

HABITAT COMMITTEE COMMENTS ON CENTRAL VALLEY SALMON RECOVERY PLAN

The Habitat Committee (HC) reviewed the recovery plan for Sacramento River Winter-run Chinook, Central Valley (CV) spring Chinook, and Central Valley steelhead (Agenda Item D.3). The HC found the table of impacts helpful, and we agreed with the general near-term strategic approach to recovery, but we believed that the longer-term strategic approach to recovery lacked detail.

The HC notes that long-term recovery criteria at the population level do not appear to accommodate any kind of harvest.

While the plan provides a good summary of the socio-political background and limiting factors and threats, it does not identify specific ways to achieve actions identified for recovery. For example, the Recovery Plan needs to specify how many miles and types of habitat need to be recovered for rearing and migration and what changes are needed in water management.

The HC recommends that the Recovery Plan actions:

- Delineate water use and management recommendations intended to recover the species. For example, the Recovery Plan needs to specify flow regimes needed to ensure water during critical times in life history (juvenile and adult migration, spawning) for each species;
- Identify habitat restoration activities and locations in the CV including mainstem, tributaries and estuarine habitat;
- Investigate genetic introgression effects due to hatchery straying as related to off-site release strategies;
- Investigate predator interactions, especially with regard to exotic species (stripped bass and fresh water bass);
- Document and enumerate actions needed to reduce bycatch of listed stocks in non-salmon (e.g., whiting) fisheries; and
- Improvements to estuarine passage and survival rates are called for in the Recovery Plan. However, the HC notes that existing monitoring programs are insufficient to pinpoint bottlenecks or measure improvements in survival and passage.