

Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture
California's Salmon Fisheries in Crisis: Historic Drought, Low Flows, and Dead Fish
July 27, 2021 10am-2pm
State Capitol, Room 4203

Background

[Senator Mike McGuire](#), Chair of the [Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture \(JCFA\)](#), and [Assemblymember Mark Stone](#), Vice Chair, are holding a hearing, [California's Salmon Fisheries in Crisis: Historic Drought, Low Flows, and Dead Fish](#). The hearing will be held Tuesday July 27, 2021 from 11:00 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Room 4203 of the State Capitol building.

The hearing will focus on the [2021 salmon fishing season](#), severe drought, lethal conditions for fish throughout the state, and the impacts to Indigenous peoples, commercial and recreational fisheries, and the environment. The agenda features presentations by state agency leaders, researchers, and Tribal, commercial and recreational fishing representatives.

The hearing will be headlined by presentations from Indigenous and state agency leaders, commercial and recreational fishing representatives, and watershed policy experts including Joseph James, Chairman of the Yurok Tribe, Russell “Buster” Attebery, Chairman of the Karuk Tribe, Chuck Bonham, director of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Eileen Sobeck, executive director of the State Water Resources Control Board, James Stone, president of the Nor-Cal Guides and Sportsmen’s Association, Mike Conroy, executive director of the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen’s Associations, Barry Nelson, policy representative for the Golden State Salmon Association, Kate Poole, senior attorney for the California’s Natural Resources Defense Council, Pat Samuel, Bay Area regional director for California Trout, Mark Bransom, CEO of the Klamath River Renewal Corporation, and Don McEnhill, executive director of Russian Riverkeeper.

Another protracted period of severe drought is devastating California’s rivers, water supplies, and iconic fisheries. Legacy policies from the Trump Administration continue to dominate Central Valley water management decisions at the State Water Resources Control Board. Shockingly, this year the California Department of Fish and Wildlife has determined that 100% of endangered winter run Chinook salmon juveniles are likely to perish in the river due to excessive temperatures. This comes despite the approval by the State Water Board of the Bureau of Reclamation’s Shasta Temperature Management Plan, which is based on a biological opinion that the State of California has challenged in court.

Once again, severe curtailments of fishing have been established on the North Coast. The commercial and recreational fishing seasons have been severely constrained, although in-season reports are showing that ocean harvest is robust this year, likely thanks to advanced trucking of hatchery-reared fish three years ago. This year, all state hatchery-reared salmon in the Central Valley were trucked west due to extraordinarily poor river conditions, and in the Klamath River every fish in this year’s cohort will be raised an additional year in the Iron Gate Hatchery rather than being exposed to lethal levels disease that could wipe out the entire year class.

However, positive developments and important drought responses are taking place on the North Coast. The Klamath River Renewal Corporation and its partners in state government are making progress towards finalizing dam removal. The State Water Board has issued curtailment orders in the Russian River watershed, and it recently publicized draft emergency orders on the Scott and Shasta Rivers to protect fisheries and the environment.

Additional information including links to: the agenda, [press releases](#), articles about the hearing, [live stream links](#), and presenter biographies can be viewed at the committee web site under the [“2021 hearings”](#) heading.

Please contact [Noah Oppenheim](#), Interim Consultant, Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture for more information.