



*To advance the economic, social and environmental sustainability of Northern California
by enhancing and preserving the water rights, supplies and water quality.*

April 17, 2023

Gina Raimondo, Secretary
Commerce Department
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Raimundo:

The Northern California Water Association (NCWA) supports the April 6 request by Governor Newsom and Lieutenant Governor Kounalakis for a Federal Fishery Disaster Declaration for the California salmon industry with the anticipated closure of the 2023 salmon season.

The recent dry years in California have been challenging for every part of our water system. In the Sacramento Valley, we have felt the impacts of the dry years in various ways and we fully understand and empathize with the families and fishing communities financially impacted by a closure of the 2023 salmon season. Our Dry Year Task Force is committed to address these issues; thus, we support the Federal Fishery Disaster Declaration and any relief that can help these communities.

In the Sacramento Valley, the leaders care deeply about the four runs of Chinook salmon that grace our region and we have been working for the past several decades with your team at the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to help implement its recovery plan for salmon in the Central Valley, with a focus on the Species in the Spotlight. As part of this Sacramento Valley Salmon Recovery Program, we have worked with our partners to complete more than 35 projects in the past several years to help address the freshwater life-stages for all runs of salmon, including efforts to improve the commercial fall-run that both commercial and recreational fishermen and women depend upon. With the dry year experiences from the past several years and the identification of the impact thiamine deficiency is having on egg-to-fry survival, we are currently working with NMFS and our partners to accelerate fishery actions on the Sacramento River.

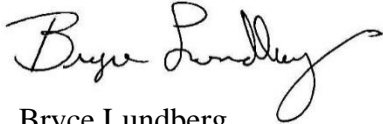
Last year, more than 600 square miles of farmland on the west-side of the Sacramento Valley was left fallow without water supplies. This significantly impacted farms, rural communities, and fish and wildlife as you can see in a [short film](#) on drought in Colusa County. To help address these impacts, Governor Newsom advanced Small Business Funding Relief for these communities and there was other support provided by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Department of Interior for drought and disaster assistance. We appreciate this support and we now call on you to provide support for the families and fishing communities impacted by the closure of the 2023 season.

While some in California point fingers during challenging times, we instead recognize there are impacts to every use of water during dry years and we prefer to roll up our sleeves, take actions

with respect to every freshwater life-stage for salmon and show our support for every part of the water system. If you get an opportunity, we recommend four short films that describe the spirit and esprits de corps in the Sacramento Valley to collaborate, support water for multiple benefits (including salmon) and support each other when we have challenges as seen with the closure of the 2023 salmon season. The films can be seen at [Floodplains Reconnected](#).

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. Please call on us if we can help in any way!

Sincerely,



Bryce Lundberg
Chair, Board of Directors



Fritz Durst
Co-Chair, Dry Year Task Force



Nicole Van Vleck
Co-Chair, Dry Year Task Force

cc: Governor Newsom
Lt. Governor Kounalakis
Janet Coit, NOAA
Cathy Marcinkevage, NMFS
Chuck Bonham, CDFW

Newsom Administration Requests Federal Fishery Disaster Ahead of Salmon Season Closure

Published: Apr 06, 2023

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW: With the Pacific Fishery Management Council recommending a full closure of the ocean salmon season based on 2023 abundance forecasts of key salmon stocks off California and parts of Southern Oregon, the Newsom Administration is requesting a Federal Fishery Disaster Declaration to support impacted communities.

SACRAMENTO – Today, Governor Gavin Newsom and Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis announced a request for a Federal Fishery Disaster Declaration to support the salmon fishing industry as it faces a closure for the 2023 salmon season. This action follows projections that indicate California’s Chinook salmon abundance is at historic lows.

Recognizing the importance of salmon to California’s commercial fisheries, Acting Governor Eleni Kounalakis, on behalf of Governor Newsom, [submitted the request](#) to U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo immediately after the Pacific Fishery Management Council recommended a full closure of California’s commercial and recreational ocean salmon season – a recommendation the National Marine Fisheries Service is expected to implement next month.

