



October 2020

FISH TALES

Newsletter of the Golden State Salmon Association

Season Update, what do we know about returns, if anything?

Fishery managers planned the 2020 season so that it would still leave over 140,000 salmon to return to the Sacramento Basin after fishing was over. At the rate things are going, it's not clear this target will be met although fish are still returning and counting is far from over.

River guides continue to report few fish in Sacramento. The USFWS says 700 winter run have returned to Battle Creek, a place where they haven't existed in the last 50 years, until a few years ago when they were reintroduced. There's potentially lots of good spawning and rearing habitat in Battle Creek, upstream from the Coleman hatchery except a few rockslides and other barriers have to be taken care of. We understand there's a contract to clear out the landslides and we hope it gets done soon.

The Coleman hatchery is open and there is cautious optimism they'll

GSSA picks up two new board members

GSSA recently added two Sacramento veterans with expertise in water policy, conservation and legal issues to our board of directors. Kim Delfino joins the board after recently leaving the leading role at Defenders of



One of the 700 adult winter run salmon that returned to Battle Creek this year

hit their egg take production this year although that says little about natural spawning in the eight miles of Battle Creek downstream of the hatchery. Battle Creek historically accounts for about 25 percent of all fall run returning salmon to the Sacramento Basin annually. If that holds true this year, many more will need to show up if we're to meet management targets.

Nimbus and Moke hatcheries will

Wildlife's Sacramento office where she's worked closely with governors and the state legislature. Kim has nearly thirty years of experience in public and private land use planning and policy, species conservation, and water policy,

open soon.

The Bureau of Reclamation closed the Delta Cross Channel gates for five days in late October to help get Mokelumne hatchery fish back to the hatchery. The closure was timed to coincide with a pulse flow of Moke River water released to attract Moke fish back to the hatchery. ■

including serving on the California Water Commission from 2010-2015.

She is currently an independent consultant providing policy and advocacy expertise on protecting

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GSSA Board Member Kim Delfino

and restoring our lands, water, and wildlife for future generations.

Kim also serves on the boards of the Water Education Foundation; Sustainable Conservation; and the

American Bar Association Section of Environment, Energy and Resources Trends.

Brandon Dawson is the second new board member. Brandon works as a Policy Advocate for Sierra Club California where he develops and advocates for protective laws and policies affecting California's water ecosystems, drinking water, natural lands, parks, and wildlife. Prior to joining Sierra Club, Brandon worked in the U.S. DOJ's Environment and Natural Resource Division on natural resource and conservation counseling and litigation.



Brandon Dawson out on the salt

Both are passionate about the natural world and will help GSSA in our mission to protect those parts needed to sustain salmon in California. We're lucky to get them! ■

GSSA Salmon Rebuilding Plan Published, Distributed

We've recently updated the salmon plan and posted it to our website and distributed to various stakeholders and decision makers.

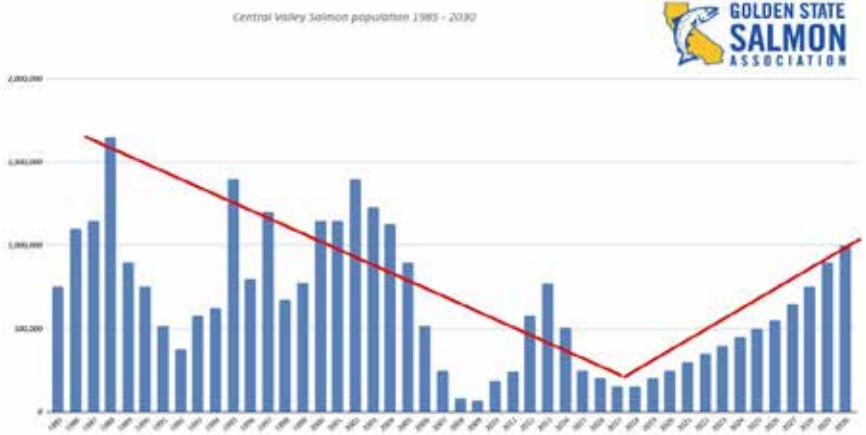
GSSA Science Committee chair (and secretary) Dick Pool calculates that if the 12 highlighted projects are completed, the ocean salmon abundance will increase from the current average of 474,000 fish to over 1 million fish. With that, the future of these fish, the fishing industry and consumers will be more secure.

If fully implemented these improvements should:

- Increase the number of juveniles entering the Delta by 5.1 million fish that currently do not survive by increasing the Sacramento River flows in the early months.
- Add 30 miles of new tributary wild spawning and rearing area in the Feather River and in Battle Creek for the fall, late fall and spring runs, creating up to 20 million new fry annually.

