

FISH TALES

February 2024

Member Newsletter of the Golden State Salmon Association

goldenstatesalmon.org

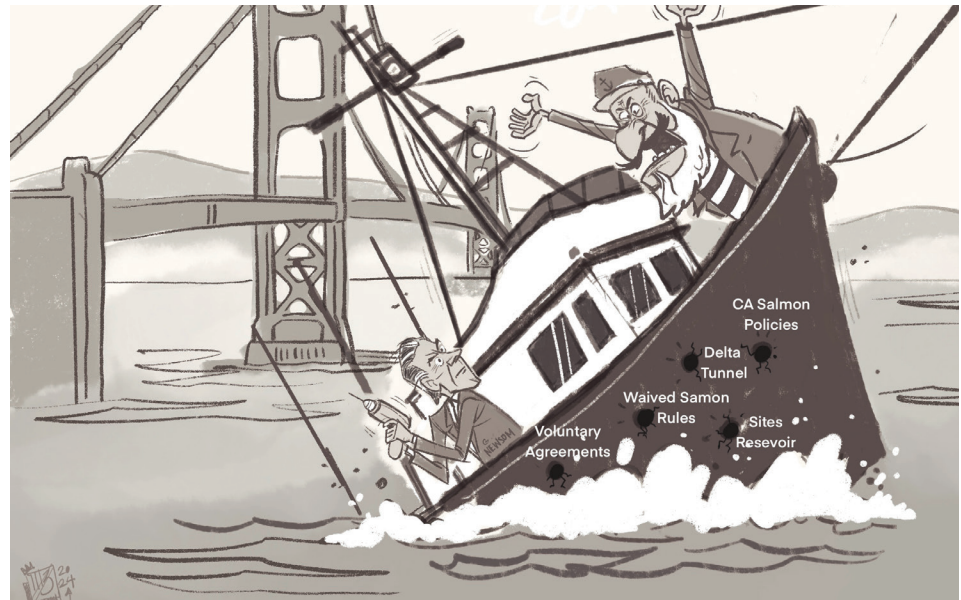
Governor Newsom's Water Diversions Obliterate Upper Sacramento Fall-Run Chinook Salmon Population By 96%

Under Governor Newsom, the upper Sacramento River, formerly the most important salmon producing river south of the Columbia, has been killed off. It's pretty simple. When you kill all of the baby salmon through environmentally disastrous water policies, 3 years later there won't be fish to catch or spawning adult fish. This is a blatant attack on fish, rivers, the Bay-Delta ecosystem, and tens of thousands of salmon families from California to Oregon.

To this day, the Governor has prevented the State Water Resources Control Board from setting and implementing any spring outmigration flow requirements.

The Governor is planning to make disastrous conditions for salmon even more dire – by calling for yet more diversions through the construction of Sites Reservoir and his massive new Delta tunnel. This approach would lead to the extinction of California's salmon families.

In 2023, the upper Sacramento River escapement (the spawning population) of fall-run Chinook salmon was 6,160 adults. Between



1995-2005, the average escapement was 175,496, which represents a loss of 96% of the upper Sacramento River's spawning.

You can see what the Governor's policies have done by looking at how salmon landings have fallen. Again, from 1996-2005, the average total ocean commercial and recreational catch was 563,317 fish. And as you can see above, plenty of fish were left to spawn each year.

In the coming month, we'll find out if the 2024 season will also be closed. If it is open, the fishing community will experience incredibly severe restrictions.

Additionally, the Pacific Fishery

Management Council (PFMC) reported that endangered winter-run Chinook spawner escapement in 2023 was estimated to be only 2,447 adults. Threatened spring-run salmon totaled an unbelievable 1,479 jacks and adult fish. Of these, only 106 were wild spawning fish. To put this in a water diversion perspective, this is a drop from over 20,000 spring-run salmon at the start of the spawning season just 2 years ago.

The core problem is simple. Lethal temperatures and low flows are killing fall, spring and winter salmon runs. Governor Newsom needs to guarantee cold flows in our rivers unless it's his plan to destroy salmon families. If so, bravo. He's doing a hell of a job. ■

WE'RE FIGHTING

GSSA and Partners File Litigation to Stop Delta Tunnel

On January 22, 2024, Golden State Salmon Association and a coalition of Tribal and conservation organizations took legal action against the California Department of Water Resources for violating the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The groups contend that when the agency finalized approval for Governor Newsom's controversial Delta tunnel project in December 2023, it failed to consider, avoid, or mitigate the wide range of negative effects the project would have on salmon, endangered fish populations, other wildlife and Tribal communities.

The Delta tunnel—also called the Delta Conveyance Project—would divert vast quantities of fresh water from the San Francisco Bay-Delta estuary to industrial agricultural operations, as well as to large cities south of the Delta and outside of the Bay-Delta's watershed. The health of the Bay-Delta, its wildlife, and its local residents depend on fresh water flowing from its Central Valley tributary rivers into the Bay.

The tunnel will also destroy Tribal sites that have been in use for thousands of years, along with the cultural practices associated with them. The agency's CEQA review failed to consider the tunnel's cultural implications for the Delta's Tribal peoples who continue to



rely on the Delta for their survival, and for whom the Delta is a fundamental part of their histories.

