

OSPR News Release

OFFICE OF OIL SPILL PREVENTION & RESPONSE (916) 445-9338

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DATE: Friday, January 24, 1997
TIME: 7:00 p.m.

Department of Fish and Game Joins Northern California Floods Response

Sacramento — The California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) has established an Incident Command System to address fish and wildlife issues affecting emergency repairs on levees and other significant facilities affected by floods. Many actions which, under normal circumstances, are strictly controlled under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Endangered Species Act (CESA), and Stream Bed Alteration Agreements, are suspended under certain emergency conditions. DFG personnel are available to answer questions about the State's fish and wildlife laws with regard to emergency repairs on levees and other facilities damaged by flood waters.

DFG has already provided thousands of hours of mutual aid to other State, Federal, and local government agencies in evacuations, rescues, levee patrols, animal welfare, and hazardous materials reconnaissance, and will continue to do so as needed. "While the Department is the State trustee for wildlife, our first priority during emergencies like this is the protection of life and property," said DFG Director Jacqueline Schafer. "We recognize the importance of repairing levees and other facilities as quickly as possible, to avoid future flooding."

"The protection of wildlife and other natural resources must be put into context, in the aftermath of a flood. Most State-listed species that could be adversely affected by levee and other

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repair efforts are not present during the winter, or would have been washed away by flood waters. Fish affected by emergency flood events benefit from a quick repair, because it reduces the number of fish washed out of the waterways and subject to stranding outside the channel after the water recedes. The sooner repairs are finished, the sooner the land-based species can start the population recovery that naturally occurs."

DFG has opened its Operations Center in Sacramento to provide a single point of contact for both public and private entities. Those who need assistance with fish and wildlife regulatory issues, as they pertain to flood protection, response, and repairs may call Department Dispatch at (916)

445-0045. Advise them that you need to contact the Department of Fish and Game's **Flood Response Incident Command**. They will connect you with the appropriate personnel. The operations center is also guiding the ongoing mutual aid support, which the Department will continue to provide, and assist in addressing flood-related impacts to DFG facilities, such as the San Joaquin Fish Hatchery, which was flooded in early January.

Numerous State, local, and Federal agencies have jurisdictions related to levee repair. DFG is working with each of these agencies to implement repairs to public levees. To the extent possible, the Department will assist local private levee interests in contacting the appropriate Federal agencies. The DFG will also provide any biological information needed.

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