



## STAFF MEMORANDUM

TO: Board Members and Alternates

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

DATE: May 4, 2023

RE: Update on Science Program

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### 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 Coordination Group to the U.S. Bureau of  | \$5,000      |

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|  | Reclamation and the Department of Water Resources. Main contract with Dr. Jennie Hoffman with Adaptation/Insight, using Compass Resources. |  |
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**2. New Science - \$390,000 in FY 24 Budget**

| <b>Subject</b>  | <b>Description of Work / Objective(s)</b>  | <b>FY 24 Budget</b> |
|---|--|---------------------|
| 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  | Funds support technical engagement by Hansen Environmental (Chuck Hansen) in CAMT and CSAMP meetings. Contract held by SWC.  | \$30,000            |
| 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.  | \$10,000            |
| SLDMWA Technical, Science and Regulatory Support  | 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.  | \$200,000           |

**SCIENCE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES:**

Staff participates in several science forums and coordination activities. The highlights include:

Voluntary Agreements (VA):

The VA Science Committee is developing the Science Plan with a final draft anticipated in May 2023. Staff are contributing in the writing and review of the plan during bi-weekly meetings and sub groups. Currently, the group is focusing on refining the draft performance metrics and hypotheses.

Delta Coordination Group (DCG):

Staff participated in the DCG meetings and provided input on the Structured Decision Making process for the summer-fall habitat actions. The Delta Summer-Fall Habitat 2023 Action Plan was submitted to USFWS and CDFW on May 1, 2023.

CAMT/CSAMP:

The CAMT/CSAMP group has been discussing the best approach for a more coordinated monitoring program and integration of the ongoing science projects and initiatives. Both of these groups are contemplating the effectiveness of the various studies and strategy for integrating the results to further our understanding of the environmental challenges. In addition, CAMT is developing a matrix of potential projects to best address the data needs and gaps to support the needed analyses and evaluations.

The monitoring sub-group developed a matrix to assess the monitoring activities, objectives, and hypotheses and will crosswalk the actions with the evolving VA Science Plan. The draft plan is anticipated to be ready in May.

Reinitiation of Consultation on the Long-term operations of the CVP and SWP (ReROC):

The Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) is working on the proposed action to be evaluated in the ReROC environmental impact statement (EIS) and Biological Assessment. The Proposed Action and qualitative analysis are anticipated to be completed in early Summer 2023. The quantitative analysis of the Proposed Action is anticipated in Fall 2023. BOR is planning an independent peer review prior to submitting the Biological Assessment to the USFWS and NMFS for development of Biological Opinions. Staff will continue to track the development and provide assistance as needed.

The next WIIN Act Quarterly meeting is scheduled for June 13, 2023.

Science Coordination:

As part of our efforts to increase the effectiveness of the Water Authority's Science Program, Authority staff is proposing to establish a Science Coordination Workgroup to assist in the guidance of the Program.

The objectives of this group will include:

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1. Improving coordination and communication with member agencies related to Science Activities,
2. Contributing to the development of an Authority Science Plan to guide science program activities, and
3. Enhancing engagement with the science community.

Staff is reaching out to solicit participants from our member agencies for participation in the workgroup, with a request to at minimum have one representative from each Division. After compiling a list of Work group members, staff will schedule an initial meeting to discuss the goals and objectives.

#### Additional Coordination Activities

Staff is participating to the Reorienting to Recovery – Salmon Workshops which focus on the identifying key challenges and improving science.