



Federation of Fly Fishers

Conserving - Restoring - Educating Through Fly Fishing

Northern California Council

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For supporting reports and correspondence please see one of the following websites.
All sites linked to NCCFFF.Org.:

<http://www.caltrout.org/>

<http://www.fffswc.org/>

<http://www.NCCFFF.org>

<http://www.tucalifornia.org/>

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STATE OF CALIFORNIA DFG REJECTS USE OF ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT PROTECTION

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – In the face of strenuous protests over its reliance on “junk science,” the California Department of Fish and Game continues to ask the federal government to remove its Endangered Species Act (ESA) protection from diminished runs of Central Valley sea-run rainbow trout (Steelhead), according to a consortium of sport fishing conservation organizations. What’s up, more water exports?

California Trout, Trout Unlimited, both Northern and Southern California Councils of the Federation of Fly Fishers (FFF), and California Sport Fishing Protection Alliance jointly oppose the Department's illogical delisting proposal. While DFG is asking that winter-run Chinook salmon, a commercially valuable species, continue to be protected, it is requesting that Steelhead, also a "threatened" species, be delisted. "With the food chain in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Rivers Delta in collapse, and its sport fishing future in doubt, what possible motivation does the State have to remove ESA protections from another species which must pass through the Delta on its way to spawning and rearing areas in these rivers?" asks the conservation groups.

In a letter written July 11 to a group of sport angling organizations, State Resources Agency Secretary Mike Chrisman expressed great concern about the condition of Central Valley Steelhead by stating that they, ". . . are clearly in trouble . . ." and vowing that, ". . . we will continue to do everything we can to protect and restore this species." In spite of these seemingly supportive words, the State Department of Fish and Game is asking the Federal Government to remove ESA listing protections from Central Valley Steelhead.

"Without ESA protection, how can the State protect and restore a species which it has failed to protect and restore under present listing standards?" asks Phil Greenlee, President of the Northern California Council of the Federation of Fly Fishers (NCCFFF).

"State government has not explained to us why they had to invent new pseudo-scientific methods to justify removal of the ESA threatened designation from Central Valley Steelhead," stated Charles Bucaria, a member of the Board of Directors of NCCFFF. "DFG had to take dead fish counts from the 1991 Dunsmuir area poisoning of the Upper Sacramento River to project the number of trout and sea-run Steelhead now in the river for 50 miles below Shasta Dam. Neither Steelhead nor salmon have been able to get above Shasta Dam since it was built. It is illogical to use old data from an area steelhead can't reach to measure the health of sea-run trout (Steelhead) below the dam," Bucaria said.

"The American Fisheries Society has debunked the state's methodology and believes that Steelhead trout are deserving of continued ESA protection," said Brian

Stranko, Executive Director, California Trout (CalTrout). The California Advisory Committee on Salmon and Steelhead Trout, which reports to the State Legislature, has urged the Department of Fish and Game to reconsider its proposal to de-list," he went on to say. "There is only one logical reason which we can think of that the administration has for stone-walling us for the past six months. That is that by allowing Steelhead to become extinct, it becomes easier to for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to export more water down the Sacramento River."

John Beuttler, Conservation Director of the California Sport Fishing Protection Alliance believes it is not in the public interest to put Steelhead in greater jeopardy, "It's hard to believe the Department would even consider delisting this troubled fishery since it has shown so little recovery. Compounding this problem is the collapse of its food supply in the Delta, which is needed by the young out-migrating Steelhead to make it to the ocean. Given these acute problems, how can it possibly serve the public to put such a valuable natural resource in greater danger of extinction?"

After repeated correspondence and meetings with Schwarzenegger Administration officials, the Federation of Fly Fishers in both Northern and Southern California, California Trout and Trout Unlimited have been joined by the California Sport Fishing Protection Alliance to publicly oppose the State's delisting proposal and to urge that the Governor reaffirm commitments made by two of California's last three governors to significantly increase the numbers of native steelhead state-wide.

The sport fishing groups have asked Gov. Schwarzenegger to reaffirm California's long-time commitment to protect and enhance state steelhead populations. A letter to the Governor dated June 18, 2005 stated, "We ask that your administration take a public position in favor of protection and enhancement of naturally occurring Central Valley sea-run steelhead trout." The Governor has not responded.

"What we want to know is simple," stated David Katz, California Director of Trout Unlimited, "What is this Administration's position regarding steelhead trout and salmon in California's rivers and streams, particularly those whose fisheries may be threatened by loss of habitat through urban development and increased water exports? When is the Administration going to get serious about protecting this public resource?"

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