

Mokelumne salmon set record return

Salmon are jumping and records are breaking at EBMUD's Mokelumne River Hatchery at the base of Camanche Dam.

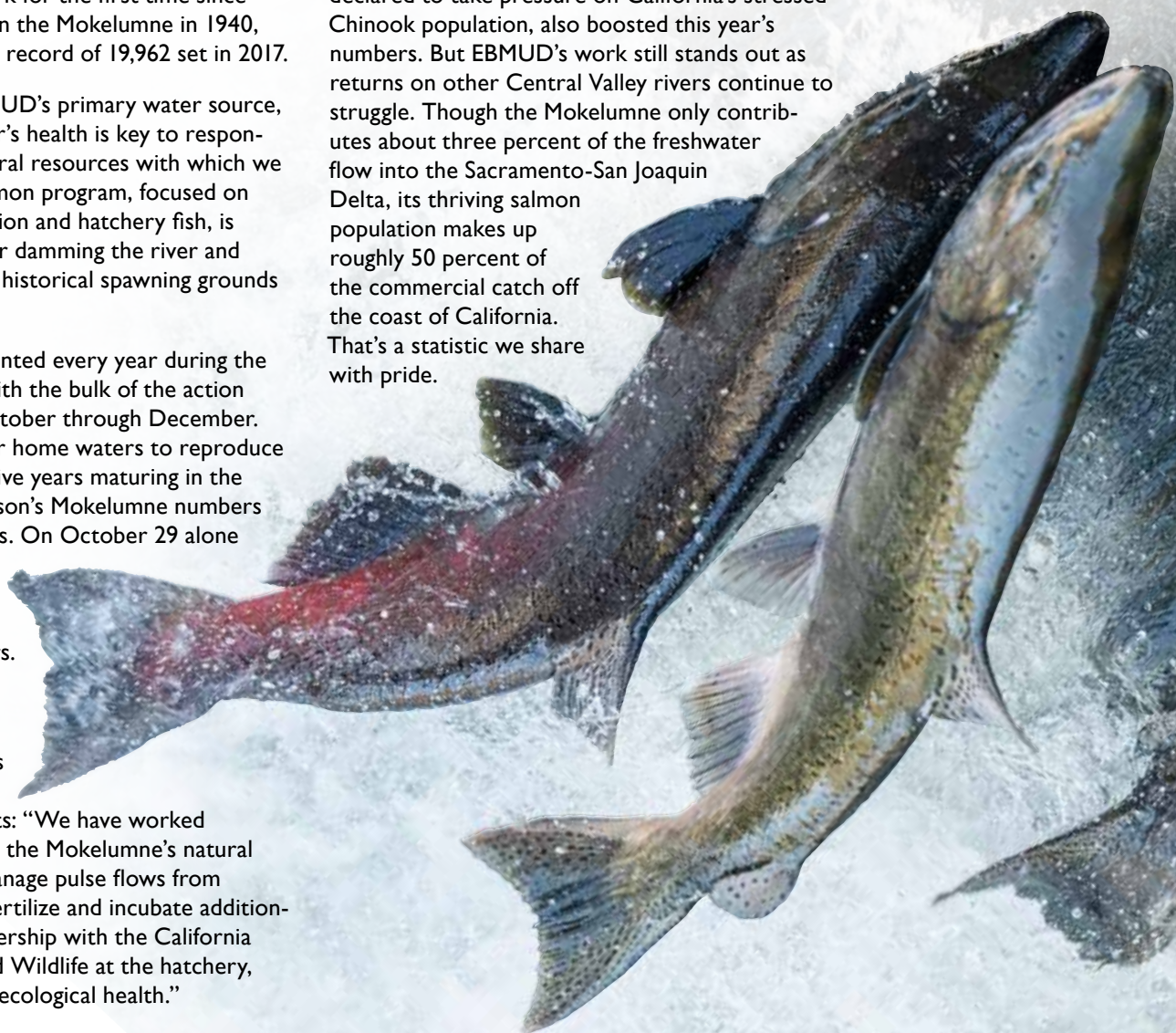
This year's fall run of spawning Chinook salmon crossed the 20,000 mark for the first time since data collection began on the Mokelumne in 1940, surpassing the previous record of 19,962 set in 2017.

The Mokelumne is EBMUD's primary water source, and protecting the river's health is key to responsibly managing the natural resources with which we are entrusted. Our salmon program, focused on both natural reproduction and hatchery fish, is designed to make up for damming the river and impeding fish access to historical spawning grounds farther upstream.

Salmon returns are counted every year during the fall spawning season, with the bulk of the action occurring from mid-October through December. Chinook return to their home waters to reproduce after spending two to five years maturing in the Pacific Ocean. This season's Mokelumne numbers have been off the charts. On October 29 alone we tallied the passage of 1,941 salmon, the largest one-day fish count in at least 30 years.

EBMUD Manager of Fisheries and Wildlife Michelle Workman says our robust programs are showing great results: "We have worked for decades to improve the Mokelumne's natural habitat, strategically manage pulse flows from Camanche Reservoir, fertilize and incubate additional salmon eggs in partnership with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife at the hatchery, and protect the river's ecological health."

A cancelled commercial salmon fishing season, declared to take pressure off California's stressed Chinook population, also boosted this year's numbers. But EBMUD's work still stands out as returns on other Central Valley rivers continue to struggle. Though the Mokelumne only contributes about three percent of the freshwater flow into the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, its thriving salmon population makes up roughly 50 percent of the commercial catch off the coast of California. That's a statistic we share with pride.



Protecting the bay, rain or shine

Rainfall refreshes our watersheds and replenishes our reservoirs.

But winter storms also pose unique challenges to the robust wastewater treatment EBMUD provides to protect the health of San Francisco Bay. Fortunately, we're at the ready, rain or shine.

When heavy rains saturate the ground, water infiltrates aging city sewers. The result is a surge of water that flows to EBMUD's wastewater interceptors, the giant underground pipes along the East Bay shoreline that collect and channel sewage to our wastewater treatment plant where it is cleaned up before being released into the bay. During heavy storms, our infrastructure must handle inflows more than ten times that of an average dry day.

EBMUD boasts a remarkable record of public health and environmental protection since the wastewater treatment plant began operating 71 years ago. But our system has its limits. A single atmospheric river on December 31, 2022, brought the largest 24-hour rainfall total since records began in Oakland in 1894. Wastewater flows peaked at 655 million gallons a day and overwhelmed the

capacity of segments of the interceptor system, leading to a release of untreated wastewater into the bay.

To better prepare for such wet weather surges and prevent future overflows, our wastewater treatment operators build upon their skills with monthly trainings. Weather forecasts, operational strategies and equipment are reviewed before each storm. Enhancements to level-monitoring stations, upgraded data communications and power supply reliability improvements also aid operations.

EBMUD rehabilitated 4,740 feet of aging large-diameter interceptor pipe last year. We will tackle additional sections following risk-based assessments. We're also evaluating ways to lower the levels of nitrogen, phosphorous and other nutrients discharged to the bay. A system tested last summer, for example, removed more than 20 percent of total inorganic nitrogen in treated wastewater.

Together, these continuous improvements strengthen our ability to meet regulatory requirements and protect the bay we love.



Learn more at ebmud.com/wastewater.



P.O. Box 24055 • Oakland, CA 94623
1-866-403-2683
www.ebmud.com

EBMUD Mission Statement

To manage the natural resources with which the District is entrusted; to provide reliable, high-quality water and wastewater services at fair and reasonable rates for the people of the East Bay; and to preserve and protect the environment for future generations.

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