

# HUMBOLDT AREA SALTWATER ANGLERS

A VOICE FOR SALTWATER SPORTFISHERS

2016 SUMMER NEWSLETTER



Salmon in the Bay!

The mission of Humboldt Area Saltwater Anglers is to represent North Coast fishermen's historic and ongoing right to sport fish along the Northern California coast; advocate reasonable and rational sport fishing seasons and regulations; educate our members and the general public about the economic and cultural contributions of sport fishing to our local economies; and promote sustainable stewardship of the resource.

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This is issue #30

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# Presidents Message

By Scott McBain



It's hard to believe that summer is almost over! I hope that everyone has had considerable time on the water this summer, and have taken advantage of salmon and California halibut in the bay, as well as other species off-shore. Hopefully we'll get a chance to target albacore this year, it's been a tough couple of years for us.

We wanted to express our appreciation for all those that responded to the HASA survey for providing input on priorities for the coming year. Both the rankings and the individual comments were extremely helpful for us to develop our 2017 budget/workplan priorities. We apologize for not providing an overview of results in this newsletter, it has been a very busy summer for us. Dirk and I will prepare a summary for the next newsletter, with explanation of how those results helped shape our 2017 workplan. A couple of notable highlights was the importance of Pacific halibut to our members (nearly equal to salmon!), the overwhelming prioritization of representation at fishery management meetings, more support of local boating infrastructure (docks, dredging), strong support for our new website, continued support for science collaboration, among others. Stay tuned for a more detailed summary.

HASA support of science, policy, and economics continues in 2016. As Casey mentions on page 22, HASA is supporting an HSU student in analyzing CDFW surf perch otoliths to get a better understanding of growth and productivity. These types of partnerships not only help our understanding of fisheries targeted by HASA members, but also builds strong relationships between HSU, CDFW, and HASA that helps in overall fisheries management. We are also contributing to dock infrastructure improvements with the City of Eureka, as well as assisting with encouraging dredging at the Eureka boat basin ramp.

Based on the disappointing outcome of the June PFMC meeting regarding Pacific halibut (see Tom's article on page 15), we are stepping back and developing a longer-term strategy to improve our standing with the PFMC to get a fairer distribution of Pacific halibut to California anglers. PFMC has basically deferred revisiting the Catch Share Plan until 2019, so we will be getting our ducks in a row to be more effective in our efforts. It is not going to be an easy process, and will require several approaches working in tandem. It was clear to us that science is not a factor in PFMC decision making on this issue, so we will be working on the economics component and policy component in the next couple of years. In the next year, we will likely be conducting a more rigorous economic study to better quantify the economic benefits of Pacific halibut to north coast anglers, as well as the economic impacts of season closures. We will also attempt to work more closely with our agency and legislative partners on the policy side. An important component is also to ensure that we fully utilize our 29,600 lb allocation this year (we have 8,000 lbs remaining as of August 14), so get out there and get your halibut!

Lastly, best of luck for the rest of the summer, and hope to see you out on the water!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott McBain".

# Odds and Ends of California Water, Salmon, and the Courts

By Larry De Ridder



In our last three issues we've explored some of the scientific expectations regarding what the removal of the four PacifiCorp Klamath River dams would produce. In this issue we're going to look at some of the political and legal activity swirling about the debate, as well as other salmon-related tidbits.

Generally speaking, water users downstream of the four dams are in favor of removal. Their primary arguments tend to revolve around warm water conditions in the two largest lakes adversely affecting downstream fish populations by (1) limiting access to upriver spawning areas and (2) promoting the growth of disease-causing organisms which kill salmon downstream of the dams. Tribal, sport and commercial fishing interests are all in favor of the projected increase in fish following dam removal, and the expectation that this will result in increased food, sport and job opportunities. The Klamath is California's second-largest salmon producing river system, and the prospects of nearly doubling its salmon output are alluring. In addition, there is no disputing that the river conditions below Iron Gate Dam are a problem for the fish. Upstream residents are split on the issue, generally based on where their personal water supply originates – from the stored water or from an alternate source.

Those who get their water from the reservoirs argue that the dams provide (1) important stops for migratory waterfowl, (2) water reserves for drought years, (3) government-promised water rights for important food crops, (4) protection for the lower river by stopping toxic sediments trapped behind the dams, (5) flood control for the lower river, and (6) recreation-based income for a remote California county (Siskiyou) with limited industry.

With the failure of Congress to act in 2015, both sides are attempting to resolve the issue without Congress, though PacifiCorp still needs approval from the government's Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). Given that the waters downstream from Iron Gate clearly do act as a repository for fish killing disease organisms, the Hoopa tribe has filed a lawsuit regarding the water release rules in effect. As this is going to press, the Karuk and Yurok tribes have announced their similar intent, claiming the government approved water release schedule is causing very high disease rates among Coho salmon, which are listed as endangered by the US Endangered Species Act (ESA). The non-profit law organization Earthjustice represents various sport and commercial fishing interests,



*Klamath River guide Mike Coopman and angler Frank Galusha with a 25 pound spring run Chinook salmon*

and claims juvenile salmon infection rates were near 90 percent in 2015. Tribal fish sampling in 2014 showed a similar infection rate. As near as I can determine, the government is supposed to ensure the infection rate does not exceed 49 percent. In response to our recent drought conditions, instead of changing the water release schedule to keep infection rates below 50%, the Feds decided to draft new rules allowing higher infection rates during drought conditions. The bottom line rationale appears to be something along the lines of "even without the dams there would be higher infection rates in low water years, so it's OK to just change the rules." Since infected juveniles have a high mortality rate, this line of reasoning isn't going down well with everyone!

While the formation of a non-profit organization to manage the decommissioning is put together, upstream users are

also headed to court. It appears that a New York based attorney has been hired by Siskiyou County to prevent dam decommissioning by attacking the process used to arrive at the deconstruction decision. To review the five options which were under discussion, review our article in the Winter 2016 issue, [The Klamath River, Past and Future, pt 2](#).

There are claims of "secret meetings" and lack of transparency in the process, with the goal of forcing removal of the dams as the only viable option. "Maintain the dams" advocates argue removal of the dams would be bad for Coho salmon and also invoke the ESA in their arguments.

As is common in such contests, sometimes actual facts are lost and rumors and misinformation can take on lives of their own. In reviewing various articles and letters to the editor which are available on-line, I've come across such gems as: (1) "It's all about the fish, the people don't matter"; (2) "The endangered Coho salmon isn't native to the Klamath watershed, so its ESA listing is unconstitutional"; (3) "Dam removal will kill hundreds of species in the Klamath Basin by release of 20 million cubic yards of toxic sludge"; (4) "Release of ... yellow perch ... will decimate Salmon spawning grounds"; (5) "Dam removal would be a violation of the Constitution of the United States as Siskiyou County voters clearly stated in the 2010 election by a vote of 80 percent to retain the dams"; (6) "As for the removal of dams within the borders of Siskiyou County, you will have to prove to us, the people of Siskiyou County, proof of private ownership of these dams by Pacific Corp. We are demanding the notarized Deed of Trust proving such ownership"; and (7) "they were built within hard economic times by the Bureau of Reclamation".

