



**February 2024**

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## **Newsom “Strategy” Condemns Central Valley Salmon to “Hotter, Drier Future”**

The “California Salmon Strategy” announced January 30, 2024 by the Newsom Administration is a grand exercise in avoidance and deflection. It blows right past the single largest issue facing California’s salmon: inadequate flows into and through the Bay-Delta Estuary.

The State needs to devote enough water, through flow and storage, to salmon and other elements of the Bay-Delta watershed’s ecosystem. That begins with adoption of a high-flow Bay-Delta Plan and reductions in agricultural water use.

The Newsom administration is the ringleader of the “Voluntary Agreements” that would increase Delta inflow and outflow by an average of about 5%. A flow increase of 5% is far short of what the State Water Board is proposing for the update of the Bay-Delta Plan and what its science says Central Valley salmon need.

Worse, the Newsom administration is a vocal supporter of two huge water development projects in the Central Valley: the proposed tunnel under the Delta and Sites Reservoir. Those two projects alone would take more water out of the Delta than the Voluntary Agreements would put in.

As long as Central Valley salmon are relegated to the leftovers of an ever-shrinking natural supply of water, they will never recover.

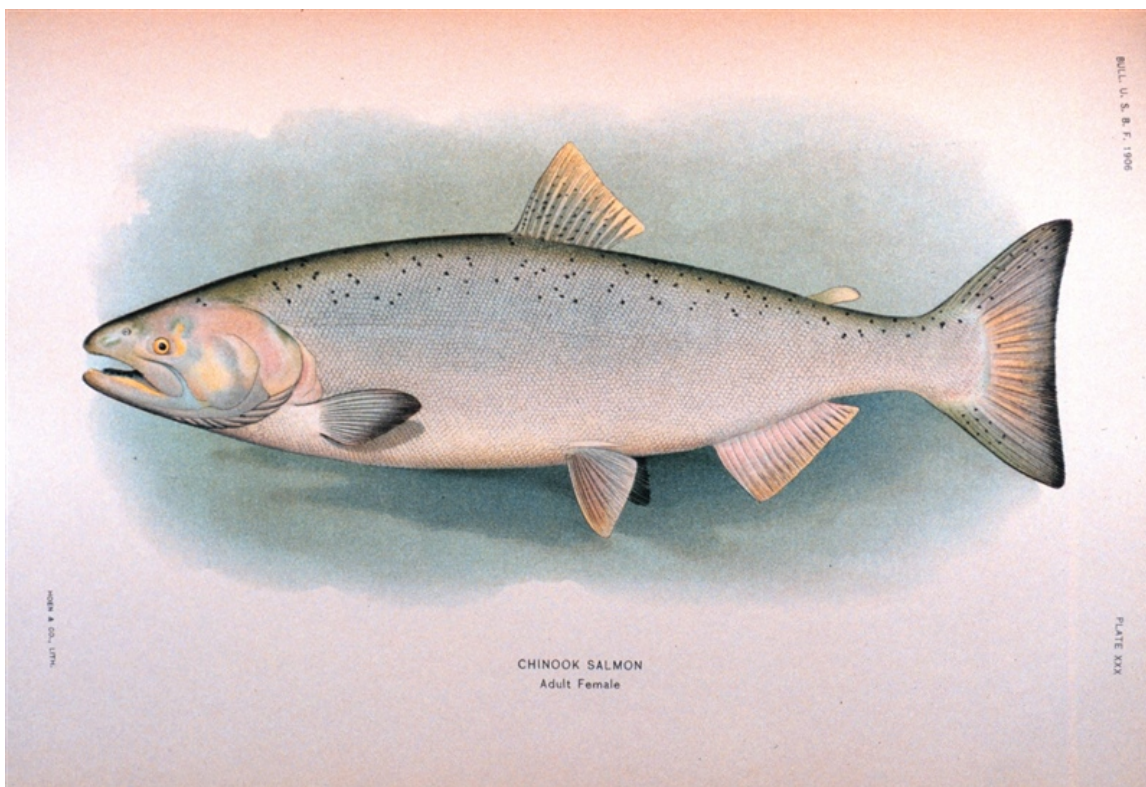
CSPA has three distinct campaigns to protect salmon fisheries from this flawed strategy. CSPA is campaigning to complete the Bay-Delta Plan, to stop the

Delta tunnel, and, more broadly, to restore rule of law in water management rather than negotiating away the public's resources.

