



Bureau of Reclamation
Mid-Pacific Region



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
California and Nevada Region

**Mid-Pacific Region
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**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Reclamation Release Spring-run
Chinook Salmon into the San Joaquin River for Study**

FRESNO, Calif. – The Bureau of Reclamation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on April 17 to 18 are releasing 54,000 hatchery produced juvenile spring-run Chinook salmon into the San Joaquin River as part of the implementation of the San Joaquin River Restoration Program. The Restoration Program is a comprehensive long-term effort to restore flows to the San Joaquin River from Friant Dam to the confluence of the Merced River restoring a self-sustaining Chinook salmon fishery in the river while reducing or avoiding adverse water supply impacts from those flows.

The salmon are from the Feather River Hatchery and are being released near the confluence of the Merced and San Joaquin rivers near Newman, California. The release effort will provide an opportunity to carryout fisheries studies while contributing to the long-term reintroduction of spring-run salmon to the San Joaquin River as called for in the San Joaquin River Settlement.

As part of this effort, some of these juvenile spring-run are anticipated to return to the river as adults in spring 2017. However dry year conditions will likely impact the number of returning fish. The USFWS and Reclamation are prepared to trap and transport the returning adults up river, if conditions are such that they cannot make it on their own. The returning adults will then be monitored to determine what parts of the river they use, their survival over the summer, and where they spawn in the fall of 2017. This information will help further inform future spring-run reintroduction efforts.

“Today’s salmon release is a monumental step forward for California’s fishing economy and the health of the state’s second largest river, particularly as we face a historic drought,” said Monty Schmitt, Senior Scientist with the Natural Resources Defense Council. “Even in the driest years, it is essential for the livelihood of communities in the Central Valley to protect the health of our rivers and fisheries while supporting the region’s agricultural economy.”

“This is an important study effort for the Restoration Program that does not impact water supply,” said David Murillo, Director of Reclamation’s Mid-Pacific Region. “We are hopeful that in three years, some of these juveniles return to the San Joaquin River as adults so that we learn more toward the long-term reintroduction of this species.”

The released spring-run are considered an experimental population under the Endangered Species Act and are exempted from the take prohibitions by the Central Valley Project and the State Water Project consistent with the Endangered Species Act rule package issued by the National Marine Fisheries Service on December 31, 2013. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife concurred with the federal regulations under special provisions of the California Endangered Species Act that apply to the San Joaquin River Restoration Program on March 17, 2014. The release will not impact water supply for any water user nor will any additional water releases be made for the benefit of these fish.

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Reclamation is the largest wholesale water supplier and the second largest producer of hydroelectric power in the United States, with operations and facilities in the 17 Western States. Its facilities also provide substantial flood control, recreation, and fish and wildlife benefits. Visit our website at <http://www.usbr.gov>.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov/cno>.