



STAFF MEMORANDUM

TO: Board Members and Alternates

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

DATE: September 12, 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 – <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 Hanson Environmental (Chuck Hanson) 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

<p>SLDMWA Technical, Science and Regulatory Support</p>	<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 	<p>\$200,000</p>
<p>University of California, Merced Science Partnership</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>\$225,000</p>

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 provided a revised Science Plan for approval by the governance committee. Staff provided substantial edits to improve the feasibility of the science plan. Per directive from the governance committee, staff is working on additional revisions to the Science Plan.

Delta Coordination Group (DCG):

The final 2024 Delta Smelt Summer-Fall Habitat Action Plan and supporting Monitoring Plan was provided on May 14, 2024. The Independent Review of the Summer-Fall Habitat Action (SFHA) Monitoring and Science Plans and Structured Decision Making (SDM) Approach is available on the Delta Science Program’s website. The panel included 4 reviewers who had expertise in aquatic food webs, fisheries management, and decision-making processes. The Final peer-review panel letters were integrated into a single document attached and linked; <https://www.deltacouncil.ca.gov/pdf/science-program/panel-letters/2024-06-20-sfha-monitoring-and-science-plans-peer-review-panel-final-letters.pdf>

In addition, the DCG was informed that the 100 TAF will be utilized for SMSCG operations, beginning Aug 30th ending Oct 31 or until it is expended based on modeling weekly updates. On September 6, 2024, a special meeting of the DCG was held to discuss proposed changes to the implementation of the summer/fall habitat.

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

The August 2024 CAMT meeting focused on finalizing the agency for the September Policy Group meeting and the next steps for the final draft report for the Delta Smelt Structured Decision and the Salmon Technical Working Group final draft report for the CAMT Salmon Sub-team update to the 2017 Salmon Scoping Team Report. The upcoming Policy Group meeting will also discuss the CSAMP visioning information.

The Reorienting to Recovery (R2R) workshop was held in April 2024. The meeting focused on reviewing three approaches to achieve salmon recovery. The participants from various interested parties provided feedback on the alternatives. The R2R effort will convene another workshop in October 2024.

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

On June 28, 2024, the USFWS provided the first draft of the Biological Opinion. This version does not include the Incidental Take Statement or Aggregate Effects. The NMFS draft Biological Opinion was released on July 25, 2024. Staff provided comments and technical recommendations to improve both documents. The public draft EIS was released on July 26, 2024 with a comment period open through September 9, 2024. Staff provided oral and written comments on the draft EIS.

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine independent review of the Long-term Water Operations of the CVP and SWP held the fourth meeting on August 12-14, 2024 at UC Davis. Information and recordings of the presentations are 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 Science Coordination Workgroup met in March 2024 to discuss the implementation of the short-term tasks outlined in the science plan. In addition, staff is working on establishing a contract with UC Merced to support the science needs of the Water Authority. At the April 2024, meeting the Board approved a resolution to address the indirect cost rate associated with this contract. The service agreement and MOU with UC Merced are being finalized. A signing ceremony for the MOU is anticipated for mid-September.