As misinformed as some of those statements are, sometimes there is a grain of truth buried somewhere. As an example, let's look at number (4) regarding yellow perch. One of our members asked me once, "What will happen to all the warm water fish in the lakes?" I was unable to find the issue addressed in the Environmental Impact Review/Statement. As a kid I was once at a 3600 acre-foot lake which had just been drained for earthquake retrofit work. You could nearly walk across the downstream water on the crappie, catfish and bass present. It's simply not possible to keep the last of the fish from washing down river. That makes this a legitimate question -- What can we expect if the dams are removed? So, I contacted PacifiCorp with the question. Either they didn't understand or they deliberately sidestepped the question in their answer, because the response I received had nothing to do with the question I submitted. It seemed to me they had no plan on how to keep non-native species out of the lower river. Granted, they would likely die quickly, cause a two-week stink, and then be done with it. But perhaps some, like smallmouth bass, would take to a Klamath River life as they have in various other Western rivers. It

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*Fly fishing for steelhead on the Klamath River.*

might take only a few survivors. Does someone out there have a plan to prevent an influx of smallmouth bass into the Klamath?

In news from up North, some recent court rulings could ultimately have local effects. In a recent federal ruling in Washington, a three-judge panel for the 9<sup>th</sup> US Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that Native American tribes not only have a right to fish for salmon, they also have a right to expect that salmon will be present. This ruling affirmed that the federal government has a duty to protect salmon habitat under various treaties dating back as much as 150 years. The case originally related to numerous culverts installed in Washington that permit water to flow under roads, but which if designed or installed poorly can prevent anadromous fish from proceeding further upriver. The ruling upheld a 2013 decision which re-

quired the state of Washington to replace hundreds of culverts with more fish-friendly intersections between waterway and road. This particular case wasn't even the first major pro-fish decision for 2016. Shortly before this case, a federal judge ruled that a huge habitat restoration effort by the Feds was still insufficient, and that federal law might even require the removal of four huge dams on the lower Snake River in Eastern Washington. Clearly recent rulings have favored salmon and their habitat over other considerations. Since we are also part of the 9<sup>th</sup> District the rulings could have local reverberations.

Closer to home, a Northern California judge recently issued a ruling which could delay Governor Brown's Twin Tunnels project. For those who aren't familiar with the subject, read our article from the Summer 2013 issue, [Pending Golden State Water Projects](#). The Sacramento Bee reported that the judge invalidated the environmental management plan for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, and that the plan must be set aside until deficiencies are corrected. In the last two years the estimated costs for the twin tunnels project have risen from \$14 billion to something closer to \$15.5 to \$17 billion, even as the initially promised environmental improvement projects list has been slashed. The plan has been the target of numerous legal challenges since it was introduced by the Delta Stewardship Council. One of the major parties pushing for the tunnels project has taken a different tactic aimed at eliminating dissent. Recently the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California removed a number of potential opponents by simply buying a huge chunk of the delta. Located on or near the proposed 35-mile tunnel project, the water district purchased Webb Tract, Bouldin Island, Bacon Island and most of Holland Tract, plus a portion of Chipps Island located a bit further from the proposed tunnel route. The total land area purchased is about 20,369 acres. The water district spent the funds with the expectation that owning the property would give them more leverage during water negotiations. Ownership of the islands comes with water rights, and it may be that the water will simply be diverted to SoCal, rather than used to irrigate the farms currently on the islands.



*Margaret Morris holds on to a beautiful Klamath River king salmon. Will dam removal create more of these great fish or introduce predatory fish like smallmouth bass?*

The sale closed escrow only days after California's Supreme Court rejected a legal challenge by San Joaquin County, one of several now failed attempts to block the sale. Conservation groups fighting the tunnel likened the land buy to tactics used by Los Angeles interests to secure water rights throughout much of the Owens River Valley, east of the Sierras, in 1937.

Just how to pay for the Twin Tunnels is also an interesting subject. It appears that as long as Governor Brown and allies don't try to pay for the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) with general obligation bonds, the matter doesn't require a popular vote. They have no intention of risking a "no" vote, as happened to them in the 1980s concerning the peripheral canal. But then, just how do you pay? Two water agencies hoping to tap into BDCP water, the Santa Clara Valley Water District and the Zone 7 Water Agency of Alameda County appear to have been caught tapping into property tax revenue. Records released under the California Public Records Act appear to show the water agencies have been using property tax funds to pay for Twin Tunnels planning costs. The BDCP, now operating as the California Water Fix, was supposed to be funded by fees assessed on water users benefitting from the project. Opponents, such as Restore the Delta, claim that funds used to work on the Twin Tunnels project were deeply buried in the property taxes, rather than taken from water users fees. Taking property tax revenue in this manner is a violation of Proposition 13. Per Prop 13, spending property taxes for such a project requires a 2/3 general election "yes" vote. The Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association has indicated that the offending government agencies could face lawsuits over the issue.

As PacifiCorp and the many government agencies involved in the ongoing water wars announce new data or progress, we'll try to keep everyone informed.



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# Humboldt Bay Herring

By James Ray, CDFW



Pacific herring (*Clupea pallasii*) have a broad distribution in the eastern Pacific, ranging from Alaska to northern Baja, Mexico. Humboldt Bay has one of the largest spawning populations of Pacific herring in California. Other significant Californian spawning populations include San Francisco Bay (the largest), Tomales Bay, and Crescent City. Since the early 1970s these populations have supported a commercial fishery targeting herring for their roe, primarily for the Japanese market. Herring are also targeted by sport anglers, who harvest them for bait; however, smoked herring is becoming increasingly popular. As 'forage fish', herring are a critical component of California's coastal ecosystems and are an important food source for salmon and other recreationally and commercially harvested marine fish. In addition, a variety of ecologically and recreationally important birds, including black brant, green winged teal, scaup, surf scoters, buffleheads, and other ducks, use herring eggs as a valuable source of winter nutrition.

To manage and protect this important resource it is essential for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to monitor several aspects of the population and their habitat. Because of increased development pressures on the bay and the up-coming statewide fisheries management plan for herring, CDFW re-established spawning habitat mapping and began to update age structure, size structure, and fecundity information in 2014. This work has been conducted in collaboration with Ken Bates of Cloudburst Fishing Company and with support from the Humboldt County Fish and Game Advisory Commission.

Spawning in Humboldt Bay typically occurs between mid-December and mid-March. Herring often enter the bay and spawn in several distinct 'waves' as different groups of fish ripen. However, in recent years spawning activity has been more truncate and has mostly occurred as a single extended event. In the 2014-15 season, a minor spawn occurred on December 23<sup>rd</sup>, with the majority of spawning occurring between February 1 –7. During the 2015-16 season spawning occurred between January 19 -27. Herring do not eat during the spawning period, which may be up to several weeks. As such, they are keen to resume feeding in the ocean and most fish leave the bay immediately after spawning. Eelgrass is the most important spawning habitat in Humboldt Bay (Photo 1).

Photo 1: Herring eggs on eelgrass.



Herring spawn in several locations throughout North Bay, and to a lesser extent in South Bay. However, an area on the eastern side of North Bay, referred to as the ‘core spawning area,’ has been identified to contain the most important spawning beds (shown in pink on map). In the 2014-15 season, herring spawned almost exclusively in the core spawning area (shown as turquoise shading on map). In 2015-16 herring spawned in both the core spawning area and on the west side of the bay (shown as black diagonal lines on map). This pattern of spawning occurs less frequently and may be a function of specific environmental conditions, such as high outflows of fresh water from Freshwater Creek or higher herring abundance causing them to disperse more widely to spawn. Research has shown that site-specific environmental conditions other than just the available habitat (e.g., wave action) can influence herring egg survival rates. Therefore, it is likely that, while herring do select sites based on spawning habitat suitability, they also select sites for other important reasons that may not be apparent to us. As such, spawning sites, like the core spawning area in eastern North Bay, which have a record of long term use, are of significant importance to the population and should be prioritized for protection during development planning processes.

