

DRAFT
Removal and Control of Aquatic Predators

Description

Many native and non-native fish, such as squawfish, steelhead, striped bass, catfish, large- and smallmouth bass, crappie, and inland silversides, are predators of juvenile native fish species, such as delta smelt and chinook salmon. Predator removal and control consists of reducing the effects of predators on important fish species on which they prey by reducing predator populations in critical habitat locations.

This category includes the following actions:

- harvest predators at Delta export pumps and
- harvest predators in upstream habitats.

Purpose

Predators constitute a substantial problem for native fish survival in many locations, such as Clifton Court Forebay at the State Water Project export pumping plant. Removing or controlling these predators at locations where they cause particular problems for survival of species of concern could possibly improve production of native fish populations. For example, warmwater game fish comprise large predator populations in tributaries of the San Joaquin River because of low flows, channel modifications, and aquatic plant growth. These predator populations cause increased mortality in juvenile salmon populations.

Constraints

Many predator species are highly valued by recreational groups as sport fish, and removal or control of these species may be controversial as well as difficult to implement. Modifying habitat conditions (e.g., using higher flows or channel modifications) to favor native species has doubtful effectiveness in controlling predation and would most likely be complex and costly to implement. Removal and control efforts for large bodies of water are difficult and costly, and often insufficiently effective.