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Assembly California Legislature



KEN COOLEY
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COMMISSION

July 2, 2014

Mike Sutton, President
California Fish and Game Commission
1416 9th St., 13th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Charleton Bonham, Director
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
1416 9th St., 12th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: California Fishery Management Policies

Dear President Sutton and Director Bonham,

In June 2012, the California Hatchery Scientific Review Group (CHSRG) released a systematic set of hatchery improvement recommendations in the report titled *California Hatchery Review Report*.

In order to safeguard California's hatchery system and our native fish populations, both so vital economically and recreationally, the undersigned legislators support implementation of the recommendations reflecting consensus science-based views of the CHSRG.

As you know, the CHRR was funded by the federal government to evaluate the effect of hatchery salmon and steelhead on California's wild stocks. That independent taxpayer funding makes this study an important asset for California. One of the key recommendations of the CHRR is identification of hatchery fish so they can be easily differentiated in real time from wild salmon. It is important to note that the CHRR was a consensus report – meaning that all members of the CHSRG agreed with all of the recommendations – and that the California Department of Fish and Wildlife participated in the development of the report and, indeed, serves on the CHSRG policy committee.

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The Commission and the Department are now in the process of updating their respective policies on Chinook Salmon. In fact, we understand that this will be on the Commission's agenda for the August 6 meeting. For the protection of the wild and native fish and for the fishery, we urge the Commission and the Department to follow the science and make it policy to coded-wire-tag all hatchery Chinook Salmon or document science-based reasons for declining to adhere to the CHRR recommendations. Questions have been raised (and eventually will be answered) as to how this effort will be funded. Such questions really just serve to spotlight the fundamental issue of whether we can permit good public policy ensuring the sustainability of our state's wild and native fish population to be lost due to a funding issue. These resources are an important legacy to all present and future Californians. If such short-term thinking prevailed in the state, we would not have Marine Protected Areas. It is our view that the consensus scientific views embodied in the CHRR should, just as science drives the Marine Life Protection Act, guide this policy.

Managing fisheries and operating hatcheries under the Endangered Species Act and within Hatchery Genetic Management Plan guidelines will be required should the Central Valley fall run Chinook be listed under the ESA. Without the ability to identify all hatchery fish the State of California is susceptible to third party lawsuits. Currently, the fall run Chinook Salmon are not listed under the ESA but all evidence suggests this is going to happen in the near future unless California becomes aggressive in recovery of wild fish efforts. This is why the CHSRG report is so critical and why a key recommendation of the CHSRG was 100% tagging of the fall Chinook Salmon in California.

We urge the Commission and the Department to incorporate 100% tagging of all hatchery Chinook Salmon in your respective policies regarding salmon.

Sincerely,

 _____ Ken Cooley 8th A.D.	 _____ Paul Jones 28th A.D.
 _____ Dan Cummings	 _____ John
 _____ Nancy Johnson	 _____ Cheryl Brown
 _____ Dan Cales	 _____ Jim

cc: The Honorable Jerry Brown, Governor
The Honorable John Laird, Secretary, Natural Resources Agency