

Mark Farrington

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RE: Current Habitat Issues

They need to focus on the wild spawn, I won't say wild strain because the once true wild fish have been enter bread with the hatchery fish over the many years. I fished the Feather primarily for the last 50 years. In the 70's, 80's and 90's to a lesser extent we had thousands upon thousands of Salmon spawning in the river from the low flow areas above the spillway to below Yuba City. Today you may see a pair or two on the riffles. They would need to triple or quadruple the size of all the hatcheries in the system to get a similar volume of productive eggs. Water temperature and inconsistent flows not necessary low flows in my opinion have l been the most damaging practice leading to the demise of the river spawn. My suggestion would be to close or limit both commercial and recreational fishing for the next several years to see what water management practices lead to a rebound in the river spawns. Habitat restoration won't do a thing unless the water is cold enough and the flow remains relatively consistent once the salmon start to nest. Higher flows are not the answer, temperature and consistent even if low will lead to hatching eggs. We had thousands of steelhead feeding on the deposited eggs in the river once the spawn began that also ceases to exist. No bait or food no fish. Reviving and sustaining a large river spawn along with the hatchery supplement I think will bring back the salmon. The hatchery spawn is relatively consistent in numbers of spawned and released smolt annually and the total number of adult salmon returning continues to dwindle. When we had the river loaded with spawning salmon we had returns of adult salmon that would fluctuate from good to very good. We may have not had as much pressure on the salmon but even as pressure increased we still had large returns. We need to focus on the river as the main source to rebuild our Salmon populations.