

Performance Measures Review- Request to the Delta Independent Science Board (DISB)

Background

The Delta Reform Act of 2009 requires the Delta Plan to include performance measures that enable the Council to track progress in meeting its objectives. These performance measures are to include quantitative or other “measureable assessments of the status and trends” of the health of the Delta, as well as the reliability of the state’s water supply exported from the Sacramento and San Joaquin river watersheds (Water Code sections 85211 and 85308).

In compliance with the Act, the Delta Plan includes a suite of performance measures (160 total) organized by Delta Plan chapter that address further achievement of the coequal goals and that are directly linked to strategies, regulatory policies and non-regulatory recommendations within the Plan.

Below is some excerpted material from the Delta Plan adopted in May of 2013 concerning performance measures. Underlined materials are especially relevant for the Delta Independent Science Board (DISB).

1 - Reporting on Delta Plan Performance Measures

“This Delta Plan contains preliminary performance measures developed to monitor performance of Delta Plan policies and recommendations. Upon adoption of the Delta Plan, staff will take the lead, working with scientific, agency, and stakeholder experts to continue to refine the Delta Plan’s performance measures. Delta Plan performance measures will be periodically reviewed by independent expert review panels and will be sent to the DISB for further review and comment. The Council will issue periodic public reports on the status of performance measures.”

2 – Performance Measures in the Delta Plan

“The performance measures included in this Delta Plan are primarily administrative measures focused on implementation of near term actions (generally, actions contained within policies and recommendations of the Delta Plan) that support the coequal goals. This initial set of performance measures will be expanded and refined after adoption of the Delta Plan and will be considered for inclusion in subsequent updates of the Delta Plan.

Delta Plan performance measures have been placed into three general classes:

- Administrative performance measures describe decisions made by policy makers and managers to finalize plans or approve resources (funds, personnel, projects) for implementation of a program or group of related programs.
- Output (also known as “driver”) performance measures evaluate the factors that may be influencing outcomes and include on-the-ground implementation of management actions, such as acres of habitat restored or acre-feet of water released, as well as natural phenomena outside of management control (such as a flood, earthquake, or ocean conditions).

- Outcome performance measures evaluate responses to management actions or natural outputs.

Development of informative and meaningful performance measures is a challenging task that will continue after the adoption of the Delta Plan. Performance measures need to be designed to capture important trends and to address whether specific actions are producing expected results. Efforts to develop performance measures in complex and large-scale systems like the Delta are commonly multiyear endeavors. The Council will improve all performance measures, but will focus on outcome measures through a multiyear effort, using successful approaches for developing performance measures employed by similar efforts elsewhere.”

Charge to the DISB

Delta Stewardship Council staff with assistance from experts at developing performance measures and feedback from subject area specialists has been working on an update and enhancement to the output and outcome performance measures used to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of the Delta Plan. This effort is in need of a midcourse review with a primary focus on the approach to determine useful and informative output and outcome performance measures for the various chapters of the Delta Plan. Therefore, staff’s refinement effort is now seeking DISB input before being presented to the Delta Stewardship Council as a proposed amendment to the Delta Plan. For background information and context, brief one-page summaries of the emerging new and modified output and outcome performance measures for five chapters of the Delta Plan will be provided (~36 in number). Staff respectfully requests the following issues be addressed by the DISB:

- A. Is the general methodology associated with this "refinement" of performance measures for the Delta Plan appropriate?
- B. Given current scientific knowledge and available monitoring activities and capabilities, is the direction being used for developing these performance measures for the Delta Plan appropriate?
- C. What general recommendations can the DISB offer to assist in making informative and measurable output and outcome performance measures?