

## HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT ON CURRENT HABITAT ISSUES

### **Scientific and Statistical Committee Review of California Current Integrated Ecosystem Assessment (CCIEA) Indicators (Correigh Greene)**

The Habitat Committee (HC) reviewed and provided input on a presentation that will be given to the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) on the Integrated Ecosystem Assessment Indicators. These have implications for tracking freshwater habitat climate impacts on an ecoregional basis rather than for the entire California Current. These indicators may be useful in the context of salmon stock management.

### **Oroville Dam Discussion Follow Up**

The HC held a webinar August 23<sup>rd</sup> regarding the relicensing effort for the Oroville Dam and associated impacts on essential fish habitat for Chinook salmon. This is particularly relevant to the Council because Feather River fall Chinook, which are a primary stock affected by this project, are the single largest contributor to the Sacramento River fall Chinook harvest in the fishery.

Jason Kindopp of Department of Water Resources (DWR) and Gary Sprague of National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) addressed the webinar.

**The HC recommends that the Council send a letter as soon as possible to the DWR and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) highlighting the importance of restoration activities contained in the 2006 Oroville Dam Settlement Agreement and NMFS BiOp to essential fish habitat.** The SAS may be able to contribute important information and advice for the letter. Below, we summarize key recommendations of the report in [Agenda Item D.1, Supplemental Attachment 1](#).

*HC Recommendation #1: Request that FERC either issue the license immediately, or allow DWR to expedite implementation of the Settlement Agreement Articles for temperature changes and habitat alterations to the low-flow channel prior to license renewal.*

The HC makes this recommendation because DWR asserts they cannot move forward with important habitat enhancement until the new license has been issued. Additionally, the HC sees the need to recommend that DWR petition FERC to move forward with habitat improvements agreed to in the settlement agreement before the license is issued. It has also been noted that while facility modifications require permission from FERC, the planning and timing for the modifications, could be a long process and does not require FERC permission. The timeline for implementation could be shortened if DWR went forward with such planning.

*HC Recommendation #2: Petition DWR for Council participation on the Ecological Committee [an advisory body for implementing the Settlement Agreement], as the Feather River fall run is the most important contributor to the Sacramento River fall Chinook harvest.*

The Ecological Committee will play an important role in shaping details of the habitat improvement projects. A Council member or advisory body member could have significant input on issues that affect the Chinook fishery by serving on the Ecological Committee.

*Recommendation #3: Request DWR to expedite the temperature changes to the low-flow channel immediately, in compliance with the California State Water Quality Control Board request. The low-flow channel improvements will also improve temperatures in the high-flow channel.*

The requirements from the SWRCB are separate from those in the settlement agreement and will also lead to habitat improvements.

*Recommendation #4: Encourage DWR to prioritize developing methods to ensure that daily maximum temperatures, rather than average temperature criteria, are not exceeded.*

*Recommendation #5: Continue to advocate for near-future solutions that directly (rather than indirectly) reduce water temperature in the highflow channel.*

*Recommendation #6: Request DWR assess and prioritize reasons for reduced spawning in the high-flow channel.*

### **Atlantic Salmon Escape**

The escape of approximately 180,000 Atlantic salmon from a net pen in Puget Sound on August 21 is of great concern due to the potential to occupy spawning habitat of native fish. Escaped fish are reported to have been found in Canada and as far south as the Columbia River and migrating into the Elwha River.

### **Klamath Issues**

Klamath dam removal is expected to be completed in 2020.

In addition, the state of California has been given a 30-day notice that a petition might be filed by the Karuk Tribe and others for listing Klamath Basin spring Chinook under the Federal Endangered Species Act, based on recent research from UC Davis that discovered a gene complex related to run timing that is associated with spring Chinook and summer steelhead. <http://www.times-standard.com/article/NJ/20170817/NEWS/170819830>

### **Rose Canyon Aquaculture Project**

The Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute proposed the Rose Canyon Aquaculture project and presented their proposal to the Council and HC in 2009 and 2015. They applied for a permit to the NOAA Aquaculture Program to raise yellowtail, white seabass, and striped bass off of San Diego in net pens. Recently they were forced to rescind their permit application because it was in naval operations lanes; they will be submitting a new application for a site two miles to the north in Federal waters off La Jolla.

PFMC

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