



CALIFORNIA



COASTAL COUNTY
FISH AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES
AND THEIR UTILIZATION

by

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Ocean Beaches

Rock fishing, surf fishing, and clam digging are conducted along all accessible parts of the county's open coast. Redtail surfperch comprise over 90 percent of the catch of both sport and commercial hook and line surf fisherman. Some of the most productive redtail surfperch beaches are Gold Bluff (Prairie Creek State Park), Luffenholtz Beach, Mad River Beach, and Centerville Beach in the Eureka area.

Surf netting with A-frame nets is conducted for both day-spawning surf smelt and night-spawning smelt from January through summer. The major surf netting localities coincide with the best surfperch fishing areas. Razor clams are dug on the exposed fine sand beaches from Little River State Beach south to Samoa. Clam digging is also popular for little-neck clams in the gravel and coarse sand between rock outcrops.

Major Sport Species

| | | |
|-----------|-----------|---------------------|
| Salmon | Rockfish | Razor and Bay clams |
| Steelhead | Surfsmelt | Abalone |
| Lingcod | Surfperch | Crabs |

Angler Days (annual average)

| | <u>1970</u> | <u>1980</u> |
|----------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Ocean | 124,170 | 156,455 |
| River (salmon & steelhead) | <u>83,850</u> | <u>108,600</u> |
| Total | 208,020 | 265,055 |

Major Anadromous Fish Streams

Redwood Creek

As with many of the smaller coastal streams, sand bars usually form at the mouth of Redwood Creek each summer. The mouth does not open until the first good fall rain, thereby limiting the upstream migration of anadromous species. Even when fish are able to enter the estuarine area, the natural flow of the main stem is often so low that upstream migration is seriously hampered.

Although forest debris and siltation constitute some impairment of the drainage, the general overall condition of the basin is fair. Natural falls occur on four tributary streams but do not block any appreciable amount of anadromous fish habitat.

The limiting factor of fishery productivity in the Redwood Creek drainage appears to be the extreme fluctuation in natural flows. Low flows during the summer and early fall months limit the year-round habitat required for silver salmon and steelhead.

Humboldt County operates a small salmon and steelhead hatchery on Prairie Creek, a tributary to Redwood Creek.

Mad River

Mad River, like most of our coastal streams, has undergone extensive logging resulting in reduced potential of the river.

Sweasy Dam, 19 miles from the mouth, was 40 feet high and the ladder over it was only partially effective. The dam has recently been removed (August 1971). Silt and gravel accumulated back of the dam filled the forebay, but salmon and steelhead are now making their way upstream past the obstruction. Winter floods will eventually clear the silt away and redeposit the gravel downstream.

Mad River salmon runs have been poor for many years but how much of this can be attributed to siltation, to Sweasy Dam, or to other factors has not been determined.

To improve the present carrying capacity of Mad River, several steps may be taken: (1) Evaluate the effect of the removal of Sweasy Dam on anadromous fish passage and then proceed on whatever projects seem appropriate; (2) stock appropriate species as conditions warrant; (3) secure the cooperation of other watershed users in wise use and management of the watershed; and (4) restrict gravel removal to noncritical spawning areas.

The Mad River hatchery, completed in 1971, should help speed up the recovery of this river system.

Eel River System

Salmon and steelhead runs are in poor condition.

Intensive logging and road construction in recent decades have resulted in degradation of the habitat through log jams and siltation of spawning areas. Restoration of this habitat through stream improvements, as well as endeavoring to increase summer and early fall stream flows, would produce larger runs.

Cooperation between the Department of Fish and Game, the Humboldt Fish Action Council, and the Pacific Lumber Company, has resulted in the construction of a rearing pond at Scotia, in 1972, capable of rearing 100,000 steelhead to yearling size. Steelhead fingerlings for this facility will be supplied from Mad River hatchery. The release of yearling steelhead will help to improve the present Eel River runs.