



January 2022

FISH TALES

Newsletter of the Golden State Salmon Association

Preliminary fall run returns are a mixed message

Unofficial information suggests that the number of fall run salmon that returned to the Sacramento Basin fell short of the 122,000 fish, managers want to see. We've heard early reports that the number might come in at about 110,000 but this could change between now and early March when the numbers will be made public. The returns correspond with a greater than expected commercial harvest and reports of the ocean sport fishery also taking more than expected. The commercial harvest was calculated using a new model that assigned greater efficiency to

It was raining and snowing...

...and you know that can't be bad, except maybe for roads. Although it was wet and snowy in late October and throughout December, the gigantic reservoirs behind the Sierra dams can probably hold all of that water they'll get in the spring when the snow melts, and then some. Of course this depends on how wet

Continued on page 2



The ocean salmon catch in 2021 exceeded early season expectations

the fleet that was first implemented this past season. The greater than expected ocean harvest will likely affect the modeling used to set the 2022 seasons. The numbers

also indicate that the pre-season ocean salmon abundance forecast of 271,000 salmon was likely considerably lower than what was really out in the ocean. ■



Heavy rains were bad for roads but good for everything else

Continued from page 1

and snowy things are in the next several months. It's quite possible that come spring and summer, reservoir managers will cling to every drop for their big customers

downstream at the expense of salmon and the health of the Delta. If this happens, the state may truck all of the hatchery salmon to the bay again, acknowledging that our Central Valley rivers are still too

low and hostile to salmon. This would include the additional 2.25 million hatchery salmon being produced this year at the Feather River and Nimbus hatcheries to mitigate for recent drought losses. ■

Getting salmon back above dams

This past year showed that salmon habitat below the big Central Valley dams can overheat and leave spawning salmon nowhere to go. However, there is still good salmon habitat above the dams. Although the dams lack fish ladders, salmon could be trapped and trucked back and forth over the dams, which is done in Oregon and Washington. CDFW director Chuck Bonham talked about the need to seriously consider this when he addressed a State Legislative hearing last July.

Rivers with the most potential include the McCloud, upstream of Shasta Dam, parts of the Feather, upstream of Oroville Dam, parts of the north and middle forks of the Yuba, upstream of Englebright dam, Butte Creek, and elsewhere.

Trapping and hauling salmon above the big dams assumes out migrating conditions downstream of the dams remain favorable to salmon during the crucial spring out migration period, which is not always the case.

GSSA can see at least two possible benefits to pushing to get a trap and haul program going. The



High in the Sierras, above dams, there is still good salmon habitat that could help salmon survive climate change. Photo, North Fork, Feather River

obvious one is salmon would be able to access cold, clean water above some of these dams that will help them (and us) now and long into the future even with climate change and water management decisions downstream. The second benefit is this would more fairly share the cost to water managers who chose to ignore the needs of salmon. Big water users are currently paying to keep

the hatcheries going but have no penalty when their dam operations overheat rivers or dewater redds, both deadly to salmon.

Making them pay to save the salmon native to the rivers they're damming seems like a fair deal. GSSA is discussing these issues with agency experts. We expect to keep pushing this in the coming year to at least experiment with a trap and haul program. ■

Renew Your Membership

If you haven't done so already, please consider renewing your membership at \$35 for the coming year. We have a lot of work ahead and can't do it without member support to keep the lights on and

the staff working. If you feel like providing more support, check out the higher membership categories available.

There's a lot of work unfinished and a lot of work ahead. Thanks

for your support, as always. You can renew online or mail a check to:

PO Box 320096
San Francisco, CA

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

GSSA and allies ask court to stop salmon carnage

On December 16 attorneys representing GSSA and allies filed a motion with a federal court seeking a preliminary injunction requiring better protections for salmon and other wildlife ASAP. We're asking the court to require the bare minimum scientifically credible protections for salmon next year, after first ensuring water deliveries for human health and safety.

