



October 2021

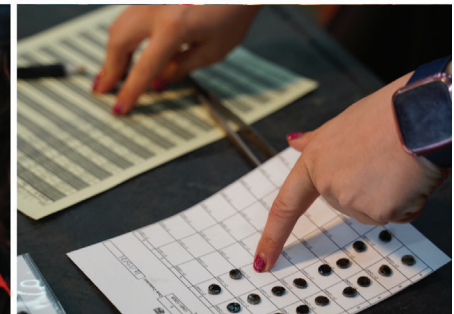
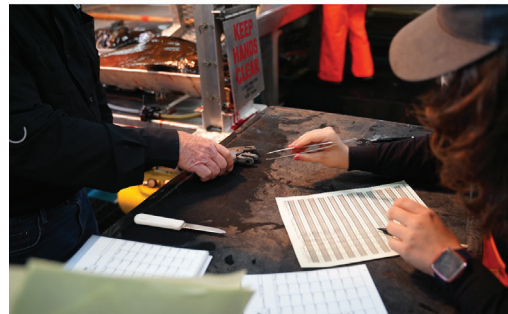
FISH TALES

Newsletter of the Golden State Salmon Association

Coleman Hatchery takes giant step to restore Sac River salmon

After a request from GSSA, and several meetings with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) regional director Paul Souza and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) regional administrator Barry Thom, the FWS has started a program to put two million more fall run salmon into the upper Sacramento Basin. The FWS Coleman Hatchery will hatch out the additional two million baby salmon this fall and winter and release them early next year into the upper Sacramento River. This will restart what many considered a very successful program that added millions of fish to the river until it was discontinued in the 1990's. It will also likely go a long ways towards compensating for losses caused by the drought. Those who fish in the Sacramento River should see many of these fish return as adults in 2024.

The fish will be too small at the time of their release to be clipped and tagged with conventional coded wire tags so a novel technology is being used to track



GSSA president John McManus helps take tissue samples for new project to seed two million additional fry salmon in upper Sacramento River. Samples get unique identifications prior to DNA analysis.

them. Tissue samples are being taken from adult parent salmon which will be compared to tissue taken three years from now when the offspring return as adults. On a recent trip to Coleman hatchery GSSA helped take some of these tissue samples.

This parent based, or DNA tagging, advances the use of this technology in California salmon hatcheries. GSSA hopes that success of this part of the program could lead to it eventually being more widely employed at other fall run hatcheries. This could allow much earlier release of hatchery salmon at times in the winter

when high flows are present in the Sacramento River, boosting survival.

Current tagging requires the baby salmon to reach at least three to four inches before they can be mass tagged in coded wire tagging machines. This in turn requires most hatchery managers to rear the salmon at least into late March, if not April, to achieve the needed size. In many years this is too late to capitalize on high winter and spring flows in the river, needed to safely deliver the baby salmon past predators and to the Delta, Bay and ocean.

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A key question researchers hope to answer is what level of survival these salmon will experience and

where they return to as adults. GSSA is grateful to the USFWS and Coleman Hatchery for doing

this work, which will add many more fish to our drought stressed rivers. ■

Feds to rewrite damaging Trump salmon water rules following GSSA legal challenge

As a result of lawsuits brought by GSSA and others, the Biden administration has agreed to withdraw and rewrite environmentally damaging water operation rules forced on Californians during the Trump administration. As always, the devil will be in the details and just how major a rewrite, remains to be seen.

The feds asked GSSA and allies to agree to stay our case during the rewrite. GSSA's attorneys asked the feds to implement interim protections similar to those in place before the Trump rules, plus water temperature protections considered by the feds in 2017, but never implemented. The feds declined that request so GSSA's attorneys

have asked the court to allow the case to proceed. We expect a ruling soon.

GSSA is grateful to our pro bono attorneys at the Altshuler Berzon lawfirm in San Francisco and our allies in the case which include the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations, Defenders of Wildlife, and The Bay Institute.

In the meantime, GSSA has met with NOAA Fisheries Assistant Administrator Janet Coit, Western Regional Administrator Barry Thom, and other federal fishery officials to discuss possible future options and paths. There seems to be a shared recognition that there

simply isn't enough water in the Central Valley in some years, like this one, to supply all the contracts the Bureau of Reclamation and others have and to keep native fish species healthy. The Bureau of Reclamation, until recently, insisted the law didn't allow it to alter water delivery contracts to accommodate the ailing fisheries, in spite of the federal Endangered Species Act. That may be changing now.

GSSA's meeting with the top NOAA Fisheries officials was in part to advocate for NMFS's retaking the central role in the work ahead rewriting the biological opinion. Current signs suggest NMFS intends to do this, which gives us hope. ■

Other Central Valley hatcheries to increase production in response to drought

In addition to the two million extra salmon Coleman Hatchery will produce and release in the spring of 2022, CDFW has announced that the Feather River hatchery will

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Millions of extra salmon will be produced this year for release in 2022

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produce an extra 1.75 million fish to push back against drought losses. CDFW says the extra Feather River fish will be studied to evaluate different release sites in and around the Bay. This follows a campaign by GSSA to get CDFW to move San Pablo Bay releases to new SF

GSSA seeks salmon help in meeting with US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi

GSSA board chair Randy Repass and president John McManus recently met US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi to talk salmon issues. The GSSA members updated the Speaker on the poor state of salmon in California, which Rep. Pelosi acknowledged. She expressed special concern over the environmental damage caused by climate change, including to

Bay release site in 2021 because of the 200 percent survival boost they get from doing so.

