

California Advisory Committee on Salmon and Steelhead Trout

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Chair

Darren Mierau

Senator Mike McGuire
1036 5th Street, Suite D
Eureka, CA 95501

Vice Chair

Mitch Farro

Members

Matt Clifford
Vivian Helliwell
James Stone
Gayland Taylor
Mike Orcutt
Ted Grantham

Contact:

Darren Mierau
1380 9th Street
Arcata, CA 95521

dmierau@caltrout.org

Web Site

<http://fisheries.legislature.ca.gov/content/related-statutes-and-committees>

Thank you for inviting me. It's a privilege to be here.

It's been a busy year for the CAC. Despite losing several members of the Committee this year, we hosted quarterly meetings in March, July, October, and January, and again yesterday here in Sacramento. Our meetings this year focused on:

- Central Valley hatchery management issues;
- the FRGP Peer Review Committee, the Department's Ad Hoc Restoration Leader's Committee, ongoing grant program reform and oversight;
- The joint state-federal salmonid monitoring program known as the Coastal Monitoring Program or CMP;
- Sites Reservoir, implications for the Trinity River Division, and the need for a science-based minimum bypass flow for Sites in the Sacramento River.

At our [March 11, 2020] meeting, the Committee discussed the upcoming commercial salmon season, ocean stocks, and particularly the status of Klamath-Trinity salmon abundance. Our ocean salmon fishery in general is not in a recovered or recovery trajectory:

- Sacramento river salmon abundance appears better than other rivers;
- But the Klamath-Trinity and Eel appear to be struggling to rebuild from the drought;
- The Klamath...#'s.
- Our preliminary Eel River monitoring indicates about half as many fish as last year, which were already very low compared to recent years.

As a result, Coastal communities in the north will continue to experience economic burden as rebuilding salmon stocks are slow to respond.

In these down years, we look to the Legislature to maintain and build on funding for investing in watershed and fishery restoration; and we look to state and federal agencies to maintain flexibility in management, hatchery operations, and to speed up the pace of restoration programs.

- for example, hatchery release strategies and release locations are critical to boost hatchery fish survival, and we encourage agency managers to work with our commercial salmon representatives to consider our recommendations.
- we need to redouble our efforts to rebuilding our fall run salmon stocks and recolonize areas that used to have natural spawners that have been impacted by drought or poor water management.

The Advisory Committee is very concerned about Sites Reservoir. The Draft EIS/EIR has the numerous deficiencies and the Sites Project Authority has refused requests to issue a recirculated DEIS/EIR.

- The modeling in the Draft EIS/EIR called for minimum bypass flows as low as 3,250 cfs at Red Bluff when CDFW has recommended no less than 13,000 cfs. Minimum instream flows of 3,250 cfs at Red Bluff would be devastating to the salmon runs.
- The modeling shows impacts to the Trinity River through a shift in the timing of diversions that increases temperatures during critical spawning periods in the fall;
- Fast-tracking of Sites and other new reservoirs, as outlined in the Governor's Draft Water Resilience Portfolio, is something the Advisory Committee does not support;
- The pursuit of Voluntary Agreements to replace regulatory flow requirements for various rivers is also not supported by our Advisory Committee. The 1994 Bay Delta Accord, 2000 CalFed ROD, the CalFed Environmental Water Account, and the 2007 VSA for Oroville relicensing are all examples of how this approach has failed and the salmon and steelhead runs continue to decline.

Regarding Central Valley water operations, the Advisory Committee suggests the State Water Resources Control Board should be encouraged to revisit permits issued to the federal Bureau of Reclamation that allow it to dewater up to 40 percent of the fall run redds in the upper Sacramento and overheat the river to levels lethal to incubating salmon eggs after the winter run temperature control season expires. So too, SWRCB permits to the BOR to operate Folsom should be reviewed with consideration given to requirements forcing the federal government to fix the temperature control device on the Folsom Dam.

We are in support of the Governor's budget to expand CDFW staff positions, and we are especially interested to know more about where the Department intends to prioritize those positions; we would advocate for programs that support grant prioritization efforts, facilitation of permitting, and especially monitoring.

We assume some or many of these positions can be prioritized to facilitate both Secretary Crowfoot's *Cutting the Green Tape* initiative as well as Director Bonham's bionics program aka the *Better, Stronger, Faster* effort to improve grant program performance and streamline project functions. Our Committee applauds the new Administration's focus on these issues, and actively supports those initiatives.

As I mentioned, we hosted two Committee meetings in 2019 that focused on the Coastal Monitoring Program which is now becoming the California Monitoring Program. This Program is managed jointly between CDFW and NMFS, and is critical to tracking recovery of our state and federally listed salmonid populations.

- Just as a reminder, but I'm sure your Committee is well aware that the State, through various bond programs, greenhouse gas reduction funds, and federal recovery funds, spends tens of millions each year on watershed and habitat restoration. Despite those funds that are prioritized towards implementation, we constantly struggle to secure adequate funding for technical studies, prioritization planning, and monitoring. We greatly need more flexibility in funding the science that supports this restoration investment.

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The point of our two CMP meetings was to assist the agencies in identifying their priority programs statewide, given the severe funding limitations for this monitoring program. and we are really encouraged that the two fisheries agencies are following through on their commitments to re-engage in their collaborations.

Finally, it appears a crisis was averted, at least temporarily, with regard to funding for the **Kingfisher Flat Hatchery Broodstock Program**, located in Santa Cruz and proving vital to sustain the endangered coho salmon south of the Golden Gate. Our Advisory Committee strongly encourages the Department, with oversight from the Legislation, to prioritize a long-term solution to maintain those critical programs into the foreseeable future.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here.

Sincerely,



Darren Mierau
Chair, CACSST

CC: Tom Weseloh