

How was fishing in 2018?



One of nature's finest foods...

GGSA is working on all fronts to make future seasons better than this one was for most. Stories that follow in this edition demonstrate how.

The fishing season is winding down except in the Sacramento River which stays open until mid-December. In some parts of the state, many were pleasantly surprised about how it turned out even though the ocean sport season was cut by months. Commercial trollers also experienced a greatly truncated season, although high prices helped buffer the shock. Where fish were caught, a good number of big three year old salmon showed, which also helped ease the pain of shortened fishing seasons. Early returns seem to indicate a high percentage of fish caught were hatchery origin which is no surprise considering the decimation of the natural spawning stocks from the drought. Steady progress in hatchery release techniques is adding to the fishery. Now we need to bolster the natural spawners to get truly great returns and full seasons for everyone. ■

Spring run returns suggest low returns for all natural origin Central Valley salmon

Low returns of spring run salmon in 2018 to Deer, Mill, and Butte creeks demonstrate the overall poor condition of natural origin salmon throughout the Central Valley due to lingering effects of the last drought. In Butte Creek, the “healthiest” of the spring run creeks, 2,118 adult springers returned this year. In Deer Creek, 159 returned, in Mill Creek, 51 returned, the lowest number on record. The fate of these runs is echoed in low numbers of returning winter run and likely to be echoed in the number of natural origin fall run salmon throughout the Central Valley because the drought hurt them too.

Eighty percent of returning winter run were hatchery fish, another sign the drought cut deeply into natural spawning runs.

The poor condition of natural spawning salmon in the Central Valley is masked by increasing numbers of hatchery salmon, thanks to improved trucking and release practices. Look at returns from good years “back in the day” and you’ll find a large percentage of natural origin salmon mixed in. This component is needed again in order to provide full seasons of good sport and commercial fishing throughout the state.



Only 51 spring run salmon returned to Mill Creek this year

Recent studies are pointing to large losses of baby Mill Creek spring run salmon once they leave the creek and enter the mainstem Sacramento River near Los Molinos. The poor condition of the Sacramento River as a salmon migration corridor in the spring, due to inadequate flows, is a problem GGSA is working to address at the State Water Resources Control Board. Years when we get heavy rainfall or snowmelt in the spring is currently the best we can hope for. ■



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Grilled wild caught California salmon will be served November 9 at the Sonoma dinner

Sonoma Dinner coming up

The annual Sonoma fundraising dinner is scheduled for November 9 at the Ramekins Culinary Center in downtown Sonoma. This year's dinner will feature wild caught California salmon cooked over an outdoor grill. This is sure to be a special treat. Sonoma Water Agency general manager Grant Davis will be honored for his forward looking work to supply water while protecting salmon habitat. Great auction items to support GGSA's work in a beautiful setting in the heart of the wine country will make the night one to remember. Tickets can be had at goldengatesalmon.org.



GOLDEN GATE SALMON ASSOCIATION
5TH ANNUAL SONOMA DINNER

NOVEMBER 9TH, 2018
6PM - 10PM

SUPPORT GGSA'S WORK TO REBUILD OUR MAJESTIC SALMON RUNS! ENJOY AN EVENING OF GREAT FOOD, COMPLIMENTARY BEER & WINE, AND FUN AUCTION ITEMS!
-ALSO-
HONORING SONOMA COUNTY WATER AGENCY DIRECTOR GRANT DAVIS FOR HIS ONGOING SUPPORT OF SALMON WATER

LOCATION
RAMEKINS CULINARY INSTITUTE
450 W SPAIN ST, SONOMA, CA 95476

\$125 PER PERSON
\$1250 FOR A RESERVED TABLE OF 10 PEOPLE

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT
WWW.SONOMA-SALMON-CELEBRATION.EVENTBRITE.COM

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Baby salmon from the Coleman hatchery are being considered for experimental release near Chico next spring to see if survival, straying, can be improved

Experimental Coleman Release Strategies Considered

GGSA and allies met with federal fish staff in late September to firm up plans to truck 200,000 Coleman hatchery fish to a release site on the Sacramento River near Chico. The pilot project is intended to test if survival can be increased without appreciably increasing straying when the fish return as adults. Past studies indicate that heavy predation can occur in the upper part of the river in low water years. This experiment seeks to find answers to these losses.

Coleman hatchery has said the releases will most likely occur in April due to the hatchery's schedule and the rate of growth size of the salmon. Concerns

have been raised about an April release, with spawning striped bass present. In addition, a more recent study found that in some years the heavy losses of salmon occur in the mid and lower reaches of the Sacramento River. Stay tuned. ■




Having enough of the right tanker trailers matters, GGSA helped get CDFW two more

GGSA efforts to provide two additional tanker trailers pays off

After GGSA pressed legislators on budget issues and organized salmon groups to press CDFW to buy two additional tanker trucks, the state agreed and ordered the tanker trailers. This means survival of hatchery fish will increase because the equipment will be available

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to move them during optimal time periods when predators are minimal at the release sites. It also helps survival by saving the baby salmon from having to navigate the increasingly hostile Sacramento and San Joaquin river corridors. Low from heavy water diversions, these rivers today fill with predator fish at the time of year when the baby salmon are trying to get to sea and many are lost. The two new trailers should be ready for the 2019 hatchery release schedule. ■

