



## Pacific Fishery Management Council

7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101, Portland, OR 97220-1384  
Phone 503-820-2280 | Toll free 866-806-7204 | Fax 503-820-2299 | [www.pcouncil.org](http://www.pcouncil.org)  
Dorothy M. Lowman, Chair | Donald O. McIsaac, Executive Director

March 20, 2014

Dr. Ren Lohoefer, Regional Director  
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Pacific Southwest Region (Region 8) Regional Office  
Federal Building  
2800 Cottage Way, Room W-2606  
Sacramento, CA 95825

Dear Dr. Lohoefer:

During its March meeting, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) received a briefing on Coleman National Fish Hatchery's 2014 fall-run Chinook salmon releases, trucking, and drought conditions in the Central Valley. The Council recognizes that water conditions this year are extraordinarily poor and uniquely challenging, and appreciates the hard work and collaboration that has occurred to address these challenges. The Council also appreciates the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) proactive efforts to collaborate with the commercial and recreational fishing communities during the development of alternative release strategies that have culminated in a document titled, "DRAFT Contingency Release Strategies for Coleman National Fish Hatchery Juvenile Fall Chinook Salmon Due to Severe Drought Conditions in 2014."

The Council encourages the USFWS to use every means necessary to improve the survival of fall-run Chinook salmon smolts produced by the Coleman National Fish Hatchery in this critically dry year, and supports the trucking of smolts to an appropriate site below the principal diversion points from the Sacramento River into the Delta.

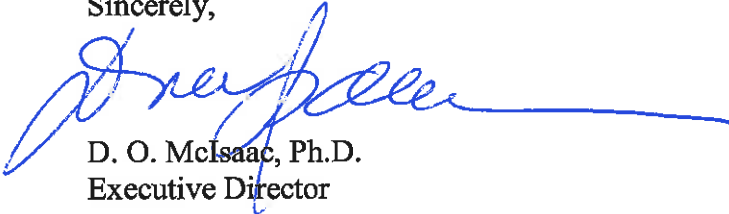
We also urge the USFWS to develop a consistent policy for future use that will define Coleman National Fish Hatchery release strategies based on drought forecasts, flow criteria, and water temperatures for future years, should severe drought conditions reoccur. Those strategies should be designed to maximize survival to adulthood and maintenance of the genetic profile for the Coleman stock, while minimizing homing strays to the degree possible. We also urge the USFWS to support flow conditions in the Sacramento system that provide for high survival of both Battle Creek releases of Coleman National Fish Hatchery fall-run Chinook salmon as well as natural spawning segments of the Chinook salmon population.

In addition, the Council requests continued strategy development and coordination between the USFWS and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife relative to the logistics and scheduling of 2014 hatchery releases in estuary areas so as to optimize the survival of fish after they leave the trucks. It is well-known that immediate predation on trucked salmon smolts can be severe by both birds and fish if precautions are not taken to avoid it. Please consider such

things as net pen acclimation, releasing fish at night and on or just prior to an outgoing tide, and different locations as ways to avoid predator attraction and high immediate mortalities. Further, please consider expending the staff resources necessary to actively evaluating immediate predation losses and adaptively react with a different strategy if mortalities are high.

Thank you again for your efforts, and the efforts of your staff, towards addressing this critical issue in a coordinated and proactive manner during this challenging time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D. O. McIsaac", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

D. O. McIsaac, Ph.D.  
Executive Director

JDG:kam

Cc: Council Members  
Council Habitat Committee  
Council Salmon Advisory Subpanel  
Mr. Dan Castleberry, Region 8, Regional Office  
Mr. Robert Clarke, Region 8, Regional Office  
Mr. Jim Smith, Red Bluff Fish and Wildlife Office  
Mr. Scott Hamelberg, Coleman National Fish Hatchery  
Ms. Jennifer Gilden, Council Staff