To characterize age structure, size structure, and fecundity of the herring population for the 2015-16 spawning season, fish were sampled using a 750 foot lampara net. Samples were taken from throughout the spawning period. The length frequency (numbers of fish in defined length categories) of fish sampled from Humboldt Bay is shown in Figure 1. Fish length ranged from 125 to 213mm. The last systematic evaluation of length was during the 1974-75 and 1975-76 seasons by Rabin and Barnhart of Humboldt State University, where length ranged from 157-230mm and 166 to 223mm respectively. This suggests larger fish were present in the population in the 1970’s than now; however, additional samples are needed to confirm this. Rabin and Barnhart showed that fish from both of their sampling seasons ranged from 2 to 11 years old. Otoliths (ear bones) were removed from each fish sampled in 2015-16 and will be analyzed by CDFW for age this summer. However, it is possible, given the smaller size of the fish in the current sample that the oldest age classes of fish, which tend to be the largest, are not present in the population.

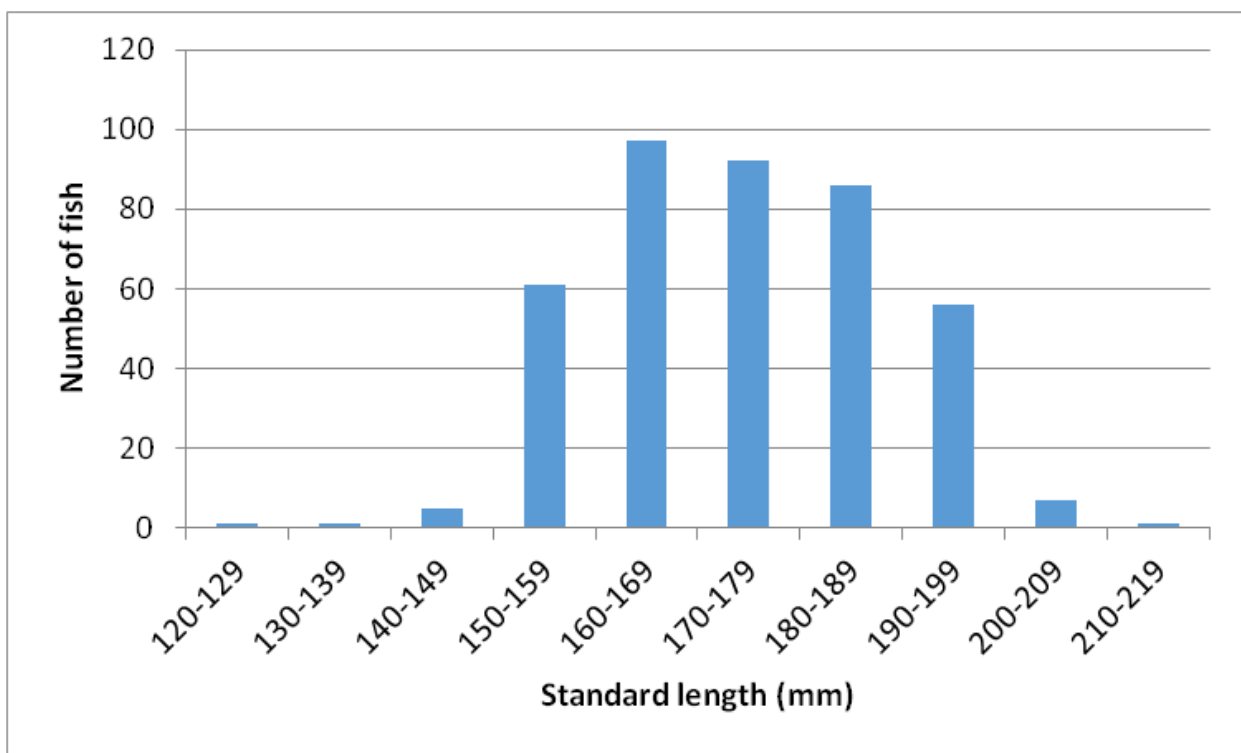
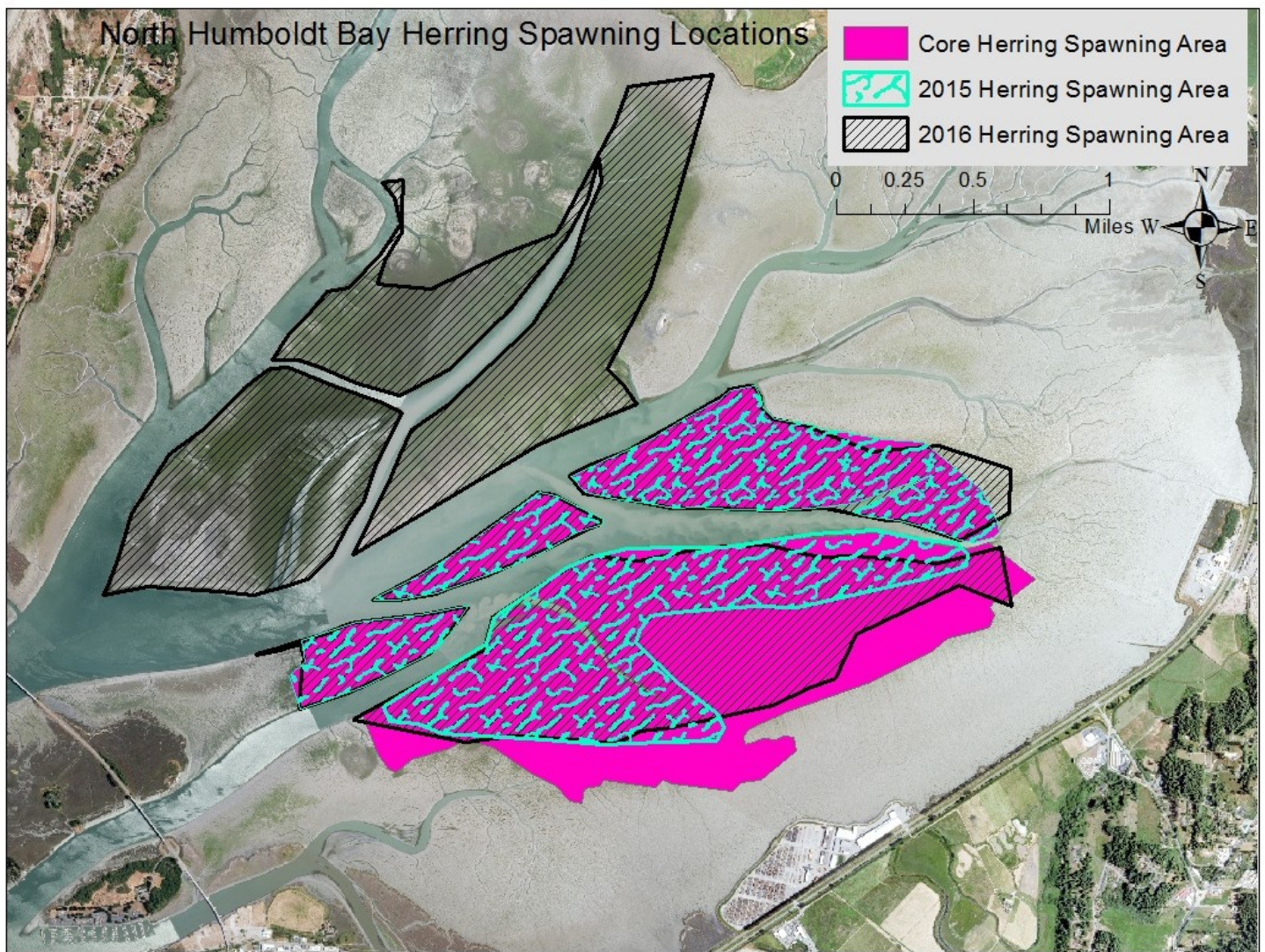


Figure 1: Length frequency of Humboldt Bay herring 2015-16.

