



California Department of Fish and Wildlife



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Joint Release of Federal Recovery Plan for Salmon and Steelhead and Conservation Strategy for California's Ecosystem Restoration Program *CDFW Announces Funding for High-Priority Conservation Efforts*

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – NOAA Fisheries and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) today jointly released two plans to restore populations of salmon and steelhead in California's Central Valley: NOAA Fisheries' Chinook Salmon and Steelhead Recovery Plan and CDFW's Ecosystem Restoration Program (ERP) Conservation Strategy.

The two plans are complementary in that CDFW's conservation strategy presents a broader framework for restoring aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems throughout the Central Valley, while the federal recovery plan focuses on the recovery of endangered Sacramento River winter-run Chinook salmon, threatened Central Valley spring-run Chinook salmon, and threatened Central Valley steelhead.

A shared goal of both plans is to remove these species from federal and state lists of endangered and threatened species. The recovery plan provides a detailed road map for how to reach that goal. It lays out a science-based strategy for recovery and identifies the actions necessary to restore healthy salmon and steelhead populations to the Central Valley.

"Establishing clear priority watersheds, fish populations and actions is essential to achieve recovery," said Maria Rea, NOAA Fisheries Assistant Regional Administrator for California's Central Valley Office. "Implementation of this plan will depend on many parties working collaboratively to pool resources, expertise and programs to recover Chinook salmon and steelhead populations that are part of California's natural heritage."

Recovery plans required by the Endangered Species Act are guidance documents, not regulatory requirements, and their implementation depends on the voluntary cooperation of multiple stakeholders at the local, regional, state and national levels.

"The Sacramento Valley joins together a world-renowned mosaic of natural abundance: productive farmlands, meandering rivers that provide habitat and feed salmon and steelhead, wildlife refuges and managed wetlands, and cities and rural communities," said David Guy, President of the Northern California Water Association. "The recovery plan is a positive step forward--through efficient management of the region's water resources, water suppliers throughout the Sacramento Valley will continue to work with our conservation partners to help implement the recovery plan and improve ecological conditions in the Sacramento River for multiple species and habitat values."

The ERP conservation strategy was developed by CDFW collaboratively with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA Fisheries to help guide environmental restoration and establish adaptive management to improve restoration success in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta



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and its watershed. The approach of conservation strategy is to restore or mimic ecological processes and to improve aquatic and terrestrial habitats to support stable, self-sustaining populations of diverse and valuable species.

"It is critical we make strategic investments in our natural resources," said Charlton H. Bonham, Director of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. "The funding of these high-priority restoration projects is not only an example of the coordinated effort between state and federal governments, but an example of California's continued efforts to minimize the effects of drought on fish and wildlife. Central Valley salmon and steelhead deserve nothing less."

California Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr.'s 2014-15 budget provided CDFW with \$38 million to implement enhanced salmon monitoring, restore sensitive habitat, improve water infrastructure for wildlife refuges, expand the fisheries restoration grant program, and remove barriers for fish passage. Some of that money will be used on projects recommended by the federal recovery plan.

Dick Pool of the Golden Gate Salmon Association said, "We thank and congratulate the scientists of NOAA Fisheries for their outstanding work in developing the Central Valley Recovery Plan. GGSA and the salmon industry particularly appreciate the fact that the plan includes both short range and long range actions that can reverse the serious salmon and steelhead population declines. GGSA has identified a number of the same projects as needing priority action. We also commend the agency for its diligent efforts to engage the other fishery agencies, the water agencies and the salmon stakeholders in the process. We look forward to assisting in finding ways to get the critical projects implemented."

The federal recovery plan and state conservation strategy work together as a blueprint of how at-risk species can be restored to sustainable levels. Restoring healthy, viable salmon and steelhead runs will preserve and enhance the commercial, recreational and cultural opportunities for future generations. As the fish populations grow and recover, so too will the economic benefits and long-term fishing opportunities for everyone.

"The Recovery Plan provides a clear framework to better coordinate and align restoration projects in the Delta, the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers and their tributaries to achieve greater conservation outcomes," said Jay Ziegler, Director of External Affairs and Policy for The Nature Conservancy. "We are pleased to see the integration of multiple habitat values in the Plan including the importance of expanding lateral river movements to enhance floodplain habitat and recognition of the importance of variable flow regimes to benefit multiple species."

The development of a recovery plan is an important part in the successful rebuilding of a species because it incorporates information from a multitude of interested parties including scientific researchers, stakeholders and the general public. Since 2007, NOAA Fisheries has held 14 public workshops, produced a draft for public comment, and met with strategic stakeholders to guide the plan's development and ensure a comprehensive and useful document.

CDFW will be investing considerable resources in improving water conservation on public wildlife refuges in the Central Valley and protecting important salmon stocks that contribute to the state's fishery. The department has also recently released a restoration grant solicitation



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which includes salmon and steelhead watersheds in the Central Valley. The solicitation can be found [here](#). Applications are being accepted until August 12, 2014.

More on the [NOAA Fisheries Recovery Plan](#) and the [CDFW Ecosystem Restoration Program](#)