



# Blue Ribbon Committee for the Rehabilitation of Clear Lake

January 25, 2023

Hon. Gavin Newsom, Governor  
Hon. Mike Thompson, US House of Representatives  
Hon. Cecilia Aguiar-Curry, CA State Assembly  
Hon. Mike McGuire, CA Senate  
Sec. Wade Crowfoot, CA Natural Resources Agency

On behalf of the Blue Ribbon Committee for the Rehabilitation of Clear Lake (Committee), I am writing to express our support for efforts aimed at rescuing and restoring the Clear Lake Hitch, or Chi as it is known by sovereign Tribal Nations throughout Clear Lake.

The Clear Lake Hitch has traditionally served a central role in both the ecosystem of Clear Lake and the culture and sustenance of local Tribes. As recently as the 1990s, the Hitch appeared in huge numbers throughout the Clear Lake basin and served as a staple of many Tribal diets. In recent years however, populations have declined precipitously, and in 2014, the California Fish and Game Commission included the Clear Lake Hitch as an endangered species under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA). Populations have continued to decline in recent years, with 2022 showing the lowest numbers in recorded history.

Given the critical status of Clear Lake Hitch populations and stressors on remaining fish from climate change, drought conditions, lack of flows during spawning season, and lack of access to spawning grounds, the Committee supports emergency efforts to save the Hitch and restore its population including (but not limited to):

- An emergency listing under the Federal Endangered Species Act by the US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Activities associated with increasing flows in Clear Lake Tributaries, particularly in critical Hitch spawning habitat during spawning season
- Critical agencies work quickly to determine where reductions in water usage are required based on the best available science.
- Immediate restoration of existing fish passage on Kelsey Creek and removal of barriers for spawning on Clear Lake tributaries
- Agencies investigate opportunities to increase flows and minimize barriers from existing diversion and dam structures
- Prioritize restoration activities within critical tributaries

Although the Committee is not a regulatory body with statutory authority, we believe the Committee can play an important role in convening community members to educate them on the critical importance of the Clear Lake Hitch and will gladly serve as a forum for outreach and education on the issue. Furthermore, the Committee supports neutral, third party facilitation of ongoing Clear Lake Hitch conversations at the State and Federal level with regulatory agencies and is willing to provide these services utilizing its existing contracts.

We appreciate your careful consideration of this issue, and look forward to further, concentrated efforts to save this critical species for the environment and communities of Clear Lake

Sincerely,

*Eric Sklar*

[Eric Sklar \(Jan 26, 2023 09:39 PST\)](#)

Eric Sklar (on behalf of the Committee)  
Committee Chair