

PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Mr. Roger G. Patterson, Regional Director
Bureau of Reclamation
Mid-Pacific Region
Federal Office Building
2800 Cottage Way
Sacramento, CA 95825

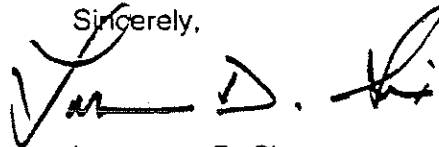
Dear Mr. Patterson:

At its April, 1996 meeting, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) adopted ocean salmon fishery management measures which are intended to increase the number of endangered Sacramento River winter chinook spawners by about 35 percent over that level which could have been expected to occur under the regulations of recent years. The projected increase will come at the cost of a significant reduction in ocean harvest of chinook salmon off California.

The Sacramento River Winter-run Recovery Team has clearly identified freshwater and estuary habitat problems as the main causes for the collapse of the winter chinook stock. In this situation, the increased ocean harvest restrictions may provide a temporary increase in winter-run spawners to avoid a critically low spawning population this coming year. However, the sacrifice of the ocean fishers will be in vain if complementary action is not taken to assure these endangered fish meet improved freshwater spawning, rearing and migration conditions for a sustained recovery. In recognition of the importance of resolving all of the management issues surrounding the recovery of the winter-run, the Council developed the attached resolution, calling for action by your agency to help assure a fruitful recovery effort.

The Council, ocean fishers and coastal communities which depend on abundant salmon stocks request your cooperation in this important task to recover the winter-run chinook salmon.

Sincerely,



Lawrence D. Six
Executive Director

JCC:sjk
Attachment
c. Habitat Committee

Pacific Fishery Management Council

RESOLUTION ON WINTER-RUN CHINOOK SALMON HABITAT

Whereas, the National Marine Fisheries Service has called for reducing the 1996 recreational and commercial salmon fishing harvest in order to protect Sacramento River winter-run chinook salmon from extinction; and

Whereas, commercial and recreational fishing has not been the cause of the decline of winter-run salmon; and

Whereas, the suggested fisheries constraints to protect winter-run will cost the recreational and commercial salmon fisheries millions of dollars in lost revenue; and

Whereas, an increase in freshwater outflows from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta into San Francisco Bay is needed to maintain estuarine habitat and reverse the precipitous decline of water quality and fish and wildlife species including the delta smelt (listed as threatened) and winter-run chinook salmon (listed as endangered); and these outflows are now available as part of the three-year 1994 Bay/Delta Accord; and

Whereas, there have been losses of downstream migrating smolts to unscreened water diversions; and

Whereas, on-the-ground habitat restoration efforts to restore winter-run populations need to be intensified; and

Whereas, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has halted the winter-run artificial propagation program at Coleman hatchery for one year to study problems of hybridization and smolt imprintation; and

Whereas, some of the habitat improvement measures already identified are yet to be implemented;

Now, therefore, be it resolved that consistent with its harvest management recommendations to protect winter-run chinook, the Pacific Fishery Management Council requests that:

1. The California State Water Resources Control Board provide sufficient outflows from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta to protect winter-run chinook and review the adequacy of the outflows required from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta in its 1995 Water Quality Plan during the tri-annual review of the plan to assure protection of winter-run; and
2. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Bureau of Reclamation prioritize and expeditiously implement on-the-ground projects to restore winter-run habitat; and
3. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission review the hydropower licenses for the projects on Battle Creek to determine if flow requirements should be modified to protect and restore fish and wildlife of the basin and downstream areas; and
4. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service explore whether winter-run could use Battle Creek as spawning grounds. This determination would need to resolve disease, fish passage, and water quality and temperature issues.

PFMC

Adopted 4/12/96