The mean fecundity (the number of eggs per gram of female body weight) for the 2015-16 season was estimated to be 240 (+/- 14). This overlaps with the fecundity estimate provided by Rabin and Barnhart in 1975 of 220 (+/-35). Based on this, the total numbers of eggs per female fish ranged from 13,363 to 30,771 in 2015-16, whereas Rabin and Barnhart found the total number of eggs per female fish to range from 9,511 to 50,489 in 1975. Older, larger female fish can produce more eggs than smaller fish. Understanding fecundity is important for accurately estimating the abundance of spawning populations of herring.

Pacific herring are a key component of California’s coastal ecosystems providing valuable ecosystem services. The eggs, juveniles, and adult fish provide food for other fish, invertebrates, birds, marine mammals, and humans. Many of the species herring support are commercially or recreationally important for humans, including salmon, ground fish, crab, and waterfowl. CDFW and its partners will continue to collect data to inform the protection and management of this valuable resource.

*Editors note: see the CDFW Herring Fishery Management Plan Development @ <https://cdfwherring.wordpress.com/>*



# Salmon and Cheeseburgers

By Bob Smith aka RBob

By the time the newsletter is out – the 2016 Klamath Management Zone (KMZ) ocean salmon season will be about wrapped up. In spite of good ocean conditions this summer, there were fewer salmon around and I can attest that other than for a few weeks in May, there were essentially no salmon to be had off Crescent City all summer.

I would like to briefly discuss ocean conditions and some of the ways it affects salmon survival.

## Copepods and Salmon

Ocean productivity is an essential cog in the complex life cycle of Pacific salmon. While a warm ocean may bring albacore and other more exotic pelagic fish closer to our shores, it also has a deleterious effect on salmon. Warmer than average ocean temperatures disrupt ocean productivity primarily by impacting the food chain and altering the abundance and diversity of important forage species. Many species of tiny plants and animals form the foundation of ocean productivity including the lowly copepod. Like crabs, copepods are crustaceans, nearly microscopic and drift in the ocean currents. Copepods also provide a critical food source for young salmon.

Copepods are planktonic (technically zooplankton) which means that they drift with the ocean currents. By determining what species of copepods are present, scientists can determine the type and source of ocean water in and around the coastal zone of northern California and southern Oregon. For example, the presence of subtropical species off northern California indicates transport of subtropical water into the California Current from the south. Likewise, the presence of subarctic species indicates transport of coastal, subarctic waters from the north.

We recently went through an El Nino cycle and have also experienced the effects of the “warm blob” in the eastern Pacific. Our offshore waters have been much warmer than normal and this has been deleterious to salmon. How? By affecting the food chain and particularly the type and abundance of key species of copepods.

## Celery vs. Cheeseburgers

Copepods are a very important forage species for young salmon – particularly during the first critical months as they enter the marine environment. Scientists are beginning to understand that there’s a clear correlation between species type and diversity of copepods and salmon survival.

As your HASA Salmon Representatives, Jim Yarnall and I have been involved in all things salmon including learning about the influence of changing ocean conditions and copepod abundance on salmon survival. It is now a known fact that there is better ocean salmon survival when the larger, lipid rich, subarctic copepods are available. Conversely, there just isn’t much in the way of nutrition available in the sub-tropical species which have been present offshore during the most recent El Nino and warm blob events. Jim and I heard it compared this way: If the subarctic copepods are available – young salmon are feasting on a diet of “cheeseburgers” and this improves salmon growth and survival. A diet of sub-tropical copepods is more like eating “celery” - and the odds of that young salmon become an adult are greatly diminished.



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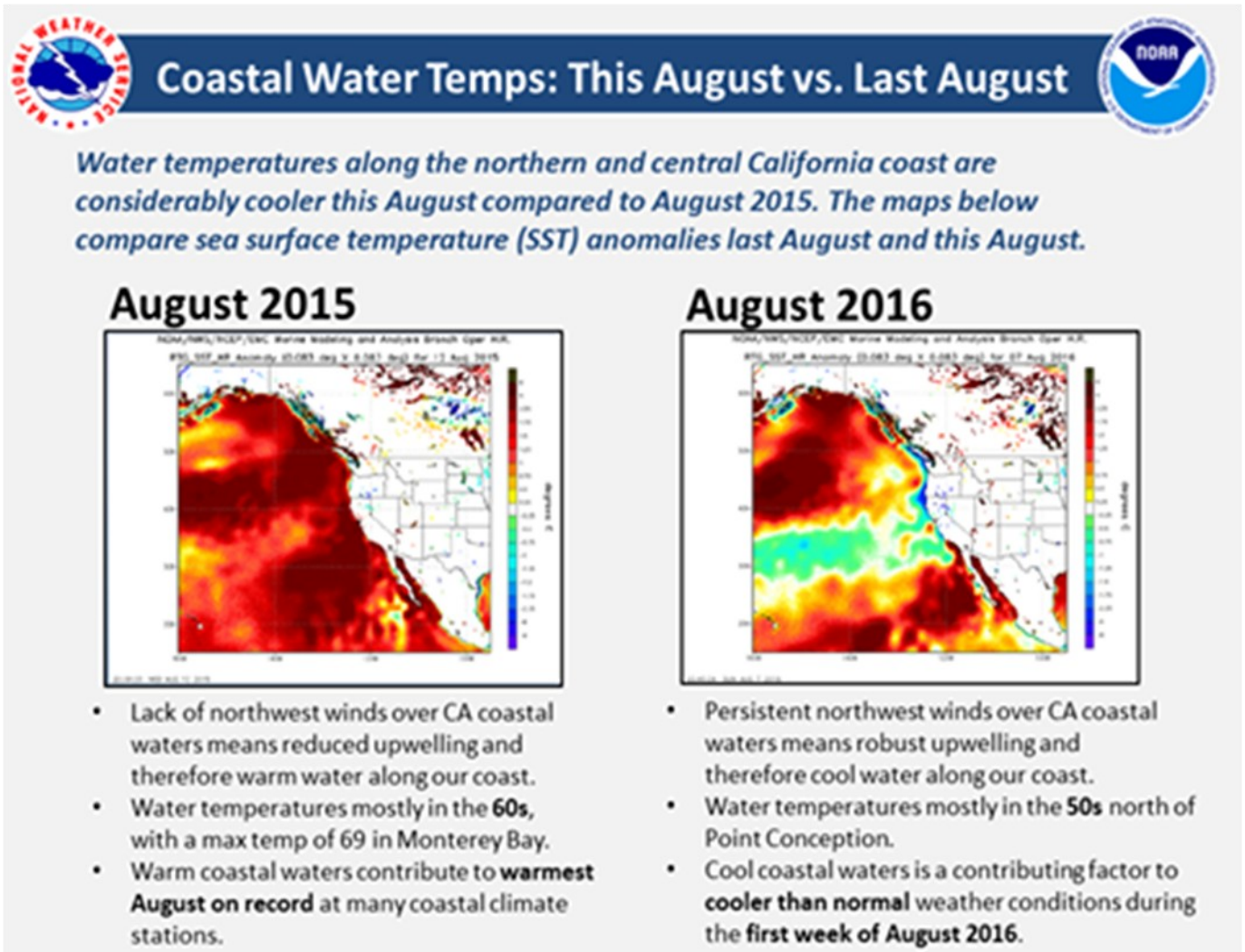
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## Cheeseburger Copepod

