

State of the Ocean – Newsletter

Spring 2018



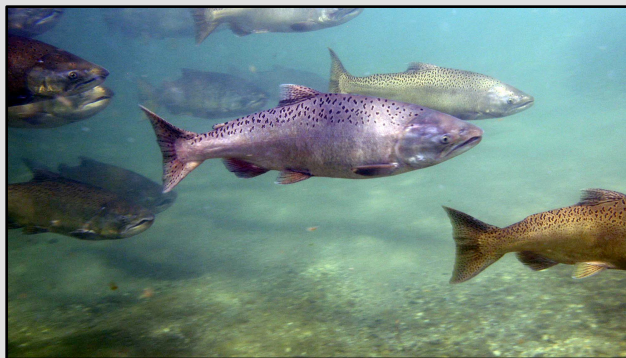
FARALLON INSTITUTE

Farallon News

- Farallon Institute scientists kicked off a 3-year NASA funded project to study the biogeography of subarctic zooplankton of the North Pacific and a 2-year NOAA funded project to measure krill biomass of the California Current. Both studies will expand our knowledge of important prey of the Pacific ecosystem.
- We have taken our “State of the Ocean” talk series on the road this spring and have connected over 400 people to global and local ocean issues.

Fisheries

Early indicators predict another poor year for Chinook salmon returning to California in 2018. Recreational fishing of salmon will be prohibited north of the Golden Gate in April, and more



restrictions on the recreational and commercial fishery are likely forthcoming at the next Pacific Fisheries Management Council meeting in April. This third consecutive year of low returns is likely due to the extended drought conditions in 2014-16 and a warmer and less productive ocean over that time frame, leading to poor survival.



Physical Ocean

Ocean conditions are pretty average right now. The tug of war between El Niño (warm/less productive) and La Niña (cold / more productive) conditions has been going La Niña's way in the past 6 months but is fairly neutral on the whole. Upwelling season started early this year, with strong winds and cold water temperatures in February. Wintertime upwelling of cold nutrient rich water has been strong and is important for readying the system for the productive spring and summer seasons. Over the next 3 months we will see if these conditions translate into lots of krill and forage fish in the ocean. We will be out measuring these important prey during shipboard surveys in May-June 2018.

Whale Migration

Gray whales are beginning their northward migration from Baja California to Alaska and are being counted by volunteers along the California Coast. Almost 600 have been counted in Santa Barbara through the end of March. Mothers and calves lag a bit behind the first northward wave and should reach northern California by early April. Point Reyes is a great vantage point to see the whales as they pass our shores. Check out www.graywhalescount.org for a daily update and learn how the data are used by NOAA to understand the recovery of these magnificent creatures.