GGSA in Terminal Fishery discussions

Advocates pushing for a terminal fishery somewhere in the Bay or Delta met in late September in an effort to broaden stakeholder input and support. Proponents and hired researchers seek to move a group of hatchery fish to a bay or Delta net pen where they can be reared for at least several weeks to imprint them on the return site. When they return as

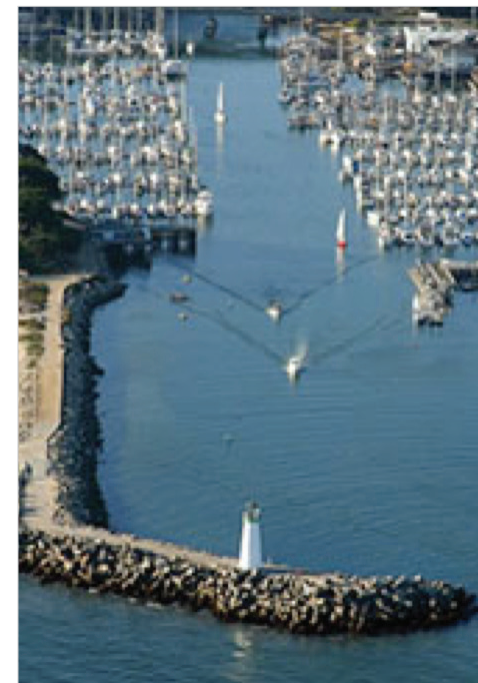
adults, fishing would be allowed and any that aren't caught might end up in a fish trap so they can't return to Central Valley Rivers. Some believe this could help natural spawning fish reestablish in the Central Valley without having hatchery fish interbreed. River guides have asked that new hatchery stocks be used so existing numbers of returning adults to the rivers won't be reduced.

In Oregon, where such terminal fisheries exist, commercial gillnetters catch fish that escape the sport fishery, which adds to their bottom line. In California, leftover fish caught in a fish trap might be sold to raise funds to perpetuate the project.

The existing ocean net pen in Half Moon Bay is similar in that fish released there tend to return there as adults, when many are caught. However, the HMB project doesn't trap surviving fish. This allows them to eventually return to the Central Valley. This may be an alternative model to pursue somewhere in the Bay or Delta. ■

Ocean net penned fish survive at three to five times higher rates of other salmon

CDFW says it has new survival data recovered from the tiny wire tags implanted in the snouts of hatchery salmon from adult salmon in 2013. The data, yet to be publicly released, apparently confirms that the ocean net pens in Half Moon Bay and Santa Cruz provide much higher survival (reportedly three to five times higher) than other hatchery fish released in the bay. This provides strong evidence of the benefit of trucking these fish to ocean net pen sites. The data also reportedly shows that fish barged from the Mokelumne hatchery enjoyed a high



Monterey Bay Salmon and Trout Project is working to keep the ocean net pen program going

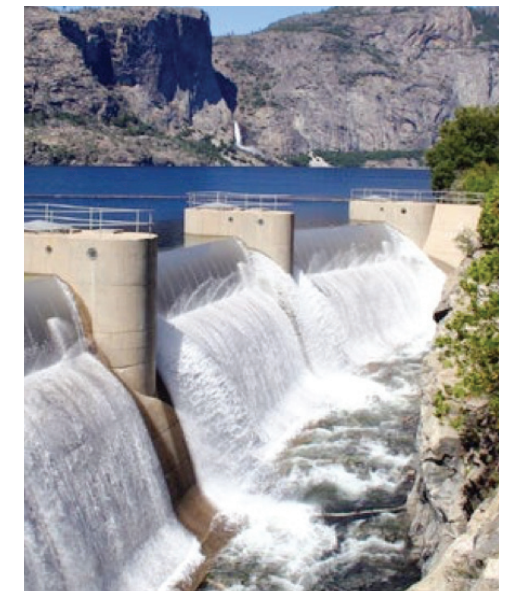
survival rate and relatively low stray rate. After this data is officially released, we'll report back.

GGSA has added its voice to those calling for the state to deliver hatchery salmon smolts to Santa Cruz and Monterey net pens, operated by the Monterey Salmon and Trout Project. Both Monterey and Santa Cruz had salmon release sites in the past which provided great fishing opportunities but ran into various bureaucratic issues in recent years. GGSA recently held a fundraising dinner in Santa Cruz and it was great to be back after being away a few years. GGSA made a contribution to the Monterey Bay Salmon and Trout project executive director Ben Harris who along with other members, attended the dinner. ■

GGSA presses on for better Central Valley river flows

After coming close to making a historic decision in August, the State Wa-

ter Resources Control Board agreed to an 11th hour request by the CA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife and CA Dept. of Water Resources to hold off on requiring a reduction of water diversions on the three main tributaries of the San Joaquin River. This came after intense pressure from agricultural water users that divert from the Merced, Tuolumne, and Stanislaus rivers. The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, which takes water from the Tuolumne River, joined the ag water districts in pleading for the status quo.



San Francisco's Public Utility Commission is leading the fight against restoring flows for salmon

GGSA has been at the state board and SFPUC arguing for a reduction in diversions to rebuild our salmon runs. GGSA has also argued the economic case that increased salmon means increased coastal and inland river economies. The state water board will meet again in November, at which time they will hopefully make the decision they delayed in August. Meanwhile, the Trump administration and their San Joaquin Congressional allies are working overtime to undermine state water law and wildlife protections so they can divert even more northern California water to their supporters who grow almonds for export in the western San Joaquin Valley. ■



With a terminal fishery, you might see something like this scene in Benicia