Staff Summary for December 10-11, 2025

7C. Department Wildlife and Fisheries Division, and Department Ecosystem Conservation Division

Today's Item **Information ☒** **Action ☐**

Receive updates from Department divisions on items of note since the previous Commission meeting.

Summary of Previous/Future Actions (N/A)

Background (N/A)

Significant Public Comments (N/A)

Recommendation (N/A)

Exhibits

1. Department news release: "North Yuba River Salmon Reintroduction Efforts Enter Second Year with Spawning, Fertilization of 350,000 Spring-Run Chinook Salmon Eggs," dated October 27, 2025
2. Department news release: "'Salmon Everywhere' One Year After Klamath Removal," dated November 11, 2025

Motion (N/A)

CDFW NEWS

October 27, 2025

North Yuba River Salmon Reintroduction Efforts Enter Second Year with Spawning, Fertilization of 350,000 Spring-Run Chinook Salmon Eggs

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and its partners have initiated a second year of spring-run Chinook salmon reintroduction efforts into historic habitat in the North Yuba River.

Roughly 350,000 spring-run Chinook salmon eggs were collected and fertilized recently at the Feather River Fish Hatchery in Oroville. The eggs will be hydraulically injected

into the North Yuba River's gravel substrate next month, as was done successfully last fall.

The North Yuba River Spring-run Chinook Salmon Reintroduction Program is a multiagency, multifaceted effort to bring the state and federally listed threatened species back to its historic cold-water spawning and rearing habitat in the mountains of Sierra County. Access to this habitat has been blocked by two dams for almost a century.

Since launching in late 2024, the ambitious program has advanced several successful reintroduction methods.

> *CDFW Produced Video Hope Upstream: Reintroducing Chinook Salmon to the North Yuba River (8:00 minute video, produced by CDFW, opens in YouTube) Premiered Sep 10, 2025*
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> *Spring-run Chinook salmon are present once again in the North Yuba River in the mountains of Sierra County. A combination of cutting-edge science and a collaboration forged among CDFW, the Yuba Water Agency, NOAA Fisheries and the U.S. Forest Service have returned this iconic species to its historic habitat where it hasn't been in more than 50 years since the construction of the Englebright and New Bullards Bar dams.*

Last fall, CDFW and its partners – including the Yuba Water Agency, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries and the U.S. Forest Service – conducted the first large-scale hydraulic egg injection in the North Yuba River, planting approximately 300,000 fertilized spring-run Chinook salmon eggs over a 12-mile stretch of gravel riverbed along Highway 49 just east Downieville.

In the months that followed, juvenile salmon were detected through both screw trap collections and snorkel surveys, confirming the method's success and the river's potential to support salmon at early developmental stages.

Building on that success, the program marked another milestone this spring with the release of 42 adult spring-run Chinook salmon from the Feather River Fish Hatchery into the North Yuba River.

This represents the first time in California that adult spring-run Chinook salmon have been reintroduced above a rim dam – a landmark achievement for salmon recovery in the state.

Acoustic telemetry has since detected the salmon moving throughout the system, and biologists expect them to spawn naturally this fall -- an event not seen in generations. Their offspring will be monitored alongside those from the hydraulic egg injections to compare survival and rearing outcomes.

"The return of adult salmon to the North Yuba River is an exciting milestone, but it's just one piece of the larger reintroduction strategy," said Michelle Forsha, Senior

Environmental Scientist with CDFW's North Central Region. "Our goal is to evaluate multiple approaches that can help reestablish a self-sustaining population in this watershed."

The North Yuba River effort is part of a larger statewide initiative to return salmon to cold-water habitats upstream of dams and other barriers – work that is central to the long-term survival of salmon in California and a key priority of Governor Gavin Newsom's *California Salmon Strategy for a Hotter, Drier Future (PDF)(opens in new tab)*.

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CDFW NEWS

November 18, 2025

'Salmon Everywhere' One Year After Klamath Dam Removal

A little more than a year after the historic removal of four hydroelectric dams on the Klamath River, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) scientists are seeing salmon reoccupying just about every corner of their historic habitat.

