



April 2021

FISH TALES

Newsletter of the Golden State Salmon Association

After GSSA request, CDFW, Feds, to truck remaining hatchery fish to west Bay

The California Dept of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) is trucking all of its hatchery baby salmon to release sites in SF Bay this year to minimize drought-related losses. This development follows months of requests and meetings between CDFW and GSSA, which urged the state to act. The US Fish and Wildlife Service will also truck roughly 900,000 baby salmon from the Coleman Hatchery near Redding to the west Bay.

GSSA urged CDFW to truck for months to help rebuild depressed salmon numbers and to avoid lethal drought condition. Although it won't help this year's restricted season, the trucking should produce a large number of 20" jacks by next year and a potentially very good season in 2023. This will be especially valuable considering water temperature modeling is now showing that water temperatures will likely be lethal for spawning salmon by fall.



GSSA president John McManus (hat on) checks out a possible west Bay release site with CDFW hatchery managers Anna Kasler (Feather River Hatchery) and Gary Novak (Nimbus hatchery)

Also, after GSSA's request, the Department is using some new Bay release sites west of the regular releases at Mare Island/Vallejo. West Bay release sites basically double the number of hatchery fish that survive to adulthood and provides equivalent benefits of building several new hatcheries. To cement the point, GSSA presented data clearly documenting big productivity gains from fish released from the Coastside Fishing Club's Half Moon Bay net pens and from a release site at Ft. Baker in Sausalito under the north tower of the Golden Gate Bridge, compared to other sites.

Prior to CDFW's decision, GSSA staff did advance scouting, initiated and established contacts with local land owners, assembled maps and photos, and shared it all with CDFW.

The Department will now truck one million Feather River fall run salmon that would normally be dumped into the Feather River. They will also truck about 2.4 million Nimbus hatchery fish originally scheduled for release at the hatchery. Together with the Coleman fish, these will add another four million plus fish that will contribute significantly to the fishery in the next few years. ■

Another hot water threat as bad as 2014, GSSA organizes response to State Water Board



Low water in Lake Oroville, atop the Feather River

The National Marine Fisheries Service is warning that under business as usual water diversions in the Sacramento Valley this year, we should expect to see 89 percent

of the winter run eggs killed by hot water. A similar percentage of fall run salmon are also likely to see their eggs die. What little water is behind Shasta Dam is currently

being released downstream for ag use. In response, GSSA organized a large number of public commenters at a recent meeting of the State Water Resources Control Board. GSSA members and supporters asked the State Water Board to intervene to avoid killing the winter and fall run salmon, as happened in 2014 and 2015 when more than 90 percent of each run was killed by hot water. We've asked the water board to work with major ag diverters to reduce diversions and avoid a salmon massacre. The State Board took the requests under advisement but made no commitments. ■

Hatcheries, a needed refuge

Recent catch and return data shows that we are increasingly relying on hatcheries to provide conditions needed to keep salmon alive. The vast majority of the salmon caught in the ocean in 2020 were hatchery fish. Hatcheries can keep water temperatures under 56 degrees, the lethal threshold for incubating eggs. As more data comes in, we expect to see that fish released at Coastside Fishing Club's Half Moon Bay net pen, and at Ft. Baker in Sausalito, contributed an outsize part of the 2020 ocean catch.

In the last big drought of 2012 through 2016, many of the naturally spawned salmon were wiped out throughout the Sacramento Basin. Since then, water managers have not fostered the conditions needed to recover natural spawning salmon, a scenario salmon will face again this year.



Hatcheries can generally control water temperatures and other variables

The State Water Resources Control Board made an attempt to rectify the problem in 2018, starting with an order to the major diverters of rivers in the San Joaquin Valley to reduce diversions. Then governor-elect Gavin Newsom halted implementation of the order and allowed the major water districts to instead engage in endless negotiations which has produced a stalemate, allowing business as usual to continue. ■

Guys vs Girls Sausalito salmon fishing showdown coming this July!

With barbless hooks, finesse can mean the difference between landing that big one or not. Who's got more finesse, the guys or the girls?

GSSA decided to do some research on the question above. We've chartered four of Sausalito best boats on July 30 for a day of friendly competition pitting guys against gals to see who can catch the biggest and most salmon. We've got 60 spots total, half for the guys, half for the gals, on the Salty Lady, New Rayann, Hog Heaven, and the Outer Limits. Keep an eye on our weekly auctions to get a ticket.