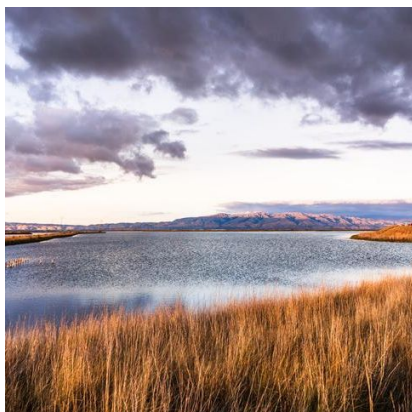
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*Chinook Salmon illustration: NOAA public domain*



**DWR Files Petition to**



**CSPA Addresses**

## Change Water Rights for Delta Tunnel

On February 22, 2024, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) submitted a water rights petition for change in point of diversion to the State Water Resources Control Board (State Board) for the Delta Conveyance Project also known as the Delta tunnel.

DWR submitted this petition despite broad opposition to the project from environmental advocacy groups, environmental justice groups, Native American tribes, and Delta cities and counties. CSPA has opposed the Delta Conveyance Project and its previous incarnations primarily because it would divert more water away from the Bay-Delta, and thus have a detrimental effect on Delta water quality, the Bay-Delta ecosystem generally, and Delta fisheries in particular.

In the petition, DWR proposes new points of diversion that include two intakes on the Sacramento River between its confluence with Sutter Slough and Freeport. These intakes would each have a maximum capacity of 3000 cubic feet of water per second.

In its Salmon Strategy, the Newsom Administration stated its goals are to “recover salmon in this state across their range” “while also reducing the risk of extinction”. Reaching these goals “will require abundant, healthy populations of salmon that return to California’s rivers each year.”

The Newsom Administration cannot have it both ways. Chinook salmon and other species of native fish in the Bay-Delta need increased flows to survive. The Delta tunnel will reduce inflow and outflow in the Bay-Delta.

CSPA had already, in January, joined

## Dewatering of the Merced River

On January 8th, 2024, CSPA joined Friends of the River in sending a letter to the State Water Resources Control Board (State Board) urging it to develop and adopt permanent minimum flow requirements for the Merced River.

This letter was sent in response to the dewatering of a 5-mile section of the Merced River over the summer and fall of 2022.

The letter got the State Board's attention. On January 16, 2024 Eric Oppenheimer, the Executive Director of the State Board, filed a response with the Federal Energy Regulatory Committee.

In the letter, Mr. Oppenheimer admitted that uncurtailed diversions were likely part of the cause of the 2022 dewatering. This means that water users diverted water that was not within their rights to take. Mr. Oppenheimer also suggested that diversions that were legal on an individual basis could have collectively dewatered the Merced River. This suggests that a regulation, other flow requirement, and/or a broad enforcement entity may be necessary to keep water in the lower Merced River year-round.

Despite these admissions, Mr. Oppenheimer offered little in the way of a solution. Mr. Oppenheimer said that the State Board will continue to evaluate methods to ensure year-round flows in the lower reaches of the Merced and into its confluence with the San Joaquin.

Water must be left in the river to ensure the survival of California's native fish species. Without enforcement and adequate flow requirements, unauthorized diversions will continue as will these dewatering

a lawsuit against DWR challenging the environmental impact report for the Delta tunnel project.

If the State Water Board acts in accordance with its legal mandates, it will deny DWR's petition for change in point of diversion. CSPA will continue in its campaign to stop the Delta tunnel by presenting testimony and through legal participation in the State Board's water rights hearing for the petition, which will likely start near the end of 2024.

Photo: SF Bay, Licensed by istock/artist Sundry Photography

events.

CSPA is closely monitoring this issue, and exploring potential solutions, as part of its Flow Restoration Initiative.

Photo: Lower Merced River dewatered, courtesy of Cindy Charles

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**YOU ARE INVITED**

**Sunday April 7th**  
**10am**

Walnut Grove (address below)

Apr 07

## Memorial for Bill Jennings



Apr 07, 2024 10:00am  
Add to [Google](#) · [Outlook](#) · [Yahoo](#)



Wimpy's Marina Restaurant, Bar & RV Park  
14001 W Walnut Grove Rd, Walnut Grove, CA 95690  
[View on map](#)

Join CSPA in celebrating the life and achievements of Bill Jennings, our longtime leader who passed away on December 27, 2022.

Bill was chairman of CSPA's board of directors since 1988 and its executive director since 2005. Bill's unique legacy of protecting California fisheries, habitat, and water quality will endure for many years to come.

A BBQ lunch will be provided at the memorial. When you register please indicate if you will be joining us for lunch.

Register online by clicking the 'register' button or email Sarah Vardaro at sarah@calsport.org.

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