

Staff Summary for April 15-16, 2026

18. Clear Lake Hitch**Today's Item****Information** **Action**

Receive and discuss presentation from the Department with an update on Clear Lake hitch, including outcomes from the February 25, 2026 leadership summit.

Summary of Previous/Future Actions

- Commission determined listing Clear Lake hitch (CLH) as threatened under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) is warranted August 6, 2014
- Commission adopted regulations to add CLH to the list of threatened species February 11, 2016
- Inaugural CLH summit at request of Commission September 14, 2022
- Fourth CLH summit February 25, 2026
- **Today, receive presentation on latest summit and instream flow study April 15-16, 2026**

Background

At its August 2014 meeting, the Commission determined that listing CLH as threatened under CESA was warranted and subsequently adopted regulations during its February 2016 meeting to add the native fish to the list of threatened animals.

At the Commission's August 2022 meeting, elders and representatives from several Clear Lake tribes reported their great concern about the status of CLH, a species of importance to California Native American tribes. The representatives cited climate change, severe drought conditions, chronic pollution, and overuse of existing water resources as major challenges facing CLH; these complex factors require cross agency collaboration, tribal engagement, and a commitment to work through the difficult problems to help the fish recover and thrive.

The Commission served as a catalyst to mobilize the first "summit" of tribes and state, federal and local government agencies to evaluate the status of CLH and increase inter-organizational collaboration to implement solutions to the problems contributing to the decline of CLH populations. Since the inaugural summit, there have been annual Clear Lake hitch leadership summits held near Clear Lake, providing a forum to share the latest scientific information and coordinate restoration efforts.

Today, the Department will present an update from the February 2026 Clear Lake hitch summit as well as information about a study on instream flows for CLH passage (Exhibit 1).

Significant Public Comments (N/A)**Recommendation (N/A)**

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Exhibits

1. [Department presentation](#)

Motion (N/A)



