

Trump Administration Proposes Weakening Protections for Yuba Salmon



What's happening?

The Trump Administration has proposed removing habitat damage through direct action - such as gravel mining or dewatering side channels—from definition of take.

The White House wants to redefine “take” strictly as only a direct injury to individual fish or animals (e.g., killing or wounding). This would eliminate that have been part of the definition up until now, and have been essential for endangered species preservation for decades. SYRCL is especially concerned what this new proposal could have to Yuba salmon and the 24 miles of habitat that are critical for their survival.

Without the current habitat harm rule and its definition of take, projects that could potentially harm salmon habitat could proceed

Submit your Public Comment on the Federal Register

Why does this matter for the Lower Yuba?

Habitat destruction is the primary driver of extinction everywhere, and the ESA's definition of harm has been vital in safeguarding and protecting the habitat they rely on throughout the Yuba River watershed.

Critical habitat on the Yuba: In a final rule published September 2, 2005, NOAA Fisheries designated the Lower Yuba River—from Englebright Dam to the Feather River—as critical habitat for Central Valley Spring run Chinook salmon, Central Valley steelhead, and foothill yellow-legged frogs. **This could essentially render that hard-fought designation meaningless.**



What makes it “critical”? The roughly 24-mile stretch of the lower Yuba River contains the gravel bars salmon need to dig “redds” (nests), the river rear, and the side channels and shaded refugia frogs require for survival and breeding. These are all “primary constituent elements” essential to the



Destroy the habitat and you destroy the species. Englebright Dam (at river mile 23.9) completely blocks salmon and steelhead from moving upstream, confined to those [24 miles of river below the dam](#) for all spawning and juvenile rearing. Salmon can access less than 20% of their historic range in the Yuba River. This language would remove the protective review process for that critical habitat.

What could go wrong?

Without the current habitat harm rule, many new projects such as gravel mining or increased water diversions in the lower Yuba, throughout the watershed on newly sold public lands, could avoid a full federal review. Below Englebright, removing habitat damage from spawning gravels, dewater side channels, bulldoze riparian zones, and increase water diversions that deplete water flow, without proper federal review. And this threat isn't limited to the lower Yuba – all critical habitat which is home to ESA listed frogs, birds, and trees are threatened.

Protecting Habitat is Key to Salmon Survival

Today, because of current ESA regulations, project developers know they must study and limit habitat impacts in critical habitat. Rolling back these protections to relicensing, road projects, or flood control work to proceed with weaker—or no—habitat protections, undoing decades of protections for Yuba salmon.

Maintaining the current definition of "take" ensures comprehensive protection for endangered species by safeguarding both the species and the habitat. This is crucial for the recovery and long-term survival of Yuba salmon and other vulnerable species.

What you can do!

Comments are due by May 19, 2025. If you care about the Lower Yuba's clean water, healthy gravel bars, and wild fish, tell our Federal agencies to maintain the current regulatory definition of "take." A simple sentence or two is more than adequate – the more voices that speak up, the more challenging it is to make changes. Submit your comment.

Submit your Comment

To submit a comment by May 19th:

- Click the button above.
- Click "Submit a Comment" (green box at top right).
- Write your comment (any length).
- Check the acknowledgment box.
- Click "Submit Comment."

Potential bullet points to include in your comment:

- Removing habitat harm from the Endangered Species Act's definition of "take" would gut one of our most effective tools for protecting species like salmon.
- Habitat destruction is just as deadly as direct injury, especially for fish confined to a limited stretch of river below Englebright Dam.
- Without strong habitat protections, projects that degrade spawning grounds and salmon habitat could devastate these endangered fish.
- Please keep harm to habitat in the definition of take.

What's next?

Depending on how many comments are submitted, the Agencies will make final recommendations and then an Executive Order will be issued. We encourage you to submit your comment by May 19th. **Every single comment counts!**

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