



STAFF MEMORANDUM

TO: Board Members and Alternates

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

DATE: March 7, 2024

RE: Update on Science Program

SUMMARY

The San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority's ("Water Authority") current science commitments for Fiscal Year 25 (March 1, 2024 – February 28, 2025) may be considered in two categories. First, the Water Authority re-budgeted \$120,000 from the FY24 budget to fund two activities and/or studies previously authorized to be funded. Second, the Water Authority has budgeted \$610,000 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 \$730,000 available to fund science, of which \$60,000 has been obligated, and another \$60,000 has been committed.

1. Previous Commitments - \$120,000 in FY 25 Budget

Subject	Description of Work / Objective(s)	FY 25 Budget
Joint Funding CSAMP Delta Smelt Structured Decision Making Phase 3b	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 3b 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.	\$50,000
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	\$10,000

	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.	
Reorienting to Recovery Salmon Workshops	Funds support continuing this effort to collaborate with a wide range of interested parties to develop innovative approaches to aid salmon population recovery. This activity was transferred from CAMT to the Delta science Program for completion and is jointly funded by SWC and other agencies.	\$60,000

2. New Science - \$610,000 in FY 25 Budget

Subject	Description of Work / Objective(s)	FY 24 Budget
Science Studies/Efforts		\$610,000
CAMT Studies	This funding would match State Water Contractor funding obligated for CAMT studies. The Water Authority and State Water Contractors are currently jointly researching potential uses for this funding – 1. Salmonid Survival Study (<i>final report expected in April 2024</i>), 2. OMR Management - Adult Delta Smelt Entrainment Study (<i>final report in preparation</i>) 3. Delta Smelt Structured Decision-Making (SDM) (<i>to be completed by August 2024</i>) 4. Evaluating the monitoring and science synthesis efforts.	\$150,000
Joint Funding CAMT Technical Support	Funds support technical engagement by Hansen Environmental (Chuck Hansen) in CAMT and CSAMP meetings. Contract held by SWC and jointly funded at a 50-50 cost share.	\$25,000
Delta Coordination Group Summer Fall Habitat Action Structured Decision Making Facilitation Support	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 and the contract is with Compass Resources, with a subcontract held by Jennie Hoffman of Adaptation/Insight, who is performing facilitation support services for the Group.	\$10,000

SLDMWA Technical, Science and Regulatory Support	Funds will be used for engagement in Science Program, technical or regulatory efforts that arise in FY 2025. Anticipated use includes technical support for the reconsultation on long-term operations of the CVP and SWP, anticipated ESA/CESA 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.	\$200,000
University of California, Merced Science Partnership	Funds will be used to initiate a partnership with the University of California, Merced, for capacity building in the Science Enterprise and to conduct research into issues of importance to member agencies.	\$225,000

SCIENCE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES:

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

Agreements for Healthy Rivers and Landscapes (“Agreements”) Science Committee (Bay-Delta Plan Update):

The Agreements Science Committee is developing the monitoring and evaluation strategy for the components of the Agreements science projects. A draft is currently under review, which includes several appendices to define and address the peer review process, the use of best available science, tributary monitoring plans, and prioritization of hypotheses. In addition, the group is reviewing the habitat accounting protocol with comments due on March 6, 2024.

Delta Coordination Group (DCG):

Staff provided input on the draft final report for 2023 activities in January 2024. The final report is anticipated in April 2024. Staff is also participating on the planning committee for the Summer-Fall Habitat and Salmon Juvenile production independent reviews. Looking forward, the DCG is updating the Science and Monitoring plan and improving documentation of the SDM effort.

Collaborative Adaptation Management Team (CAMT)/Collaborative Science and Adaptive Management Program (CSAMP):

The CAMT reviewed the presentations on the Delta smelt Structured Decision Making, including the initial cost analyses. A draft report is anticipated in February, which will provide a summary of the activities and suggestions for moving the effort forward into 2024. This report will also inform the ESA and CESA consultation efforts.

Additionally, the Salmon Technical Working Group provided the compilation of comments on the draft report for the CAMT Salmon Subteam update to the 2017 Salmon Scoping Team Report.

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The revised version is anticipated for Spring 2024. The next Reorienting to Recovery (R2R) workshop is scheduled for Spring 2024.

A draft of CSAMP biennial report was provided on February 20, 2024 for initial comment. It includes the accomplishments for 2022 and 2023. The CSAMP is also conducting a survey effort to reflect on the effectiveness, direction, and improvements of the group. Small group interviews were conducted in February 2024 with the interested parties. The initial feedback was discussed at the Quarterly CSAMP Policy Meeting and will be provided in further detail in the biennial report.

ESA Consultation for the Long-Term Operations of the CVP and SWP

A second draft of the EIS is anticipated to be released for Cooperating Agency review in mid-March 2024. This draft is delayed to allow for refinements to the CalSim modeling. In addition, the draft Biological Assessments (BA's) for both aquatic and terrestrial species were provided in mid-November. While there is no formal comment period for the BA's, staff is reviewing these documents and providing informal comments to Reclamation and the Services. The Delta Science Program is currently providing an independent science review for the BA's as requested by Reclamation. The final report is anticipated in April 2024.

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine independent review of the Long-term Water Operations of the CVP and SWP held the first meeting on January 30-31 in Sacramento. The panel was introduced to many aspects of the LTO for the CVP and SWP. Staff provided a public comment in support of the review effort and a tour of the Jones Pumping Plant. The second meeting was held in on February 28-29 in Davis. The Panel focused on the Summer/Fall Habitat and OMR data and modeling approaches. Several water contractors and interested parties were invited to participate in the discussion panels. This opportunity highlighted the complexities of the water management and projects for the water districts and authorities.

Information is available at <https://www.nationalacademies.org/our-work/review-of-the-long-term-operations-of-the-central-valley-project>

Science Coordination:

At the January 2024 meeting, the Board approved the Science Plan. Staff revised the draft Science Plan based on the input from the Water Resources Committee and Board. The final Science Plan will be posted on the website and the Science Coordination Workgroup will be convened to begin implementation of the science plan. The implementation of the Science Plan will assist with the increased coordination on science priorities with the Water Authority members and other agencies.