

Darren Mierau

Chairman, CA Advisory Committee on Salmon and Steelhead Trout

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Darren is currently the North Coast Director for California Trout. He earned a Master's Degree in Biology from Humboldt State University in 1995 and joined CalTrout in 2011. Before joining CalTrout, Mierau worked on numerous North Coast projects as a watershed restoration scientist with the consulting firm McBain and Trush. Darren is currently directing, among other projects, the Eel River 'Headwaters to Sea Initiative', CalTrout's primary restoration focus on the North Coast. He was recently elected Chair of the California Advisory Committee on Salmon and Steelhead Trout. Darren is a native Californian. He lives in Arcata with his wife and two sons.

Brief Description of Presentation

Mr. Mierau will provide an overview of the State of Salmon and Steelhead recovery efforts, including recent declines in species leading to the consideration of a 'Salmon Emergency Declaration', and the considerable expenditure of public funding toward recovery efforts. The CACSST offers several top-priority recommendations for consideration by the JCFA.

Bullet Points

The CACSST has attended the Fisheries Forum dating back to 1973, and the Committee has had the dubious role of reporting to the JCFA on the steady decline of the State's salmonid resources. The current status of these resources is not encouraging:

Some Examples:

- Fishing for coho salmon has long been prohibited in all California ocean fisheries since 1993;
- In 2008, the PFMC, NMFS, and the F&GC closed all commercial and recreational ocean salmon fisheries in California;
- CalTrout's 2017 *State of our Salmonids II* reports that of the 32 native salmonid species in CA, 15 are threatened, endangered, or extinct;
- In February of this year, the NMFS in response to a November 2, 2017 petition to list Chinook salmon in upper Klamath-Trinity as 'threatened or endangered' under the Endanger Species Act (ESA) announced that Klamath River's Spring Chinook, historically one of the most abundant salmon of the Pacific Northwest, will undergo a 12-month review to determine whether it merits protected status under the federal ESA;
- Two of California's salmon species – the central coast Coho and the winter run Chinook - are

currently being sustained by broodstock programs.. the final stage before extinction;

The CACSST is considering a recommendation **that the Joint Committee and CDFW declare a "salmon emergency"**. Such a declaration would suspend some permitting requirements for fishery restoration projects and allow the SWRCB to impose curtailments on water users in critical salmon and steelhead habitat waterways.

The CACSST believes it is fundamentally important to acknowledge (1) our native salmon and steelhead populations are vital to the state's economy, both commercially and recreationally, (2) these iconic species are an important ecological indicator of the health of California's water resources, rivers, and watersheds, and (3) these fish, and the freshwater habitats they're dependent upon, are additionally threatened by changing climate and rainfall patterns.

The resiliency of California's most vital resource...FRESHWATER.. and the FISHERY RESOURCES they sustain, are increasingly imperiled.

For several decades, the State has been investing significant public resources and a sustained effort to protect and restore salmon and steelhead state-wide. Most recently:

- Proposition 50 in 2002,
- Proposition 84 in 2006,
- Proposition 1 Water Bond of 2014,
- ~14mil in annual PCSRF funds over the last decade;
- etc.

Currently, Public Funds on the order of \$100 million per year are being expended for salmonid recovery, water quality and watershed protection.

...but we're not seeing the results we should expect.

Additionally concerning to the CACSST, is that public and **STAKEHOLDER** input and oversight of these programs, and specifically the funding priorities and decisions, is diminishing:

- The Trinity River Restoration Program's Citizen Advisory Committee, the TAMWG, has been suspended since the 2016 election;
- The CDFW Fisheries Grant Program's Peer Review Committee was prevented from meeting in the Fall of 2017 due to unsubstantiated **Conflict of Interest** concerns;
- The entire annual Prop-1 expenditures of approximately \$45 Million in CDFW Watershed Grants

and WCB Streamflow Enhancement grants has NO public review of Agency grant-making decisions;

We need to be involved...

THE CACSST provides the following recommendations:

- We welcome the Department's recent outreach to Restoration Leaders, seeking our input on how best to re-align and implement the Department's salmonid recovery programs to achieve better results;
- We support the CA Department of Fish and Wildlife ***Budget Change Petition*** proposing to increase CDFW annual budget, address structural budget shortfalls, and increase staff positions that will enable the Department to increase its focus on this CRISIS;
 - Recommends new staff be prioritized toward strategic planning, streamlining of environmental regulations to facilitate more rapid and less costly on-the-grounds implementation, and expanding the Department's Coastal Monitoring Programs;
- We urge the Department to take steps to secure the future of the Coastal Monitoring Program, which is vital to the success of salmon recovery efforts, and to identify a funding strategy that will ensure the work of this crucial program continues uninterrupted;
- We strongly urge the Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Natural Resources Agency, and with oversight from this Committee, to strengthen your partnerships with the **Community of Restoration Practitioners** so we can devise the best responses to this CRISIS.
- We strongly recommend that our State's PUBLIC TRUST RESOURCES, our freshwater and the fish and wildlife species dependent upon them, are protected from the newly forming **legal** cannabis industry, with sound environmental policy and strong enforcement.
 - The CDFW (and the SWRCB) need to continually assess how well their permitting and enforcement approach is working, and be ready to adapt if they are not;
 - Restoration funding from tax revenue needs to target the resources that have suffered most directly – salmon and steelhead watersheds on the North Coast;
 - We must identify a cumulative limit to how much cannabis farming our watersheds can sustain before it's too much, and before it's too late.