The good news is that nearshore ocean conditions have improved and SST's off our coast have returned to some semblance of normal. As I trolled the water off Crescent City in a futile attempt to find salmon during the last few days



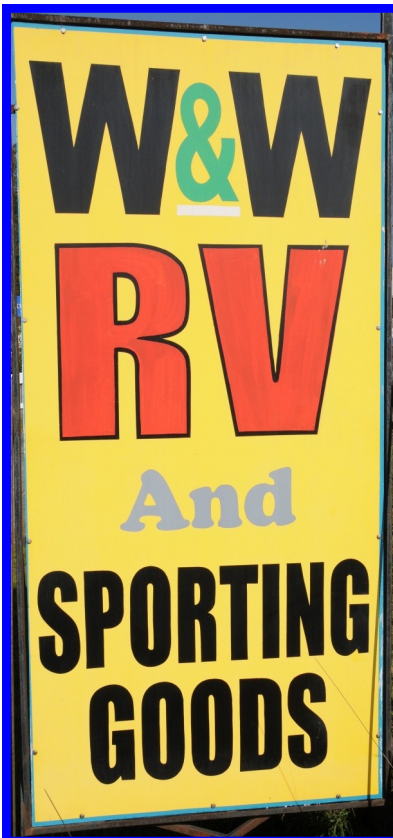
of the August window, I observed a tremendous amount of bait in the water column. Some of the black rockfish I hooked on the troll were stuffed with krill. This is one indicator that perhaps ocean conditions are beginning to return to “normal”. The National Weather Service Graphic below illustrates the difference that one year makes.



It does take time for ecosystems to recover and the nearshore ocean ecosystem is no exception. In the interim, I think we should all prepare for another lean forecast for returning Klamath fall Chinook salmon spawners. Salmon populations are cyclic and the prolonged effects of a drought combined with poor ocean conditions will take some time to recover from.

While the ocean is vast, there's also a delicate balance between sea surface temperatures, climate change, productivity, species diversity and species abundance. Let's hope there will be lots of cheeseburgers floating around for young salmon to grow fat on!

Tight lines!



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# SUMMER GROUND FISH REVIEW

By Tom Marking GAP Rep



The PFMC has completed the groundfish biennial management process for 2017/18 and in the North we will finally see a few improved conditions, with some trade-offs. We will be allowed ten more fathoms of depth (20 to 30) and have “all depth” for the season extensions into November and December. This will allow us to go offshore late in the year and try to find yellowtail rockfish that are plentiful. Also, we can fish for rockfish while we soak our crab pots. Petrale and starry flounder will be all depth and be treated like sanddabs. The downside is that by being restricted to 20 fathoms for so many years we are impacting the shallow water species, specifically black rockfish. The blacks have been reduced from five to three in our bag limit and the ling cod reduced from three to two, but with canary being rebuilt we will be allowed one in the bag limit. As you can see it’s a constant shuffle of fish in and out of the bag limit, changing depths and harvest allowances, depending upon pressure and population assessments or estimations by the fishery scientists. And I use the terms science somewhat loosely, because at times, there is very little data and educated guesses are a more appropriate terminology...but they do the best they can with what they’ve got. The bottom line is the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) process requires management and harvest rules to be set, so decisions and action are mandated by law.

What we are experiencing in our northern area is witnessed all over the west coast and by all fishing sectors. The MSA has created a massive bureaucratic system with five meetings a year, 6-7 days each that deal with all sectors of the fishery, environmental groups, associations, marketing groups, individuals, state and federal reps and every conceivable topic ranging from drift gill net to bottom contact, to assessment of over 50 fish stocks, fish complexes, environmental factors, climate changes, off-shore leases for wind and energy...and the list goes on. Out of all these thousands of pages of Briefing Book information, hundreds of hours of testimony and deliberation the PFMC harvest rules and management measures are constructed in two year cycles. Every decision made selects winners and losers of those with capital and financial interests committed to fishing, processing or marketing.

There is no “primer” on the MSA process. You basically just have to roll up your sleeves and wade into the process, reading massive amounts of literature, watch and listen to the various management plans and methods for harvest and management measure deliberations and decision making. It takes several years to get comfortable with the acronyms and verbiage of the Staff, Council, lawyers, regulators and industry representatives. And out of all this jumble of chaos, data, opinions, bias and science...decisions are made...some better than others. Our local situation could be better...but it could be a lot worse.

We have made gains on rockfish season length and depths, but at the expense of our bag limit. The Canary being rebuilt is a plus, but the yelloweye (YE) is still very constraining. The trawl sector is in far worse shape than the sports, due to a number of constraining species. Many ports have witnessed their trawl fleet reduced from a few dozen to a handful, and very controlled and constrained by the need for observers (at \$500 per day). The trawl fleet is only harvesting about 25% of their allowances due to constraints and observer availability and costs. The trawl fleet is being driven out of business, much to the delight of NGO groups and environmental associations. Why does that matter to the sports fleet you ask? Here’s why. All small ports are losing their infrastructure due to few fish landings and increased costs. Fish buyers are pulling out and infrastructure is crumbling, boats are relics at the docks and commercial fisherman are being regulated out of existence. Commercial fishing is following the path of logging and manufacturing in our area, with eco-tourism and tourist venues being proposed to attract tourist dollars. This is happening all over the west coast.

From one perspective, the regulators can brag the MSA has improved the fish stocks, but at what cost? Are the regulations so severe and so constraining that we will end up with empty ports and infrequent recreational fishing the only survivor? We only have to recall the Marine Protected Area process to witness what can happen by well-funded efforts by NGO and environmental groups. This is happening at all levels of fishery management and lawmaking in Congress. It is imperative that fisherman form associations and stay involved in the process. Yes, it takes time and effort to stay informed, but if you

An advertisement for Buck Sport Sporting Goods. The top part shows a storefront with signs for "BUCKSPORT SPORTING GOODS", "Hunting & Fishing Info", "CAMPING & BACKPACKING Sales • Service • Rentals", and "BUCKSPORT PORTLAND COAST". Below the image is a white box containing the text: "Northern California's Outdoor Authority", "Since 1948", "3650 Broadway, Eureka, Ca. 95503-3811", "707-442-1832", and "Full Line of Saltwater Fishing Gear".

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don't the other well-funded and professionally represented groups will drive the agenda, and slowly reduce your fishing opportunities.

