



FISH • TALES

NEWSLETTER OF THE GGSA • JULY 2017



GGSA, ALLIES, SUE TO HALT CONSTRUCTION OF TWIN DELTA TUNNELS

GGSA, working with the Natural Resources Defense Council and others, filed a lawsuit on June 29 challenging permits allowing construction of the twin Delta tunnels. The suit challenges permits from the federal National Marine Fisheries and the US Fish and Wildlife Service to the state to build, but not operate, the tunnels. The permits were awarded even after the federal agencies found the tunnels will badly harm fish and wildlife, particularly salmon. The federal agencies deferred additional permits governing operation of the tunnels to a future date, which GGSA believes is illegal.

Months ago the feds found that the little water left downstream of tunnel intakes near Sacramento would basically leave a stagnant cesspool with toxic blue green algae blooms, no food for baby salmon, and inadequate flows to get them to the bay. In addition, many baby salmon would be lost after bouncing off the intake screens, either to direct injury or to the swarm of predator fish expected to call the intakes their new home.

The current way of moving water across the Delta is bad for salmon and theoretically could be improved. But the proposal to build two 40 foot diameter tunnels, big enough to divert the entire Sacramento River at most times of year, isn't the answer.

History has been remarkably consistent showing that only limiting the size of the pumps and pipes can guarantee how much water will be diverted. The current twin tunnels infrastructure has to be downsized if it's to operate without wiping out salmon. Some observers believe tunnel backers have adopted a strategy to get construction going to build momentum for the project which later can't be stopped. Federal legislation allowing the tunnel project to eventually wipe out salmon would likely be needed eventually to operate it.

Among other failings, the federal fish and wildlife agencies failed to consider effects of the tunnel diversions beyond the year 2030 but the

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project isn’t expected to be completed and online until 2031. The lawsuit also points out permits were given for a project the feds have admitted will harm fish while failing to require any mitigation that is reasonably certain to happen.

The voice of fishermen, represented by GGSA, stopping this project before it drives salmon in California’s Central Valley extinct is more important than ever now.



Proposed route of Delta diversion tunnels

SEASON UPDATE; BAD FOR COMMERCIALS, GOOD FOR SF AREA SPORT FISHERMEN

When spring winds backed down, sport salmon boats out of San Francisco Bay (and some from Half Moon Bay and Bodega Bay) found hungry salmon feeding on large balls of krill and even some anchovies. Sport and commercial boats fishing below Pigeon Point caught some fish though the bite wasn’t hot.

Better than expected catches by the sport fleet out of San Francisco Bay had some wondering if the preseason abundance forecast underestimated the number of adult salmon off the coast. Whatever the case, state fishery managers say

there’s no way to update the estimate of ocean salmon abundance beyond the currently used methods based on the prior year’s returns.

Some fishermen have floated questions for future seasons about the possibility of switching from one area to another (i.e. from the Monterey to the San Francisco cell) once fishing is underway.



2017 salmon in the box

CVPIA RESTORATION FUND GETS 80 PROPOSALS

A federal fund used to restore Central Valley salmon habitat received over 80 proposals for how to spend the roughly \$25 million annually available in 2018. GGSA is the only salmon group actively engaged with fund managers to insure funds are steered to investments that will actually benefit salmon after a history of investments largely aimed at simply studying their demise. GGSA’s engagement has led to millions now being spent to restore rearing habitat in the upper Sacramento River and Delta. These are areas rich in

food that have largely been cut off from the river through neglect or in some cases, human modification.



Juvenile winter run caught in restored upper Sacramento River side channel this past winter. Looks healthy!

BODEGA NET PEN SHELVED FOR 2017

In May the California Dept. of Fish and Wildlife reversed itself and shelved plans to release salmon in Bodega Bay after receiving complaints from neighbors that all applicable environmental rules and regulations hadn’t been fully complied with prior to the release. Although the complaints were groundless, the state released the fish elsewhere because of concerns legal action could ensue. The fish will still contribute to ocean stocks caught off the California coast in the 2019 fishery.

NEW FEDERAL SALMON THREATS

San Joaquin Valley Congressmen are hopeful they'll finally get the additional northern California salmon water they've been coveting for years. The US House of Representatives just passed a bill that calls for basically seizing the water they want. It calls for ignoring limits on pumping that protect salmon and ignoring state law on water rights and stream protections.

In addition, they've moved to place one of their own high in Trump Administration's Interior Department to oversee the Bureau of Reclamation's major

dam and canal projects in California as well as the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Their pick is a former lobbyist for the Westlands Irrigation District, the biggest irrigation district in the country. Westlands delivers Northern California water to growers in the arid western San Joaquin Valley. GGSA has issued a statement opposing the nominee and stating why his approval would be bad for salmon.

