



## **ACTION ITEM**

### Consideration and Possible Appointment of the Delta Lead Scientist

#### Summary

Pursuant to California Water Code section 85280(b), the Lead Scientist for the Delta Science Program (Delta Lead Scientist) is appointed by Delta Stewardship Council after consultation with the Delta Independent Science Board (Delta ISB). The Delta ISB will provide its recommendation to appoint Dr. Lisamarie Windham-Myers as Delta Lead Scientist for a three-year term. The Council will discuss the recommendation and consider the appointment of the recommended candidate.

#### Requested Action

After an extensive search and interview process, the Delta ISB recommends that the Council appoint Dr. Lisamarie Windham-Myers as the Lead Scientist for the Delta Science Program (see Attachment 1). Water Code Section 85280(b) requires that the Council appoint a Lead Scientist after consultation with the Delta ISB. The Delta ISB recommends that the Council appoint Dr. Windham-Myers as Lead Scientist for the Delta Science Program for a three-year term, effective from December 1, 2023.

#### Background

Pursuant to Water Code Section 85280(b)(2), the term of office for the Lead Scientist shall be no more than three years, and the Lead Scientist can serve no more than two terms. The Lead Scientist is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Delta Science Program (California Water Code Section 85280 (b)(3)). As described in California Water Code Section 85280(b)(4), "The mission of the Delta Science Program is to provide the best possible unbiased scientific information to inform water and environmental decision making in the Delta. That mission shall be carried out through funding research, synthesizing and communicating scientific information to policymakers and decision makers, promoting independent

scientific peer review, and coordinating with Delta agencies to promote science-based adaptive management.”

The Delta Lead Scientist position is funded through a multi-year assignment with the United States Geological Survey (USGS). The Council, in partnership with the USGS and in consultation with the Delta ISB, began the search for the next Lead Scientist in June 2023.

Because the Lead Scientist is appointed by the Council after consultation with the Delta ISB, the Delta ISB formed an advisory committee, the Delta Lead Scientist Interview Panel (Interview Panel), to help with the selection and interview process. The Interview Panel consisted of three Delta ISB members, three Council representatives, and one representative from the USGS.

### Interview Process

The search for the next Lead Scientist began in June 2023. The application period for priority consideration closed on September 13, 2023; four applications were received. Of these four applicants, the Interview Panel selected two applicants for interviews who met the qualifications for the Lead Scientist position required by Water Code Section 85280(b)(1):

- (A) Hold an advanced degree in a field related to water or ecosystem management.
- (B) Have a strong record of scientific research and publication in peer-reviewed scientific journals in a field related to water or ecosystem management.
- (C) Have experience advising high-level managers in science-based decision-making in the areas of water management and ecosystem restoration.
- (D) Have the capability to guide the application of an adaptive management process to resource management policy decisions in the Delta.

Interviews were conducted between February and March 2024. As part of the interview process, each applicant gave a public seminar presentation on their research and experience, how their research and experience are applicable to the position, and their vision for the Delta Science Program. In addition, there was a meet and greet opportunity with stakeholders to allow the public to learn more about the applicants, as related to the position.

On March 21, 2024, in a duly noticed closed session, the Interview Panel identified a list of suitable candidates for the position for Delta ISB consideration. On March 22, 2024, the Delta ISB met in a duly noticed closed session to consider a recommendation after the conclusion of the interview process and identified, by unanimous vote, Dr. Lisamarie Windham-Myers as the preferred candidate to recommend to the Council for consideration for the appointment (Attachment 1).

## The Nominee

Dr. Lisamarie Windham-Myers is a systems ecologist with the United States Geological Survey (USGS). She received her Ph.D. from Rutgers University in Ecology, Evolution, and Natural Resources and was a professor at Lehigh University before moving back to California in 2004 to work with the USGS National Research Program and to teach Earth System courses at Stanford University on coastal wetlands.

Her research focuses on harmonizing field observations and model representation of physical and biogeochemical processes at the interface of land and aquatic systems, including water flow, storage, and quality at landscape scales. Working across agencies and disciplines, Dr. Windham-Myers' research and collaborations test and integrate pore-scale and watershed-scale models within the Delta and nationally to understand management opportunities in aquatic habitats for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and controlling methylmercury exposure.

With grants from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Energy, and the Delta Science Program, she has over 100 peer-reviewed publications, including lead authorship on both the Estuary chapter of the second State of the Carbon Cycle Report and the first textbook focused on "Blue Carbon" science, policy, and practice at global scales. While her fieldwork is focused on the West Coast, Dr. Windham-Myers regularly represents the USGS in national-scale interagency research initiatives and the U.S. international partnerships associated with climate mitigation activities.

She is currently serving as the interim Delta lead scientist, effective from December 1, 2023, based on the Council's appointment at its October 26, 2023, public meeting. Dr. Laurel Larsen, the previous Delta Lead Scientist, elected to leave her

position effective November 30, 2023 – seven months prior to the end of her term. Dr. Windham-Myers' initial appointment was through June 30, 2024, unless extended by the Council. If appointed by the Council to a three-year term, Dr. Windham-Myers' current term would be extended to be from December 1, 2023, through November 30, 2026.

## Fiscal Information

Funding for the Lead Scientist for the Delta Science Program is secured by a multi-year assignment with the United States Geological Survey.

## List of Attachments

*Attachment 1: Delta Lead Scientist Appointment Recommendation from the Delta Independent Science Board*

*Attachment 2: Curriculum Vitae of Dr. Lisamarie Windham-Myers (available here: <https://deltacouncil.ca.gov/pdf/isb/meeting-materials/2024-02-15-delta-lead-scientist-candidate-windham-myers-cv.pdf>.)*

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