



October 2022

# FISH TALES

Newsletter of the Golden State Salmon Association



The fry are tiny when released.

This allows earlier release when flows are higher, helping survival

## Extra Hatchery Production Planned for 2023

This fall and winter CDFW will produce extra hatchery salmon for release in 2023, assuming they get enough salmon eggs. The Feather River hatchery will produce 1.75 million of those and an extra 500,000 will come from the Nimbus (American River) hatchery. The 1.75 million at the Feather River hatchery restores the one million fish now released into the Feather River, many of which never make it to the ocean. CDFW agreed to do these in river releases as part of an experiment with the Dept. of Water Resources to get an estimate on how many

are lost when they're sucked towards the Delta pumps.

If Nimbus hatchery has enough extra eggs, they also plan to hatch and release 500,000 fry, like the releases GSSA partnered with the Coleman Hatchery on last year in the upper Sacramento River.

As with Coleman's fry release, CDFW staff at Nimbus will take DNA samples from the parent fish used to produce the fry. This will allow identification of the fry when they return as adults in a few years and their DNA is matched with that from the parents. GSSA applauds CDFW for taking this step into the future.

The Coleman hatchery plans to again release two million fry into the upper Sacramento River in late winter when river flows are high to boost survival. ■

## Season Update, What Happened to the Fish?

Out in the ocean, there were lots of fish in the early season and hopes were high all around. But as summer turned to fall, hopes dimmed.

CDFW says that the season was structured so that both the commercial and sport fleets would take about 85,000 salmon in the ocean. It's looking like ocean sport will come in at less



Lots of fish were caught in the early ocean fishery

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than predicted but commercial take was at about 205,000 in early October. The higher-than-expected commercial catch will likely mean the model used to estimate commercial take will be modified for next year. Current modeling does not include one of the biggest contributors to the fishery, the Mokelumne hatchery fish. This may help explain the discrepancy between the expected commercial take and the actual catch.



The Mokelumne Hatchery is sending salmon to the sea

After adding river fishing, the models predicted about 190,000 adults should return to the Sacramento Basin to spawn. Normally, fishing seasons are structured to allow at least 122,000 adults to return and spawn in the Sacramento Basin but in most recent years fewer fish have returned which is why managers aimed for 190,000 this year. As of mid-October, achieving 190,000 looked doubtful.

CDFW reports that 335 coded wire tags were recovered in California coastal waters from out of state salmon this season. In a normal year they'd be less than 100. It seems clear that the huge anchovy schools off our coast pulled in salmon from all over the

west coast, including coho.

After the out of state salmon headed home to spawn, what was left in state was a smaller school of fish. Early info suggests that many were from the Mokelumne hatchery.

Fall fishing in the ocean was poor, as was river fishing, as of early October. Coleman hatchery managers are worried they might not get enough eggs without having to resort to extra measures. On the other hand, good numbers of salmon were reported in the American River up at the Nimbus Dam and in Delta areas near the mouths of the Mokelumne and Consumnes rivers.

Early coded wire data suggests that Mokelumne salmon showed up in the ocean fishery at a rate several times greater than any other Central Valley hatchery. Nimbus and Feather River salmon came in next followed by Coleman hatchery salmon.

The predominance of Mokelumne hatchery salmon in the ocean this past season appears to confirm a



Getting ready for a night time smolt release in Sausalito

key point GSSA has been stressing with CDFW officials overseeing trucking and that is, releasing near the Golden Gate at night on an outgoing tide provides much better survival compared to those released at the historic site in Vallejo. This survival advantage would accrue to Feather River or Nimbus, or any hatchery that releases closer to the ocean and should greatly aid the in-river



Courtesy SF Baykeeper

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fishery.

Releases at Sausalito's Ft. Baker have been capped under agreement with the National Park Service which runs the site, so GSSA advocates for using similar nearby release sites.

In spite of producing at least twice the fish of the other hatcheries, Coleman fish (which usually aren't trucked) were the least represented in the ocean fishery this year, based on recovered coded wire tags. Experience shows us that when Coleman fish are trucked to the Delta, they won't find their way back to the hatchery and the hatchery won't get the brood stock it needs to produce the next generation. The reason Coleman fish are uniquely unable to find their way home is because, being reared on Battle Creek, a tributary that flows into the upper Sacramento River, they don't learn the smell of the upper Sacramento River if they're trucked. The smell of Battle Creek is apparently too weak for trucked Coleman fish to pick up when they return to the Central Valley as adults.

Some have suggested the answer

is to move the Coleman hatchery, or build a new one, on the banks of the Sacramento River. Presumably, if that were done, Coleman fish could be trucked and still find their way home as adults. Water feeding a new Sacramento River hatchery would likely need to be chilled in at least some years.

