



April 20, 2017

Charlton H. Bonham  
Director  
California Department of Fish and Wildlife  
1416 9<sup>th</sup> Street, 12<sup>th</sup> floor  
Sacramento CA 95814

Dear Director Bonham,

On behalf of the California Salmon Council, representing all California commercially permitted salmon fishermen, our Board of Directors comprised of fishermen, buyer/processors, and a public member unanimously request the Department's assistance in seeking a gubernatorial fishery disaster or failure request for the 2017 commercial salmon fishing season. Once signed by Governor Jerry Brown, we ask that the request be sent to Wilbur L. Ross, Jr., U.S. Secretary of Commerce, and the California Congressional Delegation.

This action is in response to a release of the Pacific Fisheries Management Council's (PFMC) preliminary recommendations for the 2017 commercial and recreational ocean Chinook fisheries off the coasts of Washington, Oregon, and California. Aside from the complete closures in 2008, 2009, and the near closure in 2010, the 2017 salmon season options are the worst on record and reflect some of the worst environmental impacts to salmon populations that California has ever seen.

### **Background**

The commercial and recreational fisheries in California and Oregon rely heavily on age-3 and age-4 Klamath River Fall Chinook, in addition to age-3 Central Valley Fall Chinook. Low predicted ocean abundance of all Chinook stocks promise extremely limited access to fishing grounds, and as a result, will have devastating effects on fishing jobs and communities coast-wide.

Adult Chinook returns to the Klamath River in 2016 were 21% of average for the 38 years that California Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW) has been keeping records. Fewer than 14,000 adult natural spawners returned to the Klamath and Trinity basins, far below the conservation threshold of 30,909 fish. Additionally, only 2,786 age-2 Chinook returned to the Klamath River. This is the 4<sup>th</sup> lowest return of age-2 fish observed on the Klamath River, indicating a very low ocean abundance of age-3 fish in 2017. These declines known to be caused by warm water conditions resulting in disease outbreaks, reduced flows, decreased survival and brood failures. These deleterious effects have been caused by or exacerbated by persistent drought conditions in California and Oregon.

California Salmon Council Administrative Office  
P.O. Box 2255 • Folsom, CA 95763-2255  
(916) 933-7050 • FAX (916) 933-7055  
[www.calkingsalmon.org](http://www.calkingsalmon.org)

Sacramento River Fall Chinook are a major component of ocean fisheries in Oregon and California. Returns to the Sacramento River in 2016 were the lowest since a fishery disaster was declared in 2008-2010. Ocean abundance of age-3 Sacramento Chinook is predicted to be nearly as low as 2010. As with the Klamath, reduced salmon abundance is known to have been caused by drought-related environmental impacts to salmon populations.

In 2006, when the first salmon disaster was realized, commercial fishermen landed a total of 69,728 salmon. Last year, commercial landings were only 55,051 fish, 21% percent fewer fish than a previously recognized disaster. In 2006, 477 salmon vessels participated in the fishery; in 2016, only 437 boats participated in the fishery. Ex-vessel values are down 60% in 2016 when compared to the last five-year average. Economic value can be deceiving, in that approximately half of permitted boats participate in the fishery, and in 2016 the fewest boats participated in the last six years.

Total landings in 2016 were down 68% from the last five-year average (55,051 fish compared to 172,406 fish). When comparing landings, it must be noted that the industry never recovered following the 2006 disaster. To gain a better perspective, one need only look at 2004, a record year before the collapse. In 2004, the industry landed 502,110 fish. In 2016, 55,051 were landed, realizing an 89% decrease.

The broader economic effects of this fishery failure are felt in many sectors. In addition to commercial salmon fishermen losses, charter boat operators, and in-river guides have been negatively impacted. The disaster will mean significant losses for gear stores, boat yards, campgrounds, and all the associated businesses that rely on California's salmon fishery.

The California Salmon Council stands ready to assist the Department as we have done many times before. We look forward to working with you on a strategy to secure the Governor's declaration.

Sincerely,



David Goldenberg  
Chief Executive Officer  
California Salmon Council

CC:

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