If approved, the Federal Fishery Disaster Declaration would begin the process of providing needed relief to fishing communities financially impacted by a closure.

“Countless families, coastal communities and tribal nations depend on salmon fishing – it’s more than an industry, it’s a way of life. That’s why we’re requesting expedited relief from the federal government,” **said Governor Newsom.** “We’re committed to working with the Biden Administration and Congress to ensure California’s fisheries aren’t left behind.

“To California’s salmon fishing communities, we’re working to get you expedited relief,” said **Lieutenant Governor Kounalakis.** “The Federal Fishery Disaster Declaration we’re requesting today is vital to supporting our coastal regions, and we look forward to getting families the help they need.”

HOW WE GOT HERE:

- **Prolonged drought, severe wildfires, and associated impacts** to spawning and rearing habitat, harmful algal blooms, and ocean forage shifts have combined to result in some of the lowest stock abundance forecasts on record for Sacramento River Fall Chinook and Klamath River Fall Chinook.
 - In large part, the low returns and abundance forecasts are due to difficult environmental factors faced by these salmon on their initial journey out to the ocean three years ago.
- **The low ocean abundance forecasts, coupled with low 2022 returns,** led the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) to recommend full closure of California’s commercial and recreational ocean salmon fisheries.
- **Commercial fishing in southern Oregon** is also projected to face closures through the end of 2023.

PREVIOUS ACTIONS: The Newsom Administration has made unprecedented investments in recent years to revitalize salmon populations and support the communities that rely on salmon fishing.

- **The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) [announced \\$22.5 million](#)** for 19 projects last month to support the restoration of critical habitat for salmon, climate resiliency, wildlife corridors and wetlands restoration. The funding is part of a new \$200 million effort to support critical restoration statewide. The projects announced last month include:

- **Protecting Salmon:** California awarded more than \$8.2 million to eight projects in watersheds throughout the state to address drought impacts for salmon in rivers and streams important to their lifecycle. The largest project awarded will be led by the Yurok Tribe within the Oregon Gulch section of the Upper Trinity River where remnants of hydraulic mining have narrowed the river and lead to a loss of salmon rearing habitat. This project will reestablish the natural flow of the river as well as a functioning floodplain to greatly improve habitat for salmon across various life stages.
- **Addressing Climate Impacts:** Approximately \$6.6 million was awarded to seven new projects to address urgent degrading water and habitat conditions due to climate change impacts. These projects include a focus on winter-run Chinook, improving the diversity of hatchery winter-run, as well as juvenile salmon collection system evaluation for re-introducing this species in the McCloud River above the Shasta Dam.
- **Wildlife Corridor – Fish Passage:** Wildlife corridors are essential to providing fish and wildlife room to roam, or in this case, swim. California awarded more than \$6.5 million to three fish passage projects that will modify bridges and remove other barriers to fish passage in northern and central California.
- **Last summer, working with the Winnemem Wintu Tribe** and federal partners, the [California Department of Fish and Wildlife \(CDFW\) returned approximately 20,000 fertilized endangered winter-run Chinook](#) salmon eggs to the McCloud River upstream of Shasta Reservoir for the first time since the construction of the Shasta Dam in the 1940s.
- **The largest river restoration project in American history** begins this year to [remove of four hydroelectric dams on the Klamath River](#). A project 20 years in the making to restore the river for and with Native American Tribes, it received final approval in December 2022 and will open up over 300 miles of historical habitat to salmon and steelhead that has been blocked by the dams for almost 100 years.
- **More than \$84 million was invested in the last several years** to modernize hatcheries by replacing egg incubators and sorting machines, installing automated fish counters and water treatment systems, replacing aging vehicles in fish planting fleets and modernizing hauling trucks.



