



## STAFF MEMORANDUM

TO: Board Members and Alternates

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

DATE: December 7, 2023

RE: Update on Science Program

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### 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**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Description of Work / Objective(s)</b>	<b>FY 24 Budget</b>
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 is developing the monitoring and evaluation strategy for the components of the VA science projects. This effort will include several appendices to 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 will be developing the final report for 2023 activities and providing a draft in January 2024. Staff is also participating on the planning committee for the Summer-Fall Habitat and Salmon Juvenile production independent reviews. Looking forward, the DCG will prepare the draft report by April 2024 and update the Science and Monitoring plan.

### CAMT/CSAMP:

The CAMT reviewed the presentations on the Delta smelt Structured Decision making including the initial cost analyses. CAMT is recommending to the CSAMP policy group to request a written summary report of the activities and suggestions for moving forward into 2024. This report will also inform the LTO and ITP efforts. In addition, the Salmon Technical Working Group provided a summary of analyses and will contribute the findings to the upcoming Reorienting to Recovery (R2R) Workshop in February 2024. It remains undetermined whether these salmon efforts.

### ReROC

Staff provided comments on the cooperating agency draft of the ReROC EIS and recommended a second draft for agency review prior to the release of the public draft EIS. The second draft is anticipated for December 2023. In addition, the revised draft Biological Assessments for both aquatic and terrestrial species was provided in mid-November. While there is no formal comment period, staff is reviewing these documents and providing informal comments. The list of selected panelists for the National Academies of Science independent review of the Long-term Water Operations of the CVP and SWP is available for feedback at <https://www.nationalacademies.org/our-work/review-of-the-long-term-operations-of-the-central-valley-project>

### Science Coordination:

Staff provided a draft Science Plan for the Water Resources Committee and Science Coordination Workgroup for review and suggestions. The implementation of the Science Plan will assist with the increased coordination on science priorities with the Water Authority members and other agencies. The final Science Plan is anticipated for the January board meeting.