

NATURAL REARING STRUCTURES FOR ENDANGERED WINTER-RUN SALMON BEING PLACED IN SACRAMENTO RIVER

20 tree and rock structures - 'rock wads' - will aid juvenile fish

REDDING, CA – Chances of survival may improve for young salmon and trout thanks to an innovative effort to place 20 structures – 'rock wads' – made of almond trees and large boulders into the Sacramento River to create critical rearing habitat.

Led by the Sacramento River Settlement Contractors, Reclamation District 108, the Sacramento Valley Ecological Restoration Foundation (SAVER) and funded by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the 'rock wad' structures are intended to help provide juvenile salmon refuge against larger predators, while enticing them to stay in colder waters longer, thus increasing their odds of healthy maturation for their journey to the Pacific Ocean.

"The diverse makeup of the 'rock wads' - with the boulder and woody debris - create an ideal setting for foraging, cover, and rest for the small juvenile salmon and trout," said **Roger Cornwell, President of SAVER**. "With less debris naturally entering the upper portions of the Sacramento River, we must provide opportunities that these young fish historically found during their outward migration."

The latest effort comes on the heels of a pilot project in 2017 that placed 25 shelter structures in the same area of the river beneath the South Bonnyview Bridge in Redding.

"Placing the structures in this specific section of the river pairs with a key time in the juvenile salmon's early migratory passage along the Sacramento River," said **Jeff Souza, Biologist with Tehama Environmental Solutions**. "We hope the addition of more structures will ultimately mean more salmon fry will grow to a healthier, robust size so they can better overcome challenges downstream."

This is just one of several interagency projects planned in early 2023 to aid the winter-run salmon. The Sacramento River is the only river in the world that has four runs of Chinook, or "king," salmon due to its diverse ecosystem that features near year-round cold water due to snow melt, food supply, water velocity, water depth and riverbed gravel. When one or all of these are drastically altered, fish populations are impacted.

"Helping the salmon during critical points along their lifecycle is the best path forward in finding a solution to boost fish population numbers. But to achieve the desired result, we must continue to work collaboratively – from local to state to the federal levels," said **John Hannon, Bureau of Reclamation**.

The Rock Wad Project is part of the Central Valley Project Improvement Act and also follows a comprehensive effort to recover all four runs of Chinook salmon in the Sacramento Valley Watershed as part of the Sacramento Valley Salmon Recovery Program, the National Marine Fisheries Service's Recovery Plan, the California Resources

Agency's Salmon Resiliency Strategy and the early implementation of the Voluntary Agreements/Healthy Rivers California action plan.

While this effort is led by SAVER and funded by USBR and USFWS, the project is a partnership with a multitude of local, state, and federal entities including the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, California Regional Water Quality Control Board, and National Marine Fisheries Service. The project will be constructed in partnership with Sacramento River Settlement Contract Members including Reclamation District 108, Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District, Anderson-Cottonwood Irrigation District, Basin Irrigation and Drainage Authority, City of Redding.

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ABOUT SACRAMENTO RIVER SETTLEMENT CONTRACTORS

Sacramento River Settlement Contractors (SRSC) are dedicated to providing reliable, affordable water supplies to their landowners and water users, while ensuring the environmental and economic viability of the region. Among the largest irrigation districts in the Sacramento Valley and with senior water rights, they have a long history of serving farmers and the agricultural community and maintaining critical wildlife habitat. The member districts fulfill their mission of efficiently and effectively managing and delivering water through an ever-improving delivery system and responsible policies, while maintaining a deep commitment to sustainable practices. Looking ahead, the SRSC will remain focused on continuing to deliver a reliable and sustainable water supply by positioning themselves to respond proactively, strategically and responsibly to California's ever-changing water landscape.