Halibut is our local example of how we have been effectively marginalized and cut out of the process. After WWII, foreign and American trawl fleets decimated the halibut in our area, and State and Federal Agencies had little or no interest to reign in the commercial fleets. We are now suffering the result of those impacts. In the 1990's, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) divided up the 2A remaining halibut allocation to the Commercial Fleet, the Washington Tribes, and the Washington and Oregon sports fleet. California was not even considered at the PFMC until the recent surveys done in 2013 and 2014. Our Officials were absent from the process and showed little interest or involvement. The allocation was fully prescribed to Washington and Oregon and the Tribes and they now refuse to acknowledge that California deserves more halibut allocation, and they outvote any measures to adjust the quota. California officials are out voted and basically marginalized in the current process, and that is partially due to their own action for the past twenty years of disinterest. I believe our best strategy in future efforts may be to get the California Fish and Game Commission more involved in the process to demand some adjustment to the current harvest control rules, where we can gain more access to the halibut in our areas as demonstrated by the surveys of the IPHC. This is a very political process and we on the north coast have minor political impact when compared to the rest of the State. The current process at the PFMC could be described as a "tyranny of the majority", and needed changes will not be implemented soon or easily. We need much support from our Legislators and Commission to force a shift in position at the PFMC. Hopefully, this fall with the October Commission meeting in Eureka, we can get some support from the Commission in this endeavor. It will be important for many of you to put in an appearance and request that the Commission and Chuck Bonham get involved in the process and give us support to get a more fair allocation of the halibut quota for California.

Due to the high winds this year, we are not harvesting many halibut and only about half of the quota has been harvested to date. This may allow us to fish well into the fall for Pacific halibut, so that is the only bright spot in all this commiseration. Hopefully, the wind will back off before Labor Day, so we can get in some time for salmon, halibut and rockfishing. Salmon closes on September 6<sup>th</sup>, so time is getting short.

*Editors note: as of this printing we have caught 21,638 net pounds of Pacific halibut. 8,000 pounds left*



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# UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

## **MARINE SAFETY ALERT**

### **Inspections and Compliance Directorate**

July 20, 2016  
Washington, DC

Safety Alert 07-16

### **STEM TO STERN, FOAM TO DUST INSPECTING YOUR LIFEJACKETS IS A MUST!**

This safety alert reminds all vessel operators to routinely inspect their lifejackets to ensure they are suitable for service. Recently Coast Guard inspectors in Key West, Florida discovered two vessels that had over 60 lifejackets that were required to be removed and destroyed. It was discovered that the unicellular foam buoyant material within the nylon outer shell had degraded significantly over time, broke apart, crumbled and in some instances was reduced to dust. The lifejackets were properly stored, kept dry, and not under direct sunlight; however, the location was very hot at times.

These particular lifejackets were the Type 1, 160RT model distributed by "The Safeguard Corporation" of Covington, Kentucky. They were manufactured in China and approximately nine years old. The distributor is no longer in business. Over the years, the Coast Guard has distributed a number of other safety alerts related to lifejackets and personal flotation devices (PFDs). The archive of alerts can be accessed at the following site: [http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg5/cg545/alerts/96\\_14SA.pdf](http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg5/cg545/alerts/96_14SA.pdf). See PDF page numbers 27, 72, 138, 145, 158 and 165.

As a result of this recent discovery the Coast Guard strongly recommends that vessel owners and operators inspect their Type 1 unicellular plastic foam lifejackets for potential indications of failure or degradation, specifically:

- **Compression:** The lifejacket may be compressed from many years of stowage.
- **Loss of resiliency:** The lifejacket is excessively hard, stiff or its foam is brittle. Normally after compressing the lifejacket to about half its initial thickness, the foam should expand to its original dimension in a short period of time.
- **Shrinkage:** A physical reduction in size may be indicated by "wrinkling" of the coating on vinyl dipped type or by a loose fitting shell on a fabric-covered lifejacket.
- **Manufacturer:** While the potential for problems applies to all older PFDs, those manufactured by "The Safeguard Corporation" should be closely examined.

This Safety Alert was developed by the Coast Guard Headquarters Office of Investigations and Casualty Analysis in conjunction with the Inspections Division of Coast Guard Sector Key West. Any questions or comments should be sent to send to: [HQS-PF-fldr-CG-INV@uscg.mil](mailto:HQS-PF-fldr-CG-INV@uscg.mil).



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# Eel River 2015-2016 Chinook Salmon Run

## Dry Start but Wet Finish

By Pat Higgins

The Eel River Recovery Project (ERRP) has successfully estimated the Eel River fall Chinook run since 2012, and each year is unique and has different challenges. The 2015-2016 citizen assisted monitoring project was the most difficult, however, because early rains failed and dives were not able to be scheduled, and then rainfall was so high after December 1 that observations of migrating and spawning Chinook salmon were limited for protracted periods.

Despite the El Nino conditions in the ocean that are usually linked to increased precipitation, rains from September through November were extremely sparse. Lower Eel River flows as measured by the U.S. Geologic Survey at Scotia did not exceed 100 cfs until November 11, which limited fish passage and prevented normal fall flushing of algae beds. Algae impairs visibility and harbors swimmers itch organisms. Consequently, dive surveys were restricted to the 12<sup>th</sup> Street Pool that is deeper and mixed by winds and other pools were surveyed by kayak.

Early run Eel River fall Chinook were confined to the estuary during late August and early September as flows at Scotia were only just over 30 cubic feet per second (cfs). ERRP documented movement of fish upstream as far as the 12<sup>th</sup> Street Pool by September 21 after light rains, but the major influx into lower river pools was with extremely high tides from October 22-24. Hundreds of Chinook salmon sat in shallow, algae infested pools and about 10% of early run fish went blind as a result of a fluke attacking their eyes.



**ERRP Fall Chinook Coordinator Eric Stockwell counts salmon in the Worswick Pool above Fernbridge where diseased fish were observed. 10/22/15.**



**Infected Chinook salmon captured by California Department of Fish and Wildlife with assistance from ERRP and sent to UC Davis for analysis. Photo by Eric Stockwell. 11/06/15.**

Dives on October 31, November 7 and November 14 estimated that 920, 1000, and 1200 Chinook salmon were holding, respectively, with approximately 25% of the fish comprised of smaller jack salmon. This suggests good survival of juveniles from 2014-2015. ERRP estimated 5,000 Chinook salmon were holding in the lower Eel River from the 12<sup>th</sup> Street Pool downstream on November 14. Extensive Chinook salmon spawning in the main Eel River downstream of Dyerville was documented by ERRP from November 11 through December 1.

Before December 1, Chinook salmon access to headwaters was limited, with spawning on the main Eel below Dos Rios, the South Fork below Leggett, and the Van Duzen River downstream of Goat Rock Falls. After December 1, flows were adequate for access and spawners were seen in low numbers



**ERRP divers in the 12<sup>th</sup> Street Pool in Fortuna on October 31, 2015.**

throughout the basin, including upper Outlet Creek, Ten Mile Creek, the Middle Fork and Black Butte River, and the upper South Fork near Branscomb. Lower South Fork Eel River tributaries showed a late fall Chinook run peak in mid-December. Chinook arrived at the Van Arsdale Fish Station on December 6, and only 102 fish passed upstream to spawn during the entire season. Spawners were noted in Ten Mile Creek and upper Outlet Creek, but none were seen in Tomki Creek (SEC 2016). ERRP once again found that sediment impairment limited spawning use of a number of other Eel River tributaries.

