

IEP Science Highlights

Quarterly Directors Update

March 2014

Fish Monitoring Highlights (see also <http://www.water.ca.gov/iep/activities/monitoring.cfm>)

- Fall 2013 Abundance of “POD” fish species: remained in the low “POD range.”
- Winter 2014 Smelt Abundance: Adult (monthly Spring Kodiak Trawl) and larval (biweekly Smelt Larva Survey) monitoring is currently in progress. Preliminary results of these routine monitoring surveys suggest very low abundance of Delta Smelt in 2014. Additional intensive Kodiak trawl monitoring at Jersey Point also yielded relatively few Delta Smelt (February: 87 adult Delta Smelt/237 trawls). Larval Delta Smelt were first observed in the first week of March. Sampling for post-larval smelt (biweekly 20-mm Survey) will start on March 17.
- Adult Salmon Returns: In 2013, all Chinook salmon stocks had higher returns from the ocean than in 2012: 424,914 Fall (exceeding upper goal of 180,000), 8,952 Late Fall, 6,705 Winter, and 22,760 Spring Chinook salmon returned to the Sacramento River basin for spawning. 1.2 million juvenile Winter Chinook are expected to enter the Delta on their way to the ocean. The Delta Cross Channel gates are currently closed to protect outmigrating juvenile salmon.
- Winter Fish “Salvage” at the CVP & SWP Pumps: To date (3/6), no Delta Smelt and only 16 juvenile Longfin Smelt have been salvaged. Salmon salvage has also been low: only 12 winter-run sized wild juvenile salmon and 95 steelhead have been observed.
- Pacific Herring Larvae have been abundant and widely distributed throughout the estuary and have even been observed in salvage.

Workshops and Work Teams (see <http://www.water.ca.gov/iep/activities/calendar.cfm>)

- 2014 IEP Annual Workshop: February 26-8, Lake Natoma Inn, Folsom, with CWEMF (2/24-26), 350 registered IEP workshop participants. Included oral and poster presentations on diverse topics, an evening event and panel discussion about science priorities for habitat restoration, student-mentor lunch, poster poetry slam, interactive drought room.
- DSP/SWRCB Workshops on Delta Flows: First workshop (2/20-11) on “Delta Outflows and Related Stressors” had several IEP presenters. All presenters showed IEP data. Panel report is expected in early April. Next workshop on in-Delta flows likely in mid-April.
- New IEP Project Work Teams: Resident Fishes (met 2/20), Fall Low Salinity Habitat (meets 3/20), Tidal Wetland Monitoring (proposed)

Other IEP Science Activities

- IEP Management, Analysis, and Synthesis Team (MAST): continuing revisions to the Delta Smelt MAST report; gave three public presentations about the MAST report in February. The draft MAST conceptual model and many IEP work plan elements were included in the Collaborative Adaptive Management Team (CAMT) progress report. MAST report completion target is now April, but MAST members continue to have many other high priority assignments. A new “salmon MAST” is being established.
- Science Integration: IEP staff continues to actively participate in the CAMT and its subgroups, WQMC Estuaries Work Group, Delta RMP development, and planning and/or implementation of a wide range of science activities, including evaluating and improving monitoring survey such as the Delta Juvenile Fish Monitoring Program (DJFMP) which was recently reviewed by the IEP Science Advisory Group. DJFMP staff is now working on addressing recommendations.