We're asking the court to order the feds to:

- Restore prior constraints on the Delta pumps
- Implement better upper river water temperature management plans so salmon eggs don't get cooked in the late summer and fall. This may require them to reduce releases from Lake Shasta in the spring to insure there's enough water later to avoid killing incubating salmon eggs.
- Reduce deliveries to ag before being allowed to violate delta

salinity standards. The rules require upstream reservoir releases to push saltwater out of the Delta to the Bay. This also greatly aids the outmigration of baby salmon in the spring. Last year the federal water managers failed to provide adequate water to hold the salt back and have signaled they're considering doing it again this year.

The motion is set for a court hearing in early February and a decision is expected shortly after. ■

Upper Sacramento River overheated, salmon eggs died



The upper Sacramento salmon spawning beds exceeded the 55 degrees needed to hatch salmon eggs from August through November, killing the vast majority of natural spawn

CDFW estimates that only 2.6 percent of the winter run eggs that might have been spawned and hatched in 2021 resulted in baby salmon reaching Red Bluff Diversion Dam. CDFW estimates that less than 0.4% of those eggs produced baby salmon that survive down to the delta. Even fewer will survive as far out to the ocean, and fewer will become adults and return. This will result in a low number of winter run in the ocean in 2024 which will likely constrain

ocean fishing below Pt. Arena. Both Coleman and Livingston Stone hatcheries will release baby winter run in early 2022 which will hopefully help offset some of the 2021 losses and 2024 constraints.

High water temps in the upper Sacramento River all through October and November undoubtedly killed most fall run eggs laid in the river during those months.

In July GSSA asked the State Legislature's Joint Committee on

Fisheries and Aquaculture to get an accounting from CDFW about 2021 fall run losses from lethal river temperatures. This won't likely come for a few more months.

The losses were enabled by the water operation rules established by the Trump administration. Although the Biden Administration has agreed to rewrite the Trump rules, it hasn't committed to interim steps to avoid this problem, which is why GSSA and our allies are asking a court to step in, reported on elsewhere in this edition. ■

Santa Rosa Dinner update

GOLDEN STATE SALMON ASSOCIATION
SUPPORT LOCAL SALMON
10th Annual SANTA ROSA DINNER
Door & Raffle Prizes
Win top of the line fishing gear
Great food & Drinks
Hosted Bar Event Starts at 6:00pm
\$100 Per Ticket
\$900 - Table of 10
\$750 - Table 8
Includes Raffle Tickets
Buy your tickets early... they will sell out
For more information, email cat@goldenstatesalmon.org
or to purchase tickets, visit us on the web at www.goldenstatesalmon.org

After shooting for an April 1 Santa Rosa dinner, we're currently expecting to postpone for about a month due to covid uncertainties and Sonoma County restrictions. We are also contemplating moving to an outdoor location. Details to follow after we see what things are looking like in the next month or two.

Dam building “More Water Now” initiative, GSSA joins 16 other groups in public warning:

GSSA joined 16 other groups in a letter warning the public about a looming ballot initiative that may soon be gathering qualifying signatures. The initiative comes from the ever-thirsty water districts in the San Joaquin Valley and proposes to raid the state general fund to build the dams, canals, pipes, and pumps needed to seize the last water sources on the far NW coast and the Sacramento Basin to divert to the San Joaquin Valley. These people already dammed the San Joaquin River and redirected its flow backwards, south to Bakersfield. They’ve already diverted major portions of the Sacramento River in most years to produce almonds while killing salmon. They’ve over-tapped their own aquifers and caused their part



The same people who did this to the Fresno River now want to do it to a few more CA rivers

of the state to cave in as the ground beneath them collapses. Now they want more.

As of mid-January it was unclear if supporters will get the funds needed to gather the signatures to put this on the ballot and run a campaign. An email from the campaign included this,

“Nonetheless, the campaign finds itself in the inexplicable position of having a solution everyone wants, but unable so far to raise the funds to qualify it for the ballot.” Music to our ears, and by the way, it’s not a solution that everyone wants. Here’s to hoping Californians won’t go for it. ■

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 Milcoch, 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

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