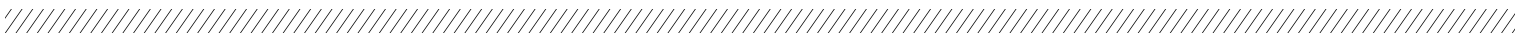




OCTOBER 2019

FISH TALES

Newsletter of the Golden State Salmon Association



WE CHANGED OUR NAME



New Golden State Salmon Association logo

Some time back we told you we'd be changing the name from Golden Gate to Golden State Salmon Association. Well now it's done as you can see in this redesigned Fish Tales. The change was done to better communicate our mission to restore the major runs throughout California's Central Valley since these are the runs that keep the sport and commercial salmon industry afloat. Under the old name, some had mistakenly believed our interest was only in salmon as they appear around the SF Bay Area. ■

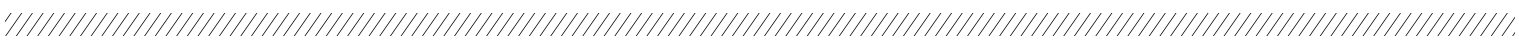


Fish showed up later than normal on the Sacramento River. Photo Vance Staplin

What Happened This Season? What's Going On In The Ocean?

Ocean salmon fishing in the season wrapping up had some unusual twists and turns. It started with record salmon catches recorded in the early commercial troll fishery for the Morro Bay area. A big chunk of the salmon runs, for reasons known only to salmon, apparently shifted south this year, with salmon being caught all the way down to the Mexican border. This southern shift was still being seen with decent catches at the end of August in Monterey Bay when the sport season closed.

Cont'd on pg. 2.



The usual big shift of fish north to the Shelter Cove/Ft. Bragg are in mid-summer didn't happen in the usual way although a good body of fish did materialize off the Sonoma/Marin coast from Pt. Reyes north in August. The expected big massing of fish off the Marin County coast in September didn't quite materialize in the usual manner either.

In the Central Valley salmon watchers waited nervously for this year's returning adult salmon to show up all through September, with better numbers starting to show by the last week of September. This seemed consistent with some theories that suggested the run was several weeks late this year. Or it may also be consistent with theories that Central Valley water operations have basically killed off the early part of the run. Fall run that spawn in November, December and even January may be producing a higher percentage of surviving natural spawned salmon these days.

Sport fishing in ocean water ends October 31, commercial fishing in ocean water ended October 15. As of early October, a few salmon were still being caught off the San Mateo coast, signaling a continuing move from the south to the Gate. ■

Where Will The Fish Return To?

Early returns show that Coleman hatchery fish were the most numerous hatchery fish in the commercial troll fishery off of Morro Bay in May and June. Coleman doesn't often come in first in fish survival or contribution to the ocean fishery but this year's good numbers of Coleman fish suggests that outmigration conditions in the spring of 2017, when these fish were one year olds, made a big difference. Recall we had near record rainfall and runoff during that spring. Just add (or manage to save and release) a little water and you get salmon.



Morro Bay saw good fishing in the early season. Photo courtesy San Luis Tribune

The Mokelumne hatchery is expecting another year of good returns. Most of these salmon, which usually enjoy higher survival rates than other hatchery fish due to good rearing and release practices, unfortunately aren't counted in the group used to forecast next season's ocean population and to set the fishing seasons. The Pacific Fisheries Management Council, which sets the ocean season, only counts fish that return to the Sacramento River basin and the Mokelumne River is not considered part of this. Theoretically we could have a million fish in the ocean but still not meet escapement requirements if the bulk of them returned to the Mokelumne or the San Joaquin River basin. Having said that, a number of Mokelumne hatchery salmon stray into the American River annually and are counted towards the minimum escapement target.

In order to satisfy the fishery managers that there are enough fish to allow us to fish, 122,000 adult salmon need to be counted in Sacramento River basin waters. GSSA's work to improve spawning and rearing conditions in the natural areas of the Sacramento basin helps assure this minimum number of returning adults is realized. Relying on hatchery fish alone greatly decreases the chances of satisfying this minimum return number.

Anecdotally, some noticed what appeared to be a much higher rate of fish caught with adipose fins during the early part of the season. More fin clipped fish seemed to be caught later in the season. Add to that some unusual water temperatures off West Coast this past summer, and additional theories sprung up. The guess is that a persistent blotch of cold water off the California coast may have attracted fish from northern waters that ran warmer than normal this year.

