



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: March 5, 2026
RE: Staff Report on Science Program – February 2026

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 \$856,250 available to fund science, of which \$734,296 has been obligated, leaving \$121,954 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
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. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Water Regulations Workbook 2. Economic Modeling Project <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
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 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"> 1. Facilitation and Technical Support for Development of Healthy Rivers and Landscapes 2. Science and Water Operations Technical Support, including consultant support 3. Recreational Ocean Harvest Monitoring Survey and Development of Machine Learning Video Analytical Tool 4. SLDMWA facility Vulnerability Assessment and Recommended Response for Golden Mussel 5. Development of Particle Tracking Model Tool and Associated As-Needed Analysis 	\$200,000
LTO Implementation – Special Studies Program	<p>Funds support special studies to enhance the scientific basis for implementation of the Long-term Operations of the CVP.</p> <p>Funding obligated to date includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tidal Delta Salmonid Acoustic Tag Data Analysis 2. Steelhead Hydroacoustic Telemetry Pilot 	\$150,000
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 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.</p>	\$10,000
Dissolved Oxygen Aerator	<p>Joint funded project to maintain the Dissolved Oxygen Aerator at the Port of Stockton to meet Water Quality Standards.</p>	\$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
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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 plans 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. The Science Committee was requested to provide cost estimates for the implementation of the Science Plan activities in early 2026.

Delta Coordination Group (DCG)

Due to the implementation of the LTO 2024 Record of Decision, the DCG has been disbanded as of January 2026.

The DCG provided an initial draft of the synthesis report to review the effects of previous summer-fall habitat actions to better inform future adaptive management decisions. The final report is anticipated for March 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 completed a subsequent gate operation from September 5-12, 2025. Due to the implementation of the 2024 ITP, the timeline for release of the annual Summer-Fall Habitat Action Report shifted to June 2026. As of December 17, 2025, the DCG has been discontinued due to changes in governance adopted by the federal government in the recently executed Record of Decision for the Long-Term Operations of the Central Valley Project and State Water Project (“LTO”) referenced below.

ESA Consultation for the Long-Term Operations (“LTO”) 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 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 panel completed review of the Long-term Water Operations of the CVP and SWP and issued the final report on November 10, 2024. Staff is reviewing 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 January 20, 2025. Staff provided an update on the Science Program accomplishments including the two projects in partnership with UC Merced, activities pertaining to Golden Mussels, objectives for the year, and potential projects. Regarding 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.

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 and associated facilities. 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, which are examined monthly. Golden Mussels have been detected at Jones Pumping Plant, as well as O'Neill forebay and Pumping/Generating Plant. Staff is providing information and scientific support to members, as needed. The site visit for the vulnerability assessment was completed in early February. While waiting for the final reports in April 2026, staff is already implementing the recommendations to protect the facilities. Staff anticipates the increase in spawning to begin in April with fouling to increase in June/July. Staff organized a Water Agency coordination meeting on February 24, 2026 to discuss the effectiveness of various methods being applied to control and mitigate for Golden Mussel infestation. This will be a monthly meeting through July 2026 and aims to share information from the operations and science staff to develop effective treatments.