



January 2020

FISH TALES

Newsletter of the Golden State Salmon Association

GSSA sues to block increased Federal Delta diversions

In October Interior Secretary David Bernhardt (a former lobbyist and attorney for the Westlands Water District) released new rules allowing big increases in Delta water diversions and pumping, like those of the early 2000's. The early 2000's pumping levels collapsed the salmon populations and shut the fishery down in 2008 and 2009 for the first time in history. Bernhardt's new federal water diversion and pumping rules are likely to take effect in late winter or early spring unless GSSA and allies can convince a federal judge to block them. We've gone to court to do that.

In July the National Marine Fisheries Service found that these very same diversion and pumping rules would jeopardize many species, including salmon. These findings were rejected by the Trump administration which reversed course and instead found that boosted diversions and pumping wouldn't hurt a thing.

If GSSA and allies succeed in getting an immediate court order (injunction) keeping the new boosted diversions from taking effect, it will force the federal agencies to stick to the existing protections and pumping limits while the case makes its way further through the court system. ■

Historical 2009 Salmon fishing ban

Restrictions for this season's recreation and commercial salmon fishing



April 6, 2009 San Jose Mercury news fishing closure map, we don't want this again

Coleman releases on rain events



Coleman hatchery releases are timed for fish to catch a ride on rain runoff

GSSA recognizes the strides made by managers at the Coleman Hatchery to time releases of baby salmon to coincide with storm runoff. This wasn't always the case and GSSA spent considerable energy and publicity capital in our early days bringing attention to the issue and the need to fix it. It seems those concerns have been noted and we expect much higher survival of Coleman fish that are released in this way.

Coleman hatchery fall run were the most numerous tagged salmon

taken in the early 2019 commercial catch off the Central coast. These fish enjoyed high runoff when they left the Central Valley as babies in the spring of 2019 which undoubtedly boosted their survival.

Coleman released about 78,000 late fall run salmon and 120,000 steelhead in December, just ahead of forecasted storms, timed to give those fish a boost on storm runoff. The bulk of Coleman's production, some 12 million baby fall run, won't likely be released until May of 2020. ■

GSSA Views Side Channels with federal Bureau of Reclamation

Recently GSSA's Dick Pool and John McManus and senior Bureau of Reclamation officials met to view a recently reconstructed side channel in the American River, across the river from the Nimbus hatchery. These officials oversee spending of about \$25 million per year on salmon restoration projects in the Central Valley.

The meeting was fruitful for a few reasons. First, the top BOR financial official, who handles the

funds and has to explain to higher ups in DC how the money is being spent, had never actually seen one of the side channel restorations they're paying for. Seeing it firsthand made a strong impression. Salmon did their part and put on a spawning demonstration, another first experience for the federal folk. Afterwards the GSSA team took the federal officials across the river to the Nimbus hatchery. Here the Bureau officials got to hear directly from the hatchery manager about the effects on salmon of the Bureau's operation of Folsom Dam. (redd dewatering and temperature mortality are problems on the American). They also got



Rod Wittler (white sweater) and Heather Casillas of the Bureau of Reclamation join GSSA's Dick Pool and John McManus alongside a recently restored American River side channel

to see a hatchery operation in full swing full of adult salmon ready to spawn. ■

GSSA sets up federal briefing by river guides

Word got out of the GSSA/Bureau visit to the American mentioned above and two of the top American River guides, JD Ritchey and Bob Sparre, contacted GSSA to explain another major problem on the river - the filling of deepwater holes formerly used by salmon to hold. The guides said that because the holes filled from gravel and sediment, salmon no longer held and instead shot up the river all the way to the dam, eliminating lots of downstream spawning that was once facilitated by the dispersed holes in the river bottom.

GSSA set up a meeting on the American River where the guides could meet and brief the US Bureau of Reclamation's John Hannon. Hannon is the Bureau's salmon biologist who oversees the Bureau's side channel restoration and gravel injection work.

Hannon has access to heavy



Fishing guide Bob Sparre points out river features to Bureau of Reclamation's John Hannon while guide JD Ritchey stands in back of the boat

equipment; bulldozers, excavators and the like. If anyone could authorize digging out the holes, it would probably be under his supervision. But this problem wasn't even on the Bureau's radar - until this meeting.

Mr. Hannon went away with an appreciation of the guides' views on the importance of restoring the holding holes and some good historical input from viewing the fish finder in places that were once

15 to 20 feet deep that are now six to 10 feet deep. Only time will tell if anything comes of this, but the parties were interested in what each other had to say.

