

Commitments to Save Clear Lake Hitch

CDFW Collaborative Actions to Ensure Hitch Survival:

- Convened a multi-agency state, federal, and tribal summit to highlight the needs of the hitch and its risk of extinction; the summit led to commitments by multiple agencies and tribes to take decisive actions to collect data, preserve streamflows, and enforce on illegal diversions and stream modifications.

Streamflow Enhancement Efforts:

- In cooperation with the State and Regional Water Boards and local agricultural stakeholders, CDFW is helping to evaluate and facilitate ways to increase stream flow during spawning season, including efforts to develop voluntary reductions in water diversions during critical Clear Lake hitch spawning season.
- CDFW is supporting a cooperative approach to increase streamflow gauging in the Clear Lake watershed, in collaboration with other state agencies, and is finalizing grant funding for the Big Valley Band of Pomo Indians to conduct stream flow and groundwater monitoring in Clear Lake hitch spawning areas.

Eliminating and Fixing Migration Barriers:

When making their annual spawning runs up the Clear Lake tributaries in spring Clear Lake hitch encounter a variety of barriers both natural and man-made that inhibit their progress upstream.

- Evaluations of barriers to hitch movement have been done by CDFW, Tribal governments, and the agricultural community to identify areas where action can be taken to remove these barriers.
- Through grant funding CDFW is supporting the Big Valley Band of Pomo Indians and Lake County to complete the removal of the Main Street barrier along Kelsey Creek.
- CDFW is collaborating with the local agricultural community to prioritize barriers on agricultural lands and provide resources for barrier removal.
- CDFW has committed two million dollars for barrier removal projects.

Advancing Monitoring, Science, and Co-Management:

CDFW is engaged in several actions with cooperating Tribal governments to protect and monitor Clear Lake hitch populations in the lake.

- CDFW recently funded and permitted a carp and goldfish removal project with Robinson Rancheria Pomo Indians of California to reduce the risk of predation on Clear Lake hitch.
- CDFW is also funding a tagging project with the Habematolel Pomo of Upper Lake to understand the habitat usage, movement, and survival of Clear Lake hitch in Middle Creek watershed.

Fish Rescues:

- In cooperation with Tribal governments CDFW has entered multiple memoranda of understanding with and trained Tribal members to facilitate rescues of Clear Lake hitch that have become stranded during spawning runs.
- CDFW is also working toward a strategy to conduct fish rescues on agricultural lands with that community. Over the last few years, the cooperating rescue groups have been able to rescue thousands of Clear Lake hitch during spawning runs and are prepared to perform rescues if needed this season.
- To meet the needs of rescued Clear Lake hitch, CDFW has evaluated off site locations to properly house fish that have been rescued and may not be suitable for immediate release. These locations are prepped and ready to provide a home for these fish for however long is necessary to equip them to survive in the wild.

Environmental Permitting:

- CDFW recently approved the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Statutory Exemptions for Restoration Projects for the Wright Wetland Preserve Restoration Project on Lake County Land Trust preserve lands with Lake County Community Development Department as CEQA lead agency.

Capacity for the Interim and Long-Term:

- CDFW has tasked additional staff with meeting the commitments to save Clear Lake hitch. One Environmental Scientist Specialist has been tasked with spearheading the task force coordinating activities among the coalition of partners. One Environmental Scientist has been tasked with conducting on-the-ground management activities. One Environmental Scientist has been tasked with streamlining permitting activities for agreed commitments. One Limited Term Environmental Scientist will be hired to work on-the-ground conducting management activities over the next 14 months.