“The speed at which salmon are repopulating every nook and cranny of suitable habitat upstream of the dams in the Klamath Basin is both remarkable and thrilling,” said Michael Harris, Environmental Program Manager of CDFW’s Klamath Watershed Program. “There are salmon everywhere on the landscape right now, and it’s invigorating our work.”

While adult returns of salmon are ongoing and final estimates won’t be available until January, initial reports indicate a stronger fall-run Chinook salmon return than last year with widespread dispersal of the fish. Recent signs of salmon recovery throughout the Klamath Basin include:

- The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and Klamath Tribes report seeing **widespread salmon spawning within the Oregon portion of the Klamath River(opens in new tab)**, including within multiple tributaries upstream of Klamath Lake where salmon haven’t been seen in more than century.
- Fish-counting stations on newly accessible tributaries within the former reservoir footprints in California have recorded 208 adult Chinook salmon in Jenny Creek and 260 adult Chinook salmon in Shovel Creek to date. While multiple state and federal agencies, Tribes and non-governmental organizations are monitoring salmon throughout the Klamath Basin, CDFW is particularly focused on monitoring these newly accessible tributaries. CDFW field crews are surveying regularly for salmon nests and adult fish.
- CDFW snorkel crews this summer documented juvenile salmon and/or steelhead occupying nearly all of the newly accessible tributaries in the reservoir footprints. In Fall Creek, one of the newly accessible tributaries upstream of the former Iron Gate Dam location, approximately 65,000 wild juvenile Chinook salmon were counted.
- CDFW’s Fall Creek Fish Hatchery, a $35 million state-of-the-art facility in its second year of operation, began spawning returning fall-run Chinook salmon in mid-October. To date, the hatchery has spawned 416 female fish and collected roughly 1.27 million eggs – four times the number of salmon spawned this time last year. More than 1,200 Chinook salmon have entered the hatchery so far.
- Temperature monitoring in 2024 and 2025 along the mainstem Klamath River following the removal of the four dams reveals the return of natural, seasonal fluctuations of water temperatures benefiting salmon. Post-dam removal water temperatures are cooling sooner in the fall when adult fall-run Chinook salmon are returning and need that cool water most followed by warming temperatures in the spring when juvenile salmon are rearing and out-migrating to the ocean.
- Scientists are seeing a lower prevalence of *Ceratonova shasta* – or C. shasta – a parasite that plagued juvenile salmon prior to dam removal. Harmful algal blooms in the Klamath River are smaller now and less frequent since dam removal.

A primary goal of Klamath River dam removal was the reestablishment of viable, wild, self-sustaining populations of salmon and other anadromous fish species for conservation, for their ecological benefits, and to enhance Tribal, commercial and recreational fisheries.

To that end, CDFW has invested more than $30 million to support fish habitat restoration projects within the Klamath Basin. These investments include:

- $20 million in grants awarded to 10 projects within the Scott and Shasta rivers and watersheds(opens in new tab), crucial salmon strongholds within the Klamath Basin. These projects, which include improved fish passage and post-McKinney Fire restoration, were developed in collaboration with and in support of local Tribes, ranchers, farmers and nonprofit fish conservation organizations.
- A $130,000 grant to Trout Unlimited to remove a manmade concrete barrier on Jenny Creek(opens in new tab) to reopen approximately one mile of additional salmon and steelhead spawning and rearing habitat.
- A $1.4 million grant to Trout Unlimited to install buffer fencing around the Iron Gate and Copco I reservoir footprints. The fencing will protect approximately 3,235 acres of riparian habitat within the reservoir footprints, support restoration plantings and reduce erosion that negatively impacts water quality and salmon and steelhead populations.
- A $582,915 grant to the Klamath River Renewal Corporation (KRRC) to develop new public access and a recreational boating launch facility in the Copco Valley, site of the former Copco Lake reservoir, to provide new public access to the restored Klamath River for boating, fishing and other recreation.

The historic Klamath River dam removal project was a key milestone of Gov. Gavin Newsom's **Salmon Strategy for a Hotter, Drier Future**, introduced in 2024 to chart important priorities and actions needed to support California's struggling salmon populations.

Photo: CDFW scientists survey a Klamath River tributary looking for salmon carcasses and salmon nests.

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