We are witnessing the creation of the next endangered species: the salmon families across California and Oregon who rely on the health of our fishery for their living, their community, and their culture. The Delta tunnel is one of the biggest salmon-killing projects in state history, and Governor Newsom has his hand directly on the spigot.

— Scott Artis, GSSA executive director

California diverts more than half of the water flowing through Central Valley rivers to serve industrial agriculture and big cities. Because of excessive water diversions, more and more fish native to San Francisco Bay and its watershed are verging on extinction, and California's fisheries are increasingly shut down.

GSSA was joined by and appreciates the dedication of The Bay Institute, California Indian Environmental Alliance, Restore the Delta, San Francisco Baykeeper, and the Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians. ■

Is \$20.6M Enough to Save Salmon Families?

On February 2, U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina M. Raimondo announced the allocation of \$20.6 million to address a fishery resource disaster that occurred in the 2023 Sacramento River Fall Chinook and Klamath River Fall Chinook ocean and inland salmon fisheries. NOAA Fisheries used revenue loss information from the commercial, processor and charter sectors to allocate funding for the disaster.

Congress provided fishery resource disaster assistance funding in the 2022 and 2023 Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Acts. Funds can be used to assist the impacted fishing communities including commercial fishermen, recreational fishermen, charter businesses and subsistence users.

(continued, pg. 3)



FOR SALMO

Disaster Relief (continued)

In the coming months, NOAA Fisheries will work with the state of California to administer the disaster relief funds. Fishing communities and individuals affected by the disaster should work with their state or other agencies.

Scott Artis, executive director of Golden State Salmon, responded, "It's been a long time coming and an even longer wait for all those salmon families who've been struggling each day to make ends meet. I'm glad to see NOAA has approved funding to keep this process rolling as quickly as possible – getting funding to affected salmon families is critical. Unfortunately, the \$20.6 million in relief is a far cry from the \$45 million requested by California last year. And it is a staggering decrease from the more than \$60 million in relief that was distributed to commercial and charter fishermen and women, processors and Sacramento River guides in 2008."

Golden State Salmon Association will continue to work with congress and other elected officials to push for the distribution of relief funds quickly and learn why NOAA allocated less than half of the request made by the State of California. ■



What We're Fighting For!

We're proud to share this excerpt from a letter to the State Water Resources Control Board from GSSA advocate Cindy Charles.

I grew up in San Francisco and fished San Francisco Bay for Dungeness crab and off the Pacific Coast for Chinook salmon in my family's 14-foot Wizard boat. Sadly, the salmon fishery is now in a total collapse. In just one lifetime, we have reached the point where there are hardly any wild salmon. My father, who went salmon fishing weekly on the Salty Lady sportfishing boat out of Sausalito, would have a broken heart to see the state of the fishery if he were alive today. He fished all his life and well into his 80s. It was a great joy for him to share fishing with me and he loved making his special wild smoked salmon to share with family and friends. Given the state of the salmon fishery today, that traditional activity in our family is not really possible anymore.

As you consider finalizing the long overdue Bay Delta Plan, you need to keep a balanced view of beneficial uses of the water we all own

as part of the Public Trust. The San Francisco Bay-Delta has NOT been protected for a longtime: fisheries are closed, water quality is failing, toxic algae blooms occur more frequently, fish counts are down.

It is time to FINALLY increase the flows to bring back the fish before it is too late. Habitat improvements can only do so much and are not a replacement for the life-giving water. The salmon will come back if they are given enough water. ■



CA Water Board: GSSA, Partners, Members Fight to Save Salmon

On January 19, 2024, GSSA filed a 160-page technical comment to the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) regarding the 2023 Bay-Delta Plan Staff Report.

The written comments follow GSSA's December testimony before the SWRCB in support of flow and temperature requirements to protect Sacramento Valley salmon. Additionally, more than 450 GSSA members sent a letter to the SWRCB urging critical action for salmon and the fishing industry.

GSSA thanks its partners: San Francisco Baykeeper, the Bay Institute, Defenders of Wildlife, Institute for Fisheries Resources, and the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations. ■

N FAMILIES



2024 Forecast Shows Dangerously Low Numbers of Adult Sacramento River Salmon

Fishery managers, in a presentation given to the salmon industry in Oregon and California, forecasted 213,622 adult Sacramento Valley fall-run Chinook salmon in the ocean off the West Coast. This compares to 169,800 estimated in 2023 and 396,458 in 2022.

In February, the PFMC released its review of the 2023 salmon fisheries and reported a total of 133,638 hatchery and natural area adult spawning fall-run Chinook were estimated to have returned to the Sacramento Valley last year. The number highlights continued poor state water management decisions that dramatically increased the impact of the drought.

This forecast will be used to

determine whether or not salmon families in California and Oregon will be able to go to work, pay their mortgages and feed their families. Tens of thousands are still suffering from last year's closed salmon fishing season. The buck stops with Governor Newsom and his salmon fishery-decimating water policies.

Under Newsom's watch, salmon have declined while acreage in ultra-thirsty almond orchards has increased by more than 300,000 acres. Newsom's appointed Water Board has failed to update antiquated salmon flow standards that date back to 1995. The Water Board has also refused to implement rules adopted in 2018 requiring more flows in San Joaquin Valley rivers to improve salmon. GSSA is working through litigation and state and federal governments to directly address problems facing the fishing industry.

Golden State Salmon Association 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



Golden State Salmon Association
P.O. Box 9360
Santa Rosa, CA 95405