

WATERWORKS

TEHAMA-COLUSA CANAL AUTHORITY



SPRING EDITION
May 2025



Manager Notes

Salmon Net Pens in TCCA Stilling Basin

If you have been to the Red Bluff Facility lately, you may have noticed an unusual structure in the Stilling Basin. In February our staff received a strange delivery, a fish holding net pen. It is part of the ongoing efforts by the Sacramento River Settlement Contractors (SRSC) to help stabilize and grow the fish populations in the Sacramento River, in particular the Winter Run Chinook Salmon, which is a listed endangered species. Shasta Lake operations are oriented around maintaining a cold-water pool for that particular species. This is the reason we often have reduced allocations along the Tehama-Colusa Canal. Winter Run are one of the four salmon runs on the Sacramento River that could potentially impact us. However, the Fall Run Chinook are now considered for listing as a Threatened or Endangered species, which could further restrict Shasta operations.

Most people are familiar with the fact that salmon return to the river they were spawned in after three years. The biological process that enables them to know which stream to return to is called 'imprinting'. In our efforts to help declining salmon populations, we have turned to hatcheries and even extreme measures such as trucking fish downstream to help them avoid the significant predation by birds, bass and other fish that occurs. The problem that arises with this is the fish don't fully imprint to their native stream. When they return, they can stray to another stream or even stop migrating early, seemingly out of confusion.

Continued on Page 4

Meet the TCCA Family



Mike and Roger, the family Goldendoodle.

Mike Urkov has been General Manager of the Westside Water District since April 2024. Mike first worked with the TCCA as a consultant in 1997 studying options for resolving issues at the Red Bluff Diversion Dam. That project culminated in the completion of the Red Bluff Pumping Plant and Fish Screen in 2012. Mike's consulting experience has mostly focused on water resources in California, with notable examples including fish passage at Anderson-Cottonwood Irrigation District, Trinity River reoperation, Settlement Contract renewals, representing TC Districts for Sites Reservoir, and CVPIA fish doubling. Mike is married to his boss, Kellie. They have three grown children Caroline (26 in San Diego), Elise (23 in Albuquerque) and Wilson (21 in Vallejo).

Aaron Hall – TCCA Red Bluff maintenance supervisor/Pumping plant operator. Aaron holds multiple welding certifications from the Butte College welding program. He then went on as a millwright at Sierra Pacific Industries where he became a lead electrician working with motor controls, PLC's, and VFD controlled motors. Aaron entered the water industry in 2009 with the TCCA. He served as an inspector during the construction of the pumping plant and fish screen. One of Aaron's biggest projects was a complete automation overhaul on the TC and Corning Canals. This involved installing new SCADA packs, level transducers, battery backup's, new narrow-banded radios, and new motor controls and wiring on the Corning Canal. Aaron graduated from Red Bluff High School where he met his wife Kristyn and has been married for 24 years, together they have two children, Preston and Carson. Aaron is a competitive archer representing many different companies throughout the West Coast. He is an avid hunter and fisherman who loves the outdoors and enjoys spending time on adventures with his family and friends.



Aaron Hall

Strategic Planning at the TCCA

During the March Board meeting, the TCCA Board of Directors undertook the dreaded “Strategic Planning Session.” This took place in the Red Bluff Facility, following the regular meeting, and took 2-3 hours.

Manager Vanderwaal reviewed the Mission Statement of the TCCA, which is “to secure, protect and develop dependable and affordable sources of water, and to operate, maintain and deliver the works essential to deliver such water.” Then he led a discussion on what goals, issues and end states the Board would like to see completed or pursued. This resulted in a robust discussion about many things. As they were thought of, and brought up, the Board members put sticky notes with the item up on the white board. Once they were placed on the board, Manager Vanderwaal worked with the Board to organize them into general areas. Once the items were organized, the Board voted on the items by placing low, medium or high priority votes on each item (colored dots). Following the vote, these general priorities were determined: Drought/Alternative Water Supply, Operations, Government/USBR Policy, Facility/Aging Infrastructure, Staffing, and Corning Canal Operations. Manager Vanderwaal will be developing a draft plan that addresses the items within each category, including 18-month, 3 year and 5-10 years goals and actions, along with a current status. This draft will be presented to the Board at the June meeting. The plans will be brought back to the Board on a regular basis for progress review and updating the prioritization.



New to the TCCA



Susan Albert began working at TCCA in March on a part time basis as an Administrative Assistant. She also works for her family company, Albert Refrigeration. She has been married to Kevin for 21 wonderful years. They have 2 boys on the cusp of adulthood, Brody (19) and Josh (17). Susan enjoys writing, photography, and planning road trips.

Manager's Notes Continued...

The point of this net pen is to hold the fish in the Sacramento River as far upstream as possible, allowing the salmon to imprint in the river. The fish in this net pen will be released at the ramp across from our pumping plant and in the San Francisco Bay. Each fish was tagged for tracking purposes when they return, to determine how well they imprinted.

The SRSC is funding this project out of its own operating fund and is partnering with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), CA Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW), and some fishing guide and commercial fishing organizations. Endangered species, like the Winter Run Chinook Salmon, cannot be used in this type of study. Instead, the fish are Fall Run Chinook Salmon, which come from Coleman Fish Hatchery and CDFW run hatcheries. The TCCA is a vital partner in this study since we host the pen and our staff are feeding the fish four times per day. The SRSC is proposing this study to be included in future federal appropriations, which would then relieve the funding that we, and they, are providing for it.

Feeding Time



Salmon arriving in the net pen



New to the TCCA

Wesley Otterson started at the TCCA in April as a Operations and Maintenance Technician. He grew up on a rice farm and raising goats. He enjoys working on the farm and shooting.

The Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority (TCCA) is a Joint Powers Authority comprised of 17 Central Valley Project water contractors. The service area spans four counties (Tehama, Glenn, Colusa, and Yolo) along the west side of the Sacramento Valley, providing irrigation water to farmers growing a variety of permanent and annual crops. TCCA operates and maintains the 140 mile Tehama-Colusa and Corning canals irrigation water supply system. The service area is approximately 150,000 acres, contributing \$1 billion to the regional economy annually.