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Official Memorandum

To: SLDMWA Board of Directors and Alternates

From: Scott Petersen, Chief Strategic and Administrative Officer
Cindy Meyer, Special Programs Manager

Date: November 5, 2026

RE: Staff Report on Science Program – October 2026

Summary

The San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority's ("Water Authority") current science commitments for Fiscal Year 27 (March 1, 2026 – February 28, 2027) may be considered in two categories. First, the Water Authority re-budgeted $339,000 from the FY26 budget to fund three activities and/or studies previously authorized to be funded. Second, the Water Authority has budgeted $661,000 in the current budget for science studies. More detail regarding the various science commitments is provided below.

Previous Commitments - $339,000 in FY 27 Budget

Subject	Description of Work / Objective(s)	FY 26 Budget
Joint Funding Delta Coordination Group (DCG) Structured Decision-making Facilitation[1]	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. Current projects under development include: 1. Water Regulations Workbook 2. Economic Modeling Project Funding issues related to other work performed by UC Merced using federal funds have resulted in delays in the implementation of these projects, which began in earnest in October. Staff anticipates the economic modeling project to continue into FY28.	$229,000

[1] Staff expects to repurpose this funding for golden mussel response activities with the elimination of the DCG under Action 5.

Hydroacoustic Telemetry Pilot Study	The Hydroacoustic Telemetry Pilot Study intends to ground-truth and enhance the data collected from the rotary screw traps near Red Bluff. The project addresses a known data gap and priority of Reclamation to further inform lines of evidence associated with CVP operations and salmonid management.	$90,000
Golden Mussel Plan	The Golden Mussel Vulnerability Assessment and Response Plan was completed in May 2026. The plan is necessary to address the increasing impacts from invasive golden mussels. Based on the Plan recommendations, additional funds may be necessary to implement mitigation and control measures.	$5,000

New Science - $661,000 in FY 27 Budget

Subject	Description of Work / Objective(s)	FY 26 Budget
Science Studies/Efforts		$661,000
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, engagement in efforts associated with the Bay-Delta Plan Update and HRL Science Plan, and refinement of the Water Authority 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, 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 6. Development of Science Investment Framework 7. Development of Prototype Allocation Modernization Tool 8. Development of Prototype Operations Visualization Tool	$331,000
LTO Implementation Special Studies Program	Funds support special studies to enhance the scientific basis for implementation of the Long-term Operations of the CVP.	$45,000

Golden Mussel Coordination and Facilitation Support	Funds support coordination and facilitation for addressing the Golden Mussel impacts in the Delta. The Water Agency Coordination group will compile information on prevention and mitigation methods through field testing and share out data at monthly meetings. Kearns & West will provide the support through July 2026.	$45,000
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. • CVP Forecasting Summit	$100,000

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 reviewing the tributary specific science plans by topic such as spawning, rearing, and migration. The science plans will be due 60 days after implementation of the Bay-Delta Plan. The State Water Resources Control Board held a public hearing and adopted a revised version of the Bay-Delta Plan on October 29, 2026. Further information is available at https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/bay_delta/

Dissolved Oxygen Aerator

The Water Authority jointly funds the maintenance of the Dissolved Oxygen Aerator at the Port of Stockton to meet Water Quality Standards. Due to rising costs and needed maintenance, the cost increased from $6,250 to $7,222. Future budget year funding allocations will be scaled accordingly.

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

In May 2026, Reclamation reinitiated consultation due to Green Sturgeon exceedance of the incidental take in the NMFS Biological Opinion. A WIIN Act meeting was held on July 28, 2026, to discuss the approach to evaluate the population impacts and future strategy. Staff are engaging in discussions to consider alternative approaches to the Green Sturgeon take calculations.

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NAS) independent panel completed review of the Long-term Water Operations of the CVP and SWP and issued the final report on November 10, 2024.

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

Reclamation has initiated the second round of NAS review of the LTO. The kick-off meeting will be held November 4-5, 2026 in Sacramento. Staff will participate in the meetings. "The review will focus primarily on the monitoring data used to calibrate and validate models of ecosystem processes in the Delta (status and trend monitoring), making it essential for the committee to understand the models and tools used in the management of the system now and in the future." https://www.nationalacademies.org/projects/CHPP-ESR-26-07

Water Authority Science Coordination Workgroup

The Science Coordination Workgroup met on August 19, 2026. Staff provided an update on: (1) Science Program accomplishments including the completion of the 2025 Recreational Salmon Video Monitoring report, (2) activities pertaining to Golden Mussels, (3) objectives for the year, and (4) potential projects. The workgroup approved the project proposal for the continuation of the Salmon Monitoring project in summer 2026. Regarding the UC Merced Socio-Economic Water Supply Model being developed by UC Merced, staff will be launching a pilot with one Authority member prior to broadening the rollout to the rest of the membership to troubleshoot data needs and create efficiencies. Staff is meeting with UC Merced to discuss potential projects for FY28. The next meeting of the Workgroup will be in November 2026.

Staff have been participating in the Golden Mussel Response Task Force meetings, coordinating with Valley Water, Westlands, and Contra Costa, and working with staff to develop a Control Plan for the Delta-Mendota Canal and associated facilities. For more details, please see the Golden Mussel memo in the Board packet.