

Pescadero Lagoon Science Panel

Update February 2014

Summary

The Pescadero Lagoon Science Panel (PLSP) was formed in early 2013 to make an assessment of Pescadero Lagoon in order to generate a consensual understanding of the abiotic functioning of the lagoon and marsh in the context of ecosystem health, and thus to provide a foundation for the evaluation of future management actions. Specifically, the panel was charged with reviewing prior studies, existing literature and data related to the Pescadero Lagoon system and drawing upon their collective knowledge and experience in comparable bar-built estuaries across the State. The PLSP expects to complete their work in spring 2014 and will share their findings with state and federal agencies as well as the public.

The PLSP is currently hard at work synthesizing an understanding of the lagoon and surrounding watershed based on past data, published reports and information gained from meetings with other scientists and site visits. This synthesis takes the form of a set of conceptual models of how the lagoon functions. These conceptual models address phenomena such as sedimentation, mouth closure, lagoon water levels, water-column stratification and salinity patterns, dissolved oxygen and water quality.

Timeline

February 27, 2013: PLSP members and agency representatives met with members of the public at the Historic Train Depot in Half Moon Bay.

August 14, 2013: PLSP held a webinar with federal, state, and local agencies. Each agency gave a brief presentation on their past and present involvement in Pescadero Lagoon, including their mission, activities, goals and priorities.

September 2013 – January 2014: PLSP held quasi-weekly webinars to learn more about the lagoon. During each web-based seminar, a researcher with expertise in Pescadero and comparable small estuaries presented and discussed her/his research results and understanding of processes and phenomena in the lagoon-marsh system. The webinars have allowed the panel to gain a more in-depth insight to past work on topics including natural history, sedimentation, steelhead use of coastal lagoons, and water quality. Webinars were held on Sep. 20, Oct. 11, 18, 25, Nov. 1, 22, Dec. 6, 13, 20, and Jan. 17.

November 22, 2013: PLSP met in Pescadero. The morning was spent exploring Pescadero lagoon. During the afternoon the panel discussed observations made in the morning and the process of developing conceptual models. The workload of synthesizing information related to the models was divided among panel members.

January 29, 2014: PLSP met in Berkeley to report on, discuss and evaluate the component conceptual models developed by groups of PLSP members. The final PLSP report was outlined.

Winter – Spring 2014: The panel is finalizing the conceptual models and background information while developing insight on how this consensual understanding can be used to gain new insight to the effects/benefits of an array of possible management actions. Specific attention is being given to steelhead mortality in the lagoon as well as to past and anticipated environmental change in the lagoon-marsh system. A final report is being prepared.