

Spotlight on predation in the Delta

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With the recent adoption of the Delta Plan and work on the Bay Delta Conservation Plan continuing, the state is making progress toward addressing big picture problems in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, but there are still a number of individual Delta stressors that can, and should, be addressed immediately.

One of those stressors is predation, particularly predation by striped bass and black bass on native species, including delta smelt and salmon. The Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) will convene a workshop next week to focus on the effects of predation on native species.

Striped bass and black bass consume large numbers of native fish in the Delta, having devastating effects on California's dwindling salmon populations. Experts from the DFW estimate that striped bass alone consume upwards of 25-50 percent of endangered winter- and spring-run Chinook salmon in the Delta and its tributaries. Yet appointed "part-time" decision-makers continue to stall efforts to address this issue.

Last year, DFW presented a proposal to the California Fish and Game Commission, which has jurisdiction over fishing regulations, to study the potential of revised striped bass fishing regulations. This proposal was supported by the federal fisheries agencies, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service, as well as the Delta Stewardship Council. The Commission ignored the experts (and its obligation to protect endangered species) and catered to the well-represented sport-

fishing special interests, rather than address this serious stressor. It voted against even taking the preliminary step of sending the DFW proposal out for environmental review and study and missed a prime opportunity to responsibly address this known problem.

Ignoring the stressor has not made it go away.

While some salmon populations have seen a slight rebound this year, likely largely due to improved ocean feeding conditions, the prognosis for the future of the species is dire. Even with habitat and conveyance improvements prescribed by the Bay Delta Conservation Plan, the effects of climate change will likely take their toll on native salmon, according to a [recent UC Davis study](#). Delta

salmon populations must be afforded every opportunity possible to thrive. Predation cannot be ignored any longer.

The DFW workshop will bring together an independent panel of experts to clarify the role of fish predation on salmon and how policy decisions can effect changes to this stressor. **Protecting endangered species is a serious issue that can no longer be ignored. If the Fish and Game Commission once again shirks its responsibility, it will be necessary for the Legislature and Brown Administration to fill the void.**

More information on the upcoming predation workshop on July 22-23 can be found at <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/erp/predation.asp>.



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A Project of the Coalition for a Sustainable Delta