

Date: Nov. ____, 2023

To: California Dept. of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW) and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS)

• Attention: Charles Bonham, CDFW Director | director@wildlife.ca.gov

• Attention: Paul Souza, Regional Director, Pacific Southwest Region | FWS FWS_FallRun@fws.gov

Dear Director Souza and Director Bonham,

Over the past two years, the Northern California Guides and Sportsmen's Association, along with others that rely on the fall run fishery for our livelihoods, have participated with you in a series of collaborative and ongoing discussions about managing our primary commercial and recreational salmon fishery. We expressed repeated concerns about not only the current state of the emergency closure and health of our fisheries, but extended consequences like our ability to meet egg harvest targets. Unfortunately, it appears that our fears are materializing in that Coleman National Fish Hatchery has been unable to meet its egg harvest obligations in 2023, and needs transferred eggs to meet its minimum obligations.

I am a proud member of NCGASA. NCGASA is an association of over 600 licensed guides and over 4,000 sportsmen and women that work together to protect and increase hunting and fishing opportunities throughout California. NCGASA acts as a voice to represent all people who use California's waterways and lands. We work closely with many other conservation organizations to make sure we leave a legacy to our children and grandchildren; the same access to outdoor recreation and appreciation for abundant wildlife and fisheries that was instilled in so many of us.

On December 15th, 2022, our organization wrote: "2022 Sacramento inland river fishery returns are among the worst our professional guides and sportsmen's community have ever seen. In fact, the returns have been so poor that we believe egg harvest goals will be constrained this year requiring spawning of extra fish and possibly the need to transfer eggs between hatcheries. Further, there are nowhere near enough fish in the river to provide any meaningful opportunities for natural spawning salmon redds, let alone the robust recreational angling opportunity that historically has attracted California's residents and out of state anglers to our formerly pristine waters and thriving fisheries."

We urge you to immediately and swiftly supplement the egg harvest totals at Coleman by transferring 10-15 million Fall run eggs from elsewhere in the Sacramento system. In addition to eggs necessary to meeting the annual target of 12 million smolts (requiring 14 million eggs), we urge you to transfer additional eggs to ensure that Coleman can produce ADDITIONAL fish. This is something that every other hatchery in the system is doing, based on robust conversation between our group and the commercial and ocean recreational groups and resource managers on strategies to overcome the 2023 closure earlier this year. Coleman must do the same; missing egg harvest is not an excuse to return to status quo in the face of this existential crisis of our fishery.

Further, those fish MUST be released instream. Current proposals to truck 100% of any fish raised on transferred eggs make no sense, imperil the 2026 season with unacceptable high straying rates, and will not help to rebuild the Fall run cohort in future years. We must ensure that these fish are released in the river to imprint on the main stem of the Sacramento, to return as a cohort in 2026 and help rebuild the decimated Fall run fishery that you are all responsible for managing. Historically, when Sacramento River was healthy, hundreds of millions of eggs from natural spawners supported a robust commercial and recreational ocean and inland fishery. The proposal to truck these transferred fish will do nothing to help with this ever-increasing problem of the lack of natural spawning fish and will set you up for future egg harvest failures in the future. Do not perpetuate this death spiral, work to stop it.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. We urgently request your reply and assurance that our communities will be engaged, listened to, and supported at this critical time.

Sincerely, _____