The Nimbus hatchery on the American River will produce an extra 500,000 baby salmon, which will be trucked to the Bay

for release along with the rest of Nimbus Hatchery's production.

If all goes well, expect 2024 to be a decent fishing season, even though natural spawned fish will unfortunately likely be largely absent. ■



Speaker of the US House of Representatives, Rep. Nancy Pelosi, met with GSSA board chair Randy Repass (right) and GSSA president John McManus (2nd to right)

California salmon. She told the GSSA members that Rep. Jared Huffman, also in attendance, is the key official to work with on water issues and expressed her trust in his leadership.

In later remarks to group of politically active bay area residents, Pelosi mentioned the plight of salmon and acknowledged GSSA's work to improve salmon runs. ■

Sacramento River overheated, killing salmon spawn

The National Marine Fisheries Service forecast this would happen. A CDFW scientists warned in July that most or all winter run eggs would likely be lost due to hot water coming out of Shasta Dam. Some water users have published opinion pieces denying or trying to disavow it, but the data are coming in, and they show the river is hot. Water coming out of Shasta Dam now is 62 degrees, which is hot enough to kill all incubating salmon

eggs. Fall run spawning historically peaks in mid-October which means that in addition to wiping out winter run salmon, the majority of fall run spawn is likely to be killed by the hot water. GSSA and allies worked last spring with state water regulators to try to avoid this outcome but our pleas fell on deaf ears, or ears instructed by higher ups to allow this outcome rather than challenge politically powerful water districts, especially before a

recall election.

Ironically, state and federal fish agencies have some staff that believe that hatchery fish are an evil cancer on the land and yet water management practices surgically and thoroughly eliminate wild spawning runs of salmon.

The insult comes just as California was starting to rebuild salmon runs decimated in the last drought. We had one of the best returns of winter and spring run this year in a long, long time. If cold water had been preserved for them, we'd

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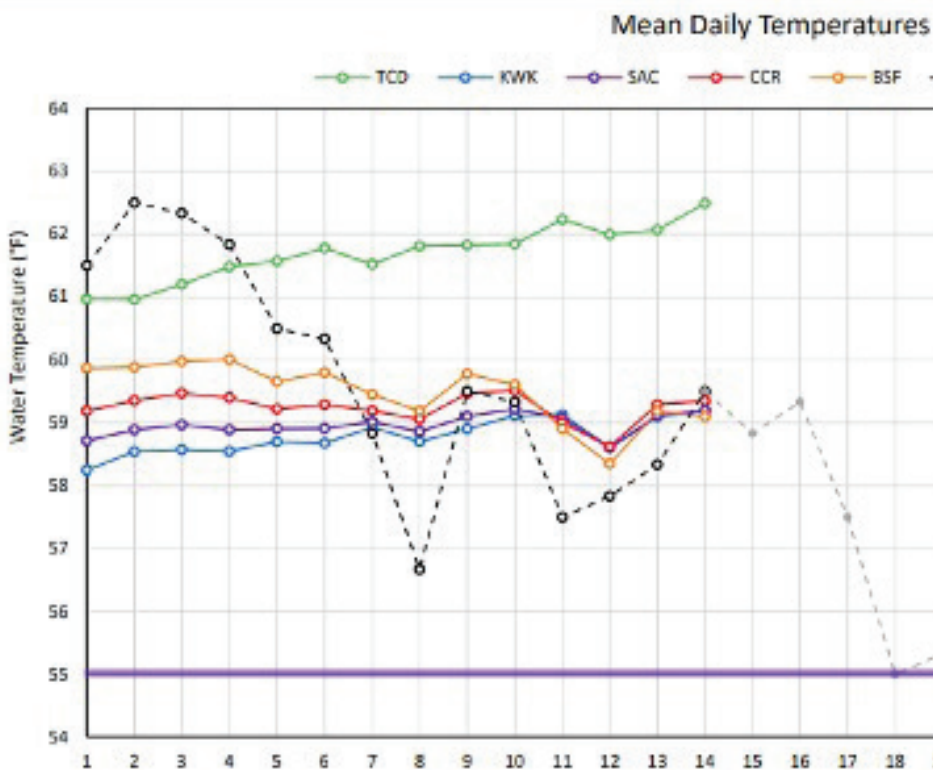
be well on our way to solidifying the run. Instead we'll have to start all over once we get some rain, assuming we get it before water practices wipe the winter and spring runs off the face of the earth.

GSSA will continue the fight, both to provide non-lethal river conditions to the native wildlife that was here long before most of us AND robust hatchery runs to keep the fisheries alive. ■

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



Salmon eggs die at temperatures above 54 degrees. Water coming out of Lake Shasta into the upper Sacramento River (green line above) was over 62 degrees on October 14

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