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

April 6, 2023

The Honorable Gina M. Raimondo
Secretary of Commerce
United States Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Re: State of California Federal Fishery Disaster Request

Dear Secretary Raimondo:

In accordance with section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, as Acting Governor of the State of California, I am requesting on behalf of Governor Gavin Newsom that you expedite declaration of a fishery resource disaster for the State of California 2023 Sacramento River Fall Chinook (SRFC) and Klamath River Fall Chinook (KRFC) ocean and inland salmon fisheries.

Earlier today, the Pacific Fishery Management Council recommended a full closure of California's commercial and recreational 2023 ocean salmon fisheries in response to near-historically low stock abundance forecasts for the fall Chinook runs of salmon originating from the Sacramento and Klamath rivers. The National Marine Fisheries Service is expected to implement this closure in May. A host of factors have pushed these iconic and important fisheries to the point of collapse, including prolonged and historic drought, severe wildfires, impacts to spawning and rearing habitat, harmful algal blooms, and ocean forage shifts and associated thiamine deficiency. Extreme climate disruption is compounding these factors and is now testing the resiliency of our salmon. In addition, the life cycle of salmon makes them extremely susceptible to environmental impacts as the salmon that are returning to California's waters now were impacted by drought conditions three years ago on their initial journey out to the ocean.

Those factors, culminating in the anticipated closure of SRFC and KRFC commercial and recreational fisheries, will have severe and long-lasting effects on already distressed coastal communities and the businesses that depend upon these fisheries. These natural causes, and the regulatory restrictions that now appear certain to result from them, constitute "a commercial fishery failure due to a fishery resource disaster"

under section 312(a). Declaring a fishery resource disaster will begin the process for requesting federal aid to assist these fishery-dependent communities during this extremely difficult time.

The expected closure of the 2023 California commercial salmon fishery will result in loss of 100 percent of the 5-year average annual ex-vessel value of \$15,033,200. The ex-vessel value of commercial salmon landings does not take into account other economic losses resulting from the reduced commercial harvest, nor does it include related economic effects of harvest reductions on charter boats, guides, and other components of the recreational fishery. The Pacific Fishery Management Council estimates that over the past five years (2018-2022) California commercial and recreational ocean salmon fisheries generated an annual average of \$28.5 million and \$17.2 million¹, respectively, in coastal community and state personal income. As such, California projects a loss for the 2023 season of over \$45 million from a closure of the SRFC and KRFC commercial and recreational ocean fisheries. This estimate does not account for the full impact to California's communities as it does not include economic impacts to inland salmon fisheries.

As you know, salmon are a vital component of California's cultural and natural resources and provide significant commercial, recreational, economic, intrinsic, and cultural benefits to the state. Based on the projected 100 percent loss of ex-vessel value, I am requesting an expedited declaration of a fishery resource disaster for California's SFRC and KRFC fisheries to enable fishing communities affected by this disaster to receive essential economic assistance.

Please direct questions or requests for more information to Dr. Craig Shuman, California Department of Fish and Wildlife Marine Region Manager at r7RegionalMgr@wildlife.ca.gov or (805) 568-1246.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and for your ongoing support of California's fishing communities.

Sincerely,



Eleni Kounalakis
Acting Governor of California

¹ Review of 2022 Ocean Salmon Fisheries – Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation Document for the Pacific Coast Salmon Fishery Management Plan. Table IV-16.

cc: The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate

The Honorable Alex Padilla
United States Senate

Members of the California Congressional Delegation

The Honorable Toni G. Atkins
Senate President pro Tempore
California State Senate

The Honorable Anthony Rendon
Assembly Speaker
California State Assembly

The Honorable Mike McGuire, Chair
Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture
California State Senate

The Honorable Mark Stone, Vice Chair
Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture
California State Assembly

The Honorable Dave Min, Chair
Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee
California State Senate

The Honorable Rebecca Bauer-Kahan, Chair
Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee
California State Assembly

Wade Crowfoot, Secretary
California Natural Resources Agency

Charlton H. Bonham, Director
California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Melissa Miller-Henson, Executive Director
California Fish and Game Commission