

HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT ON HABITAT COMMITTEE ISSUES

The Habitat Committee received multiple reports related to habitat for salmon in the Sacramento and Klamath Rivers.

Klamath Basin Dam Removal: The final Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) approvals for transfer of the four Klamath hydropower dams (Iron Gate, CopCo 1 & 2 in California, and the J.C. Boyle Dam in Oregon) to the Klamath River Renewal Corporation (KRRC), as the dam removal entity, was received on November 17th, 2022, and title to the dam facilities and related lands was then conveyed by PacifiCorp to the KRRC on December 1, 2022. Ground-breaking pre-demolition construction is scheduled to begin in mid-March 2023. Full four-dam removal by the KRRC is expected to take about 20 months, to be completed by December 2024. Subsequent watershed and salmon habitat restoration activities will then proceed for at least five years thereafter.

Discussions continue at the state agency level as to what fisheries monitoring and data-collection changes must be made. Resources for implementing the two states' post-dam removal Klamath River salmon reintroduction plans will also be dependent upon state budgets and budget constraints.

The Council may wish to coordinate and expedite post dam removal fishery management change discussions, as well as to underscore to the relevant entities the need for fully funding implementation of the upper Klamath salmon reintroduction plans of both Oregon and California after actual dam removals. We look forward to Council discussions on Klamath River dam removal issues in April 2023.

Klamath Basin water operations: The HC also heard public comment from Justin Alvarez (Salmon Advisory Subpanel) on water operations in the Klamath watershed related to habitat requirements for anadromous salmonids and two species of Endangered Species Act-listed suckers using Klamath lakes. Sucker spawning requires a specific water elevation standard for Klamath Lake, but that is competing with in-river flows meeting standards for salmon. In addressing lake level requirements for suckers, Reclamation has been dropping instream flow levels this winter, thereby impacting salmon spawning. This is putting the cohort that will first return post-dam removal at risk. The Yurok Tribe, the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishing Associations, and the Institute for Fisheries Resources (IFR) are planning on filing a *Supplemental Complaint and Request for Injunctive Relief* against the Bureau of Reclamation on March 23, 2023. These issues highlight long-term water management challenges in the Klamath River, and the HC will be tracking these issues as they develop.

California Central Valley: On September 12, 2022, the Council wrote to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and the California State Water Resources Control Board urging the Board to reconsider its 30-year-old water high-temperature maximum standards. That letter closed with “we look forward to hearing from you on how best to work with your organization toward these goals.” To date there has apparently been no response from either agency to the Council’s letter,

and no actions taken by either agency toward implementing the Council’s recommendations. Under current water high-temperature standards, winter-run Chinook suffered very low egg-to-fry (ETF) survival rates in the Sacramento River as noted in the Council letter at 2.6 percent in 2021. Under these same water temperature standards, the winter-run Chinook ETF survival rate has since then once again hit an alarming new low, falling to 1.94 percent in 2022 as measured at Red Bluff Diversion Dam (the standard monitoring point). By comparison, their average ETF survival rate for 2002-2020 was 23.4 percent.¹ In the meantime, on February 24, 2023, the Judge in the U.S. Federal District Court case *Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen’s Associations, et al. (PCFFA) vs. Raimondo* (No. 1:20-cv-00431) extended the 2022 Interim Operations Plan (IOP) that the Central Valley Project is currently governed under, with similar water high-temperature standards, until December 31, 2023, essentially unchanged.

Habitat Indicators: The Habitat Committee received an update from Habitat Committee Chair Correigh Greene on the Habitat Indicators of Klamath and Sacramento Chinook salmon stocks and the recently added Central Valley Spring Chinook indicators. The HC continues to be supportive of this work and recommends further identifying which indicators are most predictive of productivity estimates.

PFMC
03/05/23

¹ Voss, S. D. and W. R. Poytress, 2022. *2020 Red Bluff Diversion Dam Rotary Trap Juvenile Anadromous Fish Abundance Estimates*. Report of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Sacramento, CA., Table 7 (PDF pg. 49, text pg. 37).