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# NEWS

## **NEWS RELEASE**

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **2010 Ocean Salmon Season Setting Process Begins, Chinook Numbers Continue to Decline**

Preliminary 2009 salmon data released by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) shows a continuing decline in the adult return of Sacramento River Fall Chinook. This data, collected by the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG), will be a major consideration as the PFMC begins the process of setting the 2010 ocean salmon season.

According to DFG's estimates, about 39,500 Fall Chinook adults returned to the Sacramento River to spawn in 2009. This is the lowest recorded return since comprehensive monitoring of Central Valley Hatchery production and natural escapement began in the 1970s. This marks the third consecutive year that the PFMC Salmon Fishery Management Plan conservation objective (a range of 122,000 to 180,000 adult hatchery and natural spawners returning to the Central Valley on an annual basis) has not been met. This finding will automatically trigger an "overfishing concern" by the PFMC.

"This year's Sacramento River fall Chinook adult return is a terrible disappointment," said Neil Manji, DFG Fisheries Branch Chief. "Over the past two years, DFG has collected and analyzed data and worked diligently to figure out what steps can be taken to improve our stock management, increase future returns and help craft fishing regulation packages.

"Salmon have a complex life cycle in both fresh and saltwater, and while we cannot pinpoint a cause for the decline at this time, we do know ocean productivity has been unpredictable in recent years."

The one positive note in the Sacramento River Fall Chinook estimates is the healthy number of returning two-year-old salmon, or "jacks." DFG counted 9,216 jacks in 2009, more than double the number that returned in 2008. Jack returns are used to help forecast the ocean abundance of adult SRFC for the upcoming 2010 season.

DFG also collected somewhat more encouraging return figures from the Klamath-Trinity River system. Preliminary counts indicate that just over 44,500 adult fall Chinook returned to spawn in natural areas during 2009, which is several thousand fish more than the 2009 PFMC management objective of 40,700 of this species.

The data from both the Sacramento River and the Klamath-Trinity will be forwarded to the PFMC for consideration as it begins its annual ocean salmon season setting process. The PFMC sets the season for federal waters from three to 200 miles offshore. The same data will be used by the California Fish and Game Commission, which will be setting the state salmon season (up to three miles offshore) at its April 21 meeting.

DFG will hold a public salmon information meeting February 25 in Santa Rosa to present information pertinent to California salmon fisheries and gather public input regarding the 2010 season.

The information will be formally presented to the PFMC at its March 6-11 meeting. Public testimony will also be heard at this meeting. To view the PFMC meeting agenda, please visit [www.pcouncil.org/newsreleases/newsreleases.html](http://www.pcouncil.org/newsreleases/newsreleases.html).

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