GSSA has worked with the USFWS to see if survival of Coleman fish can be boosted in such a way that the fish would at least find their way back to the upper Sacramento. This has involved an experiment to truck and release them a short distance down the Sacramento from the confluence of Battle Creek. The FWS hasn't collated the data to know what level of survival boost this has provided.

None of these fixes address the underlying problem of hot water killing fall run eggs nor redd dewatering that regularly occurs in the upper Sacramento River.

Winter run returns appear to be ok (by poor recent standards) with an estimate of more than 3200 returning adult fish. Water from Lake Shasta, which feeds the Livingston Stone winter run hatchery, had to be cooled for a

second year in a row. Winter run that spawned in May and June may have experienced water temperatures that allowed many to hatch. Those spawning later, along with fall run spawners, likely encountered water temperatures too warm to hatch the eggs. Fall run that spawn after Thanksgiving will hopefully experience cold enough water to hatch the eggs. ■



Massive diesel chillers were needed to cool water for winter run salmon at Livingston Stone hatchery this year

## GSSA, Allies, in Court to Win Salmon Protections

In the modern history of salmon conservation in California we think it's fair to say that litigation is the only deliberate action that has brought relief to salmon from over diversion of the rivers. That's why GSSA is in court trying to force a reduction in diversions.

Soon GSSA and allies will get a chance to tell a federal court why and how we think rules governing operation of the big state and federal water projects should be improved for use this coming winter and spring while the overall plan is being reworked. Stay tuned. ■

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## San Joaquin Congressmen Introduce Bill to Override Salmon Protections

San Joaquin Valley Congressman David Valadao and Kevin McCarthy, with support from the full California House GOP delegation, have introduced a

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bill in Congress that would lock in place the environmentally damaging Trump water operation rules for the Central Valley Project, fund the enlargement of Shasta Dam, and renew portions of a salmon-damaging Feinstein-sponsored law facing expiration.

Given the congressional schedule, the bill will not move forward this year but could next year if control of either Congressional chamber changes. ■

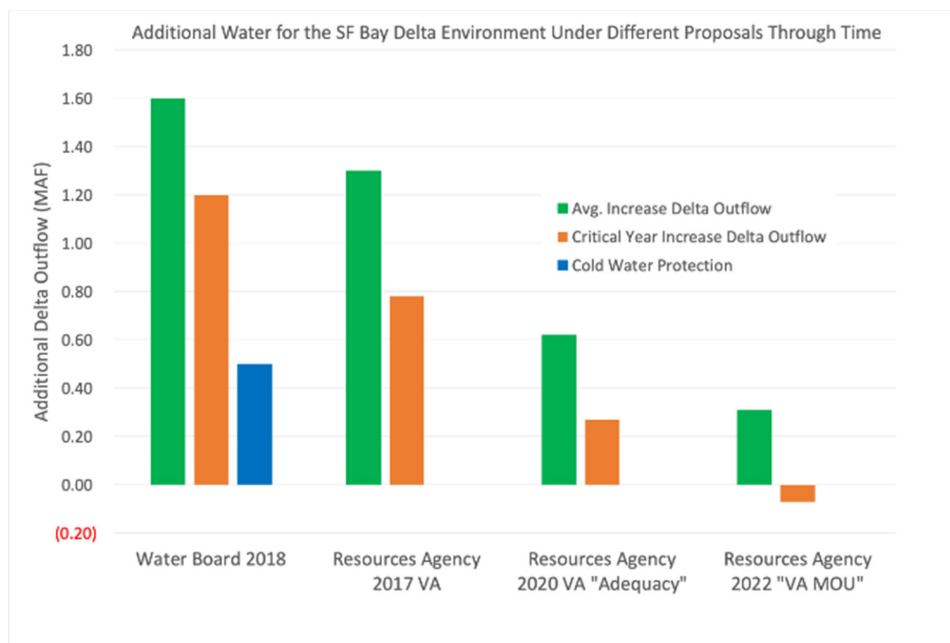
## Bay Delta Voluntary Agreement Update

The governor's office is trying to get every water district that diverts from Central Valley rivers to sign on to what he calls a voluntary agreement (VA), that largely preserves status quo agricultural water diversions on Central Valley salmon rivers. No surprise, salmon

come in last in this scheme.

The graphic above (prepared by SF Baykeeper) shows that the current VA proposal being pushed by the governor's office (CA Resources Agency) contains dramatically less water than the State Water Board said in

2018 was required to stem more environmental damage. In fact, the VA proposals, so far ten years in the making, keep getting worse over time. The current VA proposal would actually reduce the amount of water dedicated to salmon in critically dry years. ■



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