



News Release

Contact: David Reilly (NOAA) - 707.826.9248 FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Marty Golden (NOAA) - 562.980.4004 November 7, 2005

Sport Anglers Are Reminded To Follow Federal and State Fishing Regulations When Catching and Releasing In-Stream Wild Salmon and Steelhead Trout

EUREKA, Calif. – Federal and state law enforcement agents will be out again this season monitoring compliance with mandatory catch-and-release regulations for salmon and steelhead trout protected under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) and applicable California law.

Each year wild salmon and steelhead return to California's north coast along with their hatchery-raised counterparts to spawn in local rivers and streams. Anglers are allowed to keep wild fish only during specified open seasons. In most cases these wild fish are protected under the ESA or state regulations and must be returned immediately and gently into the body of water from which they were caught. All hatchery steelhead trout and some salmon produced for harvest are easily identified by their missing adipose fin (see attached fact sheet).

Most sport anglers follow good catch-and-release practices. However there have been recent reports of instances when wild fish have been treated roughly prior to release. Harsh treatment of protected fish may be construed as harassment under the ESA and could result in fines and/or imprisonment.

Fishermen also have a vested interest in safely returning these fish to the wild. A successful return of spawning fish will help to determine the duration of future open seasons in various rivers.

Fishing organizations, like the United Pier and Shore Anglers of California, United Anglers of California, Recreational Fishing Alliance, and the California Sportfishing Protection Alliance are working with NOAA and CDFG to promote safe catch-and release practices by posting information on their web sites and/or sending e-mails to their members.

For additional information see the attached fact sheet or call any of the numbers listed above. As always, fishermen should consult local fishing regulations in determining the type of fishing allowed in a specific waterway.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources.

-more-

On the Web:

NOAA: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>

California Department of Fish and Game: <http://www.dfg.ca.gov>

Safe Catch and release practices: <http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov/hcd/catch.pdf>

The United Pier & Shore Anglers of California: <http://www.upsac.org>

United Anglers of California: <http://www.unitedanglers.org>

Recreational Fishing Alliance: <http://www.joinrfa.org>

California Sportfishing Protection Alliance: <http://users.rcn.com/ccate/CSPAPagerev0.html>

-noaa-

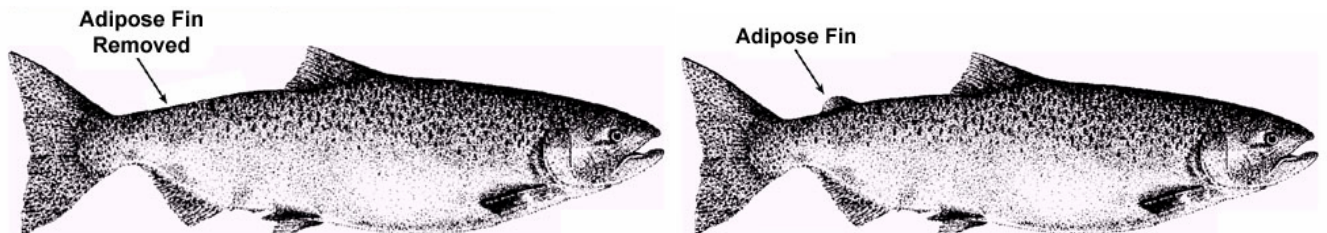
Sport Anglers Fact Sheet For In-Stream Catch and Release Requirements For Northern California Salmon and Steelhead Trout

- Causing harm to salmon and steelhead trout that are listed as Threatened or Endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) may be considered a “take” and is subject to a fine and/or imprisonment for each violation.
- The term “take” is defined under the Endangered Species Act as “harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct.”
- Examples of a “take” for an ESA-listed fish could include ripping a hook from its mouth, rough handling of fish while returning it to the water and leaving it out of the water too long. If at all possible a fish that is to be released should not be removed from the water.
- Proper methods for releasing fish include:
 - Not removing the fish from the water if possible
 - Minimize handling stress and avoid touching gills and eyes (use release tool)
 - Use barbless hooks, especially when required by regulation
 - Cut the leader line close to the hook on a deeply hooked fish
 - Resuscitate exhausted fish by slowly guiding them forward through the water several times

Additional details on releasing fish may be found at:

<http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov/hcd/catch.pdf>

- All hatchery steelhead trout and some salmon produced for harvest can be identified by their missing adipose fin.



-more-

- Before each fishing trip, anglers should call the California Department of Fish and Game Low Flow Closures phone number at (707) 442-4502.
- Be responsible for knowing current regulations (<http://www.fgc.ca.gov/html/regs.html>), including restrictions related to requirements for barbless hooks & other terminal gear.
- The following numbers, available 24 hours a day/seven days a week, can be used to anonymously report suspected violations and illegal activities:
NOAA Fisheries HOTLINE: 1-800-853-1964
California Department of Fish and Game CALTIP: 1-888-334-2258