

STAFF SUMMARY FOR OCTOBER 19-20, 2016

22. COHO SALMON (CONSENT)**Today's Item**Information Action

Receive DFW 2016 status update on Coho salmon.

Summary of Previous/Future Actions

- | | |
|--|-------------------------|
| • FGC approved coho salmon recovery strategy | Feb 4, 2004; Sacramento |
| • Received DFW status report | Aug 4-5, 2015; Fortuna |
| • Today's receipt of status update | Oct 19-20, 2016; Eureka |

Background

FGC approved the Coho Salmon Recovery Strategy in Feb 2004. The recovery strategy provides a list of recovery goals, delisting criteria, and a detailed list of range-wide and watershed restoration recommendations to achieve recovery of Coho Salmon populations. In Aug 2015, DFW provided FGC with a comprehensive 10-year status report on the species and the progress on recovery implementation. The 2016 report on the progress of Coho Salmon recovery is provided in Exhibit 1. Today, DFW will provide an update on information and progress since last Aug, focusing on habitat restoration, recovery efforts, population monitoring, and drought response.

Significant Public Comments (N/A)**Recommendation**

FGC staff: Under a motion to adopt the consent calendar, accept DFW's report.

Exhibits

1. [DFW memo, dated Oct 3, 2016](#)

Motion/Direction

Moved by _____ and seconded by _____ that the Commission hereby adopts the Consent Calendar, items 17-22.

Memorandum

2016 OCT -4 PM 1:20

Date: October 3, 2016

To: Valerie Termini
Executive Director
Fish and Game Commission

From: Charlton H. Bonham
Director



Subject: **2016 Update on the Status of Coho Salmon and Recovery Implementation.**

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) is pleased to provide the Fish and Game Commission (Commission) the 2016 report on the progress of Coho Salmon recovery, as described in Fish and Game Code section 2113. In August 2015, the Department provided the Commission a comprehensive, 10-year status report on the species and the progress of recovery implementation. This memo details information and progress since last summer. Our efforts this year have focused on a continued commitment of habitat restoration, increasing recovery efforts where the species is listed as endangered, continued population monitoring, and protecting Coho Salmon, to the degree possible, from the impacts of the prolonged drought.

Species status

The continuing drought has resulted in decreased stream flow and poor water quality across much of the range of Coho Salmon, especially from Santa Cruz County to the Eel River, in Humboldt County. Poor river conditions are affecting abundance in many watersheds. South of San Francisco Bay, only Scott Creek in Santa Cruz County appears to have a small extant population, likely due to conservation hatchery operations of the small Kingfisher Flat hatchery facility. To ensure the facility was able to keep fish in healthy condition even during the poor conditions associated with the drought, the Department invested in upgrading the holding tanks and installing water filtration and chiller equipment.

The Department is in the process of analyzing last year's range-wide population data for most rivers and creeks. Preliminary estimates show juvenile and adult population numbers are lower across the range of Coho Salmon from last year. The Department will be evaluating last year's data in relationship to trends during and before the continuing drought. The analysis will be done by early 2017.

Drought response again included rescue and relocation. The Department rescued approximately 3,200 juvenile Coho Salmon from 10 streams in the Russian River Basin and Salmon Creek (Sonoma County). Rescued fish were reared at Warm Springs Hatchery over the summer and released in late fall. The Department expects a return of 40-80 adult Coho Salmon from these rescued fish, which would be a significant number of returning adult fish for the Basin.

Progress of strategy implementation

In 2014, poor water quality led to low spawning success and early life stage survival at Warm Springs Fish Hatchery in Sonoma County, the primary conservation fish facility for Coho Salmon. The drought-induced poor survival among juvenile and adult fish resulted in a smaller release of fish back to the wild (~72,200). This past year, conditions improved and approximately 175,000 juvenile fish were released, within the normal target for the conservation program.

In February 2016, the Director awarded 61 habitat restoration grants in nine counties to promote Coho Salmon recovery. The grants totaled over \$15 million and were awarded to Tribes, water and conservation districts, cities, and fisheries conservation organizations.

In partnership with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), the Department is focusing efforts to recover endangered Coho Salmon from Santa Cruz to Mendocino counties. The agencies have developed a multi-faceted strategy, the Priority Action Coho Team (PACT). This strategy will focus on local partnerships and regional action around high-priority habitat restoration, water conservation, hatchery improvements and captive rearing efforts, local education and outreach, and improving efficiencies in permitting and regulation. The PACT report was developed with local and regional input and will be released by the end of the year. Implementation will commence in early 2017. Given the significance of conservation hatchery efforts, the Department and NMFS have already begun a process of developing plans for a new, cutting-edge Coho Salmon conservation hatchery for endangered populations south of San Francisco. The PACT effort also supports NMFS's national recovery initiative, Species in the Spotlight. Central Coast Coho Salmon are one of two listed salmon stocks in California that are part of this new, national focus.

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