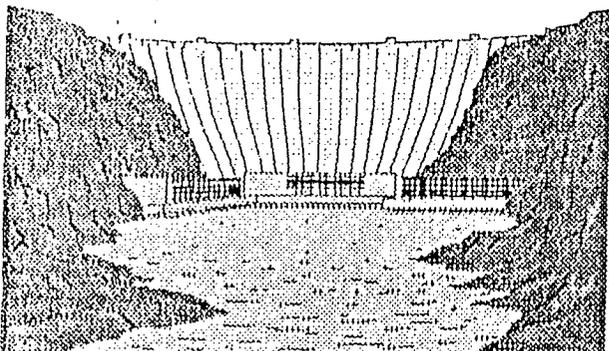


RECOVERY OF ENDANGERED SACRAMENTO WINTER-RUN CHINOOK SALMON

As stated in the recommendations of the Sacramento winter chinook recovery team, "The collapse of the winter-run chinook population resulted from the cumulative effects of degradation of spawning, rearing and migration habitats in the Sacramento River and Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta." Now in 1996, it is clear that the listing of the winter run under the Endangered Species Act in 1989 helped to focus attention on these habitat problems. However, actual management changes to resolve these problems in favor of recovering the winter run have been limited.

The recovery team goes on to identify the specific causes of decline as: 1) excessively warm water temperatures from releases at Shasta Dam, 2) interference with free migratory passage of juveniles and adults at Red Bluff Diversion Dam, 3) the export of vast quantities of water from diversions in the South Delta, 4) heavy metal contamination from Iron Mountain Mine and 5) entrainment in a large number of unscreened or poorly screened water diversions. Among a host of other factors contributing to the decline, the team attributes ocean and inland fisheries as likely to have impaired stock rebuilding efforts. It is worth noting that the failure of the winter run to rebuild is occurring during a time when Sacramento fall chinook have increased substantially from low abundance levels in the early 1990s.

Faced with the prospect of a critically low spawning population of the endangered Sacramento winter chinook, National Marine Fisheries Service has required the Council to include significant new restrictions in ocean fishery management off California to increase the rate of recovery of this stock. While it may be possible to temporarily provide small increases in the number of winter-run spawners through substantial fishery restriction, such actions will not provide any meaningful or lasting recovery of this stock as long as the basic habitat deficiencies identified by the team remain unresolved. Toward that end, the Council offers the following resolution:



RESOLUTION ON WINTER-RUN CHINOOK SALMON HABITAT ISSUES

Whereas, the National Marine Fisheries Service has called for reducing the 1996 recreational and commercial salmon fishing harvest in order to protect Sacramento River winter-run chinook salmon from extinction; and

Whereas, commercial and recreational fishing has not been the cause of the decline of winter-run salmon; and

Whereas, the suggested fisheries constraints to protect winter-run chinook will cost the recreational and commercial salmon fisheries millions of dollars in lost revenue; and

Whereas, an increase in freshwater outflows from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta into San Francisco Bay is needed to maintain estuarine habitat and reverse the precipitous decline of water quality and fish and wildlife species including the delta smelt (listed as threatened) and winter-run chinook salmon (listed as endangered); and these outflows are now available as part of the three-year 1994 Bay/Delta Accord; and

Whereas, there have been losses of down stream smolts to unscreened diversions; and

Whereas, on-the-ground habitat restoration efforts to restore winter-run populations need to be intensified; and

Whereas, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has halted the winter-run artificial propagation program at Coleman Hatchery for one year to study problems of hybridization and smolt imprintation; and

Whereas, some of the habitat improvement measures already identified are yet to be implemented;

Now, therefore, be it resolved that consistent with its harvest management recommendations to protect winter-run chinook, the Pacific Fishery Management Council requests that:—

1. The California State Water Resources Control Board provide sufficient outflows from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta to protect winter-run chinook; and review the adequacy of the outflows required from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta in its 1995 Water Quality Plan during the tri-annual review of the plan to assure protection of the winter run; and
2. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Bureau of Reclamation prioritize and expeditiously implement on-the-ground projects to restore winter-run chinook habitat; and
3. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission review the hydropower licenses for the projects on Battle Creek to determine if flow requirements should be modified to protect and restore fish and wildlife of the basin and downstream areas; and
4. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service explore whether or not winter-run fish could use Battle Creek as spawning grounds. This determination would need to resolve disease, fish passage, and water quality and temperature issues.