



March 25, 2021

Chuck Bonham  
Department of Fish and Wildlife  
1416 9<sup>th</sup> Street, 12<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: **Emergency Action in Response to 2021 Salmon Season**

Dear Chuck,

We represent California's diverse salmon fishing industry, including commercial and recreational fishing and related businesses. We are writing to request that you take urgent action to maximize Central Valley hatchery survival in response to the highly restricted 2021 salmon season and developing drought conditions. Fortunately, this can be done quickly and hopefully fairly easily, by moving salmon scheduled for in-basin releases at Feather River and Nimbus to the Bay and using release points west of the current Vallejo sites. We would also support an experimental night time release into deep waters adjacent to the Conoco Phillips facility on the outgoing tide.

As you know, although the 2021 season has not yet been finalized, it is clear that the sport salmon season will be cut by around 40 percent and the commercial season will likely be cut by more than 50 percent. These severe restrictions are being driven by low adult population estimates for both Klamath and Central Valley stocks.

In addition to the low count of adults in the ocean, we face dangerous conditions in the rivers this year as a result of drought and poor water management. Out migrating juvenile salmon this spring are likely to encounter dangerously warm water temperatures, low turbidity, and a general lack of spring outflow. Spawning adults in the fall are likely to encounter warm water both in the migratory corridor and on the spawning beds. The 2021 season is a sign of what we could see in the next few years unless additional actions are taken by the Department to maximize survival of this year's hatchery juveniles.

We have seen what this combination of events can lead to – including the disastrous fish kills in 2014-2015 and the complete closure of salmon fisheries in 2008-2009. Our salmon runs and fisheries have not yet recovered from those disasters. We cannot afford another similar

disaster over the next few years. On top of all of this are the losses we experienced last year due to thiamine deficiency. Although this can be (and was) addressed in hatcheries, naturally spawned salmon had no such aid and we could see a dip in returning adults next year as a result.

Several years of data, including from Ft. Baker and ocean releases, demonstrate that hatchery juvenile survival is dramatically higher at release sites west of the current Vallejo release sites. We understand that additional permits would not be required to move fish releases further to the west since the existing CEQA permit covers western Bay waters. That's fortunate, because, as you know, hatchery releases have already begun and will continue over the next several months. Given the tight schedule, immediate action is required. A number of promising release sites west of Vallejo have been identified and GSSA is happy to share this information with Department personnel. CDFW personnel have proven that releases at Ft. Baker, Santa Cruz and Monterey can be done without net pens when certain conditions are met.

It is not an exaggeration to say that the future of our industry lies in your hands, as well as in those of the governor. Our businesses, communities and jobs need your help.

The Golden State Salmon Association will be in touch with you to set up a call with a group of us to discuss this request. We appreciate your consideration of this request and any steps you and your team can take to help keep fishing families whole. Thank you.

Sincerely,



John McManus  
Golden State Salmon Association



Marc Gorelnik  
Coastside Fishing Club



Mike Conroy  
Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations  
Institute for Fisheries Resources