**For more info, go to:
goldenstatesalmon.org**

GSSA pilot project with Coleman Hatchery releases fish downstream, boosts survival



Staff from Coleman Hatchery release fish 80 miles

180,000 baby salmon trucked by the Coleman National Fish Hatchery in the upper Sacramento Basin to a release site about 80 miles downstream survived at a much higher rate than second control group of 180,000 released at the hatchery. The releases are part of a three year experiment involving GSSA and the US Fish and Wildlife Service to test if survival of Coleman fish can

be boosted in low water years by releasing them downstream, while still getting the fish to return as adults to the upper Sacramento River Basin.

A subset (300 each) of each group was fitted with short-lived acoustic tags that triggered detections in receivers embedded at various locations in the Sacramento River and Delta. This allowed an almost instant way to compare the

progress of both groups of fish as they traveled down the river.

The downstream release group reached the City of Sacramento at about 16 times the number of the upstream group. Perhaps more telling, 4.6 percent of the salmon released downstream reached Benicia, whereas none of the upstream release group made it that far. Zero.

In addition to the acoustic tags, all of the fish have coded wire tags that can be retrieved years later when they return as adults to spawn. GSSA is very appreciative of the efforts of Norcal Guides (providing boats and captains), the USFWS, the Bureau of Reclamation (which provided the expensive acoustic tags) and everyone else involved, and looks forward to the results. ■

Restricted ocean fishing season opens

Sport salmon anglers have been fishing south of Pigeon Point in an area extending to the Mexican border, since April 3. Many have been pleasantly surprised by relatively good, if spotty, fishing. This includes a few party and private boats from Half Moon Bay, running south to the boundary line. Commercial fishing opens in these same waters on May 1.

Highly restricted seasons were adopted by the Pacific Fisheries Management Council (PFMC) at its April meeting. The commercial troll season has been slashed to about 40 percent of a regular season. Sport fishing above Pigeon Point will be about half a regular season, once it opens on June

26. In river fishing, scheduled to open on July 16, will see a regular season.

Low numbers of both Sacramento and Klamath River salmon are the reason for the season restrictions. In spite of that, with some decent salmon schools in the ocean, the concern is turning to what's to become of them when they return to the Central Valley in the fall to spawn. Forecast models show that most or all of this year's salmon will face hot water that's likely to kill their eggs. ■



Enthusiasm south of Pigeon Pt. has been high since the sport season opened

GSSA online ad campaign aimed at SFPUC having an impact

GSSA and allies' online ad campaign to educate the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission and City residents

Continued on page 4

**Bid on our auction items
to help support salmon!**

www.goldenstatesalmon.org

Continued from page 3



Example of one of the Facebook ads being run

about the damage being done to salmon runs in the Tuolumne River is bearing fruit. The hope is that the campaign, by a coalition started by GSSA, called SF4Water, will result in the SFPUC acting more environmentally responsible.

San Francisco, and the other two water agencies that also divert the Tuolumne River, are refusing to reduce diversions in spite of the state telling them more water needs to be left in the river to rebuild salmon runs and the health of the

Delta to the Bay.

A key aim early goal of the campaign was to get SF's mayor to nominate an outsider to come in and clean house at the SFPUC. The mayor nominated SF's city attorney, who is an outsider to the SFPUC but maybe not outside enough. Time will tell.

As recently as the mid 1980's the Tuolumne still had 40,000 salmon returning to it. Last year it saw about 1,000. ■

Biden administration tells court it will reinstate a key Delta salmon protection

The Biden administration said it will abide by a Delta pumping rule put in place in 2009, at least for this year. This limits pumping as measured by how fast a part of the San Joaquin River flows backwards to the pumps. The maximum allowed under the 2009

rule is negative 5,000 cubic feet per second of reverse flow during critical spring months when baby salmon are trying to get from the Central Valley to the ocean. The Trump administration abandoned this pumping limit and allowed water diversions at much higher rates.

The announcement comes as part of the court challenge GSSA and allies brought to get the Trump set of lax rules tossed out. This good news from the Biden administration isn't the end of the story, we're still in court. But at least we've gotten a good signal that we're being heard. ■

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, Eric Holthouse, 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