All of these theories will be sorted out by early next year when the California Dept. of Fish and Wildlife finishes "reconstructing" the stocks of salmon taken in the ocean fishery. Then we'll learn more about where the fish caught originated and the relative contribution of the various hatcheries to this year's ocean and inland fishery. ■



Some Mokelumne Hatchery fish typically show up at Nimbus Hatchery on the American River

Governor Newsom Vetoes Senate Bill 1

GSSA and allies went to the mat to hold onto inland salmon protections by pushing for passage of Senate Bill 1, or SB 1. After surviving steep odds and passing in the state legislature, Governor Gavin Newsom vetoed it under pressure from the state's biggest water districts. SB 1 would have preserved Central Valley salmon protections in place since 2009 that controlled Delta water diversions. A lack of such controls prior to 2009 led to the closed fishing seasons in 2008 and 2009.

Interior Secretary David Bernhardt (a former lobbyist and attorney for the Westlands Water District) is putting the final touches on new rules that roll the clock back and allow resumption of the largely unfettered Delta Diversions of the early 2000's that were very harmful to salmon. In addition to increasing the Delta diversions, Bernhardt's new rules will allow rerouting of Sacramento River to the pumps during the critical spring salmon out-migration period, less water retained by the big dams for the following year in case of drought, and warmer river temperatures in the spawning parts of the rivers. We know what to expect because we've seen this movie which turned into a nightmare in 2008 and 2009.



Interior Sec. David Bernhardt is working to transfer more northern CA salmon water to western San Joaquin Valley ag. Governor Newsom could have blunted this but took a pass.

Prior to 2009, we basically had almost no limits on Delta water diversions, the Delta Cross Channel was open and sucking baby salmon to their deaths every spring, and the

upper Sacramento River had fewer controls on how Shasta Dam was operated to keep the river livable for salmon.

We expect, first the federal government, possibly followed by the state now that SB 1 has gone down, to cross into illegal water operations by early next year. When that happens, expect legal action from friends of salmon, including GSSA. ■



About 40 kids experience salmon fishing this past summer thanks to the Roger Thomas Fund

Kids, Ladies, Agency Fishing Trips

GSSA introduced a lot of people to salmon fishing this summer. The old saying goes you won't save what you don't love and you don't love what you don't know. So we've worked to help people know about salmon.

Thanks to the Roger Thomas fund, GSSA sent two full charter boats full of kids and their chaperones fishing and both trips came back with limits of salmon. Two boatloads of ladies also fished this summer, with minimal male interference (other than the deckhands) and both of those

trips were resounding successes, with full limits reported. Photos from these trips continue to grace the cover of fishing magazines and bounce around on the internet. Captain Joey Gallia of the New Easy Rider got a load of Sacramento legislative staff, agency folks and conservation workers out for a day of fishing with GSSA that returned with near limits of quality fish. Former Congressman George Miller, a lifelong champion of salmon, got out on a GSSA trip. Congressman Jared Huffman fished with GSSA and Reel Magic out of Bodega Bay. We also hosted some key representatives of the Sacramento Valley agricultural community on an ocean salmon fishing trip.

Everyone took fresh salmon home, with enough to share with extended family, friends and neighbors. Everyone saw commercial trollers at work making a living on the water. Everyone went away with personal stories and new appreciation for this incredible fish that has lived sustainably in our ocean and inland waters, and provided food for humans, since long before settlers came to California. ■

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■ stay tuned.

checked out too. This may not be all over, partner to split the costs, they are hopefully change in federal law that requires a local ing forward with the project. Without a Dam) continues to make noises about go- Service (NMFS) works on a court-ordered and others as the National Marine Fisheries managers, salmon fishing stakeholders, meetings are occurring with fishery

GSSA joined the lawsuit because periodic flood control releases from the dam, which greatly improve the natural river habitat downstream of the dam, would become a thing of the past if the dam was raised. Meanwhile the federal Bureau of Recla- mation (which owns and operates Shasta Dam) continues to make noises about go- ing forward with the project. Without a change in federal law that requires a local partner to split the costs, they are hopefully checked out too. This may not be all over, stay tuned. ■

We've reported on the lawsuit GSSA filed with allied group against the West- lands Water District to stop the raising of Shasta Dam. In early October, after a steady stream of court losses, Westlands announced they'll cease and desist on the action that got them dragged into court.

Shasta Lawsuit, Wetlands Losing

Meetings are occurring with fishery managers, salmon fishing stakeholders, and others as the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) works on a court-ordered review of how ocean salmon fishing may or may not affect a group of salmon-eating killer whales. NMFS has until May to re- port back to court with its findings and then decide what it's going to do with the ocean

Killer Whales That Like Salmon

Flood control releases from Shasta Dam greatly replenish the river downstream. Photo courtesy Kelsey Falle



No this killer whale isn't gargling with salmon, he's eating it

We'll keep you updated. ■ We're not sure when this will roll out. the May deadline to report back to the court very likely that NMFS will be able to meet thing, anything. In addition it's not looking NMFS may feel under pressure to do some- the ocean fishery off the California coast, ently doesn't support further regulation of either way. Although the science appar- doesn't affect the health of the orcas much ocean fishing, at least here in California, So far, the best information is showing that fishery to address distressed killer whales.

GSSA 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

