

2016 Priorities

Summary: This report proposes staff priorities for 2016. Eight topics are emphasized. Other core functions that have become routine staff and Council activities also are noted. The Executive Officer, Lead Scientist and deputy executive officers will discuss these priorities with the Council and be available to answer questions from Council members.

Background

This report proposes priorities for 2016. In March 2015, the staff presented the Council with staff's recommended priorities for that year, emphasizing activities to implement the Delta Plan and the Delta Science Plan. Those 2015 priority projects addressed six Delta Plan and Delta Science Plan topics. Also emphasized was the need to continuously build and maintain the agency's core functions that support implementation of the Delta Plan and fulfill the Council's statutory duties.

Last month the Executive Officer reviewed with the Council the 2015 progress in implementing the Delta Plan, as described in the Council's annual report. She reported that actions were well underway to follow through on Delta Plan commitments to revisit one-year water transfers, revise priorities for State investment in Delta levees, and refine performance measures, as were actions to respond to the Administration's announcement that the Bay Delta Conservation Plan would not be completed as a Natural Community Conservation Plan/Habitat Conservation Plan. Work with Delta Plan Interagency Implementation Committee (DPIIC) agencies to agree upon and fund high priority science actions also made notable progress. Several of these activities will be complete soon, but others will need to continue in 2016 or beyond to achieve the outcomes the Council seeks.

Proposed 2016 Priorities

The Council's executive staff has reviewed the 2015 priorities and January's annual report. Agencies with which we cooperate were consulted and staff resources were assessed. Four principles guided our deliberations:

- Delta Plan and Delta Reform Act Implementation. Activities that implement the Delta Plan, the Delta Science Plan, and Delta Reform Act provide the menu from which priority actions are selected. Key activities begun in 2015 will be completed.
- Delta Stewardship Council Leadership. Precedence is provided for actions where the Council plays a lead role, such as providing the best available science to support Delta decisions.

- Balancing Achievement of the Coequal Goals. Maintain a balanced program to address water supply reliability, ecosystem restoration, and the Delta as a place. Table 1 below identifies the Delta Plan objectives addressed by major 2016 priorities.
- California Water Action Plan. Delta Plan implementation actions that carry out the Administration's California Water Action Plan are also priorities, recognizing that these efforts offer synergies with other state agencies.

		Table 1. Delta Plan Strategic Objectives					
	Priority Actions	Provide a More Reliable Water Supply for California	Protect, Restore, and Enhance the Delta Ecosystem	Protect Unique Delta Values	Improve Water Quality	Reduce Risk in the Delta	Ensure Best Available Science and Adaptive Management
1	Update and amend the Delta Plan	X	X	X	X	X	X
2	Improve water supply reliability	X	X	X			X
3	Restore the Delta ecosystem		X	X	X		X
4	Promote integrated flood management	X	X	X	X	X	X
5	Protect the Delta's unique values			X			
6	Fund high impact science		X		X		X
7	Synthesize and communicate Delta Science		X		X		X
8	Ensure accountability and performance by reporting on Delta Plan implementation	X	X	X	X	X	X

Priority 2016 Delta Plan Implementation Actions

During 2016, we will emphasize eight initiatives to implement Delta Plan and Delta Science Plan recommendations. These proposed priorities are outlined in Attachment 1:

1. Amend the Delta Plan. Delta Plan amendment efforts begun in 2015 will be completed. These include affirming the Council's role with respect to one-year water transfers, refining performance measures, updating priorities for state investment in Delta levees, and promoting options for improved conveyance, storage and operations to further the coequal goals.
2. Improve water supply reliability. In addition to the water-related Delta Plan amendments described above, we will continue to work with the California Water Commission to ensure that its process to fund new water storage projects remains aligned with the Delta Plan. Newly submitted urban water management plans will be reviewed to assess how agencies' expect to reduce their reliance on the Delta and diversify local water supplies. We are also preparing for early consultation efforts in advance of a potential consistency certification for the California WaterFix project.
3. Restore the Delta ecosystem. The advent of California EcoRestore and the renewed momentum for restoration throughout the Delta watershed provides the opportunity to implement the landscape-scale design and adaptive management that is envisioned in the Delta Plan. We will continue to provide early consultation and science support for habitat restoration projects, including the California EcoRestore program, and continue to advocate for and report on implementation of recommendations of the Council's habitat restoration white paper. We will continue to provide science support for non-native invasive species control programs, and assist in and help fund critical research to improve the science supporting salmon and Delta smelt protection during state and federal water project operations.
4. Promote integrated flood management. In addition to completing the Delta Levees Investment Strategy, we will continue to participate in the Delta Protection Commission's feasibility study of a Delta levee assessment district, revision of the Central Valley Flood Protection Plan, and Corps of Engineers' studies that affect Delta levees. We will continue our annual review of improvements in emergency preparedness and response efforts in the Delta. We will also monitor progress in implementing recommendations of the recent issue paper about levee-related habitats in the Delta.
5. Protect the Delta's unique values. In addition to amending the Delta Plan's levee investment priorities and encouraging integrated flood management, staff will continue to support recreation, tourism, agriculture, and community planning efforts of the Delta Protection Commission (DPC) and Delta Conservancy.

