



STAFF MEMORANDUM

TO: Board Members and Alternates

FROM: Scott Petersen, Water Policy Director
Cynthia Meyer, Special Programs Manager

DATE: October 5, 2023

RE: Update on Science Program

SUMMARY

The San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority's ("Water Authority") current science commitments for Fiscal Year 24 (March 1, 2023 – February 29, 2024) may be considered in two categories. First, the Water Authority re-budgeted \$125,000 in the current budget to fund two activities and/or studies previously authorized to be funded. Second, the Water Authority has budgeted \$390,000 in the current budget for science studies. More detail regarding the various science commitments is provided below. In total, the Water Authority started the current fiscal year with approximately \$515,000 available to fund science, of which \$125,000 has been obligated.

1. Previous Commitments - \$125,000 in FY 24 Budget

Subject	Description of Work / Objective(s)	FY 24 Budget
Joint Funding CSAMP Delta Smelt Structured Decision Making Phase 3	This funding would support management and technical analyses required to conduct Phase 3 for the CSAMP Delta Smelt Structure Decision Making (SDM) project. Technical analyses would include modeling and the application of other analytical tools to evaluate the consequences of proposed management actions for Delta Smelt as well as the evaluation of potential consequences to other resource values including water supply and agriculture. Phase 3 is underway and will provide a Formal evaluation of Delta Smelt recovery actions along with the full suite of objectives: Salmon, Ecosystem, Water Supply, Cost, Learning.	\$120,000
Joint Funding Delta Coordination Group Structured Decision making Facilitation	Funds support and assistance with the structured decision making for recommendations for summer-fall habitat actions for delta smelt by the Delta	\$5,000

	<p>Coordination Group to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and the Department of Water Resources. Main contract with Dr. Jennie Hoffman with Adaptation/Insight, using Compass Resources.</p>	
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2. New Science - \$390,000 in FY 24 Budget

Subject	Description of Work / Objective(s)	FY 24 Budget
Science Studies/Efforts		\$390,000
CAMT Studies	<p>This funding would match State Water Contractor funding obligated for CAMT studies. The Water Authority and State Water Contractors are currently jointly researching two potential uses for this funding – 1. Continuation of Delta Smelt SDM funding for Phase 3b, or 2. Execution of a contract for Salmon Structured Decision Making.</p> <p>After deliberation within CAMT/CSAMP, the group has chosen to pursue continued development of the Delta Smelt Structured Decision Making Phase 3b, with the salmon recovery strategy being advanced through in-kind contributions this year.</p>	\$150,000
Joint Funding CAMT Technical Support	<p>Funds support technical engagement by Hansen Environmental (Chuck Hansen) in CAMT and CSAMP meetings. Contract held by SWC.</p>	\$30,000
Delta Coordination Group Summer Fall Habitat Action Structured Decision Making Facilitation Support	<p>Funds support facilitation and assistance with Delta Coordination Group Structured Decision Making for Delta Coordination Group recommendations to Reclamation and DWR related to Summer Fall Habitat Actions in the Biological Opinions and State Incidental Take Permit. Project jointly funded with State Water Contractors.</p>	\$10,000
SLDMWA Technical, Science and Regulatory Support	<p>Funds will be used for engagement in Science Program, technical or regulatory efforts that arise in FY 2023. Anticipated use includes technical support for the reconsultation on long-term operations of the CVP and SWP, anticipated ESA listing decisions for longfin smelt, giant gardener snake, yellow-legged frog (and others), and engagement in efforts associated with the Bay-Delta Plan Update and VA Science Plan.</p>	\$200,000

SCIENCE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES:

Staff participates in several science forums and coordination activities. The highlights include:

Voluntary Agreements (VA):

The VA Science Committee provided the draft Strategic Plan to the SWRCB for approval at the September 6th meeting. The next effort will develop the appendices on the plan including the peer review process, use of best available science, tributary monitoring plans, and prioritization of hypotheses.

Delta Coordination Group (DCG):

Staff participated in the DCG meetings and provided input on the recommendations for temperature thresholds for Habitat Suitability Index. The DCG is applying the 100 TAF of water provided to support the Delta Smelt habitat salinity requirements with gate actions. As of 9/25 64 TAF have been used. The gate actions will likely reach the 100 TAF by mid-October. An update on the smelt cage study is underway. After four weeks, only 9 mortalities occurred out of 600 fish. Staff is also participating on the planning committee for the Summer-Fall Habitat independent review.

CAMT/CSAMP:

The CAMT discussed the report from the Salmon Technical Working Group and the Reorienting to Recovery (R2R) Workshop. The CAMT members are contemplating whether to combining these salmon efforts into one workgroup. In addition, the PWA group will be provided the monitoring approach report for comment.

ReROC

The cooperating agency draft of the ReROC EIS was provided by Reclamation in mid-September. Staff is coordinating review and comments to provide by October 16th. The current draft contains the alternative descriptions, but does not include all the modeling. The quantitative draft of the Biological Assessment is anticipated in Fall 2023. Staff is also compiling a list of nominations for the National Academies of Science independent review of the Long-term Water Operations of the CVP and SWP. Nominations are due October 6th.

Science Coordination:

As part of our efforts to increase the effectiveness of the Water Authority's Science Program, Authority staff is proposing to establish a Science Coordination Workgroup to assist in the guidance of the Program. Initial selections for the workgroup were provided for each division. A kick-off meeting is scheduled for mid-September.

The objectives of this group will include:

1. Improving coordination and communication with member agencies related to Science Activities,

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2. Contributing to the development of an Authority Science Plan to guide science program activities, and
3. Enhancing engagement with the science community.

Additional Coordination Activities

Staff is participating to the Reorienting to Recovery – Salmon Workshops which focus on the identifying key challenges and improving science. In early September, Flowwest provided an overview presentation of the shiny App that is being developed to “Explore how Reorienting to Recovery Performance Metrics & associated values compare across different scenarios.” Staff provided feedback to improve the App and associated metadata.