

Date of Hearing: August 31, 2017

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON WATER, PARKS, AND WILDLIFE  
Eduardo Garcia, Chair  
SJR 7 (McGuire) – As Amended July 19, 2017

**SENATE VOTE:** 34-0

**SUBJECT:** Public resources: salmon: fishery restoration

**SUMMARY:** This bill urges state and federal departments and agencies responsible for the stewardship of public resources, as specified, to make collaborative, statewide salmon fishery restoration urgent and high priority, and urges the federal government to undertake all appropriate measures to provide necessary disaster relief for California salmon fisheries for 2016 and 2017. Specifically, **this bill:**

Contains sixteen whereas statements that describe salmon origin, ecological role, economic role, cultural role, recent population, federal and state endangered status, and disaster relief actions for salmon fishery failure in California.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Establishes a state policy to significantly increase the natural production of salmon and steelhead trout. Establishes a state policy that existing natural salmon and steelhead trout habitat shall not be diminished further without offsetting the impacts of habitat loss. Establishes a state policy to recognize and encourage public and privately funded mitigation, restoration, and enhancement programs to protect and increase natural spawning of salmon and steelhead trout.
- 2) Requires the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) to prepare and maintain a detailed and comprehensive program for the protection and increase of salmon, steelhead trout, and anadromous fisheries.
- 3) Finds and declares that commercial salmon fishing is in the public interest and that the preservation of commercial salmon fishing directly affects the health and welfare of the public.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown.

**COMMENTS:** This bill urges state and federal departments and agencies responsible for the stewardship of public resources, as specified, to make collaborative, statewide salmon fishery restoration urgent and high priority, and urges the federal government to undertake all appropriate measures to provide necessary disaster relief for California salmon fisheries for 2016 and 2017.

**Author's Statement:**

In the past decade, California's salmon fishery has experienced the two most severe crises in the history of this fishery. The first crisis was the closure of the

entire California salmon fishery in 2008 and 2009 due to low populations. And the second was the damage to juvenile salmon during the drought.

The projected 2017 population of Klamath River Chinook salmon in the ocean are at the lowest level ever. The 2017 population of adult Bay-Delta Chinook salmon in the ocean are also very low, only 230,000 fish. Of the 10 times in the past 65 years that the adult population of Bay-Delta Chinook salmon have fallen below 250,000 fish, eight have occurred in the past 12 years.

**Background: *Salmon Life Cycle and Populations.*** Salmon are an anadromous fish. Anadromous fish are characterized by migrating from salt water to spawn in fresh water. Eggs are laid in cool freshwater streams typically at high altitudes. Young salmon pass through several stages of life in freshwater, spending anywhere from 6 months to 3 years in freshwater before heading out to the ocean. Salmon then spend 1 to 5 years in the ocean before returning to their birth stream to spawn.

The Sacramento-San Joaquin River system is the principal producer of Chinook salmon caught in California's ocean fisheries. Historically, the Sacramento River has represented the largest population of Chinook salmon. At the turn of the century the estimated annual spawning runs approached two million fish. Habitat degradation and the recent drought have led to a significant decline in Salmon populations. It has been estimated that in the worst drought years more than 95 percent of salmon spawn perished due to conditions.

**Status of the Fishery.** On May 24, 2017, Governor Jerry Brown and Oregon Governor Kate Brown sent a joint letter to United States Department of Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross requesting an expedited declaration of catastrophic regional fishery disaster for the states of Oregon and California for 2016 and 2017. The letter stated “Ocean salmon fishery restrictions in our states in 2016 and 2017, including full closures in some areas for 2017, have severe effects on already distressed rural communities and the businesses that depend upon these fisheries. California’s 2016 commercial fisheries only caught 67 percent of what was expected, totaling only \$5.3 million compared with revenues in 2011-2015 that averaged \$12.6 million. Commercial ocean salmon fisheries along the entire California coast in 2017 are projected to result in a total value of \$4.5 million for the sale of 47,600 fish – 72 percent less than the 2012-2016 statewide average of 169,400 fish.”

**Salmon Restoration.** It is the policy of the state to significantly increase the natural production of salmon. Because of the unique life cycle of salmon, and because they are sensitive to ocean and watershed conditions, there are numerous challenges to restoration and recovery. There have been several plans over the years to improve salmon populations. All plans have depended upon collaboration between federal, state, and local governments, as well as public and private organizations to build, restore, and maintain habitat. Habitat improvement include renovation and placement of spawning gravel, water exchanges, stream bank protection, stabilization and revegetation, provide cover and remove barriers to passage.

**Supporting Arguments:** As a result of unprecedented challenges, there has never been a more critical time for an ambitious California salmon restoration effort. According to a recent study, at the current rate of decline, California stands to lose 45% of its remaining salmonids in the next 50 years unless significant action is taken to stem the decline. The recent drought resulted in severe damage to juvenile salmon. Low water flows and high water temperatures have decimated reproduction. The decline is causing severe impacts on California’s salmon fishing

businesses and our Native American tribes have also been severely impacted. California must take action immediately to restore salmon runs.

**REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

**Support**

California Salmon Council  
California Trout  
Golden Gate Salmon Association  
Nature Conservancy, The  
Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations  
River Partners  
Trout Unlimited

**Opposition**

None on file

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