



MEMORANDUM

TO: SLDMWA Water Resources Committee Members and Alternates

FROM: Scott Petersen, Water Policy Director
Rebecca Akroyd, General Counsel

DATE: December 4, 2023

RE: Water Resources Committee to Consider Recommendation to Board of Directors to Adopt Fiscal Year 2025 Objectives

Background

In December 2022, the Authority Board adopted Legislative and Policy Objectives to guide its state and federal legislative advocacy and outreach program in Fiscal Year 2024 (March 2023 – February 2024). In October 2023, the Authority Board adopted an updated Strategic Plan for the next five years, which charts the policy outcomes and objectives to implement in the coming years. This memorandum proposes objectives to guide policy in Fiscal Year 2025, consistent with the updated Authority Strategic Plan.

Staff anticipates that there will be significant policy activity in the next calendar year, specifically around 2024 water operations, revisions to the 2019 Biological Opinions, the listing status of longfin smelt, activity on the Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan update, implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Job Creation Act and Inflation Reduction Act, and state legislative activity on common interest areas. Additionally, the change in the leadership of the California Assembly and Senate, and accompanying change in Committee Chairs, has resulted in a number of new legislators in positions to highly influence Authority policy objectives, who will need to be educated on key issues to the Authority and its members to effectively influence the policy arena during the coming year.

Proposed Fiscal Year 2025 Objectives

Proposed Core Objective – To restore Central Valley Project water supplies to levels that meet reasonable demands within member agency boundaries and improve the reliability of those water supplies through the development and advocacy of sound water resource management and environmental policy.

Proposed Objective #2 – Restore Central Valley Project Water Supply for Member Agencies

Summary of Needs

South-of-Delta Central Valley Project (CVP) water supply reliability has decreased over time due to a broad number of factors.

Authority's Approach

Seek administrative, legislative, legal, and regulatory solutions to restore CVP water supplies to meet demands within member agency boundaries and improve the reliability of contracted water supplies to south-of-Delta CVP contractors. Specifically, the Authority intends to engage in efforts to advance the following key issues:

- Continued implementation of scientifically justified adaptive management and operational provisions of the 2019 Biological Opinion to be incorporated into the Consultation on the Coordinated Operations of the Central Valley Project and State Water Project
- Combined functional flow and habitat expansion measures to advance ecosystem and species recovery efforts in lieu of flow only approaches, particularly the advancement and implementation of scientifically justified Agreements to Benefit Healthy Rivers and Landscapes as an alternative to implement the Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan
- Address obstacles to enable a more streamlined water transfer program for the current and future water years

Proposed Objective #3 – Improve Water Infrastructure Affecting Authority Member Agencies

Summary of Needs

Aging infrastructure, combined with increased demands on CVP facilities and other environmental factors, and subsidence, have resulted in decreased water delivery reliability to south-of-Delta CVP contractors.

Authority's Approach

Support water infrastructure authorization and appropriations legislation and engage in administrative and legal processes that will enable Authority to operate facilities at optimal levels in the most cost effective, efficient manner. Specifically pursue state and federal legislation that would authorize funding to advance key projects, including:

- Restoration of conveyance capacity of Delta-Mendota Canal
- Expansion of San Luis Reservoir
- South-of-Delta Drought Plan Implementation
- Support for disadvantaged communities within Authority member agency service areas to have adequate and safe drinking water

Proposed Objective #4 - Improve Outreach and Education

Summary of Needs

The Authority and its member agencies make positive and responsible investments in environmental stewardship and increasing the scientific body of knowledge that are unknown to legislators, regulatory agencies, and the public.

Authority's Approach

Tell targeted local, state, and federal policymakers, and the public generally, the story of Authority and member agencies' positive and responsible investments in environmental stewardship and advancement of scientific knowledge. Adopt and implement annual Communications Plan to advance Goal 4 of the Authority Strategic Plan: Effective Communication and Engagement with Members and Key Stakeholders. Key priorities this year will include establishing relationships with new federal and state policymakers, further developing relationships with existing federal and state policymakers, and coalition building between the Authority, its member agencies, and local, state and national organizations with common interests. Key efforts this year will include:

- Host and lead weekly coordination calls with member agencies to promote coordination and effectiveness of effort to restore water supply
- Establish relationships with new federal and state policymakers
- Further develop relationships with existing federal and state policymakers
- Coalition building between the Authority, its member agencies, and local, state and national organizations with common interests

Issue for Decision

Whether to recommend that the Board of Directors adopt the staff recommended Fiscal Year 2025 Objectives.