

Year in Review

Summary: This is a year-end update on the status of 2014 staff priorities that were presented to the Council at its December 2013 meeting and reviewed for mid-year progress in June 2014. The Executive Officer, Lead Scientist and deputy directors will discuss these priorities and the activities supporting them with the Council and be available to answer questions from Council members.

Background

In December 2013, staff presented the Council with recommended priorities for 2014, emphasizing activities to address 20 of the Delta Plan's 87 policies and recommendations, as well as key elements of the Delta Science Plan and legislative directives from the Delta Reform Act. In response, the Council directed the staff to "prioritize the priorities", expressing a preference for a more focused approach to Delta Plan implementation.

In June the Council reviewed with staff five revised priorities and eight core functions essential to the implementation of the Delta Plan that have been the focus of the Council's work for 2014. Attachment 1 details those priorities and core functions, noting milestones and accomplishments for each.

Three major activities warrant special mention:

Covered Actions – The Delta Reform Act requires agencies with certain actions in the Delta to certify their consistency with the Delta Plan. This core function, including developing the regulatory framework to handle these "covered actions" and any appeals, was an early priority. Two certifications were filed this year, public review periods held, and neither certification was appealed. Staff also developed an "early consultation process" through which project proponents can better understand how to determine whether their project is a "covered action" and, if it is, how the Delta Plan's regulatory policies might apply and what consistency would look like. Staff engaged in several of these discussions this year. Three training sessions were conducted to help state and local agencies and Delta stakeholders understand the certification process and appeals procedures.

Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) – The Delta Reform Act assigns the Council and the Delta Independent Science Board (ISB) several key review roles in the development of the BDCP. In May the ISB and the Council reached a major milestone by reviewing and providing comments on the draft BDCP and accompanying environmental impact report. Project proponents for this proposed habitat restoration and water conveyance improvement project have followed up with Council staff to clarify

and address those comments. In response to our comments and hundreds of others, the BDCP will recirculate revised environmental documentation in 2015.

Delta Levees Investment Strategy – The Council developed the policy framework for, and launched an update of, the Delta Plan’s regulatory priorities for Delta levee investments. This update combines economics, engineering, and decision-making techniques to identify funding priorities and assemble a comprehensive investment strategy for the levees. Much of this year was spent working with state and local agencies to develop the framework and collect and verify the data on which the strategy will be based.

Other Council priority accomplishments this year include:

- Interim Science Action Agenda. The Interim Science Action Agenda is an initial step in implementing the Delta Science Plan. It lays out the current priority science actions within Delta organizations, programs, and agencies and identifies opportunities for leveraging existing efforts and connecting managers and scientists with similar needs. Staff have begun that leveraging through the Interagency Ecological Program and the Delta Plan Interagency Implementation Committee.
- Habitat Restoration. The Council’s staff has facilitated progress towards the Delta Plan’s objectives for tidal marsh and floodplain restoration through several activities: early consultation on restoration projects, including advice on monitoring and adaptive management; coordination through the Delta Restoration Network and other forums; other science support; and tracking of restoration actions that contribute to the Delta Plan’s objectives. The Council in August endorsed a habitat restoration issue paper that offers recommendations to pull together suggested best practices to speed progress and enhance the success of restoration projects. The issue paper builds on a 2013 ISB review of habitat restoration in the Delta.
- Flows. Updating the flow objectives of the State Water Resources Control Board’s Bay-Delta Plan is a key step in efforts to provide more certainty about the water available for beneficial use and to restoring the Delta ecosystem as well as a directive of the Delta Reform Act. Following a two-day public workshop in February, a panel of independent scientists convened by the Council’s science program prepared a report intended to help narrow areas of scientific disagreement and uncertainty over the Delta outflows necessary for a healthy estuary. The Council’s science program conducted a second two-day workshop on interior Delta flows in April. The Science Program also participated in the Collaborative Adaptive Management Team (CAMT) to support flow management decision-making by the state and federal water projects under the current Biological Opinions.
- Land Use. Staff tracks and comments on local agencies’ land use plans and actions and on regional transportation plans and sustainable community strategies (GHG emission reduction plans). We reviewed numerous projects and sent 10 comment

letters in 2014 related to general plan updates, Sustainable Communities Strategies, and ecosystem restoration projects and grant programs.

Core Functions that Support Delta Plan Implementation

Core functions are those ongoing activities that support Delta Plan implementation. Those called out specifically in the 2014 priority workplan are:

- Delta Plan Interagency Implementation Committee. The Committee, which meets twice a year, held its inaugural meeting in April and its second in November, identifying priority areas and directing staff to follow-up on specific work areas in between meetings.
- Delta Science Plan Implementation. In addition to the development of the Interim Science Action Agenda, a multi-agency report on recommendations from the June Delta Data Summit is being prepared. Staff also provided peer reviews of scientific reports, maintained our support for seminars and publications that synthesize and communicate Delta science, and provided administrative and scientific support for the Delta Independent Science Board.
- Maintain the State of Bay-Delta Science. The *State of Bay-Delta Science* report is being updated and will be published in 2015. Activities this year included selection of an editorial board and developing the outline for the report. Staff also co-hosted with the U. S. Geological Survey the 8th biannual Bay-Delta Science Conference, which convened more than 1,100 scientists and policymakers in October to share and report new findings and discuss ongoing investigations.
- Performance Reporting. Staff completed technical revisions to the online tracking and reporting system so that it tracks Delta Plan implementation. As reported to the Council in December, data gathered by DPIIC agencies and others is being reviewed to assess its value in monitoring progress towards Delta Plan performance measures. An assessment of the 118 administrative performance measures in the Delta Plan shows that 80 percent of the Delta Plan actions they track are underway: 16 have been completed, 78 are in progress and 24 have not yet been started.
- Federal Approval. Conducted scoping meetings to determine consultant requirements and best approach to begin working with federal Office of Coastal Resource Management to secure its approval of the Delta Plan.

Other Activities

The Delta Reform Act set out a role for the Council that is primarily one of oversight and coordination. Thus, many of the projects that implement the Delta Plan and further the State's coequal goals are carried out by agencies other than the Council. The 2014 Annual Report (Attachment 2) is designed to highlight the accomplishments of not only

of the Council but also those of the related state, federal and local agencies that together will help the state achieve the coequal goals for the Delta.

Today's Briefing

Chief Deputy Executive Officer Day Ray, Rainer Hoenicke, deputy executive officer for science, Cindy Messer, deputy executive officer for planning, and Taryn Ravazzini, DPIIC coordinator, will discuss the 2014 workplan and accomplishments.

List of Attachments

Attachment 1: 2014 Priorities Update
Attachment 2: 2014 Annual Report

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