CLEAR LAKE HITCH UPDATE

Presentation to the Fish and Game Commission

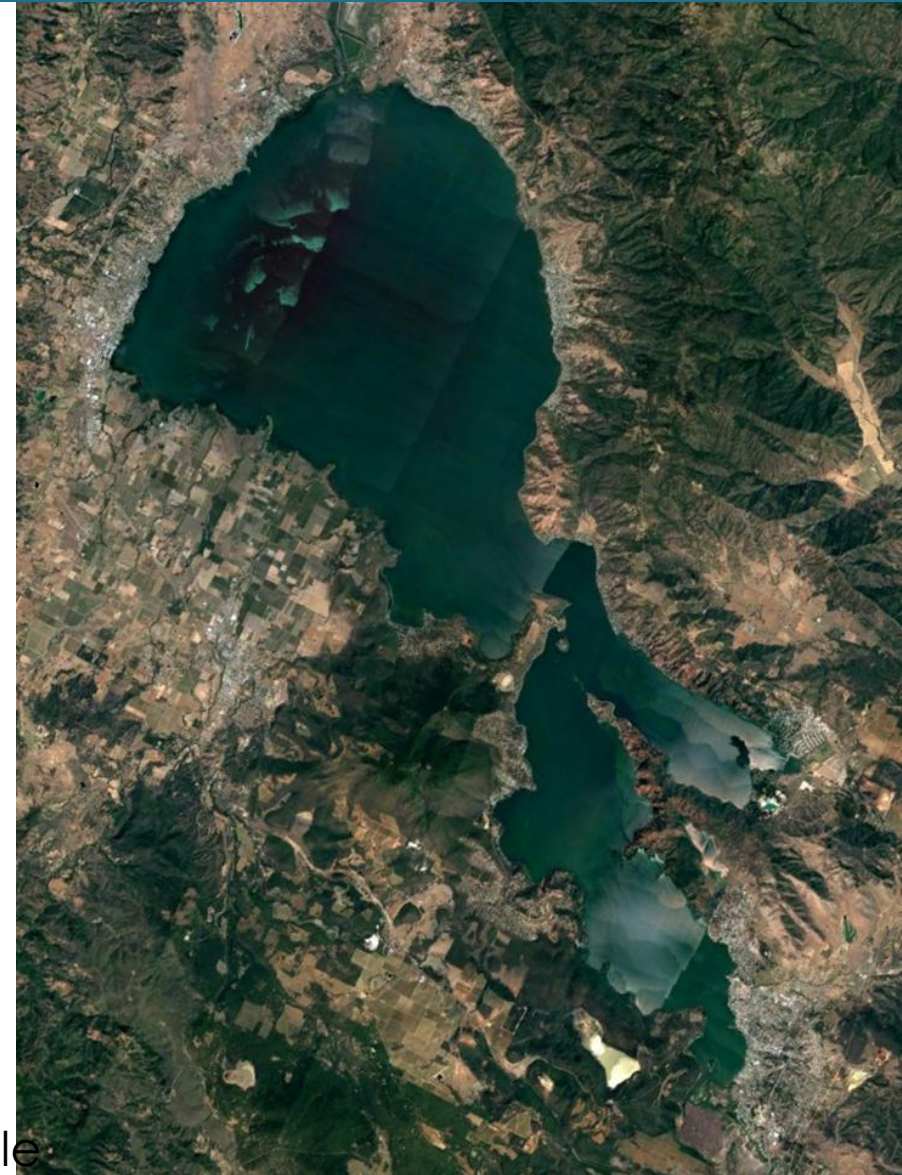
Shay Mussulman and Jenna Rinde

April 15-16, 2026



History of the Task Force

- August 2022 - Tribal elders, members and staff comments to Fish and Game Commission
- September 14th, 2022 - Inaugural Meeting
- December 8th, 2022 - First Summit
 - Task Force expanded to include additional state and local agencies.
- Goals
 - Clear Lake Hitch (CLH, or Chi) recovery
 - Work across jurisdictions
 - Maintain Government to Government dialogue



Clear Lake Hitch Summit

- 4th Leadership Summit on February 25, 2026
- Leadership expressed ongoing commitment
- Transition from an emergency response to a structured sustainable process
- Strengthen our partnerships and support each other in our common goal
- One step on the long journey of addressing historical wrongs

Collaboration within Task Force

Collaborator	Collaborator
Robinson Rancheria of Pomo Indians of California	California State Water Resources Control Board
Habematolel Pomo of Upper Lake	Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board
Big Valley Band of Pomo Indians	California Department of Parks and Recreation
Scotts Valley Band of Pomo Indians	Department of Water Resources
Middletown Rancheria	California Conservation Corps
California Natural Resources Agency	The County of Lake
California Department of Fish and Wildlife	U.S. Geological Survey
California Fish and Game Commission	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Instream Flow Evaluation for Clear Lake Hitch Passage

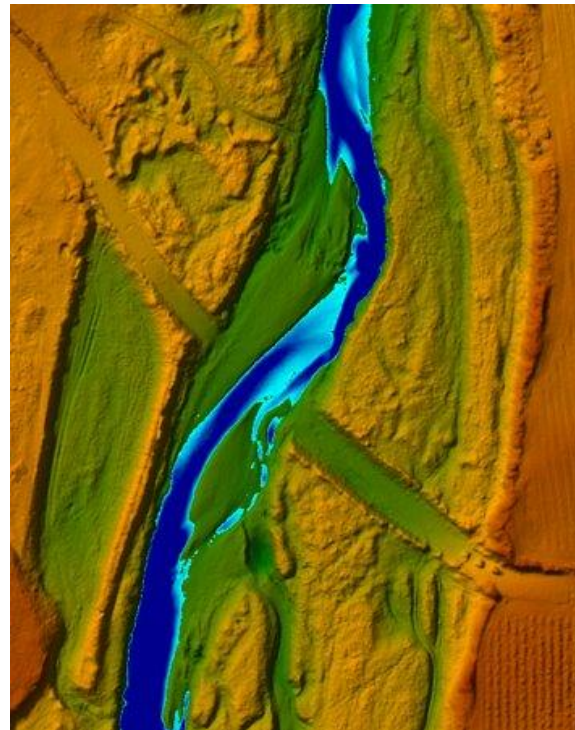
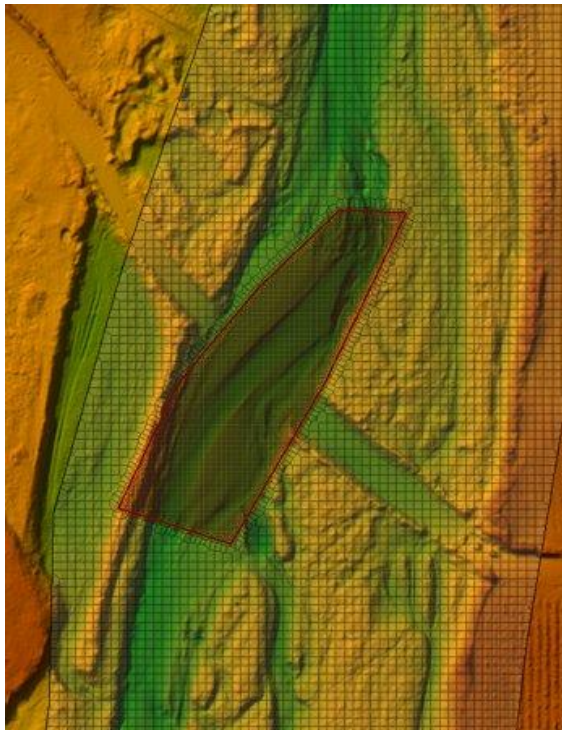
- Governor Newsom signed Executive Order N-5-23 directing CDFW and SWRCB to evaluate minimum flows to protect CLH.
 - Traditional Ecological Knowledge informed our study.
 - Advanced technology with green lidar helped expedite data collection.



