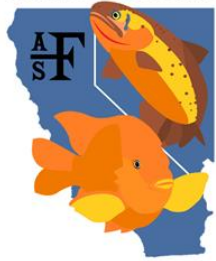


California-Nevada Chapter



Joseph Merz, Ph.D.
American Fisheries Society
California-Nevada Chapter
P.O. Box 72653
Davis, Ca. 95617-2653

March 24, 2017

Mr. Eduardo T. Demesa
Chief, Planning Division
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles District
915 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 930
Los Angeles, California 90017

Dear Mr. Eduardo T. Demesa:

I am writing on behalf of the American Fisheries Society, California-Nevada Chapter (AFS Cal-Neva Chapter). The American Fisheries Society is an international organization founded in 1870, with the mission to improve the conservation and sustainability of fishery resources and aquatic ecosystems by advancing fisheries and aquatic science and promoting the development of fisheries professionals. The AFS Cal-Neva Chapter, founded in 1966, is one of the largest chapters with over 400 members.

The AFS Cal-Neva Chapter **strongly supports efforts to remove Rindge Dam and other barriers to fish passage on Malibu Creek.** The planning process under the Malibu Creek Ecosystem Restoration Study is a much-needed and long-anticipated step on the path to restoring aquatic habitat for southern California's threatened natural heritage.

The Southern California Steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) Distinct Population Segment (DPS) is a federally listed (endangered) species. It is the southernmost anadromous (ocean-going) salmonid in the United States. The Southern California Steelhead Recovery Plan identified Malibu Creek as a Core 1 population, one of the populations that are the highest priority for recovery actions (National Marine Fisheries Service 2012). From the Santa Clara River (Ventura County) south to the Mexican border, only Malibu Creek and San Mateo Creek (San Diego County) have recent records of steelhead entering and spawning (Camm Swift, personal communication, 3/24/2017). Malibu Creek drains a 110 square-mile watershed in the Santa Monica Mountains, and flows into the Pacific Ocean at Malibu Lagoon State Beach. The lower 3 miles of Malibu Creek is critical habitat for southern California steelhead, which have been blocked from accessing an estimated 67 miles of former spawning and rearing habitat due to Rindge Dam, a 100-foot high decommissioned water supply dam, and other smaller barriers on upstream tributaries. The Recovery Plan identifies only one "critical recovery action" for Malibu

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Creek: “Remove Rindge and Malibu dams, and physically modify road crossings, to allow steelhead natural rates of migration to upstream spawning and rearing habitats, and passage of smolts and kelts downstream to the estuary and ocean.”

The Malibu Creek Ecosystem Restoration Study Draft Integrated Feasibility Report outlines alternatives for restoration. The primary purpose of the proposed project is to restore aquatic habitat connectivity along Malibu Creek and tributaries, establish a more natural sediment regime from the watershed to the shoreline, and restore aquatic habitat of sufficient quality along Malibu Creek and tributaries to sustain or enhance indigenous populations of aquatic species. The Plan includes removal of Rindge Dam, as well as several other much smaller barriers upstream of the dam. This will restore migratory opportunities to about 15 miles of aquatic habitat that have been unreachable for many decades in this watershed.

The AFS Cal-Neva Chapter encourages the Corps and the California Department of Parks and Recreation to follow through on the Integrated Feasibility Report process, and develop and implement a plan to remove Rindge Dam and other barriers to fish passage in Malibu Creek.

Sincerely,

Joseph Merz, Ph.D. and Certified Fisheries Professional
President.
American Fisheries Society California-Nevada Chapter