



## **Press Release**

6 January 2014  
**For Immediate Release**

Contact: Bill Jennings, California Sportfishing Protection Alliance: 209-464-5067; cell 938-9053; email, [deltakeep@me.com](mailto:deltakeep@me.com); website, [www.calsport.org](http://www.calsport.org)

### **Delta Fish Hammered Yet Again** *Fall Midwater Trawl Results Reveal Continued Biological Collapse*

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) has released the results of the 2013 Fall Midwater Trawl (FMWT), which reconfirms the continuing biological collapse that is occurring in the Sacramento – San Joaquin Delta Estuary. The FMWT conducts monthly surveys from September through December at 100 index stations in the Delta. The results reveal that populations of Delta smelt, striped bass and American shad declined from the disastrous levels of last year while longfin smelt and threadfin shad showed little improvement from last year's lows. The surveys, which were initiated in 1967, the same year the State Water Project began exporting water from the Delta, show that population indices of Delta smelt, striped bass, longfin smelt, threadfin shad and American shad have declined 95.6%, 99.6%, 99.8%, 97.8%, 90.9%, respectively, between 1967 and 2013. Inexplicably, the 2013 indices for splittail were not released but results from 2012 reveal that splittail indices have dropped 98.5% from 1967 levels.

“Excessive water diversions from the Delta by the State and Federal Projects and the failure of state agencies to enforce water quality standards have created an extended fish drought that can only be characterized as a biological holocaust,” said CSPA Executive Director Bill Jennings. “And the same agencies that orchestrated and chaperoned this biological meltdown are not only proposing a scheme to divert massive quantities of fresh water flows via tunnels under the Delta, under the guise of the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP), but they ask us to trust them to build the tunnels now and figure out how to operate them later,” he said.

BDCP proponents suggest that the two 35-mile tunnels under the Delta will not lead to an increase in total Delta exports. However, actual operations will be determined after completion of the project through a decision-tree adaptive management process by the same agencies that have historically failed to protect the estuary. Examination of the four alternative decision tree operational scenarios in the BDCP EIR/EIS reveals that all of them decrease Delta outflow and three of them substantially increase exports. BDCP modeling conducted for the State Water Resources Control Board demonstrates that BDCP could only export about 3.1 MAF of water if reasonable fishery protection measures are included (increased outflow, bypass flow, coldwater pool management, etc.).

“BDCP proponents are not going to spend some \$67 billion to receive the same or less water and reduced outflow for an estuary already hemorrhaging from a lack of water is a death sentence,” Jennings said adding, “given the agencies abysmal track record, there can be no trust and no tunnels until Jerry Brown takes affirmative steps to end his fish drought.”

The 2013 FMWT indices for Delta smelt and American shad were the second lowest in the 46 years of the survey. The striped bass index was tied for third lowest, while the longfin smelt and threadfin shad indices were the eighth and fifth lowest, respectively. The vast majority of record low indices have occurred over the last decade. For example: comparing the average indices of the first six years of the survey (1967-72) with the average of the most recent six years shows that the six-year average indices of Delta smelt, striped bass, longfin smelt, threadfin shad, American shad and splittail have declined by 91.7%, 98.6%, 99.3%, 99.9%, 69.6% and 88.7%, respectively.

Excessive water exports by the state and federal export projects in 2013 led to degraded water quality and habitat conditions in the Delta. The projects exported some 826,778 acre-feet more water than they had projected they would be able to deliver. Consequently, water quality standards were violated in the South Delta in June and July through 15 August and at Emmaton in April, May and June and at Jersey Point in June. Emmaton and Jersey Point are in the western Delta. Sharply increased exports coupled with a sudden reduction in Delta outflow in late June and early July caused the low salinity zone and pelagic species like Delta smelt to be drawn into the western Delta where they encountered lethal temperature conditions created by a combination of warm water released from reservoirs and high ambient temperatures. Another likely factor was high exports leading to excessive Old and Middle River reverse flows during the critical 15-April – 15 May San Joaquin pulse flow period.

2013 was also a bad year for salmon. As many as half of this year’s up-migrating winter-run salmon were stranded in the Yolo Bypass and Colusa Basin in April-June and Sacramento River temperature requirements to protect spawning winter-run were relaxed in June. In November, abrupt reductions in Sacramento River flow exposed spawning redds, killed up to 40% of Sacramento River fall-run salmon eggs and stranded newly emerged fry. And low reservoir levels will likely lead to inadequate flows for young salmon out-migration this coming spring. The decline of Central Valley salmon populations over the last 46 years is similar to the declines of Delta pelagic species. But the full consequences of this year’s debacle will only become fully apparent when this year’s young salmon return to spawn in three years.

Further information, including DFW’s FMWT Memo with graphs, the BDCP alternative comparison and the State Board’s quantitative comparisons can be found at: [www.calsport.org](http://www.calsport.org).

---

The California Sportfishing Protection Alliance (CSPA) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit public benefit conservation and research organization established in 1983 for the purpose of conserving, restoring, and enhancing the state's water quality, wildlife and fishery resources and their aquatic ecosystems and associated riparian habitats.