Other rivers suffer similar problems including the Feather and parts of the upper Sacramento. An experiment on the American to test whether clearing and deepening a hole or two could benefit the salmon returns might lead to a new, valuable tool to restore widespread spawning. Stay tuned. ■

January 18 Sacramento ISE fundraising crab dinner

GSSA is teaming up with the ISE show to put on a crab feed at the Clubhouse at Cal Expo's racetrack across the parking lot from the main fishing hall. The fundraising dinner will be held on Saturday night, January 18. Tickets are \$85 and include a one year's membership to GSSA. This will be a great time with all the fresh crab you can eat, pasta, salad and the rest, coupled with the chance to win raffle or auction prizes of river and saltwater chartered fishing trips, fishing and outdoor gear, vacation getaways and much more. Tickets to the event can be had at goldenstatesalmon.org.



How much crab can you eat? Come find out after touring the Sacramento ISE show January 18. The ticket also gives you a one year GSSA membership

GSSA's booth at the ISE is aimed at recruiting more salmon advocates and informing the fishing public of what we do. We'll be giving away some great prizes every day and you don't have to be present to win as long as we can figure out how to track you down. Stop by and say hi if you're at the show. ■

GSSA working for salmon with a conflicted Newsom Administration

GSSA is working to get the state on the right side of conflicting positions on the future of salmon and river protections.

On the one hand the state Governor Newsom announced the state will sue to stop the federal plan to boot Delta diversion from proceedings but it's been over a month and the state still hasn't filed suit. We have strong reasons to believe the big water interests are working to keep that suit from ever being filed.

On the other hand, the state's Dept. of Water Resources is applying for a permit for its own pumping plan which is very similar to the federal one. If this sounds confused, you're right, it is.

In addition, DWR's permit application ignores the State Water Project's impacts on the Feather and the Sacramento rivers upstream of the Delta.

GSSA is working to get the state to join us in the court challenge to the new federal pumping rules and to correct its own water diversion plans. ■



So far the state is refusing to include Oroville Dam on the Feather River in the water operations permit it's writing for itself

Seats still available for Sonoma dinner February 1

Seats are still available for the Sonoma fundraising dinner on February 1. The dinner, originally scheduled for November 16, was rescheduled after a traffic accident near the venue in November closed the road and forced postponement. The location is still as originally planned at the Viansa Sonoma winery. This year's dinner is honoring Erich Pearson of Sparc Farms for his sustainable, biodynamic, water-conserving farming practices. Seats are still available and can be had at goldenstatesalmon.org ■

More dinners coming

If you can't join us at the Sacramento or Sonoma fundraising dinners, maybe you can join us Friday April 3 at the annual Santa Rosa dinner or in San Francisco later in the spring. ■

**MAKE A TAX-
DEDUCTIBLE
DONATION TO
SUPPORT MORE
SALMON!**

**TO DONATE, PLEASE CALL
(855) 251-4472 or visit
goldenstatesalmon.org**



**GOLDEN STATE
SALMON
ASSOCIATION**

2019 Returns

It may be hard for some to believe but preliminary info suggests the Central Valley saw the best returns in years in 2019. As of early January, it's looking like more than 160,000 adult salmon returned to spawn which would satisfy the target set by the National Marine Fisheries Service for the season. Early reports suggest the number of two-year-old returning fish wasn't high, which will affect the calculation of adult fish forecast to be in the ocean when the 2020 season opens.

The strong 2019 returns came in a year when experienced river guides reported poor fishing in much of the Sacramento Basin after an early push on the Feather River. This might be due to many of the fish returning considerably later

than usual.

The returns were expected due to the heavy rain, snow and runoff experienced during the wet winter/spring of 2016/2017. This boosted survival of baby salmon born in late 2016 that out migrated from the Central Valley to the ocean in the spring of 2017. The improved returns also agreed with population estimates from the early spring followed by strong catches in the commercial fishery off the Central Coast in May and June.

With reduced rain and snow in early 2018, survival likely took a dip for salmon born in the fall of 2017 which are scheduled to be targeted in the upcoming 2020 fishery. This probably explains the less than stellar number of two-year-olds that returned in 2019.

Because we once again got good rain and snow in 2019, we should see another strong fishery in 2021. We're hoping for good rain and snow again this year and stopping the big planned federal boost in Delta water diversions and pumping will be key to protecting the salmon runs in years beyond 2021. ■



*How many salmon can you count in this shot?
Taken at the Nimbus hatchery on the American
River in December*

GSSA Founding Members

Chris Arcoleo, John Atkinson, Raymond Bonneau, Dennis Burkell, Hugh Chatham, Coastside Fishing Club, Joseph Conte, Crab Boat Owners Association, Tom Creedon, Ron Davis, Jim DeMartini, Joe Donatini, Jacky Douglas, Chris Duba, Kerry Egan, Ken Elie, Patrick Elie, Tim Elie, 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 Weininger, Jay Yokomizo, David Zeff, Thomas Zizzo

