



STAFF MEMORANDUM

TO: Board Members and Alternates

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

DATE: September 11, 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 \$594,296 has been obligated, leaving \$261,704 in unobligated funds available for the remainder of the fiscal year.

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. 1. Water Regulations Workbook 2. 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	Funds will be used for engagement in Science Program, technical or regulatory efforts that arise in FY 2026. Anticipated use includes technical support for the implementation of long-term operations of the CVP and SWP and supporting E.O. 14181, ESA/CESA listing decisions, and engagement in efforts associated with the Bay-Delta Plan Update and HRL Science Plan. Funding obligated to date includes: 1. Facilitation and Technical Support for Development of Healthy Rivers and Landscapes 2. Science and Water Operations Technical Support 3. Recreational Ocean Harvest Monitoring Survey and Development of Machine Learning Video Analytical Tool	\$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 requested an independent science review of the revised Science Plan by the Delta Science Program. The review was completed in July 2025. Staff is participating in the consideration of suggestions from the final review. Tributary specific draft science plans will be available for review in Fall 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 initial draft was provided at the August meeting. Staff provided suggested revisions. For the 2025 Summer-Fall Action, DWR completed 60-day operation of the Suisun Marsh Salinity Control Gates for June 23, 2025 through August 22, 2025. In addition, DWR submitted a permit amendment to not implement Fall X2 in 2025. The permit amendment is undergoing review.

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

Staff is participating in initial discussions for potential revisions 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. The final report is anticipated for December 2025. The draft report was distributed for selected reviewers prior to public release. 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 met on July 23, 2025. Staff provided an update on the Science Program accomplishments including the two task orders for the UC Merced agreement, activities pertaining to Golden Mussels, objectives for the year, and potential projects. The quarterly Science Coordination Workgroup meeting will be held on October 22, 2025. Staff is participating in the planning committee for the upcoming Interagency Ecological Program Conference in March 2026.

The Science Coordination Workgroup is supporting the 2025 Ocean Recreational Salmon Fishing Monitoring project led by Brad Cavallo. There is a well-known data gap of information connecting the ocean fishing harvest to the returning spawning population in the rivers. The integration of

improved recreational harvest data will assist with the population estimates. The recreational fishery was only allowed to harvest one weekend in June. This concentrated season provided an opportunity to deploy video monitoring stations to estimate the increase in fishing effort. Further information will be provided after the analysis is completed.

Staff has been participating in the Golden Mussel Response Task Force meetings, coordinating with Valley Water, Westlands, 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. Staff placed monitoring plates in April 2025 along the Delta Mendota Canal and pumping plants. The plates are examined monthly. Golden Mussels have been detected at Jones Pumping Plant and O'Neill forebay and pumping plant. Staff is providing information and scientific support to members, as needed.