



# Official Memorandum

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To: SLDMWA Board of Directors and Alternates

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

Date: December 11, 2025

RE: Staff Report on Science Program – November 2025

## 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.

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

Subject			Description of Work / Objective(s)	FY 26 Budget
<b>Joint Coordination Structured Decision-making Facilitation</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Delta Group</b>	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
<b>University of California, Merced Science Partnership</b>			<p>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.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Water Regulations Workbook</li><li>2. Economic Modeling Project</li></ol> <p>Funding issues on the federal government side have resulted in delays in the implementation of these projects, which began in earnest in October. Staff anticipates much of this work continuing into FY 27.</p>	\$250,000



## New Science - \$591,250 in FY 26 Budget

Subject	Description of Work / Objective(s)	FY 26 Budget
<b>Science Studies/Efforts</b>		<b>\$591,000</b>
<b>SLDMWA Technical, Science and Regulatory Support</b>	<p>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.</p> <p>Funding obligated to date includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Facilitation and Technical Support for Development of Healthy Rivers and Landscapes</li><li>2. Science and Water Operations Technical Support</li><li>3. Recreational Ocean Harvest Monitoring Survey and Development of Machine Learning Video Analytical Tool</li><li>4. SLDMWA facility Vulnerability Assessment and Recommended Response for Golden Mussel</li></ol>	<b>\$200,000</b>
<b>LTO Implementation – Special Studies Program</b>	Funds support special studies to enhance the scientific basis for implementation of the Long-term Operations of the CVP.	<b>\$150,000</b>
<b>Delta Coordination Group Summer Fall Habitat Action Structured Decision-Making Facilitation Support</b>	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.	<b>\$10,000</b>
<b>Dissolved Oxygen Aerator</b>	Joint funded project to maintain the Dissolved Oxygen Aerator at the Port of Stockton to meet Water Quality Standards.	<b>\$6,250</b>



<b>University of California, Merced Science Partnership</b>	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
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## 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 received initial drafts of three tributary specific science for review. These plans will be revised and provided for a broader review. Staff is assisting with the development of the Data Management Strategy associated with the science plan activities. In addition, the Science Committee is refining the timelines associated with early implementation projects and the value of contribution to the program.

### 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 final draft should be provided to the DCG for review in December. The final report is anticipated for January 2026. Staff is providing technical support for analyses and interpretation of results. 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 completely a subsequent gate operation from September 5-12, 2025. Due to the implementation of the 2024 ITP, the timeline for the Annual Summer Fall Habitat Action Report shifted to a final report in June 2026.

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

On December 4, 2025, Reclamation signed a Record of Decision implementing modified operations for the CVP and SWP. This action was in response to the previous Presidential Executive Order 14181. 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 provided the final report on November 10, 2024. Staff will review the report for priority actions and participate in informational meetings. The documents 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>

### Water Authority Science Coordination Workgroup

The Science Coordination Workgroup met on October 22, 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 next quarterly Science Coordination



Workgroup meeting will be held on January 20, 2025. Associated with the development of the Socio-Economic Water Supply Model being developed by UC Merced, staff will be sending data requests to member agencies. 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. Staff presented the findings at the RecFIN technical meeting on October 16, 2025 in Monterey, CA. The presentation was well received with several questions, interest, and discussions.

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. Last week, staff provided photos of the monitoring plates at O'Neill forebay that were full of Golden Mussels. Staff is providing information and scientific support to members, as needed.