing salmon streams that have lost their fish. ■



*These salmon eggs were fertilized and incubated for a month before being carefully injected into Feather River gravel.*



## PUTAH CREEK DEMONSTRATES IT CAN BE DONE RIGHT

**W**e owe the folks from the Solano County Water Agency who have restored salmon to Putah Creek a shout out and thanks for their contribution to our fishery. Putah Creek is once again salmon-friendly now that it's been realigned to make it narrower and faster (which helps keep the water a cool 55 degrees) and spawning gravels have been restored. Salmon are being spotted in the length of the creek from the Monticello Dam to the Yolo Bypass where it ends.

The Putah Creek restoration effort shows that with cold Lake Berryessa water from the bottom

of the dam, and a bit of habitat restoration, salmon will recolonize a creek.

No one is sure where the fall run salmon in Putah Creek are coming from but it appears most are hatchery fish that are straying and recolonizing, as salmon do. It's expected that within a few generations they'll be as wild as the wildest fall run salmon in the Central Valley, and maybe more so.

The Putah Creek restoration also demonstrates that in areas where gravel has been buried under heavy sediment, it can be recovered.

This is done in the fall when the creek is low and before spawning salmon are present. Deep rake-like

ripping teeth attached to an excavator bucket can break through an asphalt-like creek bottom, exposing the buried gravel, which the salmon need to build their nests or "redds". In 2016 salmon successfully built redds at many of the spots that were deep ripped the year before.

Returns of adult salmon have skyrocketed from eight in 2013, to just under 2000 in 2016. ■



*Restoration of Putah Creek has been welcomed by recolonizing salmon  
Photo: Courtesy Ken Davis*

## AFTER TEN YEARS, FEDS RELEASE FEATHER RIVER/OROVILLE DAM RULES

**I**t's only 400 plus pages long which is why GGSA is still studying a new federal document governing operation of the Oroville dam and the Feather River downstream of it. Like all of the major Central Valley rivers, the Feather is a shadow of its former self with most of the good salmon habitat lost behind a dam built with no fish ladder. To add insult to injury, the state created a big shallow pond downstream of the dam where much of the water

sits and heats up before flowing downstream to the Sacramento River. This water often ends up being too hot for salmon, destroying it for spawning downstream. The new rules are supposed to address this problem, which is one GGSA has focused on for years.

At a first glance, it looks like these new federal rules don't really have the teeth we were hoping to see. On paper, they require DWR to fix the thermal pollution problem within ten years but there appears to be plenty of loopholes and wiggle room that might easily stall that deadline.

GGSA expects to continue working this issue with DWR and others to get a speedy resolve to the thermal pollution and other problems that are holding the Feather River back from its full salmon potential. ■



*The Feather River downstream of the Oroville Dam has been radically modified by human development and is much less friendly to salmon than historically*

**Founding Members** Chris Arcoleo, John Atkinson, Raymond Bonneau, Dennis Burkell, Hugh Chatham, Coastside Fishing Club, Joesph Conte, Crab Boat Owners Association, Tom Creedon, Ron Davis, Jim DeMartini, Joe Donatini, Jacky Douglas, Chris Duba, Kerry Egan, Ken Elie, Patrick Elie, Tim Eli, Yancy Forest-Knowles, Douglas R. Gaebe, Vic Giacalone, Victor Gonella, Zeke Grader, Ren Harris, Humbolt Fisherman's Marketing Association, Paul Johnson, Perry Kerson, Jonah Li, Todd Magaline, John McManus, Joseph Meiswinkel, Mark Mlcoch, Galen Onizuka, Rick Powers, Bob Praszker, Queen of Hearts Sportfishing, Randy Repass, Frank Rescino, Jeff Robles, Patty Schifferle, Frank Seghesio, Richard Shears, Ken Stagnaro, Roger Thomas, Edwin A. Tognetti, Aaron Weinzinger, Jay Yokomizo, David Zeff, Thomas Zizzo



## FROM THE WHEELHOUSE

### RICE FARMERS, SALMON AND WATERFOWL...ALL CAN COEXIST IN THE SACRAMENTO VALLEY

*Opinion by GGSA Founder, Victor Gonella*

**G**lenn Colusa Irrigation District (GCID), the largest irrigation district in the Sacramento Valley provides high quality waterfowl habitat through the irrigation of waterfowl easement properties and the food that those properties provide. Their irrigation of Sacramento Valley rice lands also provides much needed spring food, summer rearing, and fall food and habitat for migrating waterfowl in the region. But they don't stop there. The rice farmers behind GCID are working closely with river restoration specialists to move dirt and gravel to reopen former river side channels needed by baby salmon to year-round river flows.

Salmon survive at higher rates if they have side channels in the upper river to safely feed and rear in. When they finally migrate down and out to sea, they're bigger and stronger which increases overall survival.

Working with the federal Bureau of Reclamation, GCID is restoring things to a semblance of what they were before modern Californians dammed the river, re-arranged the river banks, and degraded miles of salmon habitat. GCID knows that restored salmon habitat will greatly help struggling salmon runs. They demonstrated this in late 2014 when they provided the equipment and operators used to restore Painter's Riffle near Redding. Within months adult salmon started spawning in the newly restored channel.

Several big side channel restorations GCID planned to work on in 2016 started the year locked down

due to red tape. GGSA interceded with state officials and helped get the roadblocks cleared so the work could proceed.

Since then, GCID's heavy equipment and operators have completed two big restoration projects with more planned in the year to come. This should make things better for millions of baby salmon working their way down to the Delta, bay and finally ocean.

GCID is a good example of how we must provide water for Northern California farmers, but also for the wild animals that inhabit the Central Valley.

GCID and the farmers behind it demonstrate that the people who live and farm in the Sacramento Valley know and appreciate the salmon and waterfowl that have always been in their midst. ■

### MARCH 16 SF DINNER IN SF, SPECIAL CUISINE

**A** very special fundraising dinner will occur March 16 in San Francisco. World class chefs Charles Phan (Slanted Door in SF fame) and Ted Wilson III (Fine and Rare in SF) will team up with other great bay area chefs to put on a night of extraordinary cuisine for the foodie salmon supporters out there. These folks know and appreciate real wild seafood which is why they're throwing their support behind GGSA's efforts to keep salmon alive and well in California. Dinner hosts Adam Messner, Allison Rhodes, and Ted Wilson are back for a second year of bringing their unique touch to

the event which has the best of modern San Francisco stamped all over it. Both Adam and Allison come from fishing families and know and value real salmon. GGSA is very grateful to them and the chefs who will lend their talents. ■



*Adam Messner, who appreciates real salmon, co-hosts a very special GGSA fundraising dinner in SF March 16*

### GGSA AT ISE, COME ON BY!

**G**GSA will have a booth at the Sacramento ISE show as usual so if you're going to show, come find us and say hello. We'll be there to help spread the word on salmon restoration, what GGSA is doing to secure your salmon future, meet new and old friends, and build support for Central Valley salmon restoration. ■



*Drop in and say hello at the GGSA booth at the Sacramento International Sportsman's Expo*