



For Immediate Release

Friday, March 3, 2023
Sacramento, CA

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Commercial Anglers, Ocean Passenger Fleet, and Inland River Guides Call For 2023 Salmon Season Closure and Disaster Assistance Funding

Today, leadership of the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations, the Golden Gate Fisherman's Association, and the Northern California Guides and Sportsmen's Association are calling for an immediate closure of the 2023 salmon season and requesting the Governor Newsom, the State Legislature, and state agencies seek Federal and State disaster assistance funding for affected ocean and inland commercial operators.

On March 1, 2023, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife held their annual pre-season briefing and reported some of the worst fisheries numbers in the history of the state. These numbers follow years of drought, poor water management decisions by Federal and State managers, occasional failure to meet hatchery egg mitigation goals, inaccurate season modeling, and the inability of fisheries managers to meet their own mandated escapement goals.

"Unfortunately we have gotten to a point that we have been warning was coming; another collapse of our iconic salmon fisheries", said George Bradshaw, President of PCFFA. "The harvest models, escapement goals and model inaccuracies show there is no warranted opportunity to harvest Chinook Salmon in the state of California in 2023. Our organization is asking Federal and State managers to take the required steps to ensure the survival of the resource and close the fishery. We demand we work towards future sustainable solutions so we can once again have robust salmon runs and thriving fisheries. Our coastal communities and generational fisherman deeply rely on the proper management. Therefore this requires our Federal and State leaders lead the effort to secure disaster assistance until we all get through these foreseeable hard times."

"Inland recreational salmon anglers and salmon fishing guides are the last user group to access the resource every year when salmon return to their natal, spawning grounds and hatcheries", said James Stone, Executive Director of NCGASA. "We have seen historic low runs in the Sacramento Valley since 2015, with 75% of the last 8 years falling short of the required conservation objective of 122,000 spawning adult fall run salmon. Current salmon management policy and poor water management, without proper hatchery mitigation, has got us to this point of full collapse. Our small rural communities throughout the Delta and upper Sacramento river systems that rely on salmon for food, recreation, sport, and industry have been drastically affected. We need to enact immediate conservation measures and close the fishery in all sectors ocean and inland, coupled with a complete overhaul of our salmon management models and policies that have led to this scenario."

“After several consecutive years of poor river conditions fishery managers have forecasted near record low salmon returns to the Sacramento and Klamath Rivers”, said Rick Powers, President of GGFA. “With low returns we feel it would be irresponsible to participate in a 2023 season. While we make our living fishing for salmon, we are willing to make a short-term sacrifice to ensure a return of robust salmon populations that our families depend on. Therefore, we suggest that this year's salmon season be suspended to protect the salmon runs that are vital to California Coastal Communities, and we call for Governor Newsom and state leaders to fight for disaster assistance funding for our communities immediately.”

PCFAA, GGFA, and NCGASA comprise the three largest licensed operators and businesses that rely on the Fall Run Chinook fishery. These three organizations have partnered together on numerous previous meetings with each other and Federal and State fisheries managers seeking changes and improvements to California's fisheries management, with mixed outcomes. While the communities they represent will be irrevocably harmed by a 2023 closure, they believe there is no other conscionable alternative at this time.

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