DWR

Aug 22, 2008

To Calif. Water Resource Control Board
Tom Dodic Bd. Chair

I work for an Indian tribe in their environmental department. While I don't represent them, I do talk with them about environmental problems. Its pretty clear from their long term perspective, that the loss of large salmon runs is because of the White Mans presence. Opinions on specific causes and solutions are as varied as among our own population, including some that would be counterproductive. One impression I keep getting is that it took us 200-500 years to screw up the environment so it will probably take that long to restore it. That belief assumes now is when things stop getting worse, tho considering increasing overpopulation, that seems unlikely. However this effort to make sure the fish have enough water, needs to go ahead, even tho we cannot expect it alone to solve the whole problem. For instance; an earlier speaker asked about the effect of the Russian River having year-round flow nowadays in contrast to its flood and trickle regime in Indian times. I would suggest at least one effect has been to increase the populations of predatory fish that prey on small salmonids heading out to the ocean. Both non-native Bass and native Pike Minnow have taken advantage of the increased habitat to increase their populations. Another earlier speaker suggested allowing the river to return to its original state of summertime low flow. That should work to limit the predatory fish populations, but I don't believe its necessary to dry it up all summer. Instead, consider a temporary dry-down for maybe 2-3 weeks, probably toward the end of summer when irrigation, recreation and natural sources have slowed. In addition to predatory fish control, a period of low flow would allow easier access to pick up litter, remove the steel jacks that hamper recreation, and control invasive plants that threaten the riparian habitat.

I do wonder if this present effort to limit ponds might not make it more difficult to improve the riparian environment via some newish innovations: vegetated filter strips and swales, first-flush catchment basins, and vernal pool re-creation..

-Many Filter Strips to clean up ag runoff with vegetation, should be Swales because existing drainage ditches speed the contaminants to the river.

-First Flush Catchment Basins are off-stream reservoirs designed to fill up with the more contaminated first flow of summer-dry tributaries when the rains begin. When the basin is full, the water is level with the stream bed so the stream continues on down its channel. Vegetation in the basin can help clean up chemical and biological contamination and trash can be removed. If the vegetation absorbs toxics that make it advantageous to harvest periodically, would it be possible to claim carbon sequestration points for putting it into a landfill?

-Vernal Pools harbor many of the native species that would be used in filter strips, swales and first flush basins. Natural vernal pools in north coast valleys are rare, degraded and disappearing. Pond making rules that don't inhibit creating new vernal pools that could function to preserve native plants and animals specific to that habitat are needed.

In conclusion I suggest expanding the program. This effort should be part of a larger, integrated campaign to restore our river systems. Use your leverage to get whatever is needed to help restore the salmon population. For instance if a pond owner is willing to restore some riparian forest in place of removing the pond, barter with him to see whats equal for the fishes good. If that means the pond owner needs to put money into a fund for purchasing restorable riparian property elsewhere on the river, then set up such a fund.

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