

The San Francisco Estuary's salmon and smelt are going extinct, with climate change and non-native species increasingly limiting opportunities for classic restoration schemes. Reconciliation ecology – supporting native species within human-dominated landscapes – has benefitted declining native species beyond that envisioned by classic restoration. However, application of reconciliation ecology in the watershed has been limited to the estuary and flood bypasses despite potential of other habitats. For example, Sacramento perch would be extinct had they not been planted into reservoirs. Reservoirs hold promise for smelt and salmon, too. First, presence of kokanee and wakasagi suggest plenty of both cool water and zooplankters. Second, self-sustaining landlocked Chinook salmon populations intimate that endangered runs could complete their life histories without trap-and-haul in reservoirs. Third, populations closest to wild, native Central Valley steelhead are above the dams. Fourth, presence of at-risk Delta fishes in State Water Project (SWP) reservoirs indicates the chance that smelt may be present, too. To minimize extinction probability of these unique species, I recommend (1) stocking delta smelt into reservoirs either containing kokanee or having similar features to wakasagi reservoirs; (2) designating key reservoirs for native salmonid conservation; and (3) instituting a standardized monitoring program in SWP reservoirs.