



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric
Administration
National Marine Fisheries Service
Southwest Region
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September 22, 1999

MEMORANDUM FOR: CALFED Policy Group

FROM: Gary Stern

SUBJECT: NMFS listing determinations for Central Valley fall-run and spring-run chinook

On September 9, 1999, the National Marine Fisheries Service announced its final decision for protection of two Central Valley chinook salmon populations under the Endangered Species Act. Central Valley spring-run chinook salmon, originally proposed for listing as endangered, is listed as a threatened species. Returns of Central Valley spring-run chinook in 1998 and 1999 in Deer, Mill, and Butte creeks were encouraging, but not sufficient to remove the entire Evolutionary Significant Unit (ESU) from being listed. The Central Valley fall/late fall-run population, originally proposed for listing as threatened, is now determined not to warrant listing at this time, but will remain a "candidate" species for reevaluation if new information becomes available warranting review. These listing determinations had been deferred since March 1999 so that the agency could gather additional information about the status of the chinook populations.

Factors affecting the health of spring-run chinook salmon vary from watershed to watershed, but typically include dam construction and operation, over-harvesting, certain hatchery practices, and land-use and water-development projects that degrade water and river conditions key to salmon survival. However, the new listing of Central Valley spring-run chinook is not expected to result in any new impacts on landowners or the economy, because this species occurs in areas already having federally listed steelhead or winter-run chinook salmon with regulatory protection. Additionally, Central Valley spring-run chinook is already listed under the state of California's endangered species act.

Current Central Valley ecosystem restoration efforts in the CALFED Bay-Delta Program and the Central Valley Project Improvement Act (CVPIA) have improved habitat conditions and reduced risks to Central Valley salmon populations. The NMFS will continue to work with the CALFED and CVPIA programs to ensure the needs of Central Valley spring-run chinook are adequately addressed and provide for their recovery.



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