

The News is Not Good for North State Salmon Fishermen

May 2, 2024



The primary and powerful advisor to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife is the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC). Last week, the 14 voting member council unanimously recommended closure of California's commercial and recreational ocean salmon fisheries for the second consecutive year, through the end of 2024, mirroring recommendations made last year.

The PFMC reports Salmon stocks continue to be impacted in the Golden State from ongoing issues associated with drought and climate disruption. Though rain totals have dramatically improve this past year, the Salmon currently present and returning to California's coast and rivers were impacted by previous years' drought, severe wildfires, associated impacts to spawning and rearing habitat, harmful algae bloom and ocean forage shifts. The low ocean Salmon abundance forecasts, coupled with below average 2023 returns, led the PFMC to recommend full closure of commercial and recreational salmon fisheries.

The National Marine Fisheries Service is expected to take regulatory action to enact the closure by mid-May. The Fish and Game Commission will consider a closure of inland salmon fisheries at its May 15 teleconference meeting.

CDFW Director Charlton Bonham was regretful by the discouraging news. "After the closure last year, the decision is not an easy one to make," Bonham lamented. The Director continued, " While we've been

enjoying back to back wet winters this year and last, the salmon that will benefit from these conditions aren't expected to return to California until around 2026 or 2027. Current salmon were impacted by different environmental factors present three to five years ago."

Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Association (PCFFA) reluctantly supports the closure. While incredibly painful to fishing families, PCFAA president George Bradshaw shared, "we need to do everything we can to give Salmon a chance to recover. It has to be all hands on deck to ensure survival for our Central Valley and Klamath Salmon runs."

CDFW is working to expedite a request for federal fishery resource disaster determination for both the Central Valley and Klamath River Chinook. A similar emergency request was requested and granted, last year.

Congressman Jared Huffman (D), Senator Alex Padilla (D) and 19 of their colleagues joined Gov. Gavin Newsom in sending a letter to President Biden and Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo calling for them to swiftly declare a federal fishery disaster and granted the relief would provide necessary assistance for communities like Crescent City in grappling with the challenges of the ongoing crisis.