- Increase the survival of juveniles in the Delta by 2.1 million fish by completing the notching of the Fremont weir and opening the migration routes through the Yolo Bypass.

- Increase the survival of the Central Valley hatchery fall-run fish by 2.3 million juveniles by trucking them around the predation and Delta loss areas. ■



Here's what salmon numbers should look like if the GSSA Salmon Rebuilding Plan is implemented in full

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GSSA makes progress with state on Feather River fix

In August GSSA participated in the first meeting of the Feather River Technical Advisory Group which is tasked with finalizing a fix for the thermal pollution problem destroying miles of spawning habitat. The TAG was convened by the CA Dept. of Water Resources at the request of GSSA in order to break a 13 year logjam and address the problem. So far DWR seems genuinely engaged. We owe special thanks to State Senator Mike McGuire and his fisheries staffer Tom Weseloh for bringing state Senate oversight to DWR which succeeded in getting this issue finally addressed. We



This slide is from a recent DWR presentation showing the conceptual canal that would convey cold water back to the Feather River, opening 15 miles to spawning

are a long ways from building a connector canal or pipe linking the Thermalito Forebay to the

high flow channel of the Feather River but at least we've started the process. ■

Anderson River Park, side channel work on track

Sometimes it's nice to see a project GSSA had a hand in being completed. What you see here is the restoration of side channels off the upper Sacramento River near Anderson being dug out and restored. They'll serve as rearing habitat for baby salmon looking for places with bugs to eat and places to hide from bigger fish. GSSA successfully interceded with federal authorities earlier this year to keep



the funding for this project from being cut.

GSSA sends letter supporting Oroville Wildlife Area Unit A restoration

GSSA recently sent a letter to DWR supporting a plan to restore more floodplain in the Oroville Wildlife Area, immediately upstream of the Thermalito outlet. DWR manages the lands in question downstream of the Oroville Dam.

As reported above, GSSA is reviewing ways to augment a

Thermalito fix with a new cold water canal moving water from the upper part of the Thermalito complex to the Thermalito outlet. Instead of a straight canal, the last mile or so of conveyance could flow through newly carved spawning or rearing channels cut into what's called Unit A on the west side of the river. ■

Klamath Dam Removal sign on letter

GSSA recently joined allies in a letter supporting removal of four Klamath River dams. The letter urges PacifiCorp, the electric utility that owns and operates the dams, to engage quickly to get the dam removal process back on track.

PacifiCorp had earlier agreed to remove the dams rather than pay millions to modifying them to make them more salmon friendly. A federal agency recently ordered PacifiCorp to be part of a dam decommissioning group formed to oversee the project, a move PacifiCorp is now resisting. ■



Playing in the mud on a mega level. That's what big floodplain restoration looks like. Baby salmon will rear on this when it floods

Upper Sac spawning

It appears we may have avoided a massive fish kill in the upper Sacramento Basin this year, in part due to wildfire smoke blocking the sun for weeks and keeping temperatures a few degrees cooler.

Federal and state wildlife agencies still reported loss of some winter run redds in the upper Sacramento due to reduced water releases from Lake Shasta. Expected warming of water in early November could still kill some of the fall run eggs

in the upper Sacramento. Federal water managers and rice growers are shifting fall water releases to minimize dewatering of fall run redds. We're grateful for that and hope it works. ■

Legal updates

GSSA has seen several updates in legal cases we're involved in. All are cases brought with other conservation and fishing groups. In our challenge to the state's weak protections for species near the state pumps in the Delta, a state judge has decided the case will be heard in Sacramento. This is much better than having it heard in Fresno, the preferred legal home of the big San Joaquin Valley water user groups who are counter suing the state, claiming the pumping

rules aren't weak enough.

The legal challenge to the salmon-killing provisions in the federal Delta pumping rules is moving slowly as the federal government shares documents with all parties. It's common for disputes to arise over government withholding of documents and these will be the early issues the court will have to sort through.

Our attorneys also filed a friend of the court brief in a case where the Trump administration is attacking the state's new Delta pumping rules. The state is arguing that the

federal water projects must comply with the California Endangered Species Act, something the feds dispute. We agree with the state on this issue.

Our legal challenge to the Federal Food and Drug Administration approving creation of a mutant giant farmed salmon will hopefully soon get an answer from the court. At a recent hearing, our attorneys explained the illegality of the federal choice to ignore the environmental damage this genetic mutant poses to the environment. ■

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