Allies in Congress and the state legislature are asking for GGSA's help in rallying public support to stave off attacks on salmon and the environment.

GGSA is supporting state senate

bill SB 49 which calls for locking in environmental protections to save salmon and the environment from recent and pending federal actions. This law has passed the state senate but its future in the Assembly and in getting the governor's signature is unclear. Strong support from pro salmon forces is needed.



Toxic blue-green algae in polluted waters in the Delta after excessive Sacramento River diversions

GGSA WORKING SACRAMENTO FOR YOU

GGSA is regularly at the state capitol working to represent salmon interests. As a result, a state resolution supporting salmon written by Senator Mike McGuire with input from GGSA was introduced June 13. The joint Senate/Assembly resolution makes salmon restoration a priority for the state.

On May 24 GGSA executive director John McManus appeared before the legislature's Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture

where he asked the state to act on a number of salmon related issues and actions.



GGSA Executive Director John McManus testifies May 24 to California Legislature's Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture. Seated to McManus's right are Russ Perry of the USGS and Michael O'Farrell of NMFS.

On June 6, a panel of salmon fishing interests, organized by GGSA, made a special

presentation to the State Water Resources Control Board requesting increase river flows for salmon and other improvements.



A panel of salmon fishermen and tribal representatives joined GGSA's John McManus in a salmon presentation to the State Water Resources Control Board June 6. From right to left, McManus, John Gebers of Noyo Tackle in Ft. Bragg, commercial troller John Koeppen, Karuk tribal leader Josh Saxton and Karuk consultant Craig Tucker.

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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

“Sacramento” cont. from page 3

GGSA asked the board to fix the hot water problem coming out of the Oroville project’s Thermalito Afterbay. GGSA executive director John McManus also pressed the board on the need for greater spring reservoir releases, which are desperately needed to get baby salmon safely out of the Central Valley to the bay and ocean. He also asked the board to act to protect Sacramento River fall run from heavy losses due to elevated river temperatures during the fall spawning season and from dewatering of salmon nests, or redds, which is common in the fall after summer irrigation deliveries back off. Currently there are no state protections from these damaging practices on the fall run.

Ft. Bragg’s Noyo Fishing Center owner John Gebers told the board about the plight of salmon fishing communities like Ft. Bragg which has seen the loss of most of its commercial and sport salmon season. The board heard from commercial troller John Koeppen about the loss of commercial salmon boats in recent years and the dim prospects for handing down a career and lifestyle based on salmon fishing. Karuk tribal representatives told the board about issues besetting the Klamath River where basically all fishing for fall run salmon is banned this year.

The salmon advocates also asked for strong board action to restore flows to Central Valley rivers. ■

LONG OVERDUE ENFORCEMENT OF DAM LAW NEEDED

The state water board discussed enforcement of Fish and Game Code 5937 which requires dam operators to maintain fisheries downstream of their dams in “good condition”. This law has been ignored, with a few exceptions where environmental groups have mounted successful court challenges (Mono Lake, San Joaquin River). California has hundreds of dams that leave fisheries downstream in very poor condition.

Options to get the State Water Control Board to insist on 5937 compliance before issuing Clean Water Act Permits needed by all dam operators are being explored. GGSA is the only fishing group working to address the issue. Success could change things radically in favor of salmon and the environment downstream from the 1400 dams in the state. ■



Dry San Joaquin River downstream of Friant Dam. State law requires dam operators to maintain downstream fish populations in good condition. Not happening here.

GGSA CHAIRMEN ROGER THOMAS HONORED BY US CONGRESS

Captain Roger Thomas of the charter boat Salty Lady received Congressional recognition for a career devoted to betterment of the salmon fishery and salmon fishermen. The award was presented by Rep. Jackie Speier at a Fishermen’s Wharf event attended by a large room full of appreciative sport and commercial salmon fishermen and many friends. The resolution, co-authored by Reps. Speier, Huffman, Thompson and Pelosi, acknowledged the work Thomas has selflessly given over decades of work with the Pacific Fisheries Management Council, GGSA, the Golden Gate Fishermen’s Association, and many other government and industry groups on behalf of salmon fishermen and women. Congress acknowledged the debt of gratitude coastal and inland fishing communities owe Captain Thomas for his work that has kept salmon fishing part of the California experience. ■



Captain Roger Thomas receives Congressional Resolution. Behind Roger, Jackie Douglas, Rep. Jackie Speier, Roni Douglas