



State of California – Natural Resources Agency  
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE  
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EDMUND G. BROWN JR., Governor  
CHARLTON H. BONHAM, Director



August 19, 2014

The Honorable Ken Cooley  
California State Assembly, 8<sup>th</sup> District  
California State Capitol, Room 2188  
Sacramento, CA 94249-0008

Dear Assemblymember Cooley:

### CALIFORNIA FISHERY MANAGEMENT POLICIES

Thank you for your July 2, 2014 letter of support for taking important actions to sustain the state's salmon resources as identified in the federally-funded California Hatchery Review Report (Report). The Report was developed by the California Hatchery Scientific Review Group (HSRG) consisting of independent scientists representing multiple agencies, academia, and this Department. The Report provides recommendations to both state and federal fish hatcheries to ensure hatchery management and operations meet one or both primary purposes. The purposes are:

- Helping recover and conserve naturally spawning salmon and steelhead populations, and;
- Supporting sustainable fisheries with little or no deleterious consequence to natural populations.

The Report provides a suite of recommendations designed to improve the management of California's state and federal hatcheries. The problems facing salmon are numerous and in some cases inter-related, and thus the recommendations in the Report should be viewed as a package of equally important steps. No single recommendation is identified as "key", nor would implementation of only one recommendation ensure the long-term sustainability of natural-origin populations.

Many of the recommendations in the Report go beyond the scope of current hatchery operations and management. But reform within hatchery operations and management alone will not do all that needs to be done for salmon, which is a point the Report itself makes in statements such as this one – "hatcheries and hatchery reform alone will not recoup historic adult holding, spawning and nursery habitats or likely influence water or land-use management."

Accordingly, long-term protection of anadromous salmonids will require:

- Cool, Clean, Water at the Right Time: Without water all fish will perish. Water is needed at appropriate flow levels, at the appropriate times and at an appropriate temperature.

- Habitat: Without high-quality spawning, holding and rearing habitats anadromous salmonids will not be able to survive.
- Safe Passage: Anadromous fish need to be able to move from freshwater spawning grounds, to the sea and back.
- Monitoring and Research: Adaptive management practices require well-funded monitoring and research programs. Adequate monitoring and research ensures fisheries managers can make informed decisions.

However, the Department understands reform of current hatchery operations and management is an important part of a broader package for salmon recovery. Successful hatchery improvements require long-term stable funding to ensure the improvements are sustained over time.

The Report provides a comprehensive approach to update hatchery monitoring and evaluation (M&E) programs, spawning practices, operations and management. It specifically recommends every anadromous fish hatchery in California have a dedicated Hatchery Coordination Team (HCT) to "bring together the knowledge and expertise of hatchery managers, biologists and fish culturists, M&E biologists, fish health specialists, regional fish biologists, fishery managers, and other representatives from management or funding agencies." HCTs provide a forum to bring together specialized technical expertise to provide a comprehensive, better-informed, and more coordinated approach to hatchery operations. Implementation of these M&E programs and associated review processes will inform hatchery decisions and document compliance with best management practices. It also urges periodic interaction among the HCTs from different facilities to share scientific approaches and practices.

Last year, the Department began assembling HCTs throughout the state to evaluate the Report's hatchery-specific recommendations to determine costs, feasibility and if appropriate, the best approach for implementation. The HCTs are reviewing, evaluating, considering, and prioritizing hatchery-specific recommendations for future implementation. The HCTs will provide their recommendations, summaries, and issue statements to the multi-agency, multi-disciplined Hatchery Review Policy Team (Policy Team). The Policy Team will then review HCT recommendations and will provide those recommendations deemed appropriate to the responsible agencies for implementation. This process will identify critical operational, maintenance, and infrastructure needs, and will identify funding for these changes. The Department is not solely responsible for implementation of these recommendations and this process ensures involvement of all responsible agencies.

Your July 2, 2014 letter urges the Department and Commission to consider 100 percent tagging of Chinook salmon. Current estimates for tagging all California hatchery-produced Chinook salmon exceed \$24 million dollars for the initial year and are in excess of \$14 million in subsequent years. Start-up costs not only include purchasing

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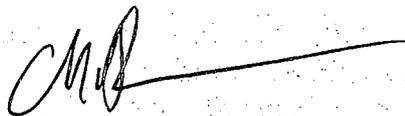
24 million additional tags, but also acquiring several new tagging trailers (\$1.8 million each) and related infrastructure, as well as hiring trained staff to process the fish and operate the tagging equipment. Recovery and processing of these additional tags throughout the state will also cost several million dollars and will result in a significant cost increase to all state, federal and tribal agencies, as well as other entities involved with salmon production, enhancement, monitoring, and/or management. The Department is not currently aware of a revenue stream to cover these anticipated costs.

In recent years, the State has enacted a Constant Fractional Marking (CFM) program in which a fixed percentage (minimum 25 percent) of all hatchery (federal and state produced) Chinook salmon contain a coded-wire tag and an external mark (clipped adipose fin) for visual identification. The CFM program is a comprehensive, statistically-robust, and peer reviewed marking and tagging system based on a 2004 report "A marking, tagging, and recovery program for Central Valley hatchery Chinook salmon." The CFM program provides scientifically sound information for fisheries managers to estimate the proportion of hatchery fish returning to natural spawning escapement and contributing to California's marine and freshwater catch. The CFM program also provides estimates of survival rates, straying tendencies, and other life history information. The Department does not oppose marking more of the relevant fishery, and understands how more and better information can translate into wiser management decisions. However, given the substantial start-up costs associated with such an endeavor the best next step in the Department's judgment would be a structured process to analyze the economics, cost/benefit ratios, and feasibility, and then identify a logical implementation pathway as part of the HCTs underway.

Careful consideration of the Report's recommendations by the HCTs will provide the best method for developing a cost-effective and scientifically defensible implementation strategy to provide the biggest benefit to California's anadromous salmon and steelhead populations.

Thank you again for your support of the Report's implementation. Please let us know if we can provide any additional information or if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Charlton H. Bonham  
Director

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The State Assembly  
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