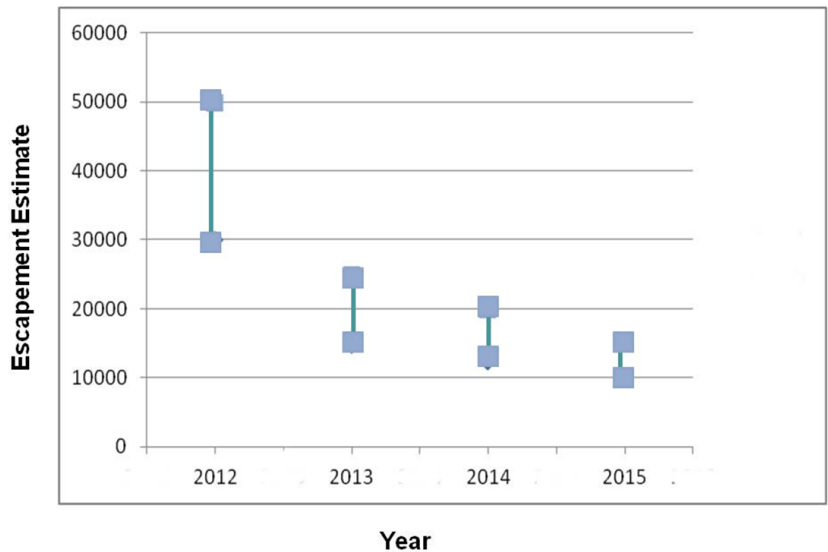
ERRP used historic run timing and professional judgment regarding fish response to flows to arrive at an estimate for the 2015-2016 late run of 5,000-10,000 fish. The total 2015-2016 Eel River fall Chinook run total estimate is 10,000-15,000. The population is showing a declining trend since 2012, but remains above 10,000 fish and at no risk of loss of genetic diversity. High jack counts indicate another strong year class and improved ocean conditions and restricted ocean fisheries may also favor population rebuilding in 2016-2017. However, ERRP has concern about survival of adult Chinook salmon in the lower Eel River due to poor holding habitat, and strongly encourages expeditious restoration to improve conditions.



**South Fork Eel River Chinook salmon migrating during flow rise to just above 100 cfs in late November 2015. Photo for ERRP courtesy of Talia Rose.**

The 2015-2016 fall Chinook assessment was funded in part by the Ft Bragg based Salmon Restoration Association, which sponsors the annual World's Largest Salmon BBQ on 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend, and the Patagonia World Trout Fund. ERRP has also become its own 501 (c)3 non-profit corporation and is soliciting support from the community to make its programs sustainable. To learn more and donate on-line, visit the ERRP website at [www.EelRiverRecovery.org](http://www.EelRiverRecovery.org). Membership is \$25/year for individuals or \$35/year for a family and can be mailed to P.O. Box 214, Loleta, CA 95551. To join 2016-2017 fall Chinook dives in October, call Eric Stockwell at (707) 845-0400. You can also follow ERRP on Face Book.

**ERRP Eel River Fall Chinook Escapement Estimates 2012-2015**



**Eel River Fall Chinook population estimates from 2012-2015. Data from ERRP.**

# Reel Steel is the Real Deal

by Jed Douglas



Having become unemployed this summer made for plenty of availability to go fishing. I signed up for the Reel Steel to go halibut fishing on July 7th. Not really being a morning person, I was able to get to the boat at 6:14 am for the 6:15 departure. Upon my arrival, there was no one on board but Tim, the skipper. I asked where everyone was, and was told that a couple cancelled that morning due to a lack of a baby sitter (poor etiquette to cancel at the last minute) and that there was one other couple going, but they were in the restrooms. Tim had planned to go to the Cape since the ocean was flat calm, but was reluctant to spend that much fuel with only three paying customers on board. Then Tim announced that since it was not our fault that he had a last minute cancellation, we were going to the Canyon to look for flatties.

A few miles from the canyon, we stopped to drop some lines to see if any halibut were around, since there was a lot of bait on the sonar. There was a huge amount of Krill and baitfish in the water all around the boat, and then we saw a humpback whale off the bow, consistently coming up to the surface with its mouth open, obviously using the baleen to catch Krill. Although there were only a few small fish nibbling our bait, the whale show was well worth the stop. We continued on to the canyon and soaked 4 lines for quite a while with no bites, not even any junk fish nibbling our bait.

Eventually we decided to go for rockfish, so at least we would have something to bring home to eat. I started out with a large swimbait on my line, and quickly brought up a large Copper. Then while the other couple were consistently pulling up lots of rockfish and I was getting nothing, Tim finally convinced me to switch to a metal jig. The other couple pulled up several huge fish that we could not keep (Yelloweye and Canary) and one of the fish dove towards the bottom after being released but popped up 50 yards away due to barotrauma. Being the responsible guy that he is, Tim had us pull our lines and he motored over to retrieve the fish. Then he sent it back down with a special fish release mechanism that is set to release at 100 feet, so the rockfish can survive to bite again.

We ended the day with limits of Lingcod, Cabezon, and various rockfish, which make for awesome fish tacos. The ride back to port, although long, was very smooth since the ocean was still flat with only a little breeze. It was a fabulous day on the Reel Steel. I highly recommend a day on the Reel Steel for anyone who wants to catch some fish. Even if you own a boat like I do, it's still a great experience to let someone else do the work and put you on the right spots to catch fish, and you don't have to worry about washing the boat when you get back to the dock!



*Editors note: This was an unsolicited story about one of many great charter captains working in the Humboldt area. We encourage everyone to send in stories about your experience fishing with the charter fleet. It is HASA's intent in the near future to create a list of charter operators published in the newsletter and posted on our website. This will help members and visiting anglers find a seat on one of our excellent charter boats.*

# Kokatat – World Class Clothing Made in Arcata

By Kit Mann

We've all heard the saying about the benefits of being a "big fish in a small pond". Here at Kokatat, we enjoy being the big fish in the world of water sportswear. And I use "world" intentionally because Kokatat is known and sold all over the world as the premier brand of apparel and gear for paddle sports. "Kokatat" is an upper Klamath Native American word meaning "into the water", and we've been into the water right here in Arcata since 1971.

Founded by Steve O'Meara (also founder of Adventure's Edge) and a couple of friends, the company was originally called Blue Puma and made down sleeping bags, general outdoor apparel and some watersports clothing. In the 80s the company decided to focus on just paddling sports and changed its name to reflect that focus.

Kokatat has always been about quality and innovation. The list of Kokatat firsts is a long one, and we keep adding to it:

- In 1976, Blue Puma was one of the first three companies in the world to use a new-fangled fabric called Gore-Tex.
- Kokatat was making synthetic fleece insulating garments with a nylon fleece long before Polar Fleece became famous.
- In the early 80s, to outfit a group of local paddlers for a first descent of the Alsek River in Alaska, Kokatat made the first paddling jacket with a cinching neoprene wrist cuff and collar. The first jacket for paddle sports made with Gore-Tex fabric came out a couple years later.
- Kokatat made the first paddle sports specific drysuit in 1987 and followed with the first Gore-Tex drysuit in history in 1989. At the same time, Kokatat was helping W.L. Gore develop the first Gore-Tex waders.
- Kokatat developed the first women-specific paddling garments.
- Several years ago, when kayak fishing was barely a thing yet, Kokatat developed a line of clothing designed for kayak fishing. (I got to help a lot with that one!)
- And just last year, Kokatat introduced the world's first drysuit that zips completely apart at the waist.

Of course, not everything that happens in the water is play; search and rescue teams, fire departments, lifeguards, and other government agencies, as well as the military, realized that Kokatat products would be ideal in their working environments. Kokatat now enjoys significant contracts with the government. One of our major contracts has been supplying the entire US Coast Guard with their boat crew drysuits.

