

Year in Review

Summary: This is a year-end update on the status of 2015 staff priorities that were presented to the Council at its March 2015 meeting. 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 March 2015, staff discussed with the Council recommended priorities for 2015, emphasizing activities to address 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.

Three major activities warrant special mention:

Delta Levees Investment Strategy – To provide priorities for state investments in Delta levees, we are working with a consulting team led by ARCADIS to develop recommendations for State investments in Delta levees, including an update of the Delta Plan's levee investment priorities. In 2015 we developed a sophisticated database of key Delta resources – levee conditions, lives and property, water supply, habitat, and other assets – to identify levels of risk. We also developed a computer-based, interactive planning tool to help summarize and visualize current risks without additional levee investments, as well as the risk reduction achieved by potential future levee projects. Using this risk-informed analysis, the Council will develop and recommend a portfolio of actions that can reduce flood risks in the Delta and Suisun Marsh.

Principles to Guide Integrating Conveyance, Storage and Operations to Achieve the Coequal Goals – Not anticipated as part of the Council's 2015 priorities, the change in approach to the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) means it no longer meets the Delta Reform Act requirements for automatic incorporation in the Council's Delta Plan. As a result, the Council developed new Delta Plan principles that address how improvements to conveyance and increases in storage capacity should be considered as interdependent parts of a system and be operated in a way that maximizes benefits for both of the coequal goals. Adopted in November, these principles provide a starting place for prospective amendment of the Delta Plan.

High-Priority Science Actions – Building on the Interim Science Action Agenda led by the Delta Science Program, we worked with the Delta Plan Interagency Implementation Committee (DPIIC) agencies to identify high-priority science actions to be implemented over the next two years, many of which were then included for funding through a grant

solicitation by the Department of Fish and Wildlife and Sea Grant fellowships funded by the Council. The outcomes of these investigations are expected to reduce scientific disagreement, provide new science data and information to support effective adaptive management, and inform the management of Delta ecosystem restoration projects and actions that improve the way water is moved across the Delta.

Other Council priority accomplishments this year include:

- Habitat Restoration. Council staff helped to accelerate progress toward the Delta Plan's objectives for tidal marsh and floodplain restoration by advising on nine high priority restoration projects and through implementing recommended actions of the Council's 2014 habitat restoration issue paper. At the request of the Department of Fish and Wildlife, staff conducted a review of levee-related habitat improvement projects in the Delta, detailing their effectiveness at providing habitat for native species, as well as the costs associated with these types of efforts. We also co-hosted a seminar to assess the best science available to support management of invasive aquatic weeds, and conducted early consultation on six restoration projects.
- Flows. Updating the flow objectives of the State Water Resources Control Board's Bay-Delta Plan remains a critical decision point in providing more certainty about the water available for beneficial use, including restoring the Delta ecosystem. The Delta Science Program continued to provide science support for the Board's decision-making in response to the Board's requests. Staff also continued its participation in the Collaborative Adaptive Management Team (CAMT) to support flow management by the state and federal water projects consistent with the relevant Biological Opinions. In November the Delta Independent Science Board presented to the Council its report *Flows and Fishes in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta*, its review of the research, monitoring, and evaluation that supports adaptive management of Delta flows. The report recommended several scientific strategies to benefit adaptive management, and to enhance collaboration and communication among institutions.
- Land Use. Experience over the past year confirms that land use decisions affecting the Delta require continued attention and coordination. Staff tracks and comments on local agencies' land use plans and actions and on regional transportation plans and sustainable community strategies. Council staff engaged in more than 15 early consultations over the past year and formally commented on 29 projects. Staff also contributed to activities of the Delta Protection Commission and Delta Conservancy to protect the "Delta as Place".
- Water Supply Reliability. After receiving reports about the SWRCB's and DWR's improved oversight of transfers and reviewing the best available science related to the ecological effects of transfers, the Council recommended updating the Plan to exclude single-year transfers from the Council's regulatory process. In addition, Council staff also worked closely with the California Water Commission as it

developed water storage guidelines for \$2.7 billion in grants from Proposition 1 (2014).

Core Functions that Support Delta Plan Implementation

Core functions are those ongoing activities that support Delta Plan implementation. Those called out specifically in the 2015 priority workplan include:

- Delta Plan Interagency Implementation Committee. The Committee, which meets twice a year, identified priority science investigations to be implemented over the next two years. This unique and critically important accomplishment has generated greater momentum for the collective prioritization of science needs and underscores the importance of the Council's Delta Science Program as an objective facilitator of collaborative activity in the region.
- Delta Science Plan Implementation. In addition to the development of the Interim Science Action Agenda, staff produced a multi-agency report on recommendations from the Delta Data Summit, designed to identify solutions to managing California's environmental data management challenges. Staff also organized two peer reviews of scientific reports, organized and/or collaborated on six major workshops and symposia as well as several lunch time seminars that synthesize and communicate Delta science, and provided administrative and scientific support for the Delta Independent Science Board.
- Performance Reporting. Over the past year, considerable time and effort has gone into assessing the Delta Plan's 21 "output" and 21 "outcome" measures, reviewing each one individually with technical experts and stakeholders to assess whether the metrics accurately address the recommendations they were designed to measure and whether data exist – or could exist – to be measureable. This process, with a review of the methodology by the Delta Independent Science Board, is expected to be completed by mid-2016. An assessment of the 118 administrative performance measures in the Delta Plan shows that 81 percent of the Delta Plan actions they track are underway: 20 have been completed, 75 are in progress and 23 have not yet begun. In 2016 we'll be well positioned to learn even more about the Delta Plan's effectiveness based on advancements that occurred in our performance reporting in 2015.

Other Activities

The Delta Reform Act set out a role for the Council that is primarily one of oversight and coordination. Thus, most 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 2015 Annual Report (Attachment 1) 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

Executive Officer Jessica Pearson, Lead Scientist Cliff Dahm, Chief Deputy Executive Officer Day Ray, Deputy Executive Officer for Science Rainer Hoenicke, and acting Deputy Executive Officer for Planning Jessica Davenport, will discuss the accomplishments.

List of Attachments

Attachment 1: 2015 Annual Report *(to be provided at the Council meeting)*

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