



STAFF MEMORANDUM

TO: Board Members and Alternates

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

DATE: February 8, 2024

RE: Update on Science Program

SUMMARY

The San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority's ("Water Authority") current science commitments for Fiscal Year 24 (March 1, 2023 – February 29, 2024) may be considered in two categories. First, the Water Authority re-budgeted \$125,000 in the current budget to fund two activities and/or studies previously authorized to be funded. Second, the Water Authority has budgeted \$390,000 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 \$515,000 available to fund science, of which \$125,000 has been obligated.

1. Previous Commitments - \$125,000 in FY 24 Budget

Subject	Description of Work / Objective(s)	FY 24 Budget
Joint Funding CSAMP Delta Smelt Structured Decision Making Phase 3	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 3 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.	\$120,000
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	\$5,000

	<p>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.</p>	
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2. New Science - \$390,000 in FY 24 Budget

Subject	Description of Work / Objective(s)	FY 24 Budget
Science Studies/Efforts		\$390,000
CAMT Studies	<p>This funding would match State Water Contractor funding obligated for CAMT studies. The Water Authority and State Water Contractors are currently jointly researching two potential uses for this funding – 1. Continuation of Delta Smelt SDM funding for Phase 3b, or 2. Execution of a contract for Salmon Structured Decision Making.</p> <p>After deliberation within CAMT/CSAMP, the group has chosen to pursue continued development of the Delta Smelt Structured Decision Making Phase 3b, with the salmon recovery strategy being advanced through in-kind contributions this year.</p>	\$150,000
Joint Funding CAMT Technical Support	<p>Funds support technical engagement by Hansen Environmental (Chuck Hansen) in CAMT and CSAMP meetings. Contract held by SWC.</p>	\$30,000
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.</p>	\$10,000
SLDMWA Technical, Science and Regulatory Support	<p>Funds will be used for engagement in Science Program, technical or regulatory efforts that arise in FY 2023. Anticipated use includes technical support for the reconsultation on long-term operations of the CVP and SWP, anticipated ESA 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 VA Science Plan.</p>	\$200,000

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 is developing the monitoring and evaluation strategy for the components of the Agreements science projects. A draft is currently under review, which includes several appendices to define and address the peer review process, the use of best available science, tributary monitoring plans, and prioritization of hypotheses.

Delta Coordination Group (DCG):

Staff participated in the DCG meetings and provided input on the recommendations for temperature thresholds for Habitat Suitability Index. The DCG will be developing the final report for 2023 activities and provided a draft for review in January 2024. Staff is also participating on the planning committee for the Summer-Fall Habitat and Salmon Juvenile production independent reviews. Looking forward, the DCG will prepare the draft report by April 2024 and update the Science and Monitoring plan.

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

The CAMT reviewed the presentations on the Delta smelt Structured Decision Making, including the initial cost analyses. A draft report is anticipated in February, which will provide a summary of the activities and suggestions for moving the effort forward into 2024. This report will also inform the ESA and CESA consultation efforts.

Additionally, the Salmon Technical Working Group provided the compilation of comments on the draft report for the CAMT Salmon Subteam update to the 2017 Salmon Scoping Team Report. The revised version is anticipated for Spring 2024. The next Reorienting to Recovery (R2R) workshop is scheduled for Spring 2024.

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

A second draft of the EIS is anticipated to be released for Cooperating Agency review in mid- to late February 2024. This draft is delayed to allow for refinements to the CalSim modeling. In addition, the draft Biological Assessments (BA’s) for both aquatic and terrestrial species were provided in mid-November. While there is no formal comment period for the BA’s, staff is reviewing these documents and providing informal comments to Reclamation and the Services.

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine independent review of the Long-term Water Operations of the CVP and SWP held the first meeting on January 30-31 in Sacramento. The panel was introduced to many aspects of the LTO for the CVP and SWP. Staff provided a public comment in support of the review effort and a tour of the Jones Pumping Plant. Information is available at <https://www.nationalacademies.org/our-work/review-of-the-long-term-operations-of-the-central-valley-project>

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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 final Science Plan will be posted to the website in February. The implementation of the Science Plan will assist with the increased coordination on science priorities with the Water Authority members and other agencies.