Image courtesy of Matthew Young, United States Geological Survey

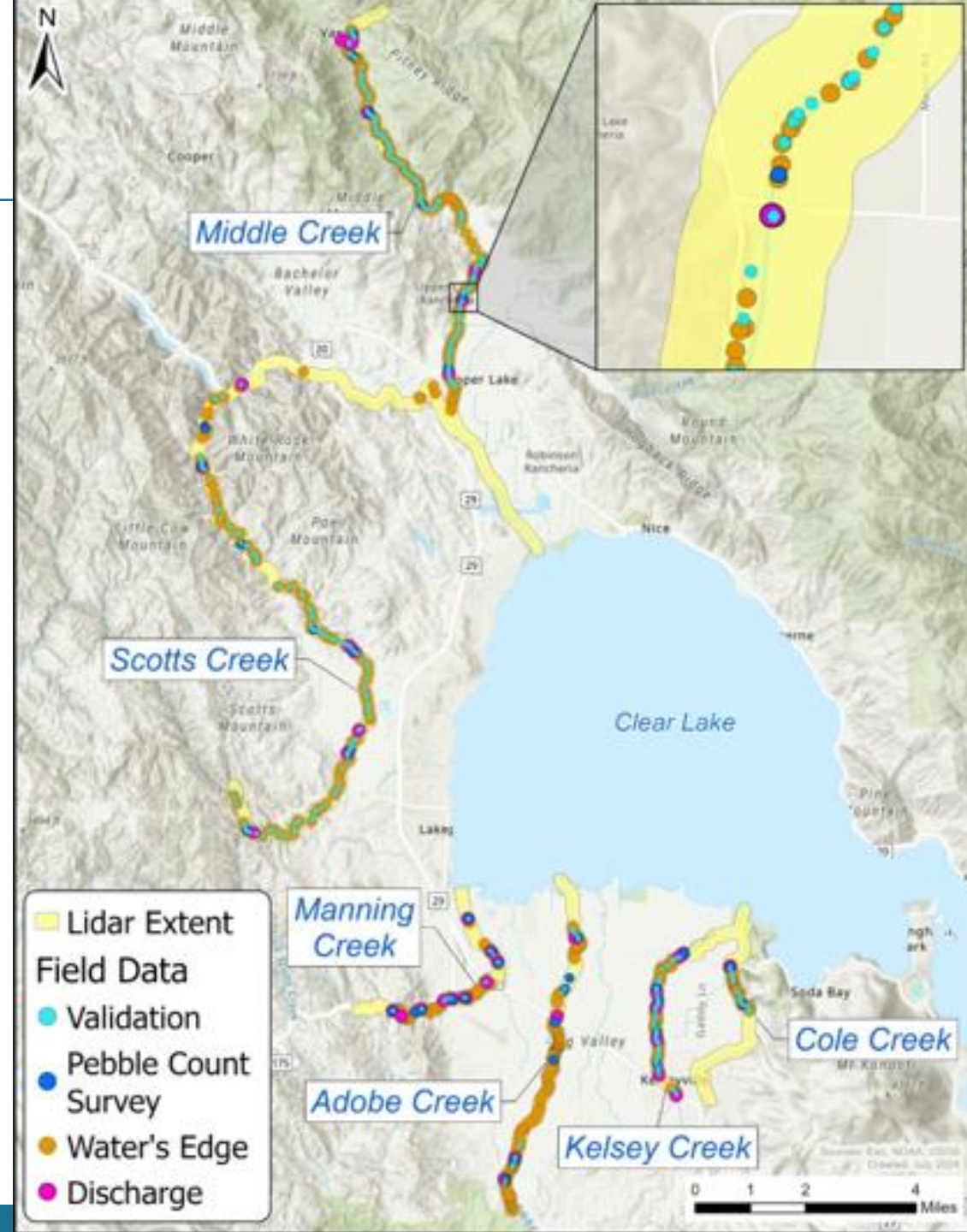
Study Approach

- Objective: develop hydraulic habitat models to identify depth sensitive areas for CLH passage.
 - Six creeks selected: Adobe, Cole, Kelsey, Manning, Middle and Scotts.



Study Progress

- Hydraulic habitat models complete covering over 50 miles with thousands of data points collected in the watershed.
- Draft Technical Report undergoing review:
 - CDFW internal review
 - Tribal review and incorporated feedback
 - Post online and initiate public input period (Spring 2026)



Next Steps

- Tiered strategy in development
- Global co-management MOA led by CNRA
- Task Force developing Summary and asks from Summit
- Task Force Draft charter
- CLH Recovery Plan



QUESTIONS?



Contact

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