



STAFF MEMORANDUM

TO: Board Members and Alternates

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

DATE: April 10, 2025

RE: Update on Science Program

SUMMARY

The San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority's ("Water Authority") current science commitments for Fiscal Year 26 (March 1, 2025 – February 28, 2026) may be considered in two categories. First, the Water Authority re-budgeted \$265,000 from the FY25 budget to fund three activities and/or studies previously authorized to be funded. Second, the Water Authority has budgeted \$591,250 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 \$856,000 available to fund science, of which \$250,000 has been obligated, and another \$15,000 has been committed.

1. Previous Commitments - \$265,000 in FY 26 Budget

Subject	Description of Work / Objective(s)	FY 26 Budget
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 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.	\$15,000
University of California, Merced Science Partnership	Funds support initiating 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. <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Water Regulations Workbook2. Economic Modeling Project	\$250,000

2. New Science - \$591,000 in FY 26 Budget

Subject	Description of Work / Objective(s)	FY 26 Budget
Science Studies/Efforts		\$591,000
SLDMWA Technical, Science and Regulatory Support	<p>Funds will be used for engagement in Science Program, technical or regulatory efforts that arise in FY 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 HLR Science Plan.</p> <p>Funding obligated to date includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Facilitation and Technical Support for Development of Healthy Rivers and Landscapes 2. Science Technical Support 3. Real-Time Operations Support 4. Bay-Delta Science Conference Sponsorship 	\$200,000
LTO Implementation – Special Studies Program	Funds support special studies to enhance the scientific basis for implementation of the Long-term Operations of the CVP.	\$150,000
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
Dissolved Oxygen Aerator	Joint funded project to maintain the Dissolved Oxygen Aerator at the Port of Stockton to meet Water Quality Standards.	\$6,250
University of California, Merced Science Partnership	Funds will be used to expand the partnership with the University of California, Merced, established last fiscal year, 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 has initiated an independent science review of the revised Science Plan by the Delta Science Program. Staff is participating on the review planning committee which is currently finalizing information for the panel. The aim of the review is to improve the feasibility and effectiveness of the Science Plan to achieve the biological goals. Reviewers have been selected and are currently being contracted. The review is anticipated to start in April 2025. Staff is assisting with the development of the Data Management Strategy associated with the science plan activities.

Delta Coordination Group (DCG)

The DCG is undertaking the development of a synthesis report to review the effects of previous summer-fall habitat actions to better inform future adaptive management decisions. The draft report is anticipated for Fall 2025. In the meantime, the DCG is supporting the efforts of the expedited Adaptive Management Team which is considering alternatives for implementation of Summer/Fall Habitat measures in 2025. Staff is participating in these workshops.

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

Staff is participating in initial discussions pertaining to the revision of the 2024 Record of Decision. The Presidential memorandum requires Reclamation to modify the recently signed Record of Decision. The 2024 LTO documents are available on the Reclamation website: <https://www.usbr.gov/mp/bdo/lto/index.html>

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine independent review of the Long-term Water Operations of the CVP and SWP is currently holding closed workshops to develop the final report. These meetings will be held over the next few months. Subject matter experts may be contacted as necessary. Information and recordings of the public meetings and presentations are available at <https://www.nationalacademies.org/our-work/review-of-the-long-term-operations-of-the-central-valley-project>

Science Coordination

The Science Coordination Workgroup reviewed and approved two task orders for the UC Merced agreement. The quarterly Science Coordination Workgroup meeting will be held on April 23, 2025. The UC Merced staff are currently beginning work on both projects. The second task order aims to develop socioeconomic model for water supply impacts is currently being reviewed. Staff participated Delta Science Program – Grand Challenges meetings to provide further input from our previous comments. Staff participated in the Interagency Ecological Program Annual Workshop in early March.

Staff has been participating in the Golden Mussel Response Task Force meetings, coordinating with Valley Water and Contra Costa, and working with staff to begin a monitoring and response plan in the Delta-Mendota Canal. Golden Mussels are an invasive species first detected in October 2024. Similar to Quagga/Zebra Mussels, the Golden Mussels have potential to impact infrastructure with their expedient colonization.