Planning staff will continue to track, review, and comment on local government general plan updates, development projects, and sustainable community strategies and to coordinate with the DPC as it updates its Land Use and Resources Management Plan. The Delta Independent Science Board (ISB) will report on its survey of research about the Delta's unique agricultural, recreational, and cultural values.

6. Fund high impact science. To further advance the collaborative science envisioned by the Delta Science Plan and its "One Delta, One Science" initiative, we will use the Science Program's grant-making capacity to help carry out the DPIIC's list of high impact science actions. The Council will solicit, review and fund fellowships and investigations that address widely-shared needs for scientific information and research upon which key Delta decisions will be based.
7. Synthesize and communicate scientific information. The Council's Delta Science Program will compile and publish the 2016 edition of the *State of Bay-Delta Science* and host the 2016 biennial Bay-Delta Science Conference. We also will convene workshops and/or publish reports to synthesize knowledge and update scientific priorities regarding primary production in the Delta, effects of the drought, modeling Delta water supplies and ecosystems, especially water temperatures in the Sacramento River temperature, and managing aquatic weeds, nutrients, and mercury in the Delta. We also will begin implementing the recommendations of the 2014 Data Summit.
8. Ensure accountability and performance by reporting on Delta Plan implementation. The Council will complete the refinement of the Delta Plan's performance measures and quickly turn to full implementation. Dashboards will be further developed to report agencies' progress in implementing the Delta Plan and the status and trends in Delta conditions. The 2016 annual report will also use the performance measures to describe the year's activities.

Conducting Core Functions that Support Delta Plan Implementation

Carrying out the core staff functions that support Delta Plan implementation is essential and also staff-intensive. By attending to these fundamental responsibilities, the Council fulfills its duty to coordinate the Delta Plan's implementation and the Delta Science Program's long-standing duties.

- Delta Plan Interagency Implementation Committee. The Delta Plan Interagency Implementation Committee will meet in May and again in the fall. Interagency work groups, especially the group currently identifying priority science actions for near term funding, will be used to coordinate with DPIIC agencies. New work groups may be convened if needed.

- Covered Actions. We are continuing to support certification of covered actions with early consultation, science support, comments on CEQA documents, trainings for agencies and citizen groups, and the online certification system. Improving coordination of State agencies' regulatory activities affecting Delta projects is emphasized.
- Delta Science Plan Implementation. The Delta Science Program will provide science support when requested by federal and state agencies, particularly scientific peer review and facilitating collaborative science activities. To implement the Delta Science Plan, the Delta Science Program will continue to consult with its science advisory committee and respond to the Delta Independent Science Board's reviews of the research, monitoring, and evaluation supporting adaptive management.
- Federal Approval. Our consultants will assist in pursuing approval of the Delta Plan as an amendment to California's coastal zone management program. We will consult with the Administration, confirm the support of the state's other coastal agencies, work with federal Office of Coastal Resource Management, and draft a submittal to secure federal approval of the Delta Plan for consideration by the Governor and the Department of Commerce.
- Communications. Meeting support, an annual report, newsletters and other publications, seminars, and speaking engagements are ongoing assignments.
- Council, Delta Independent Science Board, and Implementation Committee Support. Support for meetings of the Council, the ISB, and the DPIIC includes logistics, preparing reports and briefing panels, and post meeting follow-up.

Other Activities

Attention will still be paid to other activities that advance the Delta Plan, as time and staff resources allow. Emerging opportunities or crises may necessitate responses by the Council that could shift emphases. The Council staff will continue to track other activities that affect the Delta. Through this monitoring, it will alert the Council to actions that may significantly affect Delta Plan implementation, so that priorities can be adjusted when necessary.

List of Attachments

Attachment 1: 2016 Updated Priorities

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