

Fishery Council closes California and parts of Oregon salmon fishing in 2023

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Salmon fishermen and women, and many businesses that serve both the sport and commercial salmon boats, are now certain they'll see no income in 2023 with the official closure of the 2023 salmon season.

On Thursday, the Pacific Fisheries Management Council (PFMC) voted to finalize the season's closure—a drastic step that affects all of California's marine waters as well as ocean salmon fishing off most of the Oregon coast.

"This is a direct reflection on California's water policy and an absolutely devastating blow for the thousands of families that rely on salmon to pay their rent and mortgages, and keep their life-sustaining businesses afloat," said Scott Artis, executive director of Golden State Salmon Association (GSSA).

"Families across the State are already struggling with inflation so it is imperative that lawmakers immediately come to the aid of affected communities with disaster relief."

This closure is the second time in history salmon fishing has been closed in California. The decision was made due to low numbers of adult and two-year-old jack salmon that have survived the hostile conditions they've encountered in Central Valley rivers in recent years. All of these rivers are controlled by upstream dam operations. Dam operation decisions favoring agriculture over salmon survival have resulted in very poor natural salmon reproduction in recent years because lethal hot water left after dam releases for agriculture have killed incubating salmon eggs. In addition, strong releases of water in the spring needed to wash baby salmon safely out of the Central Valley to the ocean have been diverted or withheld.

"This is the time of year when we usually start bringing salmon to market or home to put on the family dinner table," said John McManus, senior policy director for GSSA. "Instead, families up and down the coast, and some inland, are very worried about how they're going to pay the bills this year in a disaster that could have, and should have, been avoided."

In February 2023, the PPMC estimated a total 169,800 Sacramento Basin fall run salmon in the ocean. Fishery managers typically allow fishing that will still deliver a minimum of 122,000 salmon to spawn in the Sacramento Basin, but in recent years they've increased that target number. In 2022, fishing was curtailed in an effort to see more than 180,000 fall run salmon return to spawn but less than 62,000 actually showed up.

Currently, California's salmon industry is valued at \$1.4 billion in economic activity and 23,000 jobs annually in a normal season and contributes approximately \$700 million to the economy and supports more than 10,000 jobs in Oregon. Industry workers benefiting from Central Valley salmon stretch from Santa Barbara to northern Oregon. This includes commercial fishermen and women, recreational fishermen and women (fresh and salt water), fish processors, marinas, coastal communities, equipment manufacturers, the hotel and food industry, tribes, and others.

Golden State Salmon Association (www.goldenstatesalmon.org) is a coalition of salmon advocates that includes commercial and recreational salmon fishermen and women, businesses, restaurants, a native tribe, environmentalists, elected officials, families and communities that rely on salmon. GSSA's mission is to restore California salmon for their economic, recreational, commercial, environmental, cultural and health values.