

Fish Rap: Mourning a lost salmon season  
By Allen Bushnell  
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Let us bow our heads in mourning for yet another year with no salmon season. Due to the low return numbers of spawning salmon in the Sacramento River system this year, the Pacific Fisheries Management Council once again imposed draconian limits for ocean salmon fishing.

Only 66,000 fish were counted this year in the Sacramento River, about half the number needed to meet the PFMC threshold that would possibly allow a regular salmon season. No commercial fishing for salmon is allowed in California this year, and there will be only a one-week window for sport fishing king salmon. From Eureka to the Oregon border, sport anglers can legally pursue king salmon between Aug. 29 and Sept. 7. Most of the fish caught in that northern area are from the Klamath River, which is showing healthy return numbers.

Locally, things are looking promising. The large schools of sardines that were hugging the coastline last week mostly have moved further offshore, but we know they are still in the bay. Bocci Boy has plenty of sardines in his receiver at the end of S dock at the Santa Cruz harbor in anticipation of rockfish season, which opens May 1.

High winds last week cooled the water temperatures. Fewer halibut have been reported caught in the past week, but it is still very early in the season. Ed Burrell at Capitola Boat and Bait noticed a few boats working the edges of the kelp beds near Capitola last week and heard of "at least one" halibut caught in that area. As the next few weeks progress and the water warms, we are likely to see an increase in these nearshore flatties. Considering the lack of salmon fishing, we could do with a good halibut season this year.

Burrell had very good reports from the surfcasters. Anglers working the beaches from Manresa to Pajaro have reported schools of striped bass in the surfline this week. Some of the stripers are reported to be in the 20-pound class, and anglers are finding success using poppers, KastMasters or bait for the linesiders.

Closer to home, Burrell says the perch are getting bigger near the Capitola Wharf. He cites a few calico perch caught this week in the 10- to 12-inch range from the wharf, and he personally caught a 15-inch barred surfperch near the surfline, using shrimp as bait on a #4 hook under a barrel swivel.

Bushnell can also be heard on The Let's Go Fishing Radio Show, Thursdays at 7 p.m. on KSCO radio on 1080 AM. Send your photos, comments or questions to [scrufishing@yahoo.com](mailto:scrufishing@yahoo.com)