Kokatat has about 140 employees working in our manufacturing plant in Arcata. Lots of them have been with us for years, because human values are an essential component of our success. Kokatat employees get paid sick and vacation time, fully paid health insurance, a 401(k) retirement plan and profit sharing. Family comes first and no one needs to worry about losing their job if they need to stay home with a sick kid. *And we are always looking for new employees – spread the word!*

About five years ago, Kokatat installed what was then one of the largest solar electric systems on a private business in Humboldt County. That photovoltaic system provides the electricity to run all of our sewing machines plus our computers and much of the lighting. So in addition to making great, innovative gear, we can also say "our clothing is sewn with the sun".

Next time you see a kayak angler out there on the water, look closely at what they're wearing – chances are good that something they have on – and maybe everything! – was made right here in Humboldt County.

Kit Mann (One Day) has been with Kokatat for 28 years.

[www.kokatat.com](http://www.kokatat.com)



# Humboldt Currents

By Casey Allen



This issue's cover celebrates salmon in the bay! Marlene Allen captured this angler's joy with a great shot. It is very cool to have salmon and California halibut in the bay this year. I have never seen so many fishing kayaks covering the water. The evening tides have been beautiful and productive. CDFW biologist James Ray said the arrival of California halibut usually corresponds with warmer ocean conditions like the recent El Nino. They come to feed and are believed to come from San Francisco Bay where the northern-most breeding population resides.

The down side of salmon hanging around the entrance to Humboldt Bay is the chances boating anglers take to catch them. Too many boats too close to the jetties. There were two accidents in August with one boat capsizing resulting in one fatality and three rescued and another boat washed up on the rocks without injury to the anglers. The boat was hauled onto the jetty by a loader. This comes after an incident free period when the entrance was especially dangerous because of the extreme shoaling. Details on how these accidents occurred are not available as of this writing but the same thing could have happened to Marlene and me. We trolled outside the bay one day without a strike so we made a pass near the North jetty on our way back in. We noticed a bunch of boats in the corner near where folks surf. I did not want to go in there and steered to round the jetty and enter the bay. The problem was other boats coming at me forced me too close to the end of the jetty. Although we passed between the boats and the jetty without trouble, a few minutes later in the channel, my engine died. The low trolling speed will sometimes load up the carburetor and it will flood. It takes a few minutes to restart. Had that happened while we were crossing near the jetty, we would have been washed upon the rocks. I knew better and it was a very rare instance that I was in that position, but again, it only takes once. Be aware and be careful.

I have it on good authority that the California Fish and Game Commission (FGC) will move forward the proposed boundary change for razor clams on Clam Beach at their August meeting. Instead of the boundary at the mouth of Strawberry Creek (which moved well south) the boundary will be on a line from the south parking lot as follows:

- (1) Clam Beach (also known as Little River Beach) Little River Beach in Humboldt County: Between Mad River and Strawberry Creek south of the boundary line due west from the Clam Beach south parking lot trailhead (40° 59.67' N. lat.) open only during even-numbered years; between Strawberry Creek and Moonstone Beach and north of the boundary line due west from the Clam Beach south parking lot trailhead (40° 59.67' N. lat.) open only during odd-numbered years.

Public comment will be taken at the FGC meeting in Eureka October 19<sup>th</sup>. If approved, the change will likely take effect next year.

HASA has funded a student to assist CDFW marine biologist Kathrine Crane with a surf perch otolith study. The student will age the otoliths collected from redbtail perch taken in the Perchin' on the Peninsula fishing tournament and other collection trips. The results will be similar to the Pacific halibut study showing age and weight/age ratios. Crane also tagged 11 redbtail perch in the Samoa Marine Protected Area so if you catch a tagged perch be sure to contact Crane at CDFW.



*Marlene Allen with a fat bay salmon*



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The following letter was sent to the Harbor District Commissioners, Harbor Safety Committee, County Supervisors, Eureka City Council, Army Corp of Engineers, Jared Huffman, and Mike McGuire. It was approved by the HASA Board of Directors and endorsed by the Humboldt County Fish and Game Advisory Commission.

The Humboldt Area Saltwater Anglers (HASA) is floating an idea for the long-term solution to the sediment problem in Humboldt Bay. HASA is exploring the idea of using an artificial reef to trap or deflect the sediment as it moves north from the Eel River to Humboldt Bay. This is an option described in the document "Humboldt Bay Long Term Sediment Management Study" that was distributed during the April 2016 meeting at the Humboldt Bay Harbor District. HASA has long pursued creating an artificial reef to enhance sport fishing opportunities out of Humboldt Bay. We dismissed the area south of the south jetty because of the sediment movement, fearing the artificial reef would be buried. The proposed sediment management study will evaluate littoral sediment transport and evaluate various sediment blockage, sediment removal, and a combination of sediment blockage and removal alternatives. Depending on the outcome of the study, an artificial reef could help solve the sediment shoaling issue and create rockfish habitat with the same project.

During prior conversations with John Driscoll, who works for Representative Huffman and John Powell, Humboldt Bay bar pilot, we talked about sinking a ship or two to create a sediment barrier and still have enough structure exposed above the sediment to create fish habitat. After further review, the ships we were considering (decommissioned destroyers) are simply too big. The depths we are talking about range from 20' deep behind the breakers to about 70' deep, which should be well beyond the entrance to the Bay (we don't think the sediment will move uphill). We need to maintain a 45' clearance from the surface in navigable waters or get a waiver from the USCG.

One potential option is to use smaller ships, such as derelict barges. These derelict barges are a big problem on the west coast because many of them are in danger of sinking (one recent article estimated there are 30 on the West Coast alone). There are no environmentally safe or economically viable ways to dispose of them at this time, and there is no agency willing to address the problem.

The task would be to find a few barges that could be towed to Humboldt Bay and cleaned to EPA standards (no vessels that contained PCBs or other contaminants will be considered). There is space in Humboldt Bay to moor the barges while they are cleaned. Their size would fit nicely for our water depth and could act as a sediment barrier or deflector, and will create rockfish habitat that should last for many decades. We believe this would be much cheaper and more effective than placing rubble, quarry rock or concrete structures. It could be placed quickly and would last far longer than the other options identified. If we need the estimated 2000' of reef to reach deep water, we could place a number of barges, bow to stern in a line and fill the gaps with rubble. If we place it within a mile of the south jetty we will not encroach on the commercial crab grounds.

Of course, the Army Corp of Engineers study would have to evaluate where the artificial reef would be most effective to reduce shoaling, and address other details. The littoral sediment movement from the Eel River mouth to the jetties is called a Littoral Cell. Interrupting this flow of sediment with a structure can cause the loss of beach sand adjacent to the structure. The use of groins to reduce erosion along beaches and river banks has not been effective because the change in currents usually create a new problem downstream. Sand piles up on the upstream side and eddies erode the downstream side. In our case, the artificial reef could be strategically placed to target sand collecting in the entrance of Humboldt Bay. The likely erosion between the reef and the jetty should be considered in the study as we want to avoid excessive beach loss on the south side of the jetty. The challenge is to design the placement of the artificial reef to move sand offshore beyond the entrance of the bay, reduce shoaling at the harbor entrance, and avoid eroding the beach between the artificial reef and the jetty.

This alternative could address a number of issues. It would address the environmental risk of the derelict barges sinking (along with the contaminants on-board), reduce or eliminate the shoaling problem at the harbor entrance, save millions of dollars in annual dredging, and create fish habitat that will enhance recreational fishing and tourism.

Although HASA intends to continue work on our planned artificial reef north of the Humboldt Bay entrance, we would also wholly support this option for sediment management south of the entrance. We feel the community will embrace this solution and we are willing to work on public outreach to address any concerns. We are also willing to offer any assistance our organization can provide.



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