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San Joaquin River Restoration Program receives prestigious Environmental Achievement Award

SACRAMENTO, Calif. - The San Joaquin River Restoration Program, a multi-agency effort to restore the upper 152-miles of the San Joaquin River from Friant Dam to the confluence with the Merced River, recently received the Department of the Interior's highest honor for environmental restoration.



Department of the Interior Assistant Secretary for Water and Science Tanya Trujillo presented the award to the Program while visiting California for a groundbreaking ceremony and Reclamation's inaugural 120th Anniversary celebration at San Luis Reservoir.

"After a 60-year absence, it's encouraging to see salmon returning to the San Joaquin River," said Assistant Secretary Trujillo. "This award recognizes what is possible when federal and state government agencies work together and are committed to using science and engineering to overcome challenging obstacles. Congratulations to the Program."

"Program staff have worked tirelessly towards meeting the objectives laid out in the Settlement to restore the San Joaquin River," said Program Manager Donald Portz. "This award recognizes the tremendous efforts staff have undertaken to bring spring-run Chinook salmon back to the river."

The Department's Environmental Achievement Award recognizes employees and partners who have made exceptional contributions through projects aimed at fostering the protection and preservation of cultural and environmental resources. The award presented to the Program is

for environmental remediation and restoration associated with efforts on the San Joaquin River.

“Reintroductions such as this are essential for the recovery of all Endangered Species Act-listed salmonids in California’s Central Valley,” said NOAA Fisheries San Joaquin Basin Branch Chief Jonathan Ambrose. “Programs such as the San Joaquin River Restoration Program are a template for making the impossible, possible.”

“The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is committed to continually working with our implementing agency partners to manage salmon reintroduction efforts until the goal of a self-sustaining salmon population is achieved,” said USFWS Deputy Assistant Regional Director, Fish and Aquatic Conservation, Baker Holden. “Through a truly collaborative restoration process, the program has witnessed a monumental comeback of spring-run Chinook salmon and flows to the San Joaquin River.”

“Successfully bringing salmon back to the San Joaquin River has been the product of tireless collaboration and coordination between multiple agencies and diverse disciplines,” said DWR’s River Investigations Branch Manager Paul Romero. “This type of work is vital to supporting fish species and wildlife, and DWR is proud to work with its partners on the San Joaquin River Restoration Program.”

“California Department of Fish and Wildlife values the partnership and team effort exhibited by all agencies on a project of this magnitude. The progress we’ve made thus far would not be possible without it,” said CDFW Program Manager Gerald Hatler.

The San Joaquin River Restoration Program includes five implementing agencies: Reclamation; USFWS; NOAA Fisheries; DWR; and the CDFW. Together, these agencies have been charged since 2010 with restoring the San Joaquin River Restoration Area with a focus on bringing threatened spring-run Chinook salmon back to the river. This species, which was extirpated from the upper San Joaquin River since the 1950s following construction of Friant Dam, has returned annually to the river to spawn five times since their reintroduction in recent years.

For more information about the Program, visit www.restoresjr.net and follow us on Twitter at [@sanjoaquinresto](https://twitter.com/sanjoaquinresto).

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The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov/cno.

NOAA Fisheries is responsible for the stewardship of the nation's ocean resources and its habitat. We provide vital services for the nation: productive and sustainable fisheries, safe sources of seafood, the recovery and conservation of protected resources, and healthy ecosystems—all backed by sound science and an ecosystem-based approach to management. For more information, visit our website at www.fisheries.noaa.gov/region/west-coast.

The mission of the Department of Fish and Wildlife is to manage California's diverse fish, wildlife and plant resources, and the habitats upon which they depend, for their ecological values and for their use and enjoyment by the public. Visit our website at wildlife.ca.gov.

The mission of the Department of Water Resources is to sustainably manage the water resources of California, in cooperation with other agencies, to benefit the state's people and protect, restore, and enhance the natural and human environments. For more information, follow us on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#) and read our [news releases](#) and [DWR updates](#).