

Fish Losses from Pumping Operations in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta: A CALL TO ACTION

For 30 years scientists and regulatory agencies have documented the significant impacts the major water diversions by the State Water Project (SWP) and the Central Valley Project (CVP) have on Delta fish – and yet little action has been taken to correct the situation. When the pelagic organism decline signaled the Delta ecosystem was in real trouble a few years ago, the response was to shift the blame from the known impacts of the water exports to potential other “stressors.”

As a result, the Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District (SRCS D) has been placed under intense scrutiny to examine its potential role in the Delta’s decline. Numerous hypotheses have been suggested and studied, but, as confirmed by a national panel of experts convened by CALFED, no credible linkage to fish mortality or population declines has been determined. SRCS D supports ongoing research to examine its potential impact and will respond responsibly to those results.

However, we do not need more answers to address the serious fish mortality problems **we already know exist** at the SWP and CVP. We should not tolerate further delay. **Here are the facts:**

Delta pumping operations have contributed to the loss of millions of fish

- A 1996 study by the Department of Water Resources and Department of Fish and Game stated that from 1979 – 1993, 110 million fish were “salvaged” ahead of the pumps at the SWP.
- Research demonstrates that, conservatively, 5 to 10 times more fish are lost than are salvaged, largely due to the high number of fish lost to predators in and around water project facilities.
- That means approximately 550 million to 1.1 billion fish were lost during just the 15-year period from 1979 to 1993.
- Best available information indicates that even more fish were lost in the past 20 years when the amount of water pumped out of the Delta nearly doubled.

As water exports increase so do impacts on fish

- The amount of water pumped from the south Delta doubled between 1991 and 2005, coinciding with the crash of sensitive Delta fish species.
- The 2009 National Marine Fisheries Service Biological Opinion anticipated greater losses of Chinook salmon and steelhead as Delta pumping increased since more of these fish would be entrained near the pump facilities and fall victim to predators and other threats.

For 30 years, research studies have documented significant fish impacts with little done to mitigate these losses

- Many potential solutions have been studied - but little effective action to mitigate these fish losses has been taken.

Immediate action should be taken to mitigate the known and documented impacts of water exports on the Delta ecosystem and endangered fish species

- More research must be done to fully understand all of the stressors that may be affecting the health of the Delta and what action should be taken to address them.
- **In the meantime, let’